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Haig's Oration

By William Safire
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Haig: Friends, liberals, civilians, lend me your ears;

I come to bury Nixon, not to praise him.
The good that presidents do lives after them;
The evil can be interred with their tapes;
So let it be with Nixon. The noble Elliot hath told
you Nixon was ambitious?

If it were so, it was a grievous fault, and grievous-
ly hath Nixon answer'd it.

He hath brought prosperity without war, whose
revenues did the general coffers fill;

Did this in Nixon seem ambitious?
When the a-gressed-against have cried, Nixon hath
wept:

Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:
Yet critics say he was ambitious;
And critics are all honorable men.

I speak not to disprove what Elliot spoke
But here am I to speak what I do know.
68 per cent did love him once, not without cause;
What cause withholds you then to stick with him?

O judgment! Thou art fled to editorial writers and
men have lost their reason. Bear with me;

My heart is in the West Wing there with Nixon
And I must pause ere it come back to me.

First Citizen: Poor soul! His eyes are red as fire

with weeping.

Second Citizen: There's not a nobler man in Wash-
ington than Al Haig. Mark him, he begins
again—

Haig: But yesterday the word of Nixon might
have stood against the world;
Now lies he there, and none so poor to do him
reverence.

If you have tears, prepare to shed them now.
You all do know this overcoat: I remember the
first time ever Nixon put it on;

'Twas on the trip to Peking, visiting the Great
Wall, ten days that changed the world:

Look, in this place ran Ed Brooke's dagger
through;

See what a rent the envious Muskie made:
Through this the well-beloved Elliot stabb'd;

For Elliot, as you know, was Nixon's angel:
Judge, O you gods, how often Nixon appointed
him!

That was the most unkindest cut of all;

For when the noble Nixon saw Elliot's stab on
television, watched his friend refuse to say
impeachment nay,

That vanquished him; then burst his mighty re-
solve, and, gathering up his innocent tapes,

He made poor Wright accept Sirica's wrong, and
our Commander in Chief, great Nixon, folded.

O, what a folding was there, my countrymen:
Then I, and you, and all of us caved in whilst the
glee of elitist media flourished o'er us.

First Citizen: O piteous spectacle!

Second Citizen: Peace there, hear the noble Haig.

Haig: Moreover, he plans to leave you all his
walks,

His private arbors and new-planted orchards at
San Clemente and Biscayne;

He will leave them to you and to your heirs for
ever, common pleasures,

To walk abroad and recreate yourselves.
Here was a Nixon! When comes such another?

O, the Cox-men who have done this deed are
honorable:

What private griefs they have, alas, I know not.
I am no orator, as Elliot is,

But all my life a plain military man that follows
my leader;

But were I Elliot, and Elliot Haig, there were
a Haig would ruffle up your spirits

And put a tongue in every wound of Nixon that
should move the Silent Majority to split the
heavens with a roar!

First Citizen: O noble Nixon! We'll revenge his
abasement!

Second Citizen: Impeach the would-be impeachers
Exeunt.

Haig: Now let it work. Resentment, thou art afoot.
Take thou what course thou wilt!