

## U.S. REACTION

# THE PEOPLE TAKE IT IN STRIDE

Outside the White House on Thursday evening, an exuberant crowd of about 3,000 collected along Pennsylvania Avenue and in Lafayette Square. Some waved sparklers, some carried vindictive placards (EXECUTIVE DELETED, IMPEACH THE SYSTEM), and one planted on the White House fence a slightly spaced-out message of cheer: DING DONG, THE WITCH IS DEAD. There were also some tearful admirers (GOD LOVES NIXON) who prayed for their fallen leader.

There were scattered scenes of rejoicing and scenes of sorrow across the nation last week. In Cambridge and Berkeley, throngs of students celebrated in the streets. At a World Football League game in Jacksonville, cheerleaders burst into tears when the news was announced. For most Americans, however, the reaction to Richard Nixon's resignation was curiously muted. At the Houston Astrodome, a crowd of 12,000 baseball fans reacted to the news with a long pause followed by scattered applause. In Lawrence, Kans., the phone company put extra long-distance operators on duty in anticipation of a flood of post-speech calls, but the additional help had nothing to do.

For nearly two years, Watergate had divided and confused the American people. Now there was a unifying mood: re-

lief that the doubt and turmoil were over. But the actual announcement came as an emotional anticlimax to many people. As one anti-Nixon man in Wilmington, Del., put it, "This just doesn't feel as good as I thought it would." On the other hand, many Nixon supporters quickly became resigned to abdication. "It's sort of like an inoculation," declared New Hampshire Forester Robert Breck, who had voted for tickets carrying Nixon's name in eleven elections. "You hate to get it because you know it's going to hurt. But when it's over, you're glad you got it."

In the first 48 hours after the speech, a consensus seemed to be growing among ordinary citizens, among public officials and community leaders, and among editorialists and commentators: Nixon had taken the only course open to him. There was less agreement as to the manner of his departure and what further penalty he should suffer.

## VOICES ON MAIN STREET

"I feel the speech showed that he is a very strong man, physically and mentally," said retired Baltimore Real Estate Man Ted Ziegeld, "to have gone through what he has, and to speak as he did." To Harvard University Senior Michael Messerschmidt, 21, Nixon's

statement was "ridiculous," the words of "a jilted lover saying, 'You've hurt me but I still love you.'"

Joe Marty's El Chico Bar in Sacramento was packed. When the speech was over there was loud applause. "Not once," complained one woman, "did he say he had done anything wrong. He was Tricky Dick right to the end." Boston Criminal Lawyer Nelson Baker was also disappointed: "It was another refusal to admit any guilt or responsibility. It was a charade, a grave mistake. 'Errors of judgment, errors of judgment!' Anyone else calls it a felony and he calls it 'errors of judgment.'" Equally unimpressed was Minnesota Republican Rudy Boschwitz. "A great weight has been lifted," said Boschwitz. "Dick Nixon doesn't have us to kick around any more. I'd like to say something kind about Nixon at this time, but after two years of national agony and the damage done to my party, the completely innocent victim of this mischief—well, I'm afraid that will have to wait."

But Richard Nixon still had his defenders. "Everybody is too quick to judge," said Richard Watts, a Boston utility worker. "The only man fit to run for President now will be the Pope. The rest of the politicians will be too dirty."

Anna Clinkscales of Baltimore, who last December took to Washington petitions containing 8,000 signatures urging Nixon to fight on, was enraged. "If a President who has done so much for peace can be driven out of office in this unjust manner," she said, "then this country will be at war in six months." Consulting Engineer Raughley Porter

COUPLES DANCING IN SAN FRANCISCO AFTER HEARING NEWS OF RESIGNATION



STEPHEN FRISCH

NEW YORKERS CELEBRATING FOLLOWING PRESIDENT NIXON'S TELEVISION ADDRESS



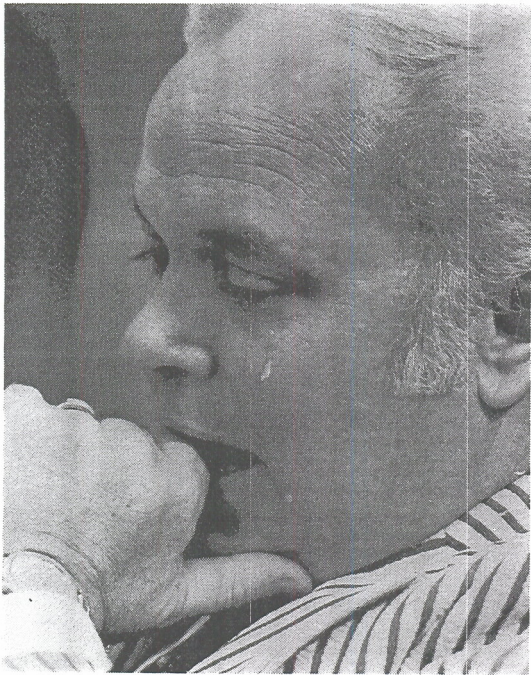
REBBOT—CAMERA 5

JACKSONVILLE CHEERLEADER IN TEARS



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59



GEORGIA G.O.P. CHAIRMAN BOB SHAW  
It was like an inoculation.

was saddened on behalf of posterity: "The schoolchildren of the future will read about Richard Nixon not for the good that he has done but because he lied and cheated."

In Shaker Heights, Ohio, Librarian Margaret Campbell was more optimistic: "I'm looking forward to another and a better day. I feel a very sad saga is over, and I just hope that we can all work together to make a better and a stronger United States." Mrs. Patricia Plotkin, a law student, described herself as "more than pleased, I'm ecstatic." In the beginning, she "wanted to see him go through the impeachment process, but I think it would have been a very painful, divisive business. So I feel better about his resignation, in spite of the \$60,000 pension."

### "I Feel Better"

Automobile Mechanic Ken Masshart watched the resignation speech with his wife and two young sons. Originally, he was cynical about the Watergate investigation because he believed "all politicians did it." Later he changed his mind somewhat: "I still think there's a lot of dishonesty, but I was surprised that they did anything about it. I never thought anything like this would ever happen. It makes a big difference to me now; I feel better about it, now that they've done something about it."

Carl Withers, president of the Shaker Heights Republican Club, is one of the remaining loyalists: "I consider Watergate in the category almost of a fraternity prank, where the victim got his hand caught in a barrel of chestnuts. The hiding of the break-in by underlings was not the type of crime that merits such severe punishment—considering the good

deeds President Nixon has accomplished." People who agree with Withers—and even many who take a less charitable view—believe that Nixon has suffered enough. But many others are not prepared to forgive or forget. According to a California Poll survey released last week, 54% of the people of Nixon's home state believe that it would be wrong to grant the former President immunity from prosecution (31% disagree).

Many Americans would be deeply troubled, however, to see any former President in legal jeopardy. Arthur Newman, an Ohio pediatrician who has never supported Nixon, says flatly, "I think if Mr. Nixon would make a full and complete revelation—if one can assume he is capable of doing so—of all that happened, I would be willing to say he has been sufficiently punished by losing his post." Adds Mrs. Julie Martin of Lexington, Va., "No one wants to see a former President in jail. But it's hard to reach the comfort of that decision when you consider the reality and balance it against your belief in equal justice."

In Grand Rapids, Mich., many citizens were jubilant—some because they disliked Nixon and many more because they were pleased that a home-town boy had made it to the White House. But when a Grand Rapids television station showed a scene of joy at a local bar, the flood of angry calls was so great that the station's newsroom stopped answering its phones. Throughout the nation, people were generally approving but restrained in their reaction to Ford: many just did not yet know enough about him. "He has an openness that appeals to me and, I would imagine, everyone," said a Virginia housewife. At the very least, many probably shared the expectation

of Democratic Congresswoman Julia B. Hansen of Washington State: "Jerry Ford won't light any fires under the nation, but the nation doesn't need any more fires lit for a while."

In San Clemente, Calif., townspeople were beginning to realize that their days of fame were about over. A motel clerk, giving directions to a man who had just reserved a room by telephone, said carelessly, "We're easy to find, we're right across the freeway from the Western White House." After a pause he added, "Let me correct that: the former Western White House."

### VOICES OF THE FAMOUS

Watergate and related scandals created a number of instant celebrities and brought notoriety, despair or both to some who were already prominent. A few of the best-known casualties maintained strict silence last week. Former Vice President Spiro Agnew and former Treasury Secretary John Connally would say nothing; at the Federal Prison Camp in Allenwood, Pa., Jeb Stuart Magruder watched the speech with other inmates. When an official asked what he thought, Magruder replied: "No comment." In Beverly Hills, John Dean told the federal marshals who are guarding him that he would say nothing about the resignation "today, tomorrow or in the near future." One notable exception was—predictably—Martha Mitchell, who said of Nixon: "He has his family intact, he has his homes, he has money. He can go out and sit in California and be oblivious. I have nothing left."

Relatively fortunate veterans of the Watergate wars could afford to be more philosophical. Archibald Cox, whom

*continued on page 63*

## THE NATION

Nixon fired as special prosecutor last fall, said that "the destruction of any man is a very, very sad occasion," but added that he believed the resignation was "an important and sound and desirable outcome." In Honolulu, Elliot Richardson, who resigned as Attorney General over the dismissal of Cox, said he approved of the Nixon resignation. "The circumstances are indescribably tragic in the most literal sense of the word. All of this is a culmination of events that are traceable to the President's own character. But I also think the way the matter has been handled does credit to the American people and our constitutional institutions."

Nixon's intimates, of course, were grieving. His industrialist friend Robert Abplanalp wired him: "Even at this hour, I remain firmly convinced that there is no evidence proving that any of your actions were inconsistent with your official responsibility." Rabbi Baruch Korff admitted that Nixon's last admission of complicity in the Watergate affair left him "distressed" but quickly added: "Yes, the President has weaknesses. He's a human being. So he waited three months before disclosing the information. So what?"

The Rev. Billy Graham, who used to appear at the White House frequently, admitted that he had been "disappointed" by the latest transcripts but urged mercy: "The President and his family have undergone two years of suffering that were worse than prison." The Rev. John Huffman Jr., former pastor of the Key Biscayne Presbyterian Church, was stunned. Last year, Huffman recalled, he and Nixon had talked about Watergate, and the President had given "his absolute, total assurance that he was not involved in the cover-up and that he was doing everything he could to expose the situation." Now, continued Huffman, "I feel he lied to me. I feel compassion for him, but God's grace is tempered with God's justice."

### A Moment of Distress

To the leadership of the Republican Party at large, the fall of Richard Nixon was a moment of genuine distress. Barry Goldwater called it "the saddest days of my life." Many, like Georgia Party Chairman Robert J. Shaw, wept. John J. McCloy, an elder among New York Republicans, called the Nixon speech "a dignified statement, a dignified exit," adding: "We shouldn't expect any more than what it contained; we shouldn't cavil at it now." After watching the Nixon speech in California, Governor Ronald Reagan, who had continued to support the President until only a day earlier, said that he felt Nixon had made "the right decision for the country."

For many Republicans, the sadness of the occasion was softened by the knowledge that the party's prospects in the November elections—as well as

1976—had been vastly improved. "We're getting off to a fresh start," said former G.O.P. National Chairman Ray Bliss. "I believe this will be a morale booster." In Massachusetts, Republican Governor Francis W. Sargent was quick to take advantage of the change in the political climate. Since only 19% of his state's voters are Republican, Sargent must maintain an almost nonpartisan position to win re-election, yet in the meantime he faces a tough fight in the primaries with Conservative Candidate Carroll Sheehan. Last week Sargent began to attack "blind, deaf and dumb" partisanship, rejecting for himself "the law that says loyalty to the party is the highest loyalty in government." For Sargent this may prove to be a highly serviceable ploy.

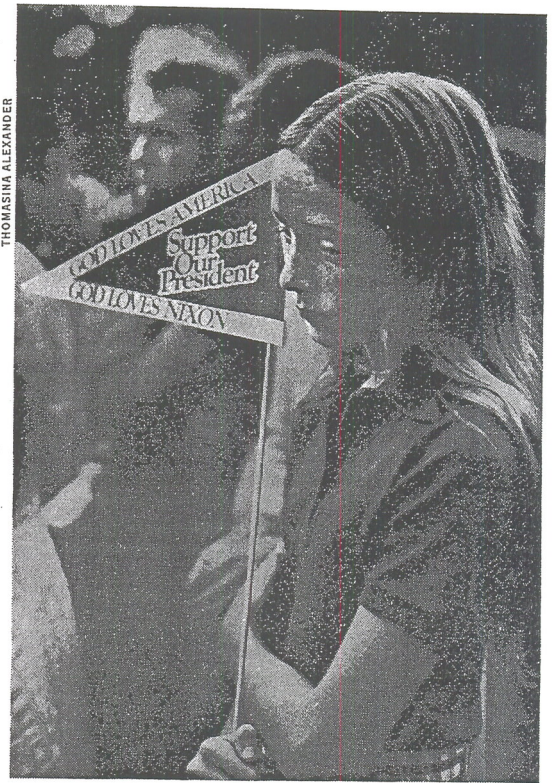
### Opposition to Immunity

Among Democratic leaders, none gloated over their old adversary. Hubert Humphrey described the Nixon address as "possibly the best speech the President has ever made." George McGovern expressed sympathy "for the trials [the Nixons] have suffered and for the ordeal still ahead." Edward Kennedy rejoiced that "the night of Watergate is over, the Constitution is safe, and America can become whole again."

A few prominent Democrats, however, quickly expressed their opposition to efforts to grant Nixon immunity from prosecution. Such proposals, said former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, who is running for the Senate in New York, are "shockingly contemptuous of the integrity of the law." Georgia State Representative Julian Bond agreed. "Why should he be granted anything that he wouldn't grant somebody else, like the boys in Canada?" Bond asked. "The prisons of Georgia are full of people who stole \$5 or \$10, and this man tried to steal the Constitution of the United States."

But most political leaders and observers, Democratic as well as Republican, seemed disinclined to press the matter last week. Elliot Richardson suggested that an informal agreement between the leadership of Congress, the Attorney General and Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski could be the basis of an understanding on which "the President could rely, even though it wouldn't have the force of law."

Almost nobody had a harsh word to say about Gerald Ford. Senator Charles Percy of Illinois spoke of Ford's ability to work smoothly with Congress; Senator Alan Cranston, the California Democrat, noted Ford's ability "to reach out, to consult and to conciliate." From the Colorado Rockies where he was vacationing, former Kansas Governor Alf Landon, the Republican presidential candidate of 1936, watched Ford's performance and was impressed "with the promptness with which he is making his decisions; he's going about



NIXON SUPPORTER OUTSIDE WHITE HOUSE  
Others waved sparklers.

his job without hesitation or delay."

Many Americans paid tribute to Ford as a man who possesses the common touch, a man of openness and candor. San Francisco Longshoreman-Philosopher Eric Hoffer agreed, but he added a gentle word of caution: "Don't forget that any common man who becomes President lives in enemy country in Washington."

### VOICES IN THE PRESS

For many weeks, the newspapers that had remained sympathetic to Richard Nixon—or at least open-minded about his guilt or innocence—were under growing pressure to change their positions. Last Wednesday morning the dam broke. In the aftermath of Nixon's latest disclosures about his involvement in the Watergate cover-up, a number of major newspapers that had been on the fence called for Nixon's resignation or impeachment.

The *Wall Street Journal* declared that ample evidence existed at last for the President's impeachment, conviction and removal from office and that the nation could now "take this momentous step in a spirit approaching unity." Resignation, it added, would be an "entirely fitting" alternative. The *Journal* praised its "perceptive colleagues who long ago concluded that it was foolish to doubt that Mr. Nixon was deeply involved in the cover-up," but added that "the present unity could never have been reached if in the impatience of our era he had been impeached the moment they perceived his guilt."

Among the other papers that came out against Nixon at midweek were the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Portland Oregonian*, the *New Orleans Times-Pic-*

## THE NATION

ayune and the Dallas *Times-Herald*. The Dallas *Morning News* also deserted him, but not until the very last day of Nixon's presidency. Its confidence in the former President, said the *Morning News* at week's end, had been "misplaced."

A very few papers stayed with the President to the end. One of these was the Burlington (Vt.) *Free Press*, whose editorial-page editor, Franklin B. Smith, recalled that Nixon had "served far beyond the call of duty to make this a better land, but the American people—horribly misled by a national press which mouthed freedom but practiced license—rejected greatness through means which disgraced everything for which this nation used to stand."

After the resignation, the predominant themes were relief that the ordeal was over and reflection on the trauma. "Maybe too much has already been written," said the *Washington Post*, "about the marvels of the system and how it 'worked.' But it did. And it is important to be precise about *how* it worked . . . in the end and most importantly, it was the conscience and pride and responsibility of innumerable people and numerous institutions that combined to as-

sert that 1) there was (and is) a norm of official behavior that is recognized and respected by all Americans and 2) the President's departure from this norm was sufficiently gross and calculated to require an extraordinary and unprecedented remedy."

New York *Times* Columnist James Reston commented: "Perhaps the greatest irony of all is that the nation has come out of this nightmare reasonably united. By his tragic blunders and lonely conspiracies, Mr. Nixon has finally kept his promise to the little girl with the sign in Ohio. He has 'brought us together,' not for his leadership and his tactics but against them . . . The essence of the tragedy is that he was not faithful to his better instincts, or even to his friends."

### "Truly Presidential"

Much of the commentary was restrained, perhaps because of a desire not to kick a man already mortally wounded. But journalists could hardly ignore the circumstances of Nixon's departure. The Los Angeles *Times* proposed that Nixon be denied a federal pension; oth-

erwise he would receive a "reward for malfeasance."

The Cleveland *Plain Dealer* lamented: "There was no humility, no admission of the real abuse of power spread on the record these past weeks." Columnist Garry Wills agreed. During the speech, he reflected, "I thought of all the flunkies who have gone to jail, who have had their careers ruined—never a mention of them. He's a guy who sent all his troops out to be shot before he finally dragged out himself."

Almost unanimously, the press welcomed the succession of President Ford. The Miami *Herald* said of his Inaugural Address: "It bespoke courage, humility, openhandedness, conscientiousness, peace and love of fellow man. Its theme was 'Truth is the glue that holds government together.' It was truly presidential." In the Chicago *Daily News*, Peter Lisagor observed: "Mr. Ford has a great deal going for him. An era of good will has been ushered in almost overnight, and the relief is enormous. It is more than the usual political honeymoon; it is the hope that follows catharsis, and the former Michigan football center seems to understand it intuitively."