



## 'Time Has Come For . . . Resignation'

— Joseph Alsop

**T**HE TIME has come for President Nixon to offer his resignation, conditional upon prompt congressional confirmation of his chosen Vice President. The condition is needed, simply because it would be a gross constitutional impropriety to use the current mess to reverse the voters' verdict of less than 12 months ago.

I have reached the foregoing conclusions with extreme reluctance. Yet it can be said on excellent authority that before the President's recent agonizing press conference, he played for a long time with precisely the same conclusions. Whatever else he may be, Richard M. Nixon is genuinely national-minded. If he gave serious thought to the alternative of resignation, it was surely because he now senses that this ability to function has been impaired.

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**T**O GIVE one illustration of the way the President has been crippled, there is the directive that he gave some time ago to Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger. The Secretary was asked to prepare contingency plans for a massive increase in U.S. defense investment. It was a wise and far-sighted presidential directive, as recent events have proved.

The President's directive to Secretary Schlesinger meant that he was thinking seriously about a strenuous effort to correct this risky situation. Yet anyone can see that an important defense increase sponsored by Richard M. Nixon no longer has a tinker's chance in hell of getting through the Congress.

The country and the Congress would simply disbelieve the unpalatable facts, however loudly this President might proclaim them in arguing for a defense increase. This is only one illustration, moreover, of President Nixon's growing inability to function. There is hardly anything he can do any longer, that requires positive congressional approval. Thus, the great engine of the U.S. Government, the presidency, has temporarily broken down.

In a way, this is an unjust state of affairs. Repeatedly, as when the Russians threatened to intervene in the Mideast with their own troops, President Nixon has in truth functioned in a way that compels admiration. Furthermore, one has to ask oneself what would have happened to previous regimes in the White House, if they had ever been subjected to a comparable inquisition.

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**T**HE SYSTEM of management that prevailed in the former Nixon White House — the one destroyed by the anti-coverup — in fact contained the seeds of great peril for the country. One has to speak of "the seeds" only, because the ways the system was used, for bugging Lawrence O'Brien, for example, were too ludicrously silly to be truly perilous.

Yet think of the peril of such a system being inherited intact by really tough and able men. In sum, by the people he chose and the system they built with his approval, the President has been brought to his present plight.