

VIEW FROM OVERSEAS AND SOME ADVICE TO (FOR) THE PRESS (Originally published December 1973)

...MR. NIXON'S DUTY

Without prejudging the question of impeachment, the public has lost confidence in the President's veracity and good faith. The record of his unconstitutional and illegal acts and of the scandal-ridden management of his administration and his party is plain. In this contest, two questions arise. The nation has to ask, can Mr. Nixon effectively govern during the remaining three years of his term? The President has to ask, where does my duty to the nation lie?

The answer to the first question is negative. At best, the nation faces three years of a crippled presidency. At worst, there will be fresh revelations, exposure of new crimes, probably the ordeal of impeachment, while inquiry into the activities of Mr. Nixon's associates and subordinates goes on.

The one last great service that Mr. Nixon can now perform for his country is to resign. He has been trying to "tough it out" for too long at too great a cost to the nation. As long as he clings to office, he keeps the presidency swamped in a sea of scandal and the American public in a morass of concern and confusion. The state of the union requires nothing less than a change in the sorry state of the presidency.

The New York Times (from the editorial, Nov. 5, 1973 International Herald Tribune).

Returning home in mid November after thirty days of travel in Switzerland, northern Italy and southern France, we were surprised to find that the country was still here and in about the same shape as when we left. While traveling like that in Western Europe, one's only sources of home news are an infrequent hotel room broadcast over the American Armed Services radio, an occasional glimpse on hotel television of Cronkite or Rather talking in the background while some Swiss, Italian or French correspondent interprets their wisdom and, mostly, the Paris Herald Tribune picked up every two or three days at some nearby kiosk.

During this eventful span of weeks, according to the impression gained from the International Herald-Tribune, the country was in turmoil; people were out in the streets in an uproar. And Washington was being besieged by irate citizens hanging on the White House fences clamoring for President Nixon's scalp. The editorialists maintained that the administration's "credibility" had been completely destroyed. That it was no longer possible for Nixon to govern, and that the only solution to this desperate situation was not impeachment (it would take too long) but for Nixon to resign immediately. Let's wipe the slate clean and start all over was the general tone of advice.

If most Europeans depend as many do on getting news of the United States from the services furnished them through the New York Times and Washington Post (who publish the IHT), from selected excerpts of NBC and CBS seen on television, and from the international editions of Time and Newsweek; it's no wonder they cannot understand how in hell we manage to survive. On our part, we just cannot see how our press feels it is doing this country any service by presenting it in such a horrible light to our European friends. And they are still our friends, grateful for our past help and our continued presence there, despite what you hear. They are just surprised that we can be so immature and stupid so consistently and continuously.

As regards the current commotion over Nixon, most Europeans are completely confused. In talking to a couple of capable, intelligent and internationally minded Swiss, one of whom holds a very high and responsible position in Swiss government, we were informed that they feel the United States performance over the past several years has been highly commendable and better than average. It was pointed out to us

- 1) that we were able to pull out of Vietnam (although belatedly) and that this was accomplished with a considerable degree of skill,
- 2) that we have succeeded admirably in our diplomacy toward China and Russia,
- 3) that we have handled, and are handling, the very dangerous Middle East situation quite well,
- 4) that we are in far less trouble than they are as regards an oil and energy crisis,
- 5) that we are not nearly so dependent on foreign labor with all of its problems as themselves,
- 6) that their population and urban congestion problems are much worse than ours,
- 7) that our pollution (you have to see the blanket of smog that covers the entire north of industrial Italy to believe it is not as critical as their own,
- 8) that while the dollar is in trouble, at least our inflation cannot begin to match European inflation, and
- 9) that, above all, our taxes are infinitesimal when compared to theirs.

If all these things are true, where is this complete disintegration of the United States brought on by the Nixon administration that our editorialists and commentators wail about daily and constantly? If what they say is correct—that Nixon no longer has the people's confidence, that he is no longer capable of governing, that only his

resignation can save the country—where do they find the facts on which to base such convictions? If some of these things are only half-truths, and if indeed Nixon is as vile and corrupt as they paint him, why not let the Congress, if it can find the stomach or conscience to do so, begin the impeachment process and remove him in proper fashion?

Of course, it is entirely possible that the liberal press has become victim to its own hysteria. One letter writer from Madrid to the *Herald Tribune* likened their anti-Nixon crusade to a personal Corsican vendetta. Bolstered last month by an unexpected success in getting rid of Agnew, the prospect of dumping Nixon brightened and the crusade took on new energy. Like a long-suffering, neurotic, hypochondriac woman whose abdomen is crisscrossed with multiple surgical scars, the press, feeding on its own sickness, imagines it has located another malfunctioning organ and can envision no possible cure except by one more trip to the operating room. Yeecch!

We think it is long past time now that the influential news media forget Watergate and the many deficiencies of the Nixon administration, sweep everything under the rug as they did all those blunders of the Kennedy crew and as they did the Johnson-Bobby Baker scandal. Stop telling the public and the President what it must think and what it must do. Get on with their business of reporting news in a sensible and unbiased fashion, and quit trying to run the country from those swiveling chairs behind editorial desks.

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