

# The Nixon Record — In Perspective

The paradox is grim and poignant. Richard M. Nixon, the "tricky Dick" of legend and, finally, fact, the super-politician, architect of the New Republican Majority, manipulative, prescient, awesome in his footwork, blasted out of the White House by the consequences of a politician's moral insensitivity and an incompetence at managing his own affairs.

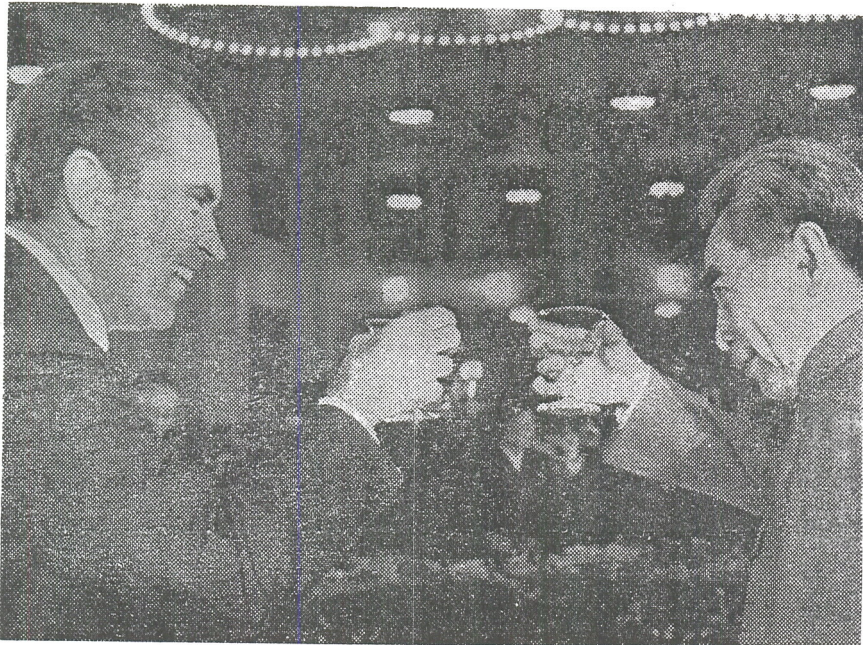
And Richard M. Nixon, one-time Red-hunter and Soviet-baiter, supposed warmonger and arch-reactionary, whose presidency must objectively be evaluated as one of noble and humane achievements against near-insuperable odds. That the odds included an almost undisguised hatred from the taste makers and mind molders of most of influential journalism ought not to be forgotten.

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The year 1968, in which Mr. Nixon came to power, may have been the nadir of American life in this century. It was the year of Tet, of the Robert F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King assassinations, of the Columbia University revolt, of the Chicago Democratic Convention, of disorder, demoralization and fear. The United States was entrapped in an undeclared war of ghastly slaughter, threatening to consume itself in self-hatred.



It is reasonable to assume that, then and now, the American people wanted an end to the war without surrender, an end to (archaic phrase!) the "cold war," the restoration of domestic tranquility, and end to the bloody over-extension of American power, a reversal of the tide of permissiveness, and a curtailment of the wasteful, discredited excesses of the assassination-panic-born Great Society.

This was Richard Nixon's mandate, and, to a far greater degree than is generally perceived after two years of Watergate drumfire, Richard Nixon delivered. And, where he failed, he certainly did not fail to try.

For the United States, the Vietnam war is over. The prisoners are home. Hanoi does not yet control the Mekong Delta. The Americans did not cut and run, did not desert an ally, do not today stand self-convicted of betrayal and cowardice before the world.

The draft is ended. A volunteer army, still controversial, is meeting its enlistment quotas and functioning.

The state of Israel twice has been saved by American power from being overrun, and, at the same time, Ameri-

can relations with the Arab states and influence in the strategically oil-bearing countries have been strengthened and improved.

Perhaps Richard Nixon's personal initiatives in opening the door to China and virtually ending hostility between the Soviet Union and the United States will not survive his present disgrace, but no duty falls more urgently and immediately upon his successor than their preservation and cultivation.

His was the administration in which an American walked on the moon, in which Amtrak was born and nurtured, in which the federal government finally acknowledged the urgency of funding mass public transportation. And if these long-awaited developments were not Nixon-authored, they did occur with his support in his presidency.

Inflation is cruel to the poor and destructive to the aspirations of the not-so-poor. But it is less severe here than in other industrialized countries.

Revenue sharing is a fact in being, not a scheme in abeyance.

There has been a slowdown in the growth of the federal government's power to coerce and control the lives of individuals and communities and a recognition, backed by the President's historic election victory of 1972, that most problems and decisions are better encountered and decided at the state and local levels than by distant policymakers in Washington.

Nationally, at least, with the Detroit decision of the Supreme Court, the tide of coercive school integration has

been slowed and perhaps even turned.

Federal outlays for medical care for the poor, standards of income maintenance for the elderly, the disabled, blind and destitute, Social Security pensions, the whole category of income redistribution toward relieving distress and alleviating inequality have grown faster under Richard Nixon than they did under any other President. This is true to the point where redistribution of income, this year, is a larger percentage, for the first time, of federal expenditure than defense, space, and foreign affairs combined.

This is the record. It is not flawless. Not everything in it is Richard Nixon's alone, and some of it may not be his at all. It is nevertheless a factual record of what has been done in his administration and one for which a President elected with Mr. Nixon's 1968 mandate, endorsed overwhelmingly in 1972, need not apologize, and in which such a President can often take great pride.

Not all of it, and probably not most of it, will be lost at his departure, and that, now, **must be this strange, defeated, private man's consolation.**