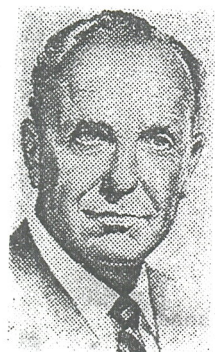


Letter from London

By William Randolph Hearst Jr. Editor-in-Chief, the Hearst Newspapers

NEW YORK — As has been noted before in this column, one of the ironies of Watergate is that President Nixon has wound up, generally, being far more admired and respected abroad than in his own country.



W. R. Hearst Jr.

Remember the enthusiastic crowds in Paris at the time of President Pompidou's funeral? And just watch the receptions he will get on his imminent visits to the Mideast and the Soviet Union.

From abroad, the President's domestic political troubles are seen as a curious tempest in a teapot — remarkable primarily for the vindictiveness being shown against a man so widely recognized as the world's most successful peacemaker. How that vindictiveness appears to at least one astute foreign observer is what I want to share with you today.

I have in hand a column by Bernard Levin which appeared in the esteemed London Times of May 31. It is a smashing attack on what has come to be known as the

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Eastern Liberal Establishment, the self-proclaimed intellectuals and Nixon haters from whom I once again vigorously disassociate myself. It was enclosed in a letter to me from Seymour Freidin, chief of our London bureau, with this comment:

"Here's a piece by an old friend and learned colleague, Bernard Levin, a gifted musicologist and author as well as columnist. He has a real wicked pen. And here is proof of what he can do."

Because I agree so thoroughly with what Levin had to say — have even expressed some of the same thoughts in my own writings — most of the rest of this space is being turned over to him, with some abridgement, unfortunately.

I'd very much like to know your reaction.

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LEVIN STARTS OUT by noting that Sen. J. William Fulbright, shortly before his recent crushing defeat in the Arkansas Democratic primary, went on national television to declare that his polls showed he was "four tenths of one per cent ahead." It later turned out that no such polls existed, and Levin goes on from there to lambaste Fulbright's deliberate fiction:

"What does the pack that has for so long been hunting President Nixon and his men say about it? Do they, one and all, declare it is just as well Fulbright lost his seat as otherwise it would have been necessary to expel him (for lying)?"

"Do they dub him 'Tricky Billy,' insist they would not buy a second-hand car from him, rejoice at the humiliation of his electoral rout, declare that the use of spurious evidence is far, far outside the area in which morally dubious practices can be excused in pursuit of power?"

After satirically remarking that the liberal establishment certainly did nothing of the sort, our witty English observer continues:

"I have said before, am about to say now, and will no doubt say again, that President Nixon may or may not be guilty of any or all of the crimes and misdemeanors attributed to him and even some (such as eating biscuits in bed) which he has not yet been charged with.

"Of one offense, however, there can be no doubt whatever that he is unquestionably and indefensibly guilty. And that is that in November of 1972 he beat Mr. George McGovern in the presidential election by one of the biggest popular margins in the history of the Republic.

"A great deal of the denunciation of President Nixon has come from people convinced of his guilt in the Watergate matter, or who feel his conduct in office . . . has fallen below acceptable minimum standards. Either one of these beliefs may be well-founded, and President Nixon therefore unworthy of his high responsibilities.

"But a good deal, also, of the implacable fervour with which he is being pursued — and which contrasts so sharply with the attitude adopted by the pursuers to similar actions by those whom they favor generally — is based on their deep sense of affront that, given the choice between their chosen standard bearer and Mr. Nixon, the American people overwhelmingly chose Mr. Nixon.

"To reverse that crushing rejection of their own beliefs is what many of those so eagerly sounding their horns in the Nixon-hunt seek. Unless the fact is grasped, a great deal of recent American history becomes unintelligible."

Levin then proceeds to analyze some of the pertinent history.

"THE ROT STARTED with President Kennedy," Levin writes. "He was claimed by the liberal establishment of America as one of them, indeed as their personal possession. The point is that 'we' most profoundly felt that 'one of us' had at last become President of the United States.

"Then came the tragedy of Dallas, and the accession of Lyndon Johnson. It is fashionable now, among the intellectually fashionable folk, to believe that the hatred of Johnson stemmed from his gradually deeper involvement in the Vietnam War.

"It did not; it long antedated it. It began on the day of the assassination when they realized, to their fury and dismay, that the new President, whatever he was, emphatically, was not one of them. It was most instructive to watch how they began to gather around Vice President Hubert Humphrey to save themselves the pain of admiring the uncouth Texan."

Levin traces in detail the maneuverings of the liberals to regain what they thought they lost with the death of President Kennedy — maneuverings which ultimately led to the disastrous nomination of Sen. McGovern as the Democratic candidate in 1972 — "probably the most absurdly inadequate potential president since Harding."

"A (Nixon) landslide of almost unprecedented proportions followed," Levin goes on, "and it is to shove that landslide back up the mountain that so many of the hunters of President Nixon yearn for, whether they realize it or not. The voters chose Nixon: So much the worse for the voters, for 'we' chose McGovern, and when 'we' open our lips, let no dog bark.

"It was 'we' who chose Fulbright, too, for he was against Nixon; indeed, absolutely anybody who is against Nixon, or whom Nixon is against, may now confidently expect canonization (by the liberals). I have no doubt that if they had thought Benedict Arnold had been a Nixon hater they would have applauded him, too.

"Because Fulbright was against Nixon, and for that matter against Lyndon Johnson, his use of a fictitious opinion poll for electoral purposes excites no indignation, no rage, no comment even, on the part of those for whom similar behavior alleged against President Nixon is enough to hang him high."

Levin concludes by asking a pointed and revealing question: "What do you think, and feel and say about Senator Fulbright's use of a non-existent opinion poll?"

IT IS A VERY good question in a very good column and once again you are invited to send me your reactions, in care of this newspaper.

Meanwhile — my compliments to Levin, my grateful acknowledgment to the London Times, and my thanks to Seymour Freidin for his letter and its thought-provoking content.