

phoned J. Edgar Hoover to say that he had received the wire, but after all it wasn't his fault and shouldn't be counted against him."

Even worse were the intellectuals who added their voices to the hue and cry of the witchhunt, following in the footsteps of McCarthy to make sure that those who had already lost their rights and their livelihoods were deprived of their intellectual and moral legitimacy as well. Puzzled by the treason of the intellectuals, in particular Lionel Trilling's infatuation with Whittaker Chambers, she finds an

explanation startling in its simplicity: "To many intellectuals the radicals had become the chief, perhaps the only, enemy. . . . Not alone because the radical's intellectual reasons were suspect, but because his convictions would lead to a world that deprived the rest of us of what we had."

Hellman concludes her meditation on the fifties more in anger than in sorrow. Of the cold-war liberals, she writes: "Such people would have a right to say that I, and many like me, took too long to see what was going on in the Soviet Union. But whatever our

mistakes, I do not believe that we did our country any harm. And I think they did. They went to too many respectable conferences that turned out not to be under respectable auspices, contributed to and published too many CIA magazines. The step from such capers was straight into the Vietnam War and the days of Nixon. Many of the anti-Communists were, of course, honest men. But none of them, as far as I know, has stepped forward to admit a mistake. It is not necessary in this country; they too know that we are a people who do not remember much." □

Dishonor Among Thieves

*This is not the court of a Charlemagne.
It is the storeroom bickering of a shopkeeper and his clerks.*

The Final Days, by Robert Woodward and Carl Bernstein. 476 pages. Simon and Schuster. \$11.95.

BY ROBERT SHERRILL

It's too bad, of course, that the federal courts didn't pack Richard Nixon off to prison to learn an honest trade, like making license plates or jute bags. And it's even more unfortunate that we are now paying him \$5000 a year in basic pension, so that he can be comfortable while going crazier by the beautiful Pacific.

But putting aside those regrets, one cannot read *The Final Days* without feeling some degree of pity for the hunchback of San Clemente.

Afraid that divorce would spoil his political career, Nixon hung on to wife Pat although, since 1962, she had wanted to leave him. She consented to stay, but only to punish him—whining and bitching and insulting his guests, drinking on the sly, and banning him from her bed. When they dined together, just the two of them, not a word was spoken. Such was life with the madonna of the frozen grimace. What husband wouldn't be slightly balmy after fourteen years of that?

Kissinger And His Teammates

Life on the White House "team" was even meaner and nastier, especially in the vicinity of Henry Kissinger.

Rose Mary Woods, Nixon's secre-

Robert Sherrill is Washington correspondent for The Nation and contributing editor of Playboy. His most recent book is The Last Kennedy.

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tary, considered Kissinger a spoiled brat ("For once, Henry, behave like a man," she suggested during one of his temper tantrums).

Kissinger loathed Haldeman and Ehrlichman, calling them "The Fanatics." Kissinger's assistant, William Watts, tried to get close enough to punch him in the nose, but Kissinger successfully ducked behind his desk and out of range. So Watts resigned. General Alexander Haig told him he couldn't resign. Replied Watts: "Fuck you, Al. I just did."

Kissinger's counsel to his staff: "This is not an honorable business conducted by honorable men in an honorable way." Kissinger's appraisal of military men: "Dumb, stupid animals to be used" as chips in the foreign-policy poker game.

Haig's judgment of Kissinger, Haldeman, Colson, and the others: "Those shits." Haig considered Kissinger dishonest and unstable.

Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler insisted that his staff pick up his dirty laundry, shine his shoes, and attend to his fleshly comfort like coolies. One of his secretaries spent most of her time "on the phone trying to arrange tennis matches with partners of sufficient White House rank not to offend Ziegler's sense of protocol, but with skill enough to challenge his on-court abilities." Ziegler insisted that he be served cocktails in the same kind of glasses used by the President. Naturally his staff hated him.

Mutual Blackmail

The stench of blackmail was in the air everywhere. Haldeman let it be known

that unless Nixon pardoned him, there might be some "adverse historical effects" of a sort to give the President "trauma." Haig interpreted this to mean that if Haldeman didn't get off the hook he would give evidence that would send Nixon to jail. And then came Ehrlichman—who already had been successfully blackmailed by E. Howard Hunt—saying that if Nixon gave him a pardon, "it would save a lot of embarrassment to the President."

But Nixon was also willing to pull some blackmail. When Hugh Scott told reporters that the edited tape transcripts reflected "a deplorable, disgusting, shabby, immoral performance," the White House informed Scott that if he didn't shut up and start supporting Nixon they would make public certain disgusting, shabby, immoral deals Scott had been involved in.

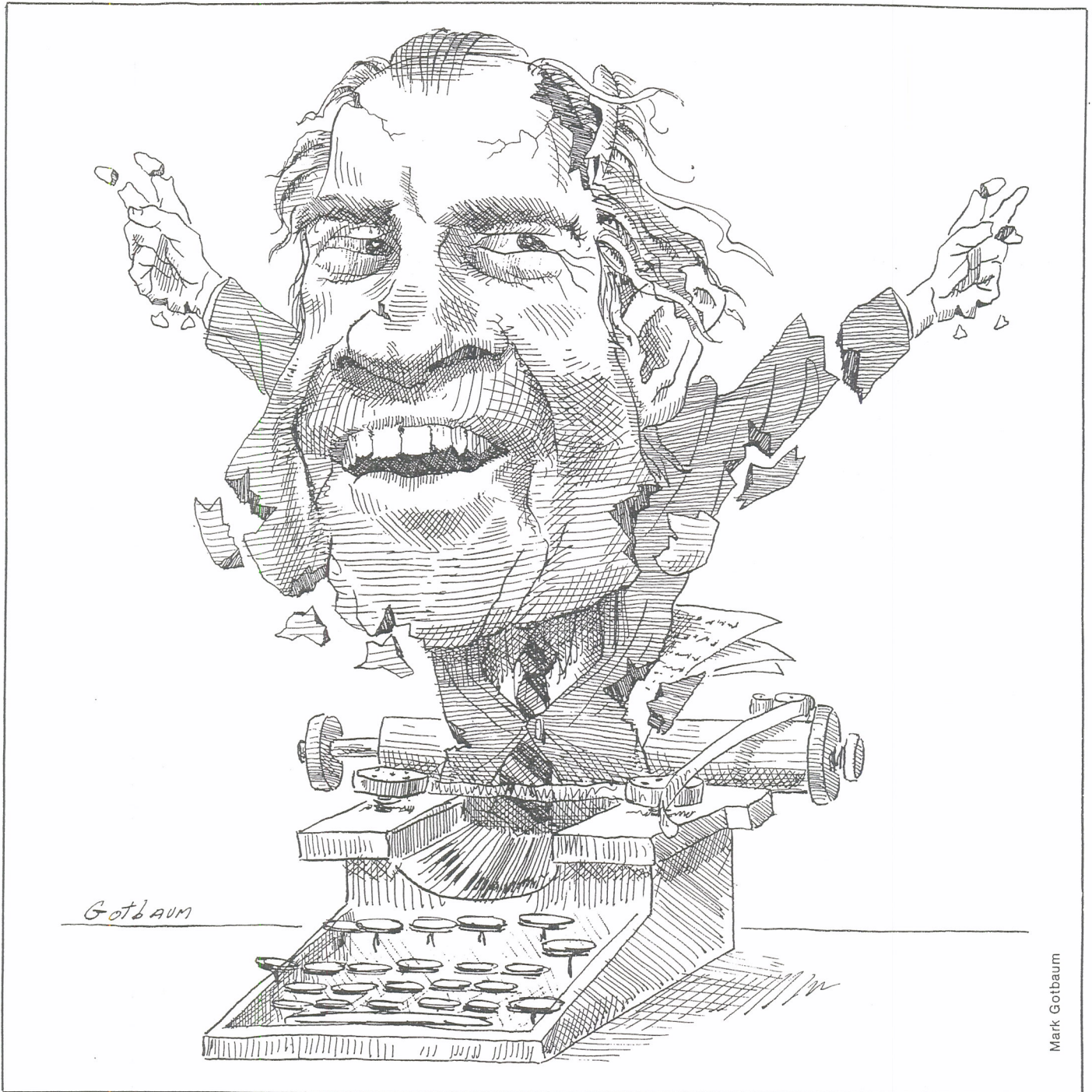
The Court Of Nixon

If the Nixon gang despised each other so much, it is not surprising that they felt contempt for their boss as well.

When Nixon passed the word along to Secretary of State William Rogers that he wanted his resignation, Rogers replied: "Tell the President to fuck himself."

Marine Lt. Col. Jack Brennan, Nixon's military aide, cracked jokes about Mr. and Mrs. Nixon's sex habits. Haig cracked jokes about Nixon's probable homosexual relationship with his chum Bebe Rebozo.

Haig called Nixon "our drunken friend." Kissinger called Nixon a "madman." One negative opinion or the other was shared by just about everyone. The



following exchange took place between Barry Goldwater and Bryce Harlow:

Goldwater: "Is the President off his rocker?"

Harlow: "No. He was drunk."

The shabbiness of the atmosphere of the Nixon years, and especially of the final days, is unrelieved by the presence of any strong character. This is not the court of a Charlemagne. It is the storeroom bickering of a shopkeeper and his clerks. The scene is not marred by rotting joints and stripped bones under the deserted banquet table, but by rat droppings behind the cracker barrel. These people are not great souls corrupted by power; they are drab little

people who are confused by power and respond to their confusion with a profound pettiness—as when Nixon, informed by Kissinger of the number of American casualties in a major battle in Vietnam, blurted, "Oh, screw 'em."

Deadly Camera Lens

Such a ruler does not end his reign either skewered by the enemy's sword or his own, but simply punctured by the camera's lens.

While preparing to make his last television appearance, Nixon told the camera crew that he didn't like to have the White House photographer clicking around all the time because "I'm

afraid he'll catch me picking my nose." And the hell of it was, Nixon probably really did have more fear of that than of being caught pulling the Watergate stuff.

Because it utterly destroys the monarchical pretensions of those who inhabit the White House, *The Final Days* is in that respect a more useful book than *All the President's Men*. The emphasis has shifted from corruption to weakness. Some critics have scolded Woodward and Bernstein as gossips, which is ridiculous. *The Final Days* is not gossip, it is immediate history, so fresh that it is brought to us with its umbilical cord still dragging the ground. □

Seven Days

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He didn't and he wasn't. History is for books, drama is for fun, but the climate was such that Redford and Company would have been stoned if they'd taken liberties with the facts in filming this book.

They were stuck with the problem of making a documentary out of a series of events for which they had very little film. Here and there they do use some television news footage, but basically they had to do a reconstruction, "a dramatization" as the supers say under the TV commercials. They also had to make it nonpolitical. Shakespeare's *Caesar* is nonpolitical too, but he's a fascinating character. In the movie, we have neither politics nor character, but a tedious authenticity that can only be overcome by the enthusiasm and imagination the members of the audience can supply for themselves.

And that is finally how *All The President's Men* must be judged; not by what it is, but by how it is received. It will succeed in the measure that it is incorporated into the heroic myths of our political culture. Either it will be judged dull and forgotten, or it will be put on the shelf next to Frank Capra's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) — a far better movie — as a factual allegory of virtue over vice in Washington, and as a confirmation, however far-fetched, that a couple of kids, armed with nothing more than energy, courage, and integrity, can still leave Iowa, come to the nation's capital, and rescue the country. □
