

Nixon 'Wound Up' by Apollo Trip

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WASHINGTON, April 27—Exhausted by over 5,000 miles of travel in less than 24 hours, the members of the press "pool" accompanying President Nixon on the return leg or his whirlwind trip to Honolulu last week fell asleep somewhere across the Pacific. Without warning, a dark, familiar shape appeared and drew back the curtain separating the press section of the airplane from the larger quarters reserved for the Presidential party. The man from The Associated Press, who had one eye open, quickly nudged his colleagues from the National Broadcasting Company, The New York Times and United Press International. To late, by the time they had roused themselves, President Nixon had smiled, closed the curtain and disappeared.

THE incident was related to Mrs. Nixon a few nights later at a dinner at which her husband bestowed the Medal of Freedom on seven journalists. "I don't know how he does it," she said. "We were all tired up front. But he was really excited by the astronauts. The trip wound him up. I think he just wanted to talk to somebody."

THERE have been good moments for Mr. Nixon in these last six weeks. On a single day, April 16, he won George Meany's adherence to a new postal reform bill and dazzled Senate leaders with a private briefing on the Administration's approach to the arms talks in Vienna. But on balance his image is of a methodical figure who decides everything after careful study of the options with the wide range of advisers and the image he has suffered.

The President's blast at the Senators who voted against Judge Carswell was—in the words of Patrick Buchanan, who wrote it—"whipped up in a hell of a hurry." Contrived only two and a half hours before the President delivered it, the speech caught both his liberal advisers and even the press office of guard.

LESS impulsive, but no less surprising to his confederates, was the Vietnam speech itself. Its general outline arose from the business-making process that Mr. Nixon has introduced to the White House. But its most startling specific revelation—the commitment to withdraw 150,000 troops over the next year—was not communicated to some of his closest associates until just before the address.

At the White House correspondents' dinner two nights before the speech, Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird confided to newsmen that the withdrawal figure would "range between 35,000 and

Finds 'Extra Glands' on Flight to Hail the Astronauts

45,000 over the next four months."

Several people on the White House staff were similarly informed. But the decision came out differently, and Ronald L. Ziegler, the press secretary, told reporters he was convinced the President had not settled on a firm figure until after he had left Washington, and perhaps not until after he had conferred with Adm. John S. McCain, Jr., commander of all United States forces in the Pacific, in Honolulu one day before the speech.

LITTLE wonder that he was wound up, or that he wanted to talk about it. The trip had provided a sharp tonic after a bad six weeks—perhaps the most troublesome weeks of his Presidency, which he suffered in silence in the White House behind a phalanx of aides who kept saying that things were going well.

There had been Laos, a postal strike, continued inflation, a mild furor over his desegregation statement, the crushing defeat of Judge G. Harrold Carswell, tension over the astronauts, a terrible run of weather in Washington, and then Cambodia.

Even his best responses had been judged to be politically motivated; in the polls, the estimate of his capacity for leadership briefly declined. Yet despite his silence, the period revealed much about him, providing little glimpses of the man behind the mask.

FOR one thing, the gulf between Mr. Nixon and Mr. Johnson seems narrower now. Presidents always seem to find consolation in travel, but the wild, impulsive journey to Houston and Honolulu and then back was especially characteristic of his predecessor, and by the end of the trip the frazzled members of the press were talking openly about their new leader, Lyndon B. Nixon.

First there was the journey out (to seize, in the words of one humorist, the astronauts' coattails), then the return to California, where he spoke on Vietnam, then the sudden decision to make an

all-night trip back to Washington after the speech.

The journey finally ended with a well-advertised display of Presidential energy. Mr. Nixon slept a few hours, rose, and was in his office at 7:30 for a full day's work. The whole thing was most unlike this President, who seemed suddenly to have acquired, by miraculous transplant, those "extra glands" with which Jack Valenti once credited Mr. Johnson.

MR NIXON's speech on Vietnam continues to be a major subject for debate here, despite Cambodia. There is little consensus on his real purpose.

Early in the game, he was accused of continuing the old win-the-war strategy while placating the left with token withdrawals and comfortable words. But the Administration has always been equally worried about the right wing, especially over the backlash they fear from charges that withdrawal has merely been a cover-up for ignominious defeat.

Many observers here believe that in this newest speech the President has given the antiwar critics the substance—a withdrawal of 150,000 troops—and the right wing the shadow—composed of artful phrases that assert the inevitability of defeat for the enemy.

YET Mr. Nixon's true motives remained veiled. This is the conundrum of the man. From time to time he seems ready to reveal them, almost eager. On the runway in Honolulu, he extolled a minister there. Then the press—fearful that the plane might leave—turned to run to their typewriters. The President hesitated, so somebody turned back and asked him another question. He answered it, and the press turned to run again.

Time was growing short. But Mr. Nixon again beseeched the press to stay with a lifted eyebrow, so somebody else asked him yet another question. Again he answered, and again he talked. But there was no time for them to ask the big questions, or he to answer them.

The jet engines were roaring. So the President turned into the plane, almost wistfully. It seemed for a fleeting moment that he wanted to talk about things before he vanished into the isolation of his office.