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A Talk With Nixon's Former Doctor

Politics and the Couch

By Jean M. White
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DR. ARNOLD Hutschnecker is a Park Avenue psychotherapist reached by dialing a BUTterfield 8 number.

"The address seems right," he agrees with a smile when that winning combination is pointed out. Certainly, the address and phone number haven't hurt his career, both as a psychotherapist and the author of books with such titles as "The Will to Live" and "The Will to Happiness."

Nor does Dr. Hutschnecker rue the public attention that has come to him as President Nixon's former physician. Nor, for that matter, the recent swirl of rumor — since denied before a congressional committee — that he once attended vice presidential nominee Gerald Ford.

"First the dance with Nixon and now with Ford," the doctor says, with obvious relish for dancing.

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HIS FOUR-YEAR professional association with Mr. Nixon ended a long time ago (1955) before Dr. Hutschnecker shifted his practice from internal medicine to psychotherapy. But, according to the doctor, a personal friendship continued over the years with occasional lunches and meetings to talk about — "whether a reporter believes it or not" — aggression and world peace and leadership in government.

The last time that Dr. Hutschnecker saw Mr. Nixon personally was on December 1, 1969, when he visited the White House. The President asked for his comment on the report of the National Commission on the Cause and Prevention of Violence. Dr. Hutschnecker later produced a proposal to test 6-year-olds for potential criminal behavior, a plan disowned by the White House after a public uproar.

The switch to psychotherapy 18 years ago has given Dr. Hutschnecker a very successful practice, with fees up to \$75 for a 45-minute hour of consultation. The success is evident in his duplex apartment-office in a co-op at Park avenue and 76th street.

His book-stacked office looks like a 30s' movie set for a Viennese psychiatrist — except for the womb-like black leather and chrome chair that tips abruptly back into a pseudo-couch when paired with a matching ottoman.

Dr. Hutschnecker has a touch of the missionary zeal of a Billy Graham, of the cheery optimism of a Norman Vincent Peale, of the psychic beliefs of a Jeane Dixon, and an accent a bit reminiscent of Peter Sellers as Dr. Strangelove.

Clippings on Hutschnecker begin 11 Apr 70, filed Prep; that clipping has list of other references.

"It is safer for a politician to go to a whore house than to see a psychiatrist . . . Consulting a psychiatrist is still an unforgivable sin for an American politician."

He is a small leprechaun of a man, probably in his mid-70s ("I promised my two sisters not to tell my age again"). Although he is "just 5 foot, 5 inches" tall, the chairs are adjusted so that he seems to be looking down slightly from behind the heavy oak desk-table.

"Now you would gently push me into making a statement about Mr. Nixon that a doctor cannot," he gently chides his interviewer.

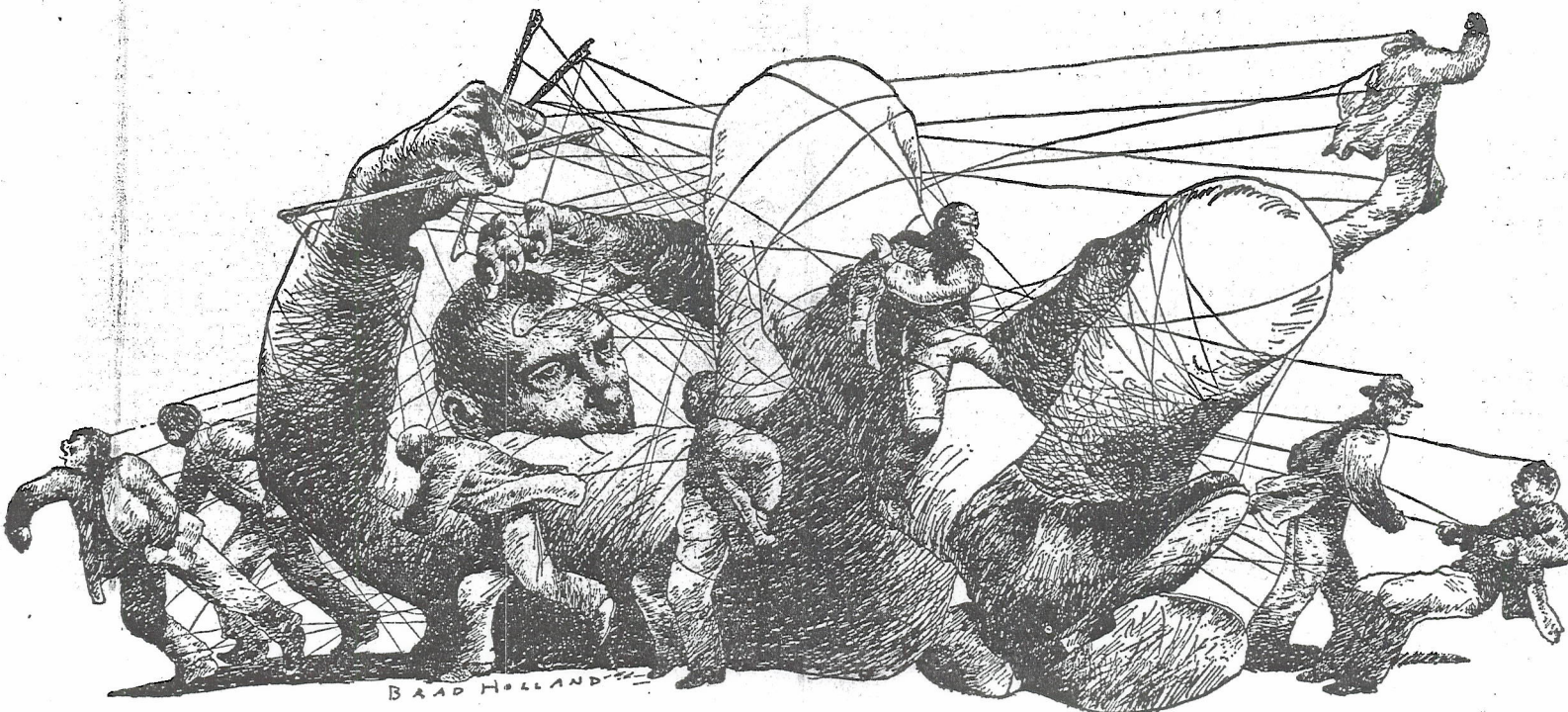
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THE DILEMMA for Dr. Hutschnecker is one confronting the medical profession more and more: Just what is the responsibility of the doctor when the health and the mental and emotional stability of men in public life become matters of public concern and political issues?

It was a question raised dramatically in the last presidential campaign when Senator Thomas F. Eagleton withdrew as vice presidential candidate after disclosure that he had received electric shock therapy for "nervous exhaustion."

As a psychotherapist, Dr. Hutschnecker deplores branding a scarlet-letter "P" on any politician who, he feels, has the courage and intelligence to undergo the self-examination involved in psychiatric treatment. What is considered fashionable and chic for others is an "unforgivable sin" for the politician.

"It is safer for a politician to go to a whore house than to see a psychiatrist," he points out. "...I can't be seen within a diameter of the White House. At this time, they would say, 'Ah, HA!' Now I can't even discuss a proposal or plan with the President. My unforgivable sin was not staying in internist. Then no one could say in the papers that the President was going to a shrink."



IT WAS JUST such an atmosphere the psychotherapist says that prompted the decision to end the doctor-patient relationship with Mr. Nixon in 1955 as he began to slant his practice to psychotherapy. Even then, he adds, rumors were going around because of "The Will to Live," his popular book on psychosomatic medicine.

In an article in the New York Times, Dr. Hutschnecker said his appearance at the Senate committee hearings on Ford's nomination convinced him that "consulting a psychiatrist or psychotherapist is still an unforgivable sin for an American politician."

(Dr. Hutschnecker made the appearance to back up Ford's contention that he once paid a social visit to Dr. Hutschnecker's office but never was treated by him.)

In the article, Hutschnecker noted the unwillingness of politicians in general to be associated with psychotherapists and went on: "A president has a personal physician to watch over his physical health. Why could a man of outstanding leadership not have a physician watching over his and his staff's mental health? Why should that be considered unacceptable and be interpreted as signifying mental instability or incompetence?"

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DR. HUTSCHNECKER'S manner is reassuring, sympathetic and concerned. He listens intently as if every-

thing you say is important. There is still more than a trace of accent from his Austrian Jewish family background and Berlin medical training. His eyes never seem to leave your face and he notices as you glance at the titles of the books ("Human Dilemmas of Leadership," "The Presidential Character" and "The Real Abraham Lincoln") in a haphazard stack on a side table.

"Oh, they just happen to be there. I read a lot for my research. I'm doing a new book on 'The Drive to Power'."

Will he be discussing his former patient, Mr. Nixon?

"A little, a very little," he feints. "There again you are trying to get back to Mr. Nixon."

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IN A LOOK magazine article four years ago, Dr. Hutschnecker wrote that Mr. Nixon's behavior indicated that, as President, he "may turn out to a Type-Two leader, the controlled, adjusted personality, moving with strength through negotiations toward peace." Type-Two is the most desirable of his four types, he wrote, the best men to stand up to the tremendous pressures of public office because "they show a controlled reaction when exposed to stress."

In the article, Dr. Hutschnecker wrote that Mr. Nixon's now-famous encounter with the press in 1962 ("You won't have Nixon to kick around any more") was "subjective reaction to a per-

sonal traumatic experience," that of a man seeing his political career in shambles. But that, he emphasized then, is quite different from how a man in a position of power confronts an impersonal crisis.

Does he continue to hold these views of Mr. Nixon today, in the light of the exceptional stresses of his presidency?

"A doctor can't comment on such things," he says. "Even with the most adjusted people, there are areas of hypersensitivity, allergic reactions to certain subjects."

As for Mr. Nixon's latest angry retort to the media ("You see, one can only be angry with those he respects"), the psychotherapist noted that "the press itself has gotten into a kind of hysteria with the ring of a lynching party."

"I don't know who would not eventually react to such a situation," he emphasized.

Sometimes, the psychotherapist continued, it may be good to let out anger but "if two married people have it out at the same time, then I don't know what the china closet will look like."

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WHERE THE physician-patient relationship does not exist, Dr. Hutschnecker has displayed no hesitation in making judgments of public figures. Among leaders he considers "mentally disturbed" are James Forrestal, John

Foster Dulles, with his "constant brinksmanship," and Robert McNamara. In the Look article on "The Mental Health of Our Leaders," he noted a "strange parallel" between President Kennedy and Frederick the Great of Prussia as sons shaped by ruthless, hard-driving fathers.

"Sometimes I seem to be the only one that dares to open his mouth," Dr. Hutschnecker says ruefully. "My colleagues attack me. You learn to treat it like a mosquito bite. The next time you present it differently."

The sharpest attack on Dr. Hutschnecker by his colleagues was prompted by his proposal for testing 6-year-olds for predisposition to criminal tendencies and sending potential criminals to remedial camps.

That was quickly denounced with such terms as "fascist" and "Frankenstein fiction" by the community of psychiatrists and psychologists.

"They cried invasion of privacy, dictatorship. Then I learned quickly you do not do things this way here. When I talked about the camps for young people, to retain them, like the camps I worked in when I came here from Germany in 1936," Dr. Hutschnecker explains.

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AFTER WATCHING Watergate, he thinks the proposal was leaked just so it could be promptly shot down.

"It has bothered me for years," he said, tapping his forehead with his index finger. "President Nixon sent Pat Moynihan (then a White House adviser on domestic affairs) to see me in this office. We talked about an hour. Moynihan said it would be sent to the National Institutes of Health. Instead, it was sent to HEW, where it was leaked. I think it was Ehrlichman who sent it there."

He believes that some of the men involved in Watergate display "an emotional immaturity and an obvious identification with an image of power" in their "nearly blind loyalty and hero worship."

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WHEN MR. NIXON first came to consult him as an internist in 1951, Dr. Hutschnecker recalls, the then-senator from California had read his book "The Will to Live."

"One thing about Mr. Nixon is that he is curious. He wants to know about everything," the President's former doctor says.

If he hasn't seen Mr. Nixon since December, 1969, has he called or exchanged correspondence with the President?

A smile and then: "Well, you would send a Christmas card."