



## 'The Man Who ...'

John Barkham

**P**RESIDENT FORD'S pardon of Richard Nixon, the President who had appointed him Vice President, was not raised as an issue in the recent primaries. But it is certain to be raised forcefully if only because of the slashing expose by Clark Mollenhoff, "The Man Who Pardoned Nixon."

To the Washington press corps — and to the White House — Mollenhoff, Washington bureau chief of the Des Moines Register and Tribune, is known as a hard-nosed, abrasive investigative reporter who goes for the jugular regardless of whether his target is a Democrat or a Republican.

He served as deputy counsel and ombudsman to President Nixon and hence knows whereof he speaks. Here he takes aim at Mr. Ford for his pardon of Nixon just 30 days after assuming the presidency and without consulting anyone. Mollenhoff regards Mr. Ford's 25-year career in the House of Representatives as a "study in amiability while preserving enough flexibility to dart in any direction when expediency beckoned."

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**H**E CHARGES Mr. Ford with "duplicitry" and lists a long series of acts and statements in which Mr. Ford said one thing and did another.

Mollenhoff emphasizes that it was Nixon and Nixon alone who put Mr. Ford into the White House. After his

assumption of the presidency the country was eager to believe in a new Ford with his talk of candor, truth and openness in government. The unconditional pardon of Nixon, announced without warning, shattered that belief, Mollenhoff believes for many Americans.

Certainly a vast volume of protest mail descended on the White House. For many it was proof that this was no new Ford but the old model who'd sat in the House for a quarter-century." Since then Ford has demonstrated that the pardon was no temporary political aberration but as callously calculated as was Nixon's commutation of the prison sentence of Teamster boss Jimmy Hoffa."

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**I**T IS WELL to remember, adds Mollenhoff, "that Ford, for some reason unknown to the public, felt an obligation to Nixon."

This is a damaging attack on President Ford's bona fides, spelled out at length. The evidence is, of course, largely circumstantial. No one but Mr. Ford and his predecessor in office know how much or how little of Mollenhoff's charge is accurate. The book, coming as it does just before the presidential conventions, is bound to make the Nixon pardon a red-hot issue. Once and for all the voters will get their chance to say Yea or Nay to the historic pardon (St. Martin's Press; \$8.95).

William Hogan will be back on Monday