

A psychological abyss?

PUTTING ASIDE the implications of President Ford's full pardon of Richard Nixon, which we will turn to later, the first question is, "Why the rush?"

Ford is hardly an impetuous man — worrying about a crisis, he is more likely to play nine holes of golf than start pushing every button in reach. So why should he suddenly, on a Sunday morning, make the Nixon announcement?

By and large I avoid bush-league psychoanalysis, but in Nixon's case there has been a real problem: He has vividly reminded me of several individuals I have known.

All of them shared his incredible ego drive, all of them would tell you at the drop of a hat how tough they were, all of them ran into rough water — and two of them blew their brains out. In addition, I once at close range watched one of these machismo types shake down.

It was a terrifying experience — one that I suspect has been haunting San Clemente since the trumpets sounded for the last time. Under normal circumstances it is hard to leave "power," or at least the outward simulations of "power."

Suppose, however, that instead of leaving the White House under normal circumstances, you are in effect kicked out? And as you leave the American people emit an audible sigh of relief? Of course, you can tell yourself that you were not forced out, that you left under your own steam as a patriotic act, that . . .

Someday "they" will appreciate you, that . . . that . . . and then the whistle blows:

You are out, kicked out, maybe up for criminal indictment, maybe consigned to the poor house, and nobody cares.

Gerald Ford, look at all you did for him (well, perhaps a bit reluctantly but nonetheless . . .), and Kissinger — there he is laughing away with that rich bum Rockefeller whom you mopped up — and all the rest of them.

Kind of funny, isn't it — the only place they realized what actually happened, how Richard Nixon was set up, was Moscow. That "Pravda" article really laid it on the line . . . How the media destroyed the President because of his progressive stance!

But what about those subpoenas? What can be done with them? By God, the first thing to do is go to that courtroom and fight it out, tell the jury the President's (well, the ex-President's) side of the story. Wait a minute . . . that won't work. The media will twist every word, and keep quoting former statements.

This stream of consciousness is obviously fictitious, but, unless all my intuitive systems are jammed, something like this has been going on inside the head of Richard Nixon this last month. Needless to say, unless one gets off the circuit, he goes mad and in the clinical psychiatric sense.

My hunch is that President Ford was informed that Nixon was on the psychological abyss, that he issued the pardon literally to save a life, and that the tenor of Mr. Nixon's remarks on acceptance indicated the mood of a drowned man resuscitated. In short, it was a psychological, not a political sequence.