

By Francis L. Loewenheim

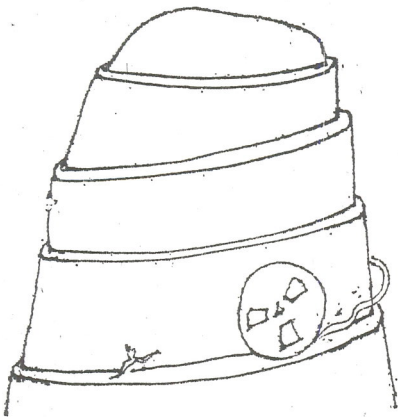
HOUSTON—Since Richard M. Nixon's resignation, several themes have dominated public discussion of the departed Administration.

The first was sounded by President Ford in his brief remarks after taking the oath of office, when he declared that "our long national nightmare is over." The second is the even more frequently heard assertion that while Mr. Nixon, despite his famous protestation, may well have been "a crook," he was a considerable success in foreign policy, and fortunately for all of us left behind Secretary of State Kissinger, who helped to make possible those achievements in foreign affairs.

From these assumptions, most people—many in the press and perhaps a majority on Capitol Hill—appear to be drawing two conclusions. One is that now that Mr. Nixon is out of office he should not be hounded with further investigations, indictments and threats of imprisonment. The other is that we should by all means continue the Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy.

I dissent. Indeed, I believe that we

*An argument  
against a letup  
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Douglas Florian

would be committing grave errors of judgment and public policy by terminating investigations of the Nixon scandals and by continuing the foreign policies.

How was it possible that the Congress and the news media had no inkling of the nature and scope of Mr. Nixon's designs and schemes until they began to be uncovered in the aftermath of the Watergate break-in?

What are we to make of those of Mr. Nixon's close associates who sat by silently while the unprecedented scandals of his Administration became a matter of public record?

Is there any possible connection between a self-styled "law-and-order" Administration that at home turned out to be the most lawless in American history, and abroad made far-reaching and dangerous concessions to the Soviet Union, China, their allies and satellites—concessions the full meaning and magnitude of which most of our people probably still do not understand?

It should have come as no surprise that an Administration that seemed to have no scruples about violating the laws at home, that evidently believed that the end justified the means, would not hesitate about entering into compacts, agreements and understandings, published and otherwise, with the utterly unprincipled rulers in Moscow, Peking, Hanoi and East Berlin.

Nor should it have come as a surprise that a President who was perfectly willing to do, or to permit, almost anything to achieve his domestic political objectives would turn around and toast the leaders of the most brutal and ruthless dictatorships in their capitals and ours—and call the result "détente" and "building a structure of peace."

Nor, it should be added, did the Moscow radio let down Mr. Nixon in his hour of disgrace, informing its captive audience, with characteristic veracity, that Mr. Nixon was "the victim of partisan politics, the economic situation in America, and the malicious propaganda of the 'mass media.'"

As for the Nixon Administration's remarkable ability to preserve its cover-up for several years, this is perhaps less a reflection on the investigative vitality of the press and the Congress than it is further evidence of the unprecedented nature of the conspiracy, and the spiritual and psychological kinship of the conspirators.

Indeed, the very tenacity and success of their cover-up seem all the

more reason for the Congressional and judicial investigations—including those of Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski—to continue until we have the full story of what former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, who doubtless knew what he was talking about, has called "the White House horrors."

If these investigations are now summarily terminated, many people may well conclude that the real target of these investigations was Mr. Nixon himself, rather than the scandals of his Administration, and there will doubtless be many others who will conclude, not without reason, that, once Mr. Nixon has resigned, the Congress promptly lost much of its recently developed investigative and reformist zeal. As the Democratic Congressman Jonathan B. Bingham of New York put it rightly on the House floor: "Until the full story of . . . the Watergate cover-up and abuse of Presidential powers is known, history and the American people may forever suffer an incomplete understanding of these traumatic events and the lessons they must teach."

And, finally, what of Mr. Nixon's associates, especially his Secretary of State? Did Mr. Kissinger believe that he could—or should—continue to serve an Administration whose scandalous conduct was unprecedented in American history? Did he believe that he could shut his eyes and continue to lend his presence and reputation to such an Administration? Did he believe that an Administration that acted criminally and subversively at home could and would—in the long run—be trusted and respected abroad? That it was possible for the Nixon Administration to "build a structure of peace" in the world while at home it had no hesitation about taking long strides toward an authoritarian or police state?

The conclusions seem clear. Our principal problem is not what to do about Mr. Nixon. Our principal problem is to ferret out all that he and his accomplices, active and passive, did, and sought to do, while he was in the White House.

As for his faithful Secretary of State, who seemingly knew nothing, sensed nothing, asked nothing and protested nothing, the time has come for him to follow Mr. Nixon once more, and to resign.

Francis L. Loewenheim is associate professor of history at Rice University.