

Editor's Report

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Out of the tunnel

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SAN SIMEON — The events of this tragic, historic, soul-searching week have left me with a renewed sense of profound pride in being a citizen of the United States of America — a feeling which used to be called patriotism in the simpler, more honest days of the past.



W. R. Hearst Jr.

It is a good feeling. It needs no apology. What has happened this week proves once and for all that our democracy and its ideals remain the practical hope of humanity everywhere. In spite of our many failings, even despite grave failings in leadership, American democracy really works.

We take it more or less for granted normally, but it really is something of a miracle. Just consider.

In what other country in the world, with the exception of Great Britain, would the commander of almost total

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strength be forced to resign because he abused that strength?

That is a political fact which should be remembered today by those of us who may be apprehensive at the collapse of national leadership and its replacement by an untested substitute. We needn't worry.

No matter who is President of our nation — as the dismal recent past has emphatically demonstrated — in the end the right and the good and the tremendous force of a free and informed people will prevail.

That's the way our Founding Fathers conceived it in their genius, and thanks to the Constitution they wrote, that's the way it remains after almost 200 years.

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TWO FACES ALTERNATE in my mind (as they did on the television screen) while writing these words. One is the tense, face of Richard M. Nixon as he read his statement of resignation Thursday night. The other is the tense, but reassuring face of Gerald R. Ford as he was sworn in Friday as the 38th President of the United States.

Significantly, one of those men had devoted his life to a single aim — to seize and wield the immense power of White House command.

The other, by contrast, has devoted his adult life to cooperative public service in which the constructive sharing of power is imperative.

Watching and listening to the official exit of Richard Nixon was a traumatic experience for me. For many years he had been a friend and even a next door neighbor. It was impossible not to feel deep compassion for the anguish so thinly concealed by the mask of composure he wore in his farewell speech.

At the same time, inevitably, I felt surges of anger. Once again, as in the case of Spiro Agnew, I had a bitter feeling of betrayal.

Despite all his many great accomplishments in seeking an era of world peace, in the end Richard Nixon had to become the first American President to resign because he failed to keep faith with his countrymen. His Thursday farewell address was sad, shocking and dramatic in its significance. To me it also had a certain blindness to reality which probably—in the final analysis —may prove to be the key for unlocking the doors of his oddly secretive personality.

A bigger man would have used the occasion to make an abject apology to all the fellow citizens who trusted him. Not this one. He said simply — looking millions of Americans squarely in the eye — that the only reason he was quitting was because he had clearly lost the political support in the Congress needed to conduct the affairs of government as he had in the past.

There was no apology. There was no indication of the humility which goes with true greatness. There was nothing really human at all. It was a kind of painted, clockwork robot which sat reading those words of farewell to the American public.

Yet it was sad. We were witnessing the climactic moment in a real life American Tragedy and an historic moment in our country's history.

As for me, I don't feel I need apologize for my support of him, such as it was. My course has always been — and always will be — to support the elected leadership of this nation as long as it is honestly possible to give them the benefit of any doubt.

Twice, in recent months, I have been burned by this policy. Even so, to me it still is valid and most certainly it will be continued.

Thus our Hearst Newspapers will support with full confidence President Gerald Rudolph Ford as the President of our United States.

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FORD MAY JUST be the type of modest unassuming American needed to heal the wounds inflicted on our society by the whole Watergate mess. You can believe what he says and you better believe what he has stood for all his life.

Watching his face while he was taking the oath of his unwanted and terrifying new office was like watching the dawn of a new day.

We can be proud that this great country of ours has had the unique inherent political strength to pass through and emerge from the shameful tunnel of Watergate while displaying for all the world to see the disgrace of it.

It couldn't have happened anywhere else.

Today we all should be especially proud to be Americans.