

16 November 1974

Dear Harold:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your mailings of Nov.. 8 and 14 and to reply in some way to some of the main points you raise. We continue somewhat preoccupied with trying to get the place ready for the rainy season, due to descend upon us at any moment but which at times doesn't begin until after Christmas. One never knows. Meanwhile the roof is still covered with plastic and planks to anchor the plastic as we wait for enough roofers to estimate the job so that we can make some sort of intelligent choice.

The first thing I must do is to reassure you that your various enclosures are more than welcome. There is much we do not understand, but the general impression they convey is most informative and adds detailed meaning in many cases to your letters. If I do not comment on them it is because I have nothing constructive to suggest because of limited understanding, not because of lack of interest. All go into your files, of course, and there are times when I refer to them later with illuminating results.

Before I go further, I want to mention something I have been meaning to bring up with you about typewriter ribbons. We used to use silk, which is much the best, but which is no longer available. We find the best substitute is a nylon ribbon, medium inked, and the thing to notice about a nylon ribbon is the length -- the longer the better, because the longer it is the thinner it has to be. Heavy inking is useless, dirty and more trouble than it is worth. Medium inking lasts just as long if not longer, and even when dried out and faded it provides uniform lettering. Also much better for carbon copies, as you no doubt know. The nylon ribbons we have been getting lately run 14 yards long. The STM found an 18-yard silk ribbon lasted here as long as six months. Nylon apparently doesn't come that long for her machine (same as yours) and the 14-yard jobs she's been using last her between four and five months.

Dr. Lungren: You are correct in your thinking that the Nixon family and Dr. Tkach have been notably scarce around the Nixon ruins. Especially Tkach. After coming out with Nixon after his resignation, Tkach just disappeared, finally turned up back in Washington, and we've never seen any explanation as to just when he went back or why except one vague indication that he had another Air Force assignment. We assume he may have balked at doing what Nixon appears to have got Lungren to do. As to the family, Pat and the girls were photographed a few times around the hospital, going or coming, but that's all except for one inane thing Julie once said to a reporter or reporters. Tricia silent. Pat silent.

Lungren's medical bulletins have been curiously vague and usually omit some essential element of the medical picture which would give other doctors a real clue to Nixon's actual condition. There also seems to be a genuine and close correlation between some of Lungren's (or Ziegler's) more dramatic hints about Nixon's sad state and developments in court ~~in~~ back at the Watergate trial in Washington. The most amusing was just after Maximum John announced he would name a panel of three docs to go west and verify Nixon's ability or inability to testify. Nixon suddenly improved enough to leave the hospital and return to San Clemente.

He had to improve -- at least to the point where the independent doctors would verify his actual condition. Assuming they ever get to examine him.

No, you are not wrong in sensing a perverse self-destructiveness. The apparent sequence of developments after his resignation suggests strongly that he brought on his new round of clotting himself, most probably by not taking his prescribed anti-coagulant drugs. He may not even have told Lungren, ~~and~~ with the possible result that the subsequent round of anti-coagulants when he got into the hospital represented what amounted to an overdose, which led to his internal bleeding episode which furnished so much mileage for Ziegler. We strongly suspect that Nixon literally would rather die than testify. It may be entirely unthought-out and subconscious with him, but it cannot be improbable. As he more and more loses control of the situation (such as the joint motion by the WH, GSA, the Secret Service and the prosecution to retain all the tapes ~~and~~ ^{and} documents within ready access despite Nixon's contract with Ford, and such as the several bills in Congress to effect much ~~or~~ the same thing) and realizes his loss of control, he cannot fail to be affected.

The various stories on the whole situation make one thing clear -- that Lungren says nothing not approved by Nixon. We think we detected one thing Lungren said one day -- I forget now what it was -- but where the next day he hastily corrected himself, and presumably after being properly chewed out for saying it in the first place.

The reporters are handling the story well. Repeatedly they obviously consult independent doctors on Lungren's bulletins and do not hesitate to point out where he has omitted vital evidence or has blown some routine detail up into a big deal of some kind. The other docs are obviously skeptical and say so indirectly in many ways. The interesting thing is that the reporters are reporting their reservations.

10/10/74

We have no quarrel with your ~~10/11/74~~ memo (I think you means 10/11) on the WXPost reporting of Watergate and on Hunter Thompson's piece in Rolling Stone. We sent the Fink piece along only for you to check against if you needed to. Agree with your conclusion that he stuck basically to already published material, and that the CIA is to be thanked for the Pulitzer Prize. A classic example of preemptive leaking so funnelled as to serve mainly the ends of the leaker, but irresistible to the leakee. If you ever have a chance, we'd be interested in your opinion as to who at the Post is in charge at that end of the operation, assuming there is any possibility you ever can say who.

Sorry about inflicting Hunter Thompson on you, and perhaps I was overly intrigued by his conviction that Nixon had taped his conversation with Ford when he offered him the vice-presidency. Otherwise I saw nothing new in it of any substance and sent it mainly because of his vitriolic way to talking about Nixon.

I join you in your belief that Rolling Stone and its ilk are dealing in misinformation partly through economic motives, but I think there is more to it than the fact that such stuff sells. It sells because it goes considerably beyond that offered by the establishment press, and because it gratifies the contempt such young publications share with their young readers

about the establishment. Bear in mind that writers, editors and readers of suchn publications have done just enough of their own thinking to arrive at the conclusions they now have in spite of the main thrust of the establishment press, including such so-called establishment enemies as the New Republic and even in some cases people like Izzy Stone. What counts with the young is that they have reached their present frame of mind in spite of all this, including the omissions as well as the commissions of establishment sin. This gives them the idea that they discovered all this through their own efforts, reinforcing their contempt for anyone who doesn't wear long hair and jeans and have at least some experience with the popular indulgences of the young. They have then withdrawn into this point of view and not only do not look beyond their own limited point of view but refuse all efforts to get them to do so. They will not listen. They know. In many ways, many of them have stopped thinking. The Rolling Stone's readers probably would be only puzzled by an objective, factual expose, and would suspect the editors of selling out in some way. They want bitter contempt, and that is what Rolling Stone is giving them. They think the system is doomed anyway, most of them. What Rolling Stone apparently hasn't thought of is the probability that it is, as you say, purveying misinformation just as busily as the hated establishment.

Your 11/12/74 memo on the WG conspiracy trial testimony being a replay of the Ervin committee hearings. Necessarily yes. Little new. We agree that the essence of the facts brought out by the Ervin committee already had been leaked, and that this accomplished the leakers' purposes. What we would add about the Ervin committee is this: The leaks came out piecemeal, were reported in a confused and startled way and in such haste that the proper interrelationships among them were not discerned and pointed out as they should have been. Only people like yourself, and to a much less extent, we, who were a priori interested and headed through experience or predilection toward a questioning perspective had any chance of making the necessary connections of the fragmented parts into a coherent whole. The average person had neither incentive nor the means of doing anything of the kind. Most people were shocked and horrified, something that cannot be said of either of our two cases. We expected no better, in fact expected and still suspected much worse if anything. Not so with most people. They reeled at many of the revelations for which they had no preparation, make little if any of the automatic deductions we did, and in many many cases were dragged unwillingly along by the various stories and would have much preferred to forget the whole sordid business. Many did. Then came the Ervin hearings, which presented on national TV a coherent if watered down picture that was reasonably complete in the public mind and as a matter of fact much more complete than much of the public would have liked. That was followed somewhat later by the House Judiciary Committee hearings on impeachment which did a sort of update job on what the Ervin committee had produced, again on readily understandable TV, and whether we think either of these jobs was good, they combined to convince most of the yokels that Nixon had to go. Otherwise we would not have gone, and enough of the yokels would have risen to Rabbi Korff's emotional bait about the presidency to have made it possible for him to survive. As usual, the right thing happened for the wrong reasons, but it happened, however incompletely and half-heartedly it was made to happen.

add to your impressions of the conspiracy trial: We note that alone of the defendants, Haldeman is cheerful and brash. The rest glum. Indicates Haldeman still has some real or fancied control over Nixon. We'll see.

No dissent on Erhlichman. We too noted his lawyer's puzzling zest in going after Nixon. Unexpected in a lawyer who served Rebozo. Straw in the wind we haven't been able to nail down: we heard that both Rebozo and Abplanalp visited Nixon ~~XXXX~~ soon after he resigned and went to San Elemente. But no word of Bebe since then. Is he, has he, deserted ~~the~~ the ship? I'll believe it when I see it, and then only, but if I do, I am prepared to.

Your 11/12 on Times clips about Hunt's testimony. I have read these with some care and saw nothing which was not carried by the Post. I'll watch for anything.

Same date, Braden. Sure, he used to work for them and I have no doubt still does when the need arises. His attack on Holtzman conforms, certainly. This is not his first lappe from what is usually a stand one can identify with a normal, reasoning, liberal man.

Only one clip enclosed, out of the past but still interesting.

Apologies for this choppy, garbled letter. As I said, we both are trying to catch up somewhat with things that have been neglected for years. The STM is doing her best to cut her chronologizing to a minimum, and I spend little time with the files except to read, clip and paste, being busy most of the ~~business~~ time outside. In the past four months or so of hard physical work I've lost quite a bit of weight, being down to less than 120 compared with the 140 or so the last time you saw me. I even have a few muscles to show for it, especially around the arms and shoulders. Legs not that good, but better than ~~XXXX~~ they were, you may be sure. We both feel wonderful, and the largely-Chinese diet continues to please. In some haste last night after a day spent out shopping, we had our first "foreign" meal (that is, Amurrican) in some months. Enjoyed it, too, but tonight we ^{were} back with the woks and rice-cooker, and it just felt more natural and tasted better.

Best to you both,


jdw