

A Novelist's Predictions Of Doom

Writer Irwin Shaw sees a military takeover of the U.S. government as "within the realm of possibility"

Washington

Four years ago, novelist Irwin Shaw predicted there would be a Watergate-type scandal — and he says it was easy to foresee.

"I've watched Richard Nixon since he first showed up, and he was a crook from the beginning and he debased the democratic process from the beginning," said Shaw, who does not mince words.

Now the 60-year-old author of "The Young Lions," "Rich Man Poor Man" and "Evening in Byzantium" says the United States, along with the rest of the world, is rushing toward disaster.

"I'm very pessimistic because everything seems to be rushing toward catastrophe," said Shaw, in the U.S. to research a new book and to visit his son, Adam, a reporter for the Washington Post.

"It's almost like pre-World War II. That is, you have a discredited govern-

ment, inflation, such dissatisfaction, such evidence of deep corruption. You have a feeling, well, the world has been there before and the way you solved it before was with some huge explosion like World War II," he said.

Shaw, born in New York, has lived in Paris and Switzerland for 20 years. He has maintained his American citizenship and has voted in most national elections.

His best-known work is "The Young Lions," based on his experiences as front-line soldier during World War II. Published in 1948, it was a best-seller and was made into a movie.

Shaw does not expect an economic crash. He sees something a little more dramatic than that.

"I'm thinking about some kind of huge war coming out in a place no one foresees. Maybe Chile is a forerunner of that, or the African countries.

Turning to American poli-

cies, Shaw says he never trusted Richard Nixon.

"He's the same Richard Nixon as always, except this time he has this powerful mandate, so all the things that made him Richard Nixon became more solidified and more powerful. He has also given us a highly personalized, predatory, paranoid government. He believes everybody is his enemy and anything he can do to defeat them is worthwhile and legal."

The United States is in danger of losing its democracy, and a military takeover of government is well within the realm of possibility, said Shaw.

"The fact that we could enter the Vietnam war, in which 50,000 guys got killed, without a declaration of war by Congress indicates that our democracy is threatened," he said.

Shaw's scenario for a military takeover goes like this:

"First we have enormous inflation," he said. "Peo-

ple's money is worth nothing. Salaries have never kept pace with the cost of living. We begin to have terrible strikes because people can't live anymore.

"Savings vanish because of inflation. Everybody on a pension, on a fixed income, is pauperized. And what do you think is going to happen then?"

"The only way you're going to keep the lid on is by subduing all these people who have a perfectly good reason for making a fuss, to strike, to riot, to cause a run on the banks."

And who, asked Shaw, is capable of putting down the strikes and riots? Answer: the military.

Shaw spends four or five months a year in his Paris apartment. He is spending this month and next in Paris, which he considers the most beautiful city in the world. When the weather becomes colder, he heads for his home in Klosters, Switzerland.

He does not dislike Amer-

ica or Americans. He said that, class for class, Americans are just as sophisticated as Europeans.

"And the Europeans are not more cultured, they're not more polite, they don't look better, they don't smell better and they don't even eat better."

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