

A LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Nixon on television. Once it was commonplace, but for more than 2½ years the familiar face has been scarcely glimpsed on TV screens, as the ex-President made only the rarest forays from San Clemente. This week he is back on the screens of America, in the first of four long-awaited interviews with British TV Personality David Frost. In our cover story we give not only a behind-the-scenes account of how the shows were put together, but also a preview of the programs, especially the one dealing with Watergate.

In the 90-minute show Frost, who on other topics was rather soft and undemanding, dramatically confronts Nixon with his mistakes. Under Frost's no-holds-barred questioning, Nixon is humbled, his defenses are shattered.

Whatever Nixon said or did not say, we recognized, this first lengthy explanation by Richard Nixon to the American people would have considerable historical value. Thus we approached Frost last winter and arranged with him (though not for a fee) to have a TIME correspondent cover Operation Nixon. John Bryson, who took the pictures for our cover plus the album of color shots that accompanies the story, was the only still photographer allowed at the taping sessions. To John Stacks, our Washington news editor during the Watergate period, went the assignment of living for six weeks with the Frost staff in their Beverly Hills Hilton headquarters—looking at video tapes, interviewing Frost and observing his staff strategy sessions.

“Covering this story,” says Stacks, “was a little like covering a bullfight from inside the matador’s camp. The matador was talking, carefully, and the bull was unavailable for interviews. The result reveals the incredible number of Nixons that exist inside the former President. The shows are a kind of video psychobiography.”

Writing the cover story was a return engagement for Senior Writer Ed Magnuson, our Watergate specialist. “Mag” wrote 21 cover stories on Watergate in 19 months, including the final ones on Nixon’s resignation and the country’s reaction to the pardon. Says he: “It would be nice if this were the last.”

Ralph P. Davidson

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The Cover: Photographs by John Bryson.

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