

Conservative Architect of Security Plans

Tom Charles Huston

By CHRISTOPHER LYDONE

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 23—The young lawyer who drafted the White House's new domestic security plans in the summer of 1970, Tom Charles Huston, is a fervent, scholarly conservative who wishes he had lived in the 18th century. His intellectual heroes are Cato, the Roman moralist, and Thomas Jefferson; the portrait on his office wall here was of John C. Calhoun, the Southern theorist of states' rights and nullification of Federal statutes.

His explanation of the proposed counteroffensive against anti-Nixon insurgents three years ago used the language of a stern public philosopher, not a law-and-order fanatic.

"The real threat to internal security—in any society—is repression," Mr. Huston explained today in a telephone interview from Indianapolis, where he has been practicing law for the last two years. "But repression is an inevitable result of disorder. Forced to choose between order and freedom, people will take order."

A Troubled Time

"A handful of pepole can't frontally overthrow the government," he continued, recalling the troubled mood of spring, 1970, a season of widening war in Indochina, terrorist bombing at home and civil strife at Kent State University in Ohio.

"But if they can engender enough fear, they can generate an atmosphere that will bring out of the woodwork every repressive demagogue in the country. Unless this stuff was stopped, the country was going to fall into the wrong hands."

Security was actually just a sideline for Mr. Huston in



The New York Times/John May

"The real threat to internal security ... is repression."

(Mr. Huston in Indianapolis law office yesterday)

an intense, ultimately frustrated two-year term of service with the Nixon Administration.

Mr. Huston, who was born May 9, 1941, the son of an insurance man, in Logansport, Ind., remembers a teen-age phase as a "Stevenson Democrat." But by the time he graduated from high school, he was a conservative ideologue, a "Jeffersonian Republican," a believer in individual responsibility, small government and "what the framers of the Constitution called republican virtue."

A campus conservative at Indiana University, where he won both bachelor's (1963) and law (1966) degrees with high honors, Mr. Huston became the national chairman of Young Americans for Freedom in 1965. In 1966, as the antiwar movement grew among students, he organized the World Youth Crusade for Freedom, which sent campus leaders to tour Vietnam and tried to build support for the anti-Communist commitment there.

It was also in 1966 that he

took his first political plunge. His personal endorsement of Richard M. Nixon for President was a somewhat controversial move at a moment when many young conservatives preferred Ronald Reagan; and it was early enough to attract the grateful attention of Mr. Nixon's close aides.

Accordingly, after the Nixon victory in 1968 and the end of Mr. Huston's two-year stint with Army intelligence, he was invited to join the group of speech writers in the Executive Office Building, next door to the White House.

His experience was in many ways disenchanting. "The Administration's domestic programs were never rooted in any philosophical view of what government ought to be doing," he complained this afternoon. When the liberal Daniel P. Moynihan prevailed over the conservative Arthur F. Burns in the internal White House debate over welfare reform, "it was all over for me," Mr.

Huston said. Yet things got worse, he felt, when the real winners in the White House proved to be not the liberals but the "technocrats" and advertising men.

Doubts on 'New Federation'

Then and now he argued that the Nixon Administration's "new federalism" did not go far enough in decentralizing power. It is not enough, he said this afternoon, for the Federal Government to give the city of Indianapolis \$100,000 in a program "to fight rats any way you want to"; Indianapolis should also have the right to decide whether it wants to fight a war on rats at all, he said.

For most of a year, from the end of 1969 until the fall of 1970, Mr. Huston worked on the security program — first as a researcher and writer, later as the project officer for the White House. But by the spring of 1971 he recognized with regret that the spirit of pragmatism, not philosophical conservatism, was running the Administration, and he moved quietly back to Indianapolis.

The hardest thing about leav-

ing Washington was moving his large collection of antique books and furniture. With his wife, the former Brenda Courtney, he has assembled a library of Presidential campaign biographies going back to 1824 and a houseful of period furniture.

He says he does not miss the capital, especially since the Watergates scandal burst on old associates. But he still has a profound respect for President Nixon. "The last thing I'd ever do is count Richard Nixon out," he said. He's still the greatest living politician. If anyone can survive, he can."

5-24-73 ngt