

David S. Broder

Nixon's China Trip:

'Nothing Shames Him'

BOSTON—This reporter is about to break a promise to himself not to write another word on the subject of Richard Nixon. The utter shamelessness of the man—his willingness to exploit and corrupt every institution and relationship of which he has ever been a part—has become so blatant that one would think it would not require comment.

But Nixon goes blithely on his way, demonstrating again in his incredible journey to Peking that there is nothing, absolutely nothing he will not do in order to salvage for himself whatever scrap of significance he can find in the shambles of his life.

Nixon's entire political career was a ceaseless scramble, first for advancement and then for rehabilitation. To his native intelligence, he added a dogged determination and single-minded ambition that propelled him with extraordinary speed from the House to the Senate to a highly visible post just a heartbeat away from the presidency.

Defeated for President by John F. Kennedy in the 1960 campaign, after an effort for which he needed to offer no apologies, Nixon might have retired into a useful role as titular leader of his party and indulged his growing interest in foreign affairs.

Instead, he plunged into a disastrous campaign for governor of California, trumping up a thoroughly phony "Communist" issue and employing the same shabby tactics that later came to be known as "dirty tricks" in his 1972 presidential race.

After that second defeat in California, Nixon might again have been thought ready to subside into a useful private role—but no. In 1964, he tried to maneuver himself into the presidential nomination and in 1968, finally persuaded his party to give him another chance at the White House.

Although he and his chosen campaign manager, John Mitchell, almost contrived to lose an election it seemed for the Democrats to win, Nixon at long last fulfilled his obsessive ambition and gained the presidency.

But possession of power proved as dangerous for him as the pursuit of power. In short order, Nixon and his cohorts had set about the subversion of the institutions and processes of government in the elaborate scheme that culminated in the effort to rig the 1972 election by use of a secret White House police force.

When that scheme was exposed, by accident, at Watergate, Nixon launched a desperate struggle to retain the power he had gained. Knowing full well, from the very start, what his guilt and complicity had been, he nevertheless subjected his country to a two-year ordeal, during which his administration was shattered, his political party disgraced and the capacity

of the government he headed to deal with the nation's real problems completely frustrated.

If there is any other act of personal selfishness by an American President that carried such high costs for the self-regard and self-confidence of our people, it does not come to mind.

Finally, when he was exposed as the fraud he was and forced to resign in the face of certain impeachment, his successor — a decent man who had defended Nixon far past the point of political prudence—granted him a pardon that spared Nixon the prospect of indictment and trial.

This reporter thought—and wrote—at the time that the public outcry against the pardon was wrong, believing, with Mr. Ford, that it was time to put Nixon and all he represented behind us. I believed, naively, that even a Nixon would have the decency to disappear from public view and recon-

"There is nothing, absolutely nothing he will not do in order to salvage for himself whatever scrap of significance he can find in the shambles of his life."

struct what remained of his life in private, instead of exploiting the country further for his own needs.

That was naive, for this man is utterly without shame. Within a year of his disgrace, the words from San Clemente indicated clearly that he was contriving his reappearance in public life.

The Chinese Communists have now given him his excuse, and Nixon has seized it, with typical disregard for the consequences.

That his trip is an enormous political embarrassment to the President who pardoned him is inconsequential to Nixon. That his first words in Peking were a repudiation of the Hel-sinki agreement and the policy of detente which he himself had willed to Mr. Ford, along with Secretary of State Kissinger, in no way discomfited Nixon.

Nothing shames him; nothing deters him. Nothing ever has and nothing ever will. So, in utter frustration and with no belief whatsoever that anything will influence him, I break my vow of silence on the subject of Richard Nixon and say: Sir, you presume too much on the patience of your country. Enough is enough.