

The Experts Found Themselves Confused

U.S. V. RICHARD M. NIXON: The Final Crisis. By Frank Mankiewicz. Quadrangle; 276 pp.; \$8.95.

Reviewed by
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WHAT ARE they doing, all those people standing around at cocktail parties in Georgetown and listening to the Washington political gossip? Frank Mankiewicz, who sometimes originates some of the most interesting of the stories that drift out to the thirsty listeners, concludes that what they are doing is getting confused.

The recognized experts were, he observes, the least reliable interpreters of what was happening in the Watergate case.

"The insiders who knew a lot about politics — Alsop, Evans and Novak, Wilson, etc. — could not believe that their usual informants were wrong, and that an event without precedent in history was about to take place," Mankiewicz writes.

"The outsiders who knew a lot about the evidence — Kraft, Raspberry, Braden, Will — could not believe that a President against whom the evidence was so strong and so public could



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fail to be impeached and removed from office."

Those who saw the developments in the Watergate story as part of the political process simply did not comprehend what any citizen could understand, Mankiewicz argues. It was not a political case but a police case, he continues, with Archibald Cox, Leon Jaworski and John Doar advancing a judicial process leaving President Nixon no alternative but to depart from office.

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IT IS, in short, an untypical pattern in political scandal. The reporter who

thinks his revelations will result in change is often considered pleasantly ingenuous in a powerful world. Sometimes he is. But there are crises when the evidence is too heavy to ignore, and it is then that the experts find themselves confounded by those like Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein of the Washington Post who have not yet learned the folly of expecting too much.

Mankiewicz is most informative and entertaining when he writes about the role of the press in Watergate. Mankiewicz was political director of George S. McGovern's campaign for President, and he finds pleasure in noting ludicrous misinterpretations of events in Watergate by writers who had ridiculed McGovern a year before for calling the Nixon administration the "most corrupt in the history of the United States."

He also writes in detail and with enthusiasm about the work of the figures whose efforts led to the end of the final crisis — the prosecutors, Senator Sam Ervin and especially Congressman Peter W. Rodino Jr.