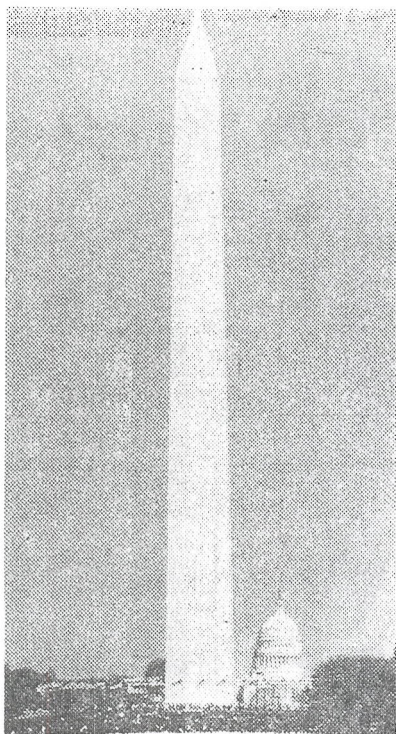


Watergate's Damage To America's Image

After so many months of Watergate, the credibility of the Nixon administration is at total risk, whatever dramatic action it may take. Not only experts in American affairs, but also ordinary men and women will now search for the hidden reason for dramatic actions. What is wrecking America's image is not whether the President has technically broken or not broken the law, but that a man so self-confessed in misjudgment of other men and their actions should still be in control of the world's most powerful nation. And the irony, for a British historian, is that no minister of George III, nor even George III himself, could have survived such a record of disaster: James III never broke the law, but he was chased from his kingdom. Many ministers in England have been impeached, or threatened with impeachment, for incompetence or for erroneous judgment, not for breaking a law or obstructing justice. Many Americans misunderstand the concept of impeachment, which is

and fundamentally unimportant arguments—the tapes, the real-estate purchases, the income-tax payments, or prior knowledge of the burglaries. The glaring enormity is that a man who chooses one self-confessed grafter for his deputy, whose aides are indicted on charges of perjury, conspiracy, burglary and the rest, has not been compelled to give up office. In no other country, Communist or free, would this be so. Not to recognize this, and not to recognize the intense harm that it is doing to America's image overseas, and therefore to America's power to influence the world, is the most dangerous of attitudes.



"Watergate is news, still headline news, in London."

directly derived from English constitutional practice of the 17th and 18th centuries. It was a device developed by Parliament (the legislative branch) when it was weak, both in relation to the monarchy (the executive) and the judges — so that the king could be forced to part with ministers who were corrupt or incompetent, or whose policy Parliament loathed. It was a weapon, quite deliberately devised, to check the excesses of the executive; to bring not only criminals to justice, but also those who were bringing English institutions into disrepute.

If ministers or heads of state are removable only if they technically break the law, the prospects for absolutism and tyranny must be very bright—even in America. And to many Englishmen the debate about Watergate seems to move away all too quickly from the central issue to peripheral

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At present, America's capacity to influence events depends upon one man and one man alone—Dr. Henry Kissinger; an extraordinarily dangerous situation for a great power. There is a great deal of anti-Americanism in Europe and elsewhere in the world, and now it has a glaring blemish upon which it can fasten and pump in its poison. Certainly Europe was developing a more independent attitude in economic and foreign affairs before Watergate, but surely no one can doubt that the process has accelerated since that debacle.

And what should be realized is that Watergate is news, still headline news, in London, avidly read, avidly discussed day after day after day. Watergate is not a local, internal domestic affair. The schizophrenic attitude that American foreign policy sails on—magnificently and effectively untouched by White House "horrors" or by the lies and evasions is a cruel delusion. Watergate is a cancerous growth eating at America's strength. Watergate is bad enough, but what worries America's friends far more deeply is the weakness of a constitutional system that renders a change of a President during his elected term almost impossible, except by death. This, in effect, becomes elected monarchy, and a monarchy far more powerful than George III ever enjoyed. The whole political and constitutional history of Britain centered on the Watergate problem—how to curb a monarch's bad judgment in choosing ministers; that is why we invented impeachment, and used it.

And one longs to hear some voices on Capitol Hill stating loudly and clearly the central issue: that the responsibility of a President is not to a mandate given one year, two years, three years previously, but a *daily* responsibility to the people's elected representatives, answerable at all times and on all matters, not only for keeping the law, but also in choosing men of integrity and honor. If the trust committed to the President is not honorably discharged, removal is essential for the well-being of the country.

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