

William Rusher

A View Of the U.S. as The Village Idiot

Bangkok

ONE OF the side benefits of foreign travel is the opportunity to look at the United States from outside, for a change. I wish I could report that the experience, these days, is an uplifting one — like those gorgeous views of the planet earth, with its



William Rusher

rusty continents and royal-blue oceans and swirling clouds, that our astronauts used to enjoy on the way to the moon. Unfortunately, the U.S. today, as viewed from abroad, looks rather like some village idiot mindlessly banging his head against a wall.

Take the announcement of Ron Nessen, President Ford's press secretary, that the government would bill Richard Nixon some \$8000 for the cost of so much of his final flight to Los Angeles last August 9 as took place after he officially ceased to be President at 11:35 a.m., at a point over Jefferson

City, Missouri. Mr. Nessen was later prevailed upon to retract this particular piece of nuttiness, but the damage had already been done.

In case you haven't heard, the rest of the world (give or take a Swede or two) feels far less ill-disposed toward Mr. Nixon than most of his domestic critics. Nor is it merely the familiar story of the prophet not without honor save in his own country.

★ ★ ★

IN THE particular case of Richard Nixon, the rest of the world simply hasn't been able to summon up the indignation over his conduct that billows forth so effortlessly from, say, Lowell Weicker.

I have a friend in Italy, and not even a terribly anti-clerical one at that, who is convinced that the Pope wiretaps the cardinals — a preposterous idea, to be sure, but one that nicely illustrates the blase European attitude toward that sort of thing.

Little do they realize the heights (or is it depths?) of vindictiveness that millions of Americans have attained on the subject of Richard Nixon. I have no doubt that Messrs. Gallup and Harris could find plenty of people who would agree that, once the presidential jet reached Missouri and the sands ran out on the Nixon presidency, the pilot ought to have switched off the engines and bailed out.

★ ★ ★

OR TAKE the still-continuing brouhaha over the allegedly "illegal" files on anti-war Americans kept by the CIA during the 1960s. This flap is almost 100 per cent pure propaganda: a controversy deliberately manufactured by Seymour Hersh and his superiors at the New York Times, abetted by the usual publicity-thirsty liberals in the Congress, solely for the purpose of embarrassing and, if possible, crippling the CIA.

Even assuming the CIA actually did something technically within the jurisdiction of the FBI, no shred of harm resulted. Yet, to judge by the uproar, you would think somebody had been caught trying to steal the Constitution from the National Archives.

President Ford has been forced to appoint a "blue ribbon" panel to inquire into the matter, and Congress (not trusting Mr. Ford's panel to get to the bottom of it) is creating its own special investigating committee. Meanwhile an amazed world watches, and wonders.

★ ★ ★

THERE IS not a major nation on earth that does not have at least one, and usually several, secret services. In the case of Britain, the very identity of the head of the principal secret agency, was for many years carefully concealed.

Yet here is the Congress of the United States, simply on the insistence of a powerful liberal newspaper, preparing to hold CIA Director Colby upside down by his feet in public and compel him, under pain of perjury, to tell it and the Russians and the whole human race what he and his predecessors have been doing and why the CIA shouldn't be prevented from ever doing it again.

Do you wonder that other nations, watching this performance, think we are out of our minds? Are they so very wrong?

Universal Press