

The Nixon Haters

By Ernest van den Haag

Suppose Mr. Nixon were guilty of everything he is accused of. Money was collected illegally from corporations which expected favors in return. He encouraged assistants to find out who "leaked" Government secrets, or to improve his electoral fortunes, by committing burglaries, tapping wires, preparing silly "enemy lists" or trying to get the I.R.S. to audit the tax returns of "enemies." Suppose that Mr. Nixon tried afterwards to sweep these things under the rug. And that, contrary to promises, he fired a prosecutor who became too inconvenient and that some fought-over tapes disappeared. Finally, suppose he borrowed money to buy residences in California and Florida, made profits and found ways to reduce his tax liability, and to have excessive public funds spent for his residences.

Some of these accusations involve no wrongdoing; others seem trivial; many seem plausible; none have been proven. But suppose they were true. Should they determine our judgment of his Presidency?

President Roosevelt deported more than a hundred-thousand Americans from California and imprisoned them. They were not guilty of anything except arousing hysteria. Despite warnings by Assistant Secretary of State Adolph Berle, F.D.R. left Alger Hiss and fellow travelers in important positions. Harry Truman, a product of the unsavory Kansas City political machine, tolerated corruption and called the accusations against Alger Hiss a "red herring," thus bequeathing us Joe McCarthy. Kennedy's election was stolen; L.B.J.'s dealings with Bobby Baker were notorious.

Does any of this determine our estimate of these Presidencies? F.D.R. will be praised or despised for his foreign and domestic policies. Truman will be remembered for his stand on Korea and the Marshall Plan. Kennedy is a martyr. President Johnson will be judged by his populist legislation and his military ventures.

Mr. Nixon got us out of Vietnam, without delivering Saigon to Hanoi. He balanced the superpowers so that the danger of attack on the U.S., or of further Chinese or Soviet military expansion, is now remote, whereupon he could save Israel without sending a single soldier.

In the U.S. President Kennedy's promises, escalated by President Johnson, had set up expectations that neither could meet. Riots followed—which President Nixon stopped. He has been successful. Why then do they hate him so? Let me speculate on the motives of the Nixon haters—as they speculate on his.

Some sources of Nixon hate are impersonal. They produced no less for Senator Goldwater, depicted as a madman about to start an atomic holocaust and rob the people of Social Security into the bargain. The country has been run by liberals. Their establishment was threatened for the first time in a generation when Mr. Goldwater and then Mr. Nixon became candidates. Liberals still dominate the judiciary, the universities, the Federal bureaucracy and the media. They were unable to prevent Nixon's foreign suc-

cesses, but he was unable to weaken their domestic grip. The establishment did not allow him to stop the many poverty programs which help not the poor but their helpers. We are still paying for Kennedy's promises and Johnson's escalation with high crime, tax, welfare and inflation rates.

When liberals put up Senator McGovern (Henry Wallace *redivivus*), Mr. Nixon won overwhelmingly enough to become a real threat. The inflation of Watergate was the response. The mess is silly and sordid—not tragic and totalitarian. Watergate has been exploited to attempt to politically undermine the President who is then accused of being a eunuch and pressured to resign. He has disappointed The New York Times since—and because—he became President.

But much of the hate for Mr. Nixon

is personal and self-serving. The American left could no more believe in Alger Hiss' guilt than the French right could in Captain Dreyfus' innocence. If Hiss is guilty, the liberals who promoted him and his allies, and refused to investigate, are not blameless. Chambers indeed risked his life and Mr. Nixon his career to root out Hiss and friends. They didn't get much help. Everybody at Harvard testified for Alger Hiss and now wants to prosecute bad old Richard. Watergate is being used to redeem Hiss and Mr. McGovern, and the liberal sponsorship of both.

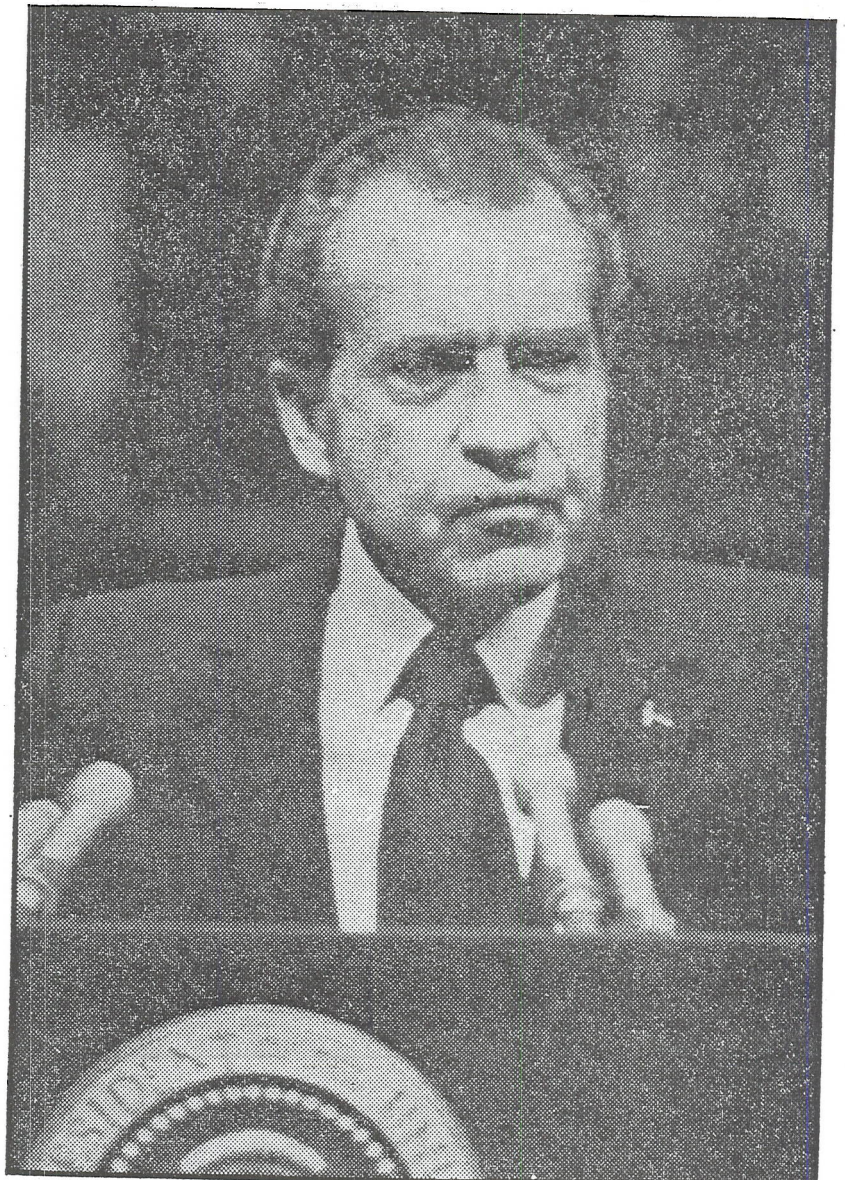
But what does Watergate prove? That Mr. Nixon has defects? Mr. Nixon is not hated because of his many defects, or mistakes, or misjudgments. He is hated, hated profoundly, and feared, for what he has accomplished, for his virtues rather than his vices. There is a lot to hate.

Ernest van den Haag, psychoanalyst, is lecturer in sociology and psychology at the New School for Social Research.

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