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AMERICAN HERITAGE

NOVEMBER 1991



LEVA
COULD HAVE
US IN 1970
WHO GAVE US THE
RIGHT TO DIG UP
DEAD POLITICIANS?



THE RACIST PRESIDENT...

*who started
modern civil rights*

CREDIT CARD AMERICA

*It grew up
overnight*



I FOUGHT FOR FIDEL

*An American rebel's
farewell memoir*

Harry S. Truman

“I think one man is just as good as another,” he said, “as long as he’s honest and decent and not a nigger or a Chinaman.” Yet Truman broke with his convictions to make civil rights a concern of the national government for the first time since Reconstruction—and in so doing he changed the nation forever.

THE CONVERSION OF HARRY TRUMAN

by William E. Leuchtenburg



His unprecedented 1948 civil rights message won Truman this salute from the cartoonist Herb Block.

Harry Truman approached national politics with divided memories and divergent loyalties. He was reared in a border-state county as Southern in its sympathies as any Mississippi Delta town and by a family that shared Mississippi’s racial outlook and held dear the hallowed symbol of the Stars and Bars. Yet Truman also harbored a powerful nationalist strain. He never regretted that the Civil War had ended in a Union victory,

and he came to view Lincoln as a man of heroic stature. Perhaps nothing revealed so well the conflicting tugs on him as a letter he wrote in 1941 to his daughter, Margaret: “Yesterday I drove over the route that the last of the Confederate army followed before the surrender. I thought of the heartache of one of the world’s great men on the occasion of that surrender. I am not sorry he did surrender, but I feel as your old-country grandmother has expressed it—



Mary Jane and Anderson Truman, the President's paternal grandparents, had strong ties to the slave South . . .



. . . but the frontier saga of his maternal grandfather, Solomon Young (shown with grandmother Harriet), made the deepest mark.

"What a pity a *white* man like Lee had to surrender to *old* Grant."

Truman's direct ancestors identified strongly with the slave South. All four of his grandparents were born in Kentucky, and when they migrated to Missouri in the 1840s, they brought their slaves with them. Truman's grandparents received slaves as a wedding present, and in Missouri one of his grandfathers owned some two dozen slaves on his five-thousand-acre plantation. His parents, Truman recalled, were "a violently unreconstructed southern family" and "Lincoln haters." His mother was an ardent admirer of

the pro-Union Jayhawkers. Truman's grandmother never wearied of telling of the morning in 1861 when, with her husband away, Jim Lane, at the head of a scruffy band of horsemen wearing red sheepskin leggings, rode into her farmyard, ordered her to hop to it and cook for him and his men, then killed her hens, slaughtered all the livestock, including more than four hundred hogs, toted off the still-bloody hams, pocketed the family silver, and set the barns afire.

Truman's family rehearsed, too, the awful time in 1863 when a Union commander, retaliating for Quantrill's sack of Lane's hometown of Lawrence, issued the notorious General Order No. 11, which routed all the people of Jackson County, the den of Quantrill's bushwhackers, and

herded them to a Federal fort, where for months they were compelled to live on handouts. As a girl of eleven Truman's mother, Martha, trudged through the dust with her mother and five other children behind an oxcart carrying all that was left of a once-proud holding. After the Trumans and their neighbors had been evicted, Union forces set the countryside

ablaze for miles. In later years Martha Truman would have no compunction about saying, "I thought it was a good thing that Lincoln was shot."

The women in his family sought to imbue Truman with an intense dislike of the Union cause and its leaders. When in 1905 the twenty-one-year-old Truman, proud of his splendid new National Guard uniform, called on his grandmother, she gave him a once-over, then told him sternly, "Harry, this is the first time since 1863 that a blue uniform has been in this house. Don't bring it here again." More than four decades later, when the President's mother was invited to the White House, one of her sons said that the only unoccupied bed was in the Lincoln Room. She retorted, "You tell Harry if he tries to put me in Lincoln's bed, I'll sleep on the floor."

Truman literally learned at his mother's knee to share the South's view of the War Between the States. He grew up detesting the meddlesome abolitionists, decried the racial experimentation of Reconstruction, and sneered at Thaddeus Stevens, that "crippled moron." He also acquired an abiding belief in white supremacy. In 1911, when he was twenty-seven, he wrote Bess Wallace: "I think one man is just as good as another so long as he's honest and decent and not a nigger

Truman literally learned at his mother's knee to share the South's view of the War Between the States. He also acquired an abiding belief in white supremacy.

William Quantrill, the Confederate guerrilla leader who, pillaging Lawrence, Kansas, in 1863, slew at least one hundred and fifty of its citizens, including women and children. One historian has called him "the bloodiest man in American history."

Truman's Jackson County, though, revered Quantrill, because he had his counterpart in James Lane, chieftain of

or a Chinaman. Uncle Will says that the Lord made a white man from dust[,] a nigger from mud, then He threw up what was left and it came down a Chinaman. He does hate Chinese and Japs. So do I. It is race prejudice I guess. But I am strongly of the opinion that negros [sic] ought to be in Africa, yellow men in Asia and white men in Europe and America."

More than a quarter of a century later, in a letter home to his daughter about dining at the White House when he was a U.S. senator, he described the waiters, who he thought were "evidently the top of the black social set in Washington," as "an army of coons," and in a letter to his wife in 1939, he referred to "nigger picnic day."

Yet if Truman absorbed his family's and his county's Southern heritage almost by osmosis, other legacies drew him toward identification not with a section but with the nation. Early in 1860 one of Truman's great-uncles in Kentucky wrote his brother—Harry's grandfather—in Missouri: "Andy . . . I am in hopes that you are not a seceder. I am for the union now and forever & so is old Ky." The next year he wrote again: "Ky. is not willing to turn traitor yet awhile. God forbid that she ever should. You see I am a union man yet and expect to live and die one. . . . Are you still in . . . the union, or have you seceded? Oh I hope not. I hope you have not turned against this glorious union to follow Jeff Davis and Co."

Truman's forebear's fierce loyalty to the Union, though, did not carry with it admiration for Abraham Lincoln. "My old woman is distant relation of old Abe Lincoln," he explained in 1864, "but we are not Lincolnites."

Truman's capacity for perceiving a national interest transcending his family's devotion to the Lost Cause owed a great deal to the fact that the community in which he was raised, instinctively Southern though it was, turned its face, in a highly self-conscious way, toward the West. Truman was keenly aware of Independence as the entrepôt to the Santa Fe, the Mormon, and the

Oregon trails. As a boy he played on the tracks of the first railroad that ran west of the Mississippi, and in the 1920s he became president of the National Old Trails Association, which required him to travel around the country to promote using the routes of the historical trails to the West for interstate highways. On one of his trips he visited Boot Hill in Dodge City and encountered a gunslinger who had faced Bat Masterson. Truman was happy, he announced on one occasion, to be "back home—once more a free and independent citizen of the gateway city of the old Great West."

If Truman's family constantly reminded him of his Confederate heritage, it also relayed to him vivid recollections of his ancestors' experiences on the frontier. His great-grandfather, the son of an adventurer allied with Daniel Boone, is said to have been the first white child born in Kentucky, and his great-grandmother wore a lace cap to conceal a scar from being scalped in an Indian raid in 1788. As a boy Truman heard these tales countless times.

But it was the saga of his grandfather Solomon Young that made the most lasting impression. He had first headed West in the "year of decision," 1846, the same year as Francis Parkman's journey on the Oregon Trail. A Conestoga wagon master who drove huge herds of cattle across the plains, he would leave one spring and not get home until the next. He was once

Truman's parents were, he said, "violently unreconstructed."

away so long that his young daughter did not know him when he returned. He went West one year from Independence with no fewer than 1,500 head of cattle, and in the summer of 1860 he reached Salt Lake City with forty wagons and 130 yoke of oxen.

Truman took full political advantage of this frontier past. As he campaigned through the West in 1948, he claimed so many places were spots at which Solomon Young had stopped that reporters wondered how the man had ever made it to Sacramento. In that campaign, the veteran correspondent Richard L. Strout recalled, "the further west he got the more his western vernacular increased. . . . All the way across the West as his vernacular got thicker he told about Grandpa's covered wagon trip to Oregon and produced an historical relative or two in virtually every area where he spoke."

Truman's behavior in that campaign left observers at the time, and commentators since, bewildered about just where he located himself. If in talking to Western audiences he exploited his grandfather's feats on the Great Plains, he took pains to remind Southern audiences of



his Kentucky ancestry and his fondness for Stonewall Jackson.

To add to the confusion, some perceived him to be neither Western nor Southern. A Truman follower could call him at different spots in the same book a man "from a midcontinental state," "a Midwesterner," and "coming from a border state . . . neither a Northerner nor a Southerner." The

On being told of the blinding of a black sergeant, Truman turned pale; then he rose and said, "My God. I had no idea it was as terrible as that. We've got to do something!"

last comment is closest to the mark. He was a border stater, a man from Missouri.

But rather than being "neither a Northerner nor a Southerner," he was both. He was in the position to be at the same time inside and outside the South, able to empathize with its hurts and its hopes but to surmise that its destiny lay in the finding of a place for itself within the nation.

Nonetheless, entering the United States Senate in 1935, Truman immediately gravitated toward the Southerners. They, in turn, accepted him as one of their own. Months before the 1944 campaign some Southerners had come to view Truman as a feasible vice-presidential nominee, and at the 1944 Democratic National Convention Southerners helped conspicuously in putting him across. Afterward Gov. Chauncey Sparks of Alabama said, "The South has won a substantial victory. . . . In the matter of race relations Senator Truman told me he is the son of an unreconstructed rebel mother."

When Franklin Roosevelt's death, on April 12, 1945, catapulted Truman into the White House, the white South felt confident that Truman would find its racial customs congenial. On the funeral train carrying FDR's body, the Democratic senator from South Car-

olina Burnet Maybank assured a Southern friend, "Everything's going to be all right—the new President knows how to handle the niggers."

But on December 5, 1946, Truman demolished these comfortable assumptions by announcing the creation of a President's Committee on Civil Rights. He had been moved to act after a delegation had called on him to protest outrages against blacks. He was appalled especially by an incident in Aiken, South Carolina, where, only three hours after a black sergeant

had received his separation papers from the United States Army, policemen gouged out his eyes. In Georgia, Truman heard, the only black to have voted in his area was murdered by four whites in his front yard. In another Georgia county two black men were gunned down by a white gang, and when one of their wives recognized one of the killers, both the wives were shot to death too. On being told at a meeting with the National Emergency Committee Against Mob Violence of the blinding of the black sergeant, the President, his face "pale with horror," rose and said, "My God. I had no idea it was as terrible as that. We've got to do something!"

The very next day he wrote his Attorney General, "I know you have been looking into the . . . lynchings . . . but I think it is going to take something more than the handling of each individual case after it happens—it is going to require the inauguration of some sort of policy to prevent such happenings." On December 5 Truman signed an order creating a President's Committee on Civil Rights, which he directed to look into not merely racial violence but the entire universe of civil

rights. To carry out this huge assignment, he appointed fifteen prominent citizens under the chairmanship of the president of General Electric, Charles E. Wilson. Only two of the fifteen were from the South, and both of them were conspicuous liberals.

In October 1947 the committee issued its historic report, "To Secure These Rights." It found that a gaping disparity between the country's ideal of equality and its behavior had resulted in "a kind of moral dry rot which eats away at the emotional and rational bases of democratic beliefs." Furthermore, it said, with an eye toward the Cold War, the United States "is not so strong, the final triumph of the democratic ideal is not so inevitable, that we can ignore what the world thinks of us or our record."

The committee came forth with nearly three dozen recommendations, including expanding the civil rights section of the Justice Department, creating a permanent Commission on Civil Rights, enacting an anti-lynching

statute and a law punishing police brutality, expanding the suffrage by banning the poll tax and safeguarding the right to cast ballots in primaries and general elections, and outlawing discrimination in private employment. It also favored "renewed court attack, with intervention by the Department of Justice," on racially restrictive covenants in housing and ending "immediately" discrimination in the armed services and in federal agencies. Most controversial, it opposed not only racial discrimination but segregation. In particular, it advocated denying federal money to any public or private program that persisted in Jim Crow practices and making the District of Columbia a model for the nation by integrating all its facilities, including its public schools.

The publication of "To Secure These Rights" aroused a storm of criticism. The chairman of the Democratic com-



A button from the 1948 presidential campaign.

mittee in Danville, Virginia, wired Truman, "I really believe that you have ruined the Democratic Party in the South," and a Baptist minister in Jacksonville, Florida, informed him: "If that report is carried out, you won't be elected dogcatcher in 1948. The South today is the South of 1861."

In one respect the shock expressed by the South is surprising, for Truman

The Florida State Association of County Commissioners found the President's program "odious, detestable, loathsome, repulsive, revolting and humiliating."

had built a sturdy record on behalf of civil rights as early as 1937. As senator he had twice cooperated with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in signing petitions to break filibusters over anti-lynching legislation, and less than two months after he took office as President he had written a public letter asking the House Rules Committee to advance legislation for a permanent Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC).

Yet until 1947 Southern politicians had tolerated such actions because they thought them merely expedient. They assumed that since, as senator, he came from a state with 130,000 black voters, he had to make a show of going along with civil rights bills that were doomed to defeat anyway. Even while supporting such measures, Truman had made a point of announcing that he did not question Jim Crow. In 1940 he told the National Colored Democratic Association of Chicago: "I wish to make it clear that I am not appealing for social equality of the Negro. The Negro himself knows better than that."

His performance as President had also been ambivalent. He had asked for an FEPC bill, for instance, but then had run away from the fight to get it enacted.

Yet the white South had good reason to conclude that by 1947 Truman had changed. He had done so, in part, for political reasons. In World War II Southern blacks had migrated in large numbers to states, such as Michigan and California, with big blocs of electoral votes, and in the 1946 elections, dismayed by Southern racist demagogues, they had given evidence of drifting away from the Democrats. Even in the South black voters promised to be an increasing presence following a 1944 Supreme Court decision outlawing the

white primary. Truman was motivated too by foreign policy concerns. Discrimination against people of color was proving an embarrassment to the government as it vied with the Soviet Union for the allegiance of Third World nations. Probably most important, though, was Truman's outrage against the mistreatment of blacks. Truman had never been willing to condone denying to citizens, black or white, their fundamental rights, and as President he was expanding his awareness of the need to use federal power to secure to all Americans the liberties guaranteed by the Constitution. What Southern politicians thought could be explained only as self-interested bids for black votes actually represented both long-held beliefs and maturing convictions.

Once Truman set out on this new course, he would not relent. When Democratic leaders asked him to back down from his strong stand on civil rights, he replied: "My forebears were Confederates. . . . Every factor and influence in my background—and in my wife's for that matter—would foster the personal belief that you are right.

"But my very stomach turned over when I learned that Negro soldiers, just back from overseas, were being dumped out of Army trucks in Mississippi and beaten.

"Whatever my inclinations as a native of Missouri might have been, as

President I know this is bad. I shall fight to end evils like this."

On February 2, 1948, Truman, undaunted by Southern criticism, sent a special message to Congress asking it to enact a number of the recommendations of his committee. Never before had a President dispatched a special message on civil rights. He called for an anti-poll tax statute, a permanent FEPC, an anti-lynching law, and creation of a Commission on Civil Rights. To end intimidation at the polls, he asked for legislation banning interference by either public officials or private citizens with the free exercise of the suffrage. He did not embrace his committee's recommendation to deprive states of federal grants if they did not abandon Jim Crow, but in keeping with recent Supreme Court decisions, he did call upon Congress to forbid segregation in interstate travel. "As a Presidential paper," the historian Irwin Ross has written, "it was remarkable for its scope and audacity."

Once again the white South reacted with rage. A Georgia congressman said his section had been "kicked in the teeth" by Truman, the *Nashville Banner* denounced his proposals as "vicious," and in Florida the State Association of County Commissioners declared that "all true Democrats" found the President's program "obnoxious, repugnant, odious, detestable, loathsome, repulsive, revolting and humiliating."

No state exceeded Mississippi in the fury of its rhetoric. "Not since the first gun was fired on Fort Sumter, resulting as it did in the greatest fratricidal strife in the history of the world, has any message of any President of these glorious United States . . . resulted in the driving of a schism in the ranks of our people, as did President Truman's so-called civil rights message," asserted Rep. William M. Colmer. Truman, agreed Rep. John Bell Williams, "has . . . run a political dagger into our backs and now he is trying to drink our blood."

In a long speech on the Senate floor, Sen. James Eastland charged that the President's program was an effort "to secure political favor from Red mongrels in the slums of the great cities of the East and Middle West" who planned to defile "the pure blood of the South." The President's "anti-southern measures," he maintained, would destroy the South "beyond hope of redemption." Indeed, he concluded: "This much is certain. If the present Democratic leadership is right, then Calhoun and Jefferson Davis were wrong. If the present Democratic leadership is right, then Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner were right, and Lee, Forrest, and Wade Hampton were wrong. If the President's civil-rights program is right, then reconstruction was right. If this program is right, the carpetbaggers were right."



Former Democrats from the Deep South launch the States' Rights party convention in Birmingham, Alabama, July 17, 1948.

At the Jefferson-Jackson Day dinners in mid-February, Truman got rude reminders of Southern hostility to his program. In Washington at the most important dinner, a table at the Mayflower Hotel reserved and paid for by Sen. Olin Johnston of South Carolina was deliberately left vacant, in a conspicuous spot near the dais. Mrs. Johnston, a vice-chair of the dinner committee, decided not to attend, she explained, "because I might be seated next to a Negro."

Truman, shocked by the ferocity of the assault on him and recognizing that his re-election was in jeopardy, sought to placate his Southern critics, but he would not appease them by abandoning fundamental principles. After a meal at the White House with members of the Democratic National Committee, Alabama's national committeewoman lectured the President: "I want to take a message back to the South. Can I tell them you're not ramming miscegenation down our throats? . . . That you're not for tearing up our social structure—that you're for all the people, not just the North?" Truman reached into his pocket, whipped out a copy of the Constitution, and read her the Bill of Rights. "I stand on

the Constitution," he replied. "I take back nothing of what I proposed and make no excuses for it."

With Truman unrepentant, the South wrote him off. When he announced formally that he would run for re-election, John Bell Williams told his congressional colleagues that the President should "quit now while he is still just 20 million votes behind." The South and the border states were going to cast 147 electoral votes in November, said Senator Johnston, "and they won't be for Truman. They'll be for somebody else. He ain't going to be re-elected. He ain't going to be renominated." On the floor of the House, L. Mendel Rivers of South Carolina, shaking his finger, his voice trembling, cried, "Harry Truman is already a dead bird. We in the South are going to see to that."

Sectional animosity enveloped the 1948 Democratic Convention that summer, a mood no one captured so vividly as H. L. Mencken. His dispatch of July 9 began, "With the advancing Confederate Army still below the Potomac, Philadelphia was steeped tonight in

the nervous calm that fell upon it in the days before Gettysburg." On the following day he wrote: "There was an air of confidence among the Yankee hordes already assembled . . . that the rebels would begin falling to fragments before they crossed the Chickahominy." Though Mencken had no sympathy for Truman or his civil rights notions, his story a day later indicated that this confidence was justified. When the Southerners caucused in Philadelphia, they revealed that they had little strength outside a few Gulf states, he reported, adding: "After the count of bayonets . . . [Gov. Ben] Laney asked if there were any copperheads present. . . . A lone Trumanocide from Indiana then made himself known, and was politely applauded. But there were no others, and the gathering broke up in depressed spirits."

The Southern Democrats continued to send off salvos against the President, but it did not take long for them to learn that their threat to deny him renomination was an empty one. At the Southern caucus Gov. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina insisted, "We have been betrayed and the guilty



On October 29, 1948, thousands of Harlem residents turn out and press up against barricades to see Truman.

shall not go unpunished." When the roll was called, however, Truman easily defeated the Southern favorite, Sen. Richard B. Russell of Georgia. Russell swept almost the entire South, but that is about all he got. So mutinous was the South, though, that the convention chairman did not dare attempt to make Truman's nomination unanimous, as was traditionally done to signify party harmony.

Truman's opponents sustained an even greater setback over the plat-

gates alike agreed that, as *Time* recounted, "the South had been kicked in the pants, turned around and kicked in the stomach." Sen. Walter George of Georgia, in what one writer has called "a splendid Catherine wheel of mixed metaphors," expostulated: "The South is not only over a barrel—it is pilloried! We are in the stocks!" Having sustained severe losses, "the defeated army," Mencken concluded, "retired . . . to a prepared position on the swamps bordering the Swanee River."

After the civil rights plank was adopted, thirteen

Alabama delegates (one of them was Birmingham's police commissioner, Eugene ["Bull"] Connor) and all of the Mississippi delegation stalked out of the hall. The rebels reconvened in Birmingham to organize a States' Rights party with the intent of defeating Truman and his program by gaining enough electoral votes to throw the contest into the House of Repre-

sentatives, where the South would have substantial bargaining power. To lead them in the forthcoming campaign, the States' Rights party, or Dixiecrats as they were commonly known, chose Strom Thurmond as their presidential candidate and Mississippi's governor, Fielding Wright, as his running mate. Thurmond told seven thousand cheering, stomping delegates: "There are not enough troops in the Army to force the Southern people to admit the Negroes into our theaters, swimming pools, and homes. . . . We have been stabbed in the back by a President who has betrayed every principle of the Democratic party in his desire to win at any cost."

The Dixiecrats constituted a serious threat to Truman's bid for re-election. He already faced a formidable challenge from the Republican nominee, Gov. Thomas E. Dewey of New York, and the left wing of his party had broken away to back the Progressive nominee, Henry Wallace. Truman's chances, slim at best, seemed negligible if he could not hold the South. But in Alabama the Dixiecrats kept the name of the President of the United States off the ballot altogether. In Mississippi and South Carolina, state Democratic committees selected Thurmond as their presidential nominee. Summing up the situation in the aftermath of the Philadelphia convention, the *Chattanooga Free Press* wrote: "This should be a day of mourning for Southern Democrats. Their only consolation is the grim satisfaction that President Truman and his unfaithful cohorts are going down in ignominious defeat."

Truman, though, held firm to his commitment to bolster the constitutional rights of blacks. When an Army buddy advised him, from the perspective of a Southerner, not to press on civil rights, the President responded, "The main difficulty with the South is that they are living eighty years behind the times and the sooner they come out of it the better it will be for the country and for themselves." He added: "When

The era marked the end of the Solid South. Not until LBJ's day would the most serious cleavage appear, but Truman opened a fissure that would never be mended.

form when a determined group of liberals pushed through a strong civil rights plank cosponsored by Hubert Humphrey, the mayor of Minneapolis. "As I walked with the young mayor . . . out of that hall," one liberal activist later recalled, "I actually thought he was going to be shot. . . . It was very tense, very tense."

Journalists and the Southern dele-

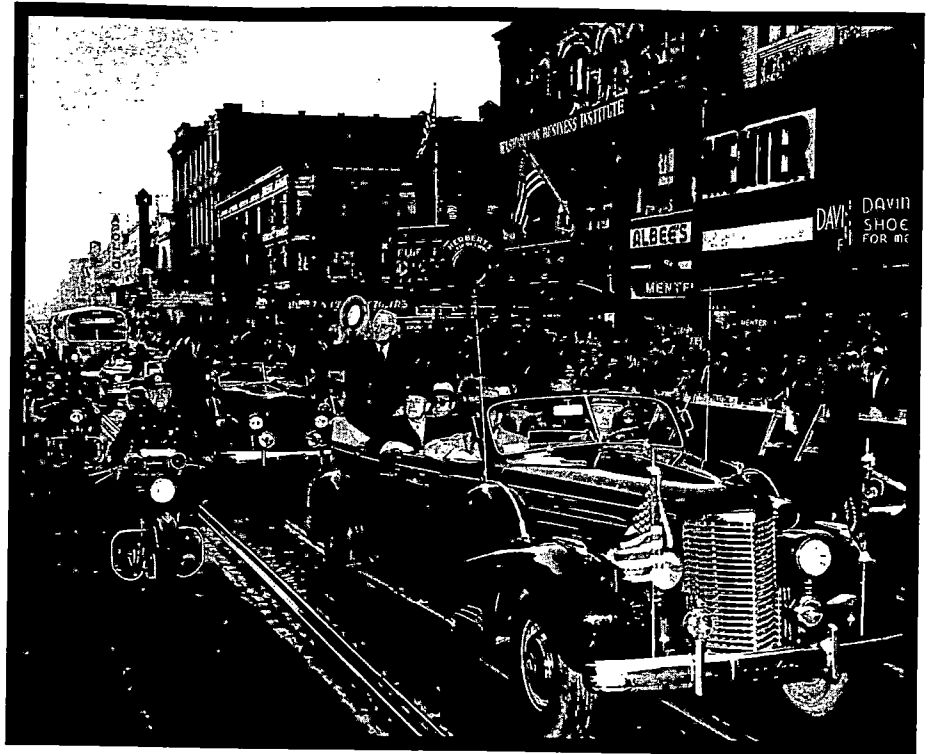
the mob gangs can take four people out and shoot them in the back, and everybody in the country is acquainted with who did the shooting and nothing is done about it, that country is in a pretty bad fix from a law enforcement standpoint." Truman concluded by saying, "I can't approve of such goings on, and . . . I am going to try to remedy it and if that ends up in my failure to be elected, that failure will be in a good cause."

Truman meant what he said. On July 26 he issued two Executive orders. One, drawing upon his authority as Commander in Chief, affirmed the principle of equality of treatment in the armed forces without respect to race. The other directive forbade discrimination in the federal civil service. On October 29 he became the first President ever to solicit votes in Harlem.

Well before the Harlem speech, analysts gave Truman little chance of carrying the South. It came as no surprise, then, when in November he lost four Deep South states to Governor Thurmond. Louisiana gave Thurmond more than 49 percent of its votes, Truman less than 33 percent. In some northern parishes Truman ran third—behind both Thurmond and Dewey. He fared still worse in other states. In South Carolina Thurmond got 72 percent, Truman 24 percent; in Mississippi Thurmond received 87 percent to Truman's miserable 10 percent. Alabama, of course, registered no votes at all for Truman.

Thurmond, though, gained no states beyond these four, as Truman astonished prognosticators by sweeping all the rest of the South and winning reelection. Most Southern Democrats could not bring themselves to bolt the party of their fathers to join the Dixiecrats, and they felt even less comfortable with switching to the Republicans, the party of Reconstruction.

The Truman era, however, proved to be the end of the Solid South, at least of a South solid for the Democrats. (To be sure, not until the 1960s, when



Waving from his Cadillac, a President of the United States campaigns through Harlem for the first time in history.

Lyndon Johnson pushed through far-reaching civil rights legislation, would the most serious cleavage occur, but Truman is the one who opened the fissure that would never be mended.) In 1948 four Deep South states had broken away to the Dixiecrats; in the next election, four more Southern states defected to the Republicans. So by 1952 eight of the former Confederate states had abandoned the Democrats. As one scholar has said: "The significant fact is that a Democratic President proposed to Congress the enactment of laws to improve the status of the Negro. This was heresy; the whole logic of the South's loyalty to the Democratic party was the assumption that the party was pledged to leave race relations in the hands of the states. When the Democratic party ceased to be the party of white supremacy, the deepest basis of Southern solidarity had been destroyed."

In one respect, his opponents in the South misperceived Truman, for he never wholly abandoned the racist view he had absorbed from his family or his sympathy for the Southern tra-

dition of localism. Even after blacks hailed him as their champion, he continued to sprinkle his private conversation with terms such as *nigger*. He not only opposed the 1960s sit-ins but thought they might well be Communist-inspired. In 1961 he told reporters that Northerners who went south on Freedom Rides were meddling outsiders bent on stirring up mischief where they did not belong, and in 1965 he called the Selma to Montgomery march "silly" and Martin Luther King, Jr., a "troublemaker."

Yet Truman's foes had good reason for thinking him their nemesis, because if he had a Confederate lineage he also felt intense loyalty to the Constitution and the Union. He especially revered the memory of Andrew Jackson, a Southerner but a nationalist. Eventually he was even able, despite his family background, to bring himself to cherish the Great Emancipator.

Shortly after departing the White House, Truman reflected: "Old Abe Lincoln is . . . a president I admire tremendously. In a way, it's surprising . . . because I was born and raised in the South . . . and a lot of southern-



Two decades after he issued the order that integrated the services, the former President reviews a Marine honor guard.

ers still don't feel that way about him at all. And that included the Truman family, all of whom were against him. Some of them even thought it was a fine thing that he got assassinated.

"I realized even as a child that was pretty extreme thinking or worse; let's just call it dumb thinking, or no thinking at all. But it still took me a while to realize what a good man Lincoln really was, with a great brain and even greater heart, a man who really cared about people and educated himself to the point where he knew how government should work and tried his best to make ours work that way. I felt just the opposite of the rest of the Truman family after I studied the history of the country and realized what Lincoln did to save the Union. That's when I came to my present conclusion, and that was a long, long time ago. . . . Lincoln was a great and wonderful man in every way."

Truman's reading in history and in documents such as the Declaration of

Independence and the Bill of Rights had led him to question the assumptions on which he was raised. He acted as he did not because he believed in the social equality of the races, not because he was "anti-South," but because he took solemnly the oath he had sworn to sustain the Constitution.

As a border-state Democrat Truman carried within him the conflicts that divided not only Missouri but the country. He had been nurtured on the valor of Robert E. Lee, the iniquity of the Union raiders, the melancholia of the Lost Cause. Only someone who understood himself to be a Southerner could have felt such empathy for the traditions of the South. Yet he also had a schoolboy's love of the history not of a section but of a nation, took pride in having been a doughboy in

the Army of the United States of America, and viewed the Constitution as sacred text. That nationalist theme, a minor one when he was a child, was the one that prevailed in the end. As a consequence Truman permanently altered the character of Southern politics. For the first time since Reconstruction, he made civil rights a proper concern for the national government, and for the first time ever the Democratic party became the main protagonist for the rights of blacks. The South, and the nation, would never be the same again. ★

William E. Leuchtenburg, William Rand Kenan Professor of History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, is president of the American Historical Association. An expanded version of this essay, which was one of the three Fleming Lectures in Southern History he delivered at Louisiana State University in April, will be published by LSU Press in *Three "Southern" Presidents*.

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THE TRUMAN YEARS—I

MY first political memory is of Election Day, 1916. My father was a loyal Democrat, and our family supported President Wilson against his opponent, Charles Evans Hughes. To inform the people of St. Louis of the results as quickly as possible, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* had made an ingenious arrangement with the local utility companies. In the evening, "the electric lights in homes and street cars will flicker out once and be turned on again if President Wilson has been re-elected," the newspaper proudly announced. "If Hughes is elected, the lights will flicker out three times." I was nine, it was the first election I was aware of, and this novel way of learning the outcome especially excited me, because it might allow me to stay up late. I begged my parents to allow me to await the signal, and they agreed.

We waited in our living room as the evening wore on. Finally, near midnight, our lights blinked once. As we began cheering for Wilson, our lights suddenly blinked twice more. Plunged into despair, we went to bed thinking Hughes had been elected. It was not until a day later that we, and the nation, learned that California's vote, which was counted late, had gone to Wilson, and, with it, the 1916 election. Of the many election nights I have lived through since, only one, in 1948, was as memorable.

After graduating from college and law school, I practiced law in St. Louis for fifteen years, and then, on April 28, 1944, at the age of thirty-seven, I executed the oath of office as lieutenant, junior grade, in the United States Naval Reserve. Armed with my new commission, I went downtown to buy a uniform, as well as a "how to" book on Navy customs and regulations. I knew absolutely nothing about military procedures—not even how to give and receive a salute.

A few days later, I received orders to report to the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, in Washington, D.C. I arrived by train in a city that, like the nation it governed, had been

transformed by the war. Washington in 1944 buzzed with energy, excitement, and purpose. Men and women in uniform rushed through the once sleepy streets. I found the commotion a bit overwhelming at first. I had visited Washington a few times on legal business, but I had never got to know the city, its people, or its culture. I commuted each morning to the Navy Department, where I was assigned routine staff work.

Shortly after D Day, I was selected as one of two officers assigned to make a survey of Navy logistical activities on the West Coast, in preparation for the coming push against Japan. My partner on this mission was a Reserve lieutenant-commander from Pittsburgh named Nathan Pearson, who had worked in marketing research for U.S. Steel before the war. The pattern of our inspection tours soon became familiar. At each stop, Pearson and I handed the base commander a letter from the top Navy brass in Washington requesting his full cooperation. Invariably, we received an effusive welcome—and almost no information of substance. After several hours of this empty ritual, we searched out lower-ranking Reserve officers stationed at the installation. Then we invariably got a different story, revealing key information about the base's strengths and weaknesses.

I learned an important lesson from this tour, which served me well in the distant future: to find out what was really going on in the military, it was necessary to look beyond the official chain of command. Top commanders, whether in the Second World War or

in Vietnam, were predictably defensive about any sign of weakness. One had to look behind the official briefings in order to assemble an accurate picture. My legal experience was useful in dealing with the military, but a different and less confrontational procedure was necessary. I believe that my real preparation for service as Secretary of Defense twenty-four years later began on that inspection tour in 1944.

Once we were back in Washington, Pearson and I assembled our conclusions and submitted a lengthy report, emphasizing the need to unify Navy logistical operations on the West Coast. Acting on those recommendations, the Navy reorganized and strengthened the Western Sea Frontier—the command responsible for coordinating supply activities on the West Coast. To direct this new effort Washington chose the Commander-in-Chief of the Atlantic Fleet, Admiral Royal E. Ingersoll, who had the experience and the four-star rank essential for exercising effective control over the flow of material from the West Coast ports into the Pacific theatre.

Admiral Ingersoll was impressed by our report, and soon Pearson and I were headed back to San Francisco, this time as part of Ingersoll's staff. Upon arriving at the Western Sea Frontier headquarters, we began organizing Navy supply lines from the West Coast to forward areas in the Pacific, in preparation for the planned invasion of Japan.

On April 12, 1945, in the middle of a cool, clear, and breezy afternoon, the Western Sea Frontier received the news of President Roosevelt's death. Like everyone else, I was stunned, and wholly unprepared for it. Certainly I could not have imagined the consequences for me personally—consequences that led me to the White House in less than three months, and launched a career that would last for the rest of my life.

EVEN at the moment of initial shock, however, I felt a small, personal flutter when I realized that I



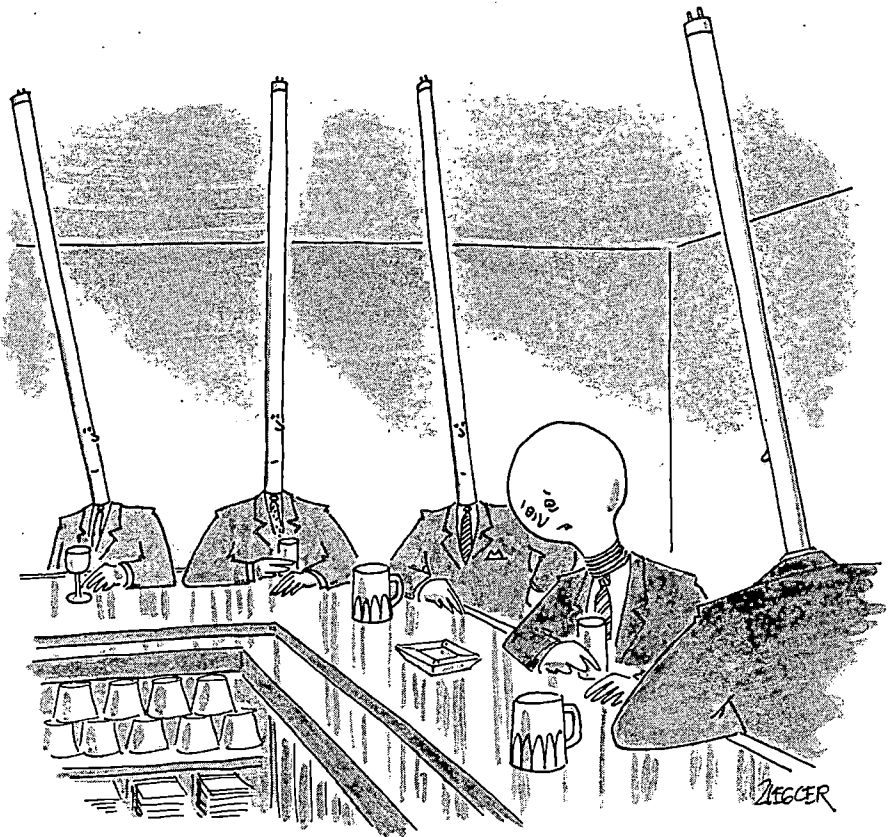
had once met the man who was now President of the United States. It was in 1939, at a cocktail party at the St. Louis home of a friend and client, James K. Vardaman, Jr., who was one of the city's few businessmen to have supported Harry Truman's successful bid for the Senate in 1934. My meeting with Senator Truman had been brief and inconsequential. But my acquaintanceship with Vardaman turned out to be the key to my career in Washington.

Shortly after Roosevelt's death, I got an unexpected telephone call from Vardaman, who was now a Naval Reserve officer. He was in San Francisco and wanted to see me right away. We met a few hours later at a downtown hotel. Almost vibrating with excitement, he told me he was going to be the naval aide to the new President. We both knew that it would be unprecedented for the naval aide to come from the Naval Reserve rather than the regular Navy. That may have seemed like a distinction without a difference to the rest of the world, but it meant everything in the tradition-laden Navy, which believed that a post of such prestige should always be given to a career officer. Vardaman, angry at the way the regulars scorned the Reserves, saw his new post as a way of settling some scores.

During our discussion, Vardaman raised the possibility that I might eventually join him in Washington. In June, Vardaman returned to San Francisco for a momentous event: the signing of the Charter of the United Nations. America seemed to stand at the absolute height of its power and self-confidence, and its hopes for its new President, the new world organization, and a peaceful postwar world all seemed to converge on that lovely city in June of 1945.

Only the war still going on in the Pacific shadowed the mood. Some of the men dealing with Stalin—future colleagues of mine, like Averell Harriman, Robert Lovett, James Forrestal, George Kennan, and Dean Acheson—may have already seen the clouds of the Cold War, but they were not visible to a slightly overage naval lieutenant thinking about his meeting with the new President's naval aide.

When we met, Vardaman told me in confidence that the President would shortly be going to Potsdam for a meeting with Churchill and Stalin to settle



"Laugh if you will, but my kind once ruled the earth."

the future of postwar Europe and plan the final phase of the Pacific war. But Vardaman's immediate concern, was not Russia or Japan; instead, it was one that gave me my first glimpse of Washington power struggles. His problem was with the Navy, and its strong-willed Secretary, James V. Forrestal. As we had both anticipated, the Navy was upset that a Naval Reserve officer held the job of naval aide to the President. Forrestal had offered to send someone over to "take care" of Vardaman's office while he was at Potsdam. Vardaman interpreted the offer as a Navy effort to protect its parochial interests and spy on him. He had a solution to this problem which would also bring me to Washington, if only temporarily: he would assign me to the White House as his assistant while he and the President were at Potsdam. My main function would be to keep any regular Navy officers—Navy "spies"—from entering his office while he was away. Vardaman even thought that he could get me a temporary promotion, on the ground that the position required someone of a higher rank. The idea was irresistible. I might get a chance to observe, and even participate

in, some history. I would be nearer my family, who were staying with relatives in Boston. And the work would be more interesting than what I was doing at the Western Sea Frontier.

After our conversation, Vardaman gave me a ticket for the signing of the United Nations Charter, at the War Memorial Opera House on June 26th. From a red plush seat in the balcony I looked down at a wondrous sight: the brilliant colors of the fifty flags of the nations present, each on a gilded flagpole, arrayed behind a large circular table with a green baize cover, on which lay two large books bound in gleaming hand-tooled blue leather and waiting to be signed. Below me, in the orchestra, I could see the delegates of many countries, bathed in floodlights. When the time came for the United States to sign the document, I felt euphoria and pride as I watched our President walk onstage, accompanied by the Secretary of State, Edward R. Stettinius, and, next to him, the President's military aide, Colonel Harry Vaughan, and Vardaman. In honor of the official color of the United Nations, the President had dressed himself in a navy-blue suit, with a blue necktie and

up maps and putting documents in folders, preparing to transport part of the Map Room to Potsdam for the conference. I was impressed by the sight of these efficient young men, and noted that I was older than any of them.

One of the men I met in the Map Room that day was a twenty-seven-year-old Naval Reserve lieutenant named George M. Elsey, and he became my closest associate and collaborator over the next twenty-five years. Elsey told me later of the intense curiosity with which he and his colleagues greeted me. They were already extremely uncomfortable with what they viewed as Vardaman's abrupt and crude style, and were wary of the man he had brought in to replace the popular and respected Tyree.

WHILE I was excited by the opportunity that Vardaman had offered me, I looked at Washington as simply a temporary assignment. I planned to return to St. Louis and my law firm as soon as the war was over. My ambition remained at that time exactly what it had been since 1929: to be the best trial lawyer in St. Louis, to live there for the rest of my life and bring up my family there. Washington—even the White House—was merely another, albeit better, assignment in my Second World War service. I had been educated in St. Louis, had lived for only the briefest time in the East, and did not feel myself to be in any way part of the so-called Eastern Establishment, which dominated the corridor of financial, legal, and political power between New York and Washington. But I welcomed the chance to see how it worked.

I reported to the White House for official duty on July 11th, four days after the Presidential party left for the long sea trip to Europe. The place was quiet compared with the bustle I had encountered only a few days earlier. And when I arrived a pleasant surprise awaited me: a temporary office on the second floor of the East Wing, on the northwest corner, facing Pennsylvania Avenue. It was not a large office, but that was of no importance: I had an office in the White House.

As I settled in, I discovered quickly that there was very little for an assistant to the naval aide to the President to do when the President and his naval aide were both away. The only specific assignment Vardaman had given me

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was to oversee the redesign of the Presidential seal and flag—a project on which George Elsey, who had gone to Potsdam, was already working. Guarding Vardaman's office, taking care of his mail, and keeping an eye on the Map Room took, at the most, only a few hours a day. It was quite a change from the feverish pace of the Western Sea Frontier.

Nevertheless, I was thoroughly enjoying myself and, to make the most of the assignment, I decided to get to know the White House better. In those days, before the Secret Service had subdivided even the inside of the White House into security zones, one could go pretty much anywhere except into the family quarters. The feeling of being at the center of history affected me deeply. The Cabinet Room, the Fish Room (now called the Roosevelt Room), and the rest of the West Wing seemed accessible and inviting, on the one hand, and highly intimidating, on the other. Although the White House was filled with the offices of powerful Presidential aides, it did not have the feeling of an office building. Partly because it is the home of the President and his family, the White House has always reflected the style and personality of its current residents. At the time, it just seemed simple and informal, like the Trumans themselves.

With free time on my hands, I began to look around to see if there was anything I could do to make myself more useful. As was the custom in those more civilized times, I made courtesy calls on people with whom the office of the naval aide worked. The most important of these early calls was on the special counsel to the President, Judge Samuel I. Rosenman, one of F.D.R.'s most valued associates, and the most important Roosevelt holdover in the Truman White House. Roosevelt had so valued Rosenman's advice that he wanted to create for Rosenman the plain and elegant title of "counsel to the President," but he had been dissuaded at the last minute by Attorney General Francis Biddle, on the ground that such a title would undercut the role of the Attorney General as the President's legal adviser. So F.D.R. simply added the word "special" to the title he had in mind, and Rosenman became the special counsel to the President. (In the nineteen-seventies, as the power of the White House staff grew,

one of F.D.R.'s successors removed the word "special" from the title, reestablishing Roosevelt's original title for the position.)

Rosenman had the second-largest and second-best office in the White House, situated approximately where the Vice-President's office is today, facing the magnificent Old Executive Office Building. I noticed immediately that while much of the rest of the White House seemed to slumber in the President's absence, Rosenman's office was a beehive of activity. Three typists were constantly busy, and Rosenman himself was buried in papers. He told me he had just been ordered to meet President Truman in Europe to take charge of drafting a sort of interim State of the Union Message, which the President wished to give upon his return. The fact that the President, surrounded by the rest of his staff in Potsdam, still needed Rosenman had a profound impact on me. It was evident that no one on the new team possessed anything approaching his vast experience as a Presidential assistant.

From the moment I met Rosenman, we hit it off. We shared a reverence for the law and an enjoyment of the nuances of the legal profession, which we discussed often as we got to know each other. He had bright, intelligent eyes, which contrasted with a heavy, ponderous bearing. His manner was wise and thoughtful, and his advice was always carefully thought out and carefully presented. He combined a subtle wit with a fine sense of irony. His advocacy on a matter was powerful, and usually decisive, with President Truman, and later I saw him confront, without the slightest concern for his own bureaucratic position, men who were much closer personally to the President. He was a confirmed liberal, who believed deeply in resuming the Roosevelt New Deal as soon as the war was over.

In many conversations, before and after his trip, Rosenman gave me his view of the proper role of a Presidential



aide. It has guided me ever since. He stressed one basic point: the White House staff exists for a single purpose—to serve the President. Presidential assistants who become controversial violate the first rule of their service to the man whom the people of the United States have elected: they should never advance a personal agenda if it conflicts in any way with the President's policies or interests. If a member of the President's staff becomes controversial, he weakens the man who has chosen him, and should, if he is honorable, offer the President his resignation. (It is remarkable how many Presidential assistants, in almost every Administration from Truman to Bush, have not understood that their basic obligation is to the President who has chosen them.) I believe that Roosevelt was entirely correct in his feeling—shared fully by Rosenman—that members of the Presidential staff should not become public personalities. True, the rise of a larger and ever more voracious press corps in Washington, together with the temptations of publicity and fame, has made his dictum increasingly difficult for many senior aides to live up to in recent years. However, in those long-ago days, when White House aides did not make regular public and press appearances, Rosenman epitomized this philosophy. Unlike today's senior White House officials, who often build personal staffs in order to enhance their own positions, Rosenman worked without any aides, simply reaching out to anyone he thought could be of help. One of the many items on his agenda when I arrived at the White House was preparing a message to Congress on universal military training, and, because I was available, he asked me to assist him on it. Rosenman left for Europe to meet the President at the end of July, only about two weeks after I arrived. But so informal and small was the White House in those days that neither of us saw anything odd in the fact that, upon leaving, the President's special counsel turned over such a responsibility to the temporary assistant naval aide.

AS I toiled in obscurity in the East Wing in July, momentous events were unfolding at the conference of the Big Three in Potsdam, and at a place code-named Trinity, in the desert near Alamogordo, New Mexico. Since the Manhattan Project was run by the

Army, operating directly under the President through Major General Leslie Groves, the head of the Manhattan Project, and Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, and since information about it was carefully compartmentalized, I knew nothing of the July 16th test of the atomic bomb at Trinity or of the plans to drop the bomb on Japan.

I was in my office in the White House on August 6th when I heard about Hiroshima. My initial reaction to the news was as simple as that of most other Americans: the war would be over sooner than we had expected, with less loss of American life. Mercifully, that proved to be the case, but I knew too little to suspect the larger truth: that we had entered an age in which warfare would never be the same; that, in fact, the development of nuclear weapons would turn out to be the most significant event of the century—even more significant than the rise and fall of Fascism and Communism. Had I known that over twenty years later, as Secretary of Defense, I would be the direct link between the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the nuclear chain of command, my excitement would undoubtedly have been tempered by more sombre reflections.

When President Truman and I became closer, he talked often about the decision to drop the atomic bomb on Japan. Although he never evinced any doubt about his decision, he wanted his actions to be understood. He always emphasized the point that no one had told him about the Manhattan Project before he became President. To withhold from the man next in the chain of command the most vital secret of the war was not an oversight but a deliberate—and, I believe, irresponsible—decision by President Roosevelt and his senior advisers.

President Truman told me he had first heard of the existence of “the most terrible weapon” on the evening he became President, less than four hours after Roosevelt died and only twenty minutes after being sworn in as President. Secretary of War Stimson had then taken him aside and told him that Roosevelt had set up a special organization to develop a “superbomb,” which was almost ready for its first test. President Truman said he had been so overwhelmed by the events of the day that the information about the bomb

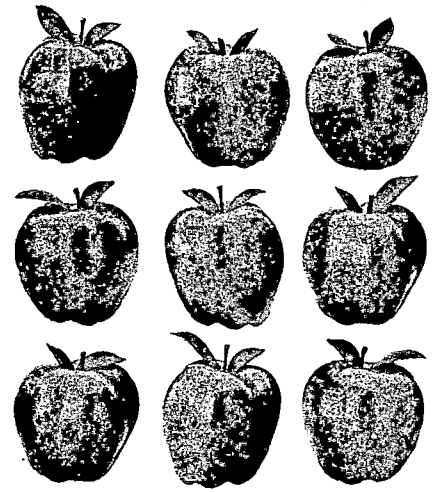
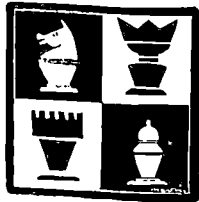
did not sink in—a clear demonstration, if any were needed, of the need to keep the Vice-President fully informed of important events, so that he (or she) can deal with any decisions that need to be made quickly if the President is unable, for whatever reason, to perform his functions.

When Stimson heard nothing more on the subject from the new President for two weeks, he asked to see him “on a highly secret matter.” He brought with him General Groves. They handed President Truman a detailed memorandum that contained a heart-stopping sentence: “Within four months we shall in all probability have completed the most terrible weapon ever known in human history, one bomb which could destroy a whole city.”

This is the way that President Truman learned that he would soon face a decision unique in history, and would face it under very difficult conditions. While the men on whom he relied for advice had worked with each other for years, he knew what they now told him for only the first time. Given the number of other pressing matters with which he had to deal, he had no time to educate himself adequately. But from the moment he met with Stimson and Groves he understood that the final decision would have to be his, and his alone. “I am going to have to make a decision which no man in history has ever had to make,” he said to the very next person he saw after Stimson left his office—Leonard Reinsch, a radio-station director who was temporarily assigned to the White House staff. “I’ll make the decision, but it is terrifying to think about what I will have to decide.”

When President Truman discussed these events later, he always made it clear that he had only one goal: to end the war as soon as possible. I stress this point because of the controversy that continues even today concerning three aspects of these events.

First, there has been speculation, over the years, that the use of the bomb against Japan instead of Germany was related to racial factors; that, not wishing to use it against Europeans, the United States reserved it for Asians. That notion is utterly false. The use of new techniques, such as incendiary bombing, against targets that included



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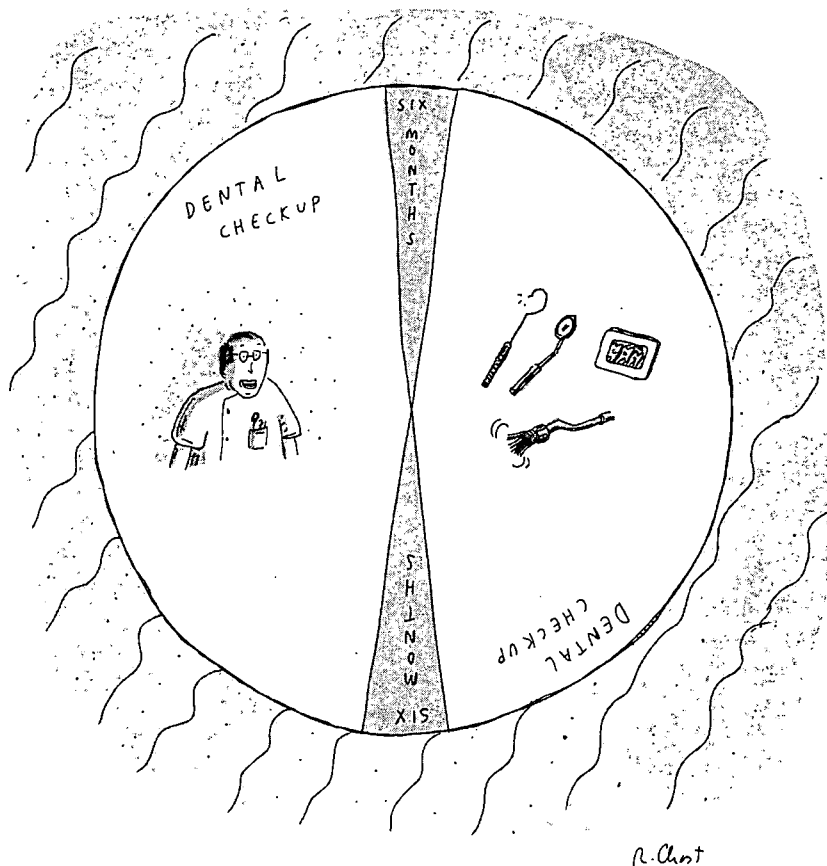


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THE WHEEL OF LIFE



R. Chant

Dresden was nearly as devastating as the atomic bomb. Besides, the men who built the bomb, including J. Robert Oppenheimer, had hoped to finish it in time for it to be used against Germany. I have no doubt that if it had been finished in time to be useful in shortening the European war President Roosevelt or President Truman would have used it.

Second, a theory has frequently been advanced that one of the main reasons for the use of the bomb against Japan was to intimidate the Russians. As recently as late 1989, Eduard Shevardnadze, then the Soviet Foreign Minister, repeated this charge. "Military there was no need to drop nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki," he said in a speech in New York. "It was a political decision taken to intimidate us. This tragedy of the century must be brought to light and its perpetrators globally denounced." There is no evidence to support this theory. Never did I hear President Truman or any of his colleagues discuss the use of the bomb against Japan in terms of Soviet-American relations. In the summer of 1945, when a weary nation and

its new President wanted nothing more than to end the Pacific war quickly and bring the rest of the troops home, considerations of postwar strategy and relations with Moscow were low on the national agenda, and unrelated to the discussion of what to do with the new weapon.

Finally, there is the most frequently debated question about the decision to drop the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki: Why did the President not order a demonstration bomb dropped on an unpopulated area before using one on a populated area?

To President Truman the issue was not as complicated as it seems to many people today. There were several reasons he did not consider the idea of a demonstration bomb. First, his scientists and military advisers, with only one test behind them, were not absolutely certain that the next bomb would perform properly, and they did not want to risk a publicized dud. Second, his advisers felt that Japan would not appreciate the uniqueness and the full destructive power of the bomb unless it was used against an actual target. The fact that the President was at Potsdam

or on the cruiser during the most critical period—between the flash in the New Mexico sky on July 16th and the flight of the Enola Gay on August 6th—meant that he was never presented with a full-scale argument for a demonstration bomb. He told me later, however, that he had considered it, and had come to the conclusion that a demonstration would not suffice after a war of such terrible carnage—that Japanese lives would have to be sacrificed to save many more lives, both American and Japanese.

In the end, what weighed most heavily with President Truman was the military estimate that enormous numbers of American casualties would be suffered in an assault upon the main islands of Japan. Only eight months earlier, the American Army had suffered heavy losses in the Battle of the Bulge, against a German enemy thought to have been already defeated. The assumption was that the Japanese, deeply committed to their emperor, would fight even more tenaciously than Germany, and everyone remembered that the Third Reich had resisted down to the last street in Berlin. In our conversations the President mentioned this factor more than any other. The estimate that stayed in his mind was a total of five hundred thousand, consisting of half killed in action and half wounded. Thus in President Truman's mind the decision was relatively simple—a choice between sacrificing a horrendous number of Americans and using a weapon that could shorten the war dramatically. Although he later spent considerable time defending his decision, he did not agonize over it at the time. Death and destruction on the most extreme scale had been the hallmarks of both the First World War, in which Harry Truman fought, and the one whose conclusion was now in his hands. He wanted to end the war as quickly as possible.

THE pace of epochal events in August and September of 1945 was intense. President Truman and his entourage returned from Europe on August 7th. Two days later, on the same day as the second atomic bomb was dropped, on Nagasaki, President Truman reported to the nation on his trip and on the atomic bomb. Five days later, the Japanese surrendered.

August 14th was an unforgettable day, with excitement building as the

nation waited for formal word that the war was over. A huge crowd gathered around the White House, creating the most joyous mood I have ever seen in Washington. Finally, in the late afternoon, word came, through the Swiss: the Japanese had surrendered unconditionally. At 7 P.M., I went outside to walk through the streets of the capital—in uniform, as always. Everywhere, people were dancing, celebrating wildly. Everybody was everybody's friend that night. It was a sweet time to be alive.

THE formal responsibilities of the assistant naval aide to the President were fairly limited even when the President was in the White House. We used to refer to the job as being similar to a potted palm, because one of its most important requirements was then, as it is now, to stand quietly in the background at social and ceremonial events, on the alert for some unescorted woman who might need to be helped to her seat, or to assist some lost guest in search of the White House washrooms. This aspect of the job was central to its justification, but it was boring. However, in the nineteen-forties, before the development of the modern National Security Council structure and of the elaborate system of communications that now exists between the President and the Pentagon, the naval aide had another, more important function, which was to act as the liaison between the Navy Department and the President on naval matters. That brought me into contact with that remarkable and ultimately tragic man James V. Forrestal.

Forrestal was fifty-three years old. He had gone to Princeton and had then worked his way rapidly up to the presidency of the New York investment firm of Dillon, Read & Company. Unlike most of his Wall Street colleagues, he supported the New Deal. In 1940, he came to Washington as an administrative assistant to President Roosevelt, and later that year he moved to the Navy Department, first as Under-Secretary and then, in 1944, as Secretary of the Navy.

Given the strains between Vardaman and Forrestal, I was initially concerned that I would be caught between the two men, but in fact one result of their mutual antipathy was that both of them decided to deal with each other through me rather than directly. Thus, almost

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from my earliest days at the White House I was thrust into a close relationship with this fascinating man.

My first courtesy call on Forrestal did not last long. I approached it with uncertainty; I was a newly promoted lieutenant commander working for a man Forrestal did not like or respect, and Forrestal was one of Washington's most powerful men. But, to my relief, he was cordial and did not make any references to his annoyance with Vardaman or to the Navy's original opposition to my new assignment.

He had a wiry, coiled frame, and I couldn't help noticing his nose, which was flattened—the result of a boxing match in his youth. I was struck immediately, and again in all our subsequent meetings, by the extraordinary intensity and nervous energy of the man. Although we later became good friends and worked closely together, I always felt a bit uncomfortable in the presence of that intensity: it never let up. Over time, another aspect of Forrestal's personality came to disturb me: he seemed virtually devoid of a sense of humor. I have always thought a sense of humor indispensable for people in high-pressure jobs. Jim Forrestal not only lacked it but increasingly, we all came to learn, found humor in others irritating. He was the opposite of Rosenman, who maintained an easy and relaxed demeanor even when he was dealing with affairs of great moment; Forrestal conveyed agitation and tension even when he was dealing with minor matters. That was true as early as 1945—long before he began to destroy himself.

MY work gave me growing satisfaction in the late summer and the fall of 1945. I was spending less than a quarter of my time on my formal duties as assistant naval aide. Once in a while, when Vardaman was away, I would fill in for him at functions that required the naval aide's presence. The first time such a situation caused me to sit in on high-level discussions was in November of 1945, and the occasion was the first postwar summit—the meeting, in Washington, of President Truman, Prime Minister Clement Attlee of Great Britain, and Prime Minister Mackenzie King of Canada. Mine was the last name on the guest list, but the purpose of the meeting was nothing less than to develop a postwar policy for the international aspects of atomic energy. Although such occa-

sions were very rare, Rosenman, with Vardaman's approval, kept me busy on a growing number of projects, only a few of which had anything to do with military affairs. While most people in the government allowed events to set their agenda, Rosenman worked steadily toward clear objectives, minimizing diversions. I helped him draft messages for the President, organized research for him, and, always, learned from him about the government. In the closing months of 1945, he took me into the Oval Office for several meetings with President Truman. The issues under discussion were not as important as the fact that Rosenman wanted the President to start to view me as more than a junior naval aide.

In those months, the nation began the adjustment to peacetime conditions. For most people, that meant getting back to their prewar lives or moving on to something new. The White House was no exception, and at the beginning of 1946 Rosenman left the White House to return to practicing law in New York. On January 14th, President Truman told his morning staff meeting that he intended to nominate Vardaman as a governor of the Federal Reserve Board. He did not name a successor, and I became that odd Washington half person, an "acting" naval aide. As it happened, Vardaman's nomination caused a minor controversy and brought me into close contact with the President for the first time. The press went after Vardaman for several abuses of his position as naval aide, including the use of personnel from the Presidential yacht as occasional personal servants and of a Navy painter to repaint his back porch and gate. Those acts had undoubtedly been leaked by Navy officers seeking revenge against Vardaman. At the same time, some former business and banking associates of Vardaman's from St. Louis, primarily Republicans, indicated that they were prepared to testify against his appointment.

As the battle intensified, President

Truman called me into his office for our first private meeting. He gave me an assignment: because of my knowledge of Vardaman himself and also of details of his St. Louis business career, he wanted me to take on responsibility for coordinating the confirmation of Vardaman. It was personally important to him that Vardaman be confirmed, he said. I had no experience in congressional relations, and did not yet know any members of Congress well, but in those more informal days my assignment was not as unusual as it might seem today, when every President has a large office devoted entirely to working with the legislative branch. The fight for Vardaman gave me my first lessons in the care and feeding of Congress. For six weeks in February and March of 1946, I worked on the Vardaman nomination, conferring regularly with senators in both parties. In the process, we were able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of most senators that Vardaman's opponents were venting personal animosities, which had no bearing on his qualifications for the Federal Reserve Board, and he was confirmed.

With the departure of Rosenman and Vardaman, obvious questions arose concerning my own future. Although I had been at the White House only seven months, there were rumors that I was being considered not only as Vardaman's replacement but as a possible successor to Judge Rosenman. President Truman had made many efforts to get Rosenman to stay, arguing that there was no one available to replace him. Later, I learned that Rosenman had immediately replied, "Mr. President, you have a fine replacement sitting right here in the White House, and he even happens to be from Missouri. His name is Clifford." According to Rosenman, President Truman replied that I was too young and inexperienced to assume the authority and status that came with the title of special counsel, but that he would assign me many of the tasks previously carried out under Rosenman's direction. So, while newspapers had speculated that I would replace Rosenman, the President announced on January 24th that he would simply not fill the position; it was a "wartime emergency post," created for one man, the President said, and did not need to be filled "now that our enemies have surrendered."

This decision was greeted with relief



and pleasure by several members of the White House staff who were part of the original Missouri team—especially the President's military aide, Harry Vaughan, who did not wish to see any threat to his intimate relationship with the President. They had been comrades since 1918, when, as young first lieutenants, they trained together. More than anyone else, Harry Vaughan could relax and amuse his friend. Primarily to have Vaughan around, Harry Truman had created a new position, military aide to the Vice-President, at the beginning of 1945, and Vaughan had been with him from the first minutes after Roosevelt's death. Unfortunately, Vaughan, like many other Presidential cronies over the years, did not understand that a personal friendship between two people has to be different from a relationship, no matter how close, with a President. Neither I nor any other White House aide ever threatened Vaughan's personal association with Harry Truman; none of us wanted to interfere with an old and treasured fellowship of the very sort that every President needs in order to relax. But Vaughan thought that his old ties to Harry Truman gave him special authority in areas of substance and personnel. Vaughan compounded his growing problems by a unilateral act of office imperialism. On his own authority, he took over Rosenman's spacious office. Washington has always been a city that pays special attention to such perquisites, and Vaughan's new office, with its proximity to the Oval Office, seemed to convey an increase in power. From it Vaughan attempted to spread his influence still further, thereby causing both Forrestal and Judge Robert Patterson, who had just succeeded Stimson as Secretary of War, to complain to President Truman.

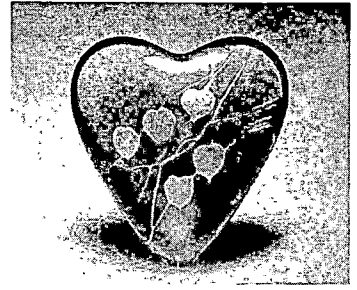
On April 4th, President Truman announced my appointment as naval aide, succeeding Vardaman. My work was bringing me into ever-closer contact with the President, and I understood his reluctance to promote me over the heads of many older White House aides who were closer to him. I had also received two rapid promotions in Navy rank—the first, in November, to the rank of commander, and the second, in January of 1946, to the rank of captain. The speed of those promotions, from a lieutenant, junior grade, to full captain in less than two years, was certainly unusual by any standard. My friends

and others pointed out that I had never had any seagoing assignments. I was, one of my friends said, the ultimate "dry-land sailor." Reading about my lack of seagoing experience, the humorist Robert Benchley, whom I had met during one of his visits to Washington, sent me a photograph of himself in an admiral's uniform with six stars and eleven rows of decorations on his chest; the photograph was inscribed to "Clark Clifford, without whose moral support I could not have achieved my old-age-security pension." *Time* suggested parallels between my career and that of Sir Joseph Porter, the character in the operetta "H.M.S. Pinafore" who had "served a term as office boy to an Attorney's firm" and gone on to become "Ruler of the Queen's Navee."

AS naval aide to the President, I found that my most enjoyable function was arranging the President's cherished poker games, most of which were held on the Williamsburg, the Presidential yacht.

The change that has come over the perception of the Presidency in the last half century is illustrated by the casual candor with which the public, the press, and the White House itself treated the President's favorite way of unwinding. There was none of the public sanctimony that exists today about such matters as a little gambling with the boys. When journalists asked what we were doing on the river, President Truman, instead of presenting a false picture of a President hard at work, complete with rigged photo opportunities showing him behind a stack of briefing books, would simply say, "Some of the boys and I were playing a little poker." If asked what we drank, the President would answer, "Kentucky bourbon."

The Williamsburg was a lovely two-hundred-and-forty-foot vessel, built in 1930 and reconfigured in 1945. It was said, even by my friends—or perhaps especially by my friends—that my seafaring career in the Navy was limited entirely to the Williamsburg. That may not have been entirely true, but it was close enough to amuse everyone, including President Truman, at my expense. I was also ill prepared for one of the main duties of the naval aide: to oversee the menus when the vessel transported the Commander-in-Chief. On one of the earliest cruises for which



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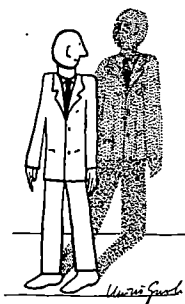
I was chief menu-maker, I absent-mindedly approved shrimp as an appetizer before both lunch and dinner for three straight days. The President found this oversight at once appalling and amusing, and after two days he turned to me and said, "I can't bear the sight of any more shrimp. I don't like shrimp. In fact, I've never liked shrimp." From then on, President Truman often referred to the Williamsburg as Clifford's Floating Shrimp Palace.

The poker games developed into one of the earliest important links between President Truman and me. The first few times I was on board the Williamsburg, the President did not include me in the game, but on about the third weekend he called on me to fill a vacant place at the table, and afterward, although I was not a particularly good poker player, he asked me to continue to participate. Before long, President Truman asked me to assume responsibility for setting up the game. He loved an eight-handed poker game, and played with a core group of regulars, including my close friend from St. Louis, Stuart Symington (later a senator), and Secretary of Agriculture Clinton Anderson (also later a senator), and—his favorite poker companion—Fred Vinson, the Secretary of the Treasury (later Chief Justice of the United States). To this group he added other players on a rotating basis. It was through the poker games that I first met Averell Harriman, then Secretary of Commerce. Harriman, one of the wealthiest men in the country, guarded his chips as though he were the poorest man at the table. A rising young protégé of Speaker Sam Rayburn, Representative and later Senator Lyndon Johnson, also joined the game from time to time. Johnson was extremely pleased to be included, but he was not much of a poker player.

The Williamsburg would usually depart late Friday afternoon and return Sunday afternoon. The poker weekends were stag affairs (President Truman, while always courteous to women, was rarely relaxed and comfortable in their presence), and, with the exception of the President, everyone had to share a stateroom. The poker game could be fun, especially when I was winning, but, like Lyndon Johnson, I

enjoyed most the long, leisurely meals—they often lasted two hours—when the President reminisced or talked politics.

The game itself was for real money—enough to make it interesting, and sometimes dangerous, for someone trying to live on a naval officer's salary. President Truman's theory on the stakes was simple: "I want to play for enough so that it is a good game with a lot of skill involved, but I don't want anyone to get hurt." I bought a book on poker and studied it assiduously. I found that if I played rather conservatively I could, over time, actually generate a small but useful amount of additional income. As for President Truman, he enjoyed himself thoroughly, whether he won or lost. It was the fellowship and the release from White House pressure that



made those trips so important to him.

The President asked me to be the banker of the poker game. As we started out on Friday evening, I would distribute a five-hundred-dollar stack of chips to each player. If he lost this stack he would receive a second five-hundred-dollar stack. In my capacity as banker, I would extract approximately ten per cent of each pot and put the chips in a silver bowl, called the poverty bowl. As the weekend went on, the chips would add up to a rather substantial sum. If a player had lost his full thousand dollars, I would supply him, free of charge, with an additional stake of a hundred dollars from the poverty bowl. If he lost that hundred-dollar stake, he would be supplied with another one, and he could continue to dip into the silver bowl until he made his way back into the game. The system kept everyone in the game, and limited the amount a player could lose to nine hundred dollars.

Many hours of poker lead, of course, to many stories, and, like fishing stories, they tend to get exaggerated over time. But one incident with Fred Vinson remained vivid for years. Vinson was named Chief Justice of the United States by President Truman in 1946, but his status as the President's favorite poker companion did not change. A large and gentle man with a long, rather sad face (*Time* once likened it to that of a "a tired sheep with a hangover"), he shared with President

Truman not only a love of poker but a similar sense of humor. In 1947, I suggested to the President that we combine a poker evening with a party on Vinson's birthday, and this became an annual event, which usually took place at my house, in Chevy Chase. After a festive dinner, we would adjourn to a big round table for our poker game.

Late at night one year, when my mother happened to be visiting, we played a hand in which the pot in the middle of the table grew to about three thousand dollars. Neither my hand nor my nerve was strong enough to keep me in, so, seated between the President and the Chief Justice, I dropped out to watch the action. As the tension built, Vinson studied his cards. I could see that if he got any card from a jack down—this was a game of high-low, with most of the cards showing on the table—he would win at least half the pot. With the odds heavily in his favor, he turned to President Truman, who was dealing the cards, and said, "O.K., Mr. President, hit me." The President flipped the next card over. It was the queen of spades. Without thinking, Vinson looked straight at the President and burst out, "You son of a bitch!" There was a moment of shocked silence; no one had ever called President Truman anything other than Mr. President, even in the informal setting of the poker table. The hush was broken by the Chief Justice, stammering apologetically, "Oh, Mr. President, Mr. President—" Never did President Truman, or the rest of us, laugh harder or louder than we did at that moment; my mother, asleep upstairs, was awakened by the racket and said she had never heard a group of men laughing so loud in her entire life. (Years later, the Chief Justice defended himself on the ground that his outburst was "ejaculatory only and not addressed to the President.")

AS I came to know President Truman as a boss and a friend, I also came to know his mother, and I realized that this remarkable woman, born eight years before the start of the Civil War, had been central in shaping her son's values. She took pride in him, not for being President but for having character. Once, in 1946, he gave a small dinner for her in the family quarters of the White House. He wanted her to meet his staff, and he wanted us to meet his mother. We chatted

casually for a while, and then someone asked her, teasingly, if she would like to share with us any secrets about her son. She lit up with pride, and said, in an utterly serious tone, that she would share with us a secret about Harry that the world did not know. We all leaned forward; I was literally on the edge of my seat. "When he was a boy," she said, "Harry could plow the straightest furrow in Jackson County." I looked at the President, who was beaming with pleasure.

MY most frequent assignment in those early days was speech-writing. Rosenman was gone, his talent with words gone with him. Unbelievably, there was no professionally qualified speechwriter around the White House to fill the vacuum. But Rosenman had deliberately strengthened my position by bringing me into direct contact with the President at every opportunity, and assignments began to come my way. My association with the President at the poker table undoubtedly helped increase the flow of those assignments.

Notwithstanding a love of language instilled in me by my mother, I did not consider myself to have any particular gift as a writer. Even though he had suggested me as his successor, Rosenman himself understood my limitations in this area. He later commented, accurately, that I was "quite a pedestrian writer."

No one would ever rank Harry Truman with Presidents like Lincoln, the two Roosevelts, and Kennedy as an outstanding orator, or place his inexperienced speechwriter in a class with speechwriters like Roosevelt's Robert Sherwood and Kennedy's Theodore Sorensen. But I felt strongly that President Truman must find his own style, and worked diligently toward this goal. Over time, President Truman did develop a short, punchy style—one that came to reflect his own homespun Missouri personality and values, in contrast to the very different phrasing and style of the aristocratic squire of Hyde Park. Harvard accents and oratory gave way to Missouri "common sense."

To review major speeches, President Truman would call a conference of advisers in the Cabinet Room. He followed a procedure that was probably unique to him. First, he would read the entire draft aloud to get a feeling for it.

Sometimes he would then ask me to read the speech aloud, too, so he could hear how it sounded. Afterward, he would review it paragraph by paragraph, asking for comments and suggestions after each paragraph. He preferred short, basic sentences, and his own changes were always in the direction of making the speech simpler, more understandable, more direct.

CALLING me into his office in early June of 1946, the President said, without any drama or ceremony, that it was about time for me to get out of uniform and become special counsel in name as well as fact. Not long after, he took me aside again and added, "You should also get out of the East Wing and be closer to my office. I want you and Vaughan to switch offices." (Harry Vaughan took offense at this change, and held me accountable for his removal to a far more modest office, in the East Wing.) To the inevitable question "What does a special counsel do?" the answer was "Whatever the President wants." The title "special counsel" was grand, but the job had no power or authority other than that conferred on it by the President. In a pattern that continued throughout my career, my value was as an adviser or counsellor, and not as an administrative or bureaucratic chief.

Over time, a working routine developed in the Truman White House. For me, the key events in each Presidential day were the first and the last—the morning staff meeting and, even more important, a private meeting that usually ended the working day. The morning staff meetings had a casual air to them; today much of what took place in them would be handled by the White House chief of staff, without the participation of the President. But President Truman did all the work himself, sometimes in a haphazard manner. He began each meeting by going through the papers on his desk, handing them out to various members of the staff for action. Charlie Ross, his press secretary, would raise any press or public-relations problems. After that, the rest of the staff would bring up anything they felt needed Presidential attention. I tended to wait until late in the meeting before speaking, and to bring up only those items that needed immediate approval. I knew I would have a more important opportunity to talk to the President at our



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private meeting at the end of the day.

I normally saved for it a number of matters that, though not necessarily urgent, required considered discussion. Nothing was off limits during our private discussions. It was the perfect time to reflect on the day and to look ahead, and the President, who often had a bourbon-and-branch-water as we talked, seemed to enjoy the interval between the working day and the evening.

There are many ways to organize the White House staff, and no single structure is "right" for every President. But the organization of the White House must start with the recognition that the President is, first of all, a person like the rest of us, with his peculiarities, preferences, strengths, and weaknesses. Whatever system a President uses should reflect his individual character as well as the nature of the job. President Truman liked harmony among his staff. He did not deliberately set one staff member against another, as Franklin Roosevelt had done, and as Lyndon Johnson would do later. Talking to Sam Rosenman about the contrast between Roosevelt and Truman, I concluded that the enjoyment Roosevelt took in watching members of his staff compete with each other probably derived, in part, from his having been unable to engage in sports since he contracted polio—that he liked to play with people instead, as a kind of indoor sport. But President Truman did not play this game.

The manner in which President Truman ran the White House evolved as the months passed, but at all times it reflected his informality, his accessibility and openness, and his preference for rapid, intuitive decision-making rather than careful, analytical staff work. His White House could best be visualized as a wheel with spokes. Each spoke was one of his key aides, with different (but sometimes overlapping) areas of responsibility. Harry Truman would never have felt comfortable if access to him had been controlled by a single person. No organization chart of the Truman White House ever existed, and no one except the President himself gave any of the senior staff a direct order. I was a major beneficiary of this unstructured system, but I must admit that the process of decision-making sometimes dismayed me. Given my belief in exhaustive preparation, its casu-

alness and frequent superficiality ran counter to my training.

DESPITE the President's preference for harmony, an important struggle took place in his Administration between liberal and conservative factions. My values pulled me decisively toward the liberals in that struggle. The President himself combined some contradictory attitudes: he usually supported specific New Deal or liberal policies when he was given a clear choice, but often appointed conservatives to high Cabinet positions. A farmer by background, he had populist values, and they usually translated into liberal positions. At the same time, his simple style contrasted sharply with that of many of the powerful intellectuals and ideologues of the New Deal, and he never felt comfortable with them. As he replaced them in the first two years of his Administration, the conservative voice became stronger in the Cabinet. And Rosenman's departure robbed the liberals of their strongest voice inside the White House.

The leader of the conservative faction was John Snyder, a St. Louis banker, who became Secretary of the Treasury in 1946, after Fred Vinson became Chief Justice. With Rosenman gone, Snyder became the dominant influence on domestic policy. He resented the fact that my rise had placed another liberal close to the President. We had known each other in St. Louis, and at first, from offices close to each other in the East Wing, we worked together as colleagues. I did not anticipate that we would soon become adversaries.

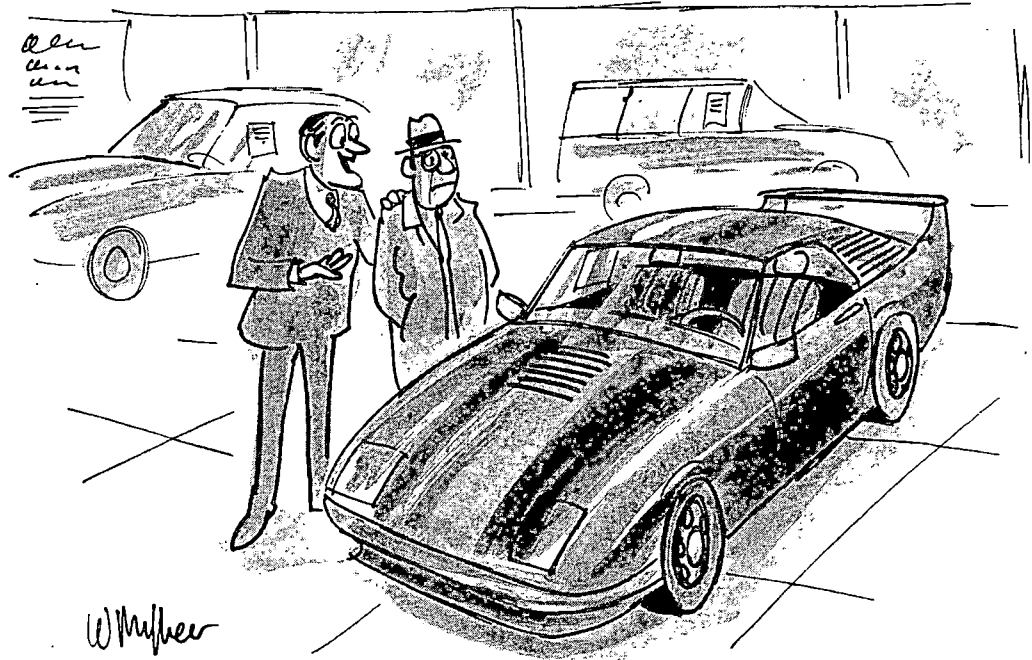
In the early days of the Truman Administration, Snyder and Vaughan, who was also conservative, were probably his two closest friends. That meant that in almost every domestic-policy discussion President Truman would hear a conservative position aggressively advanced. In one Cabinet meeting in late 1946, Snyder, annoyed at those who believed that wages had to be allowed to rise after the war to stimulate growth, even at the risk of inflation, burst out, "These people have enough. They wouldn't even know how to spend the money if they got any more." That was typical of Snyder, who was openly pro-business and anti-New Deal on every issue. Snyder and I never argued in front of the President, but as our differences sharpened, our relationship became

highly formal and antagonistic. At times, the situation resembled submarine warfare, conducted out of sight of the President but almost constant.

By this time, most of the rest of the Cabinet was also conservative. Two Roosevelt holdovers, Harold Ickes, at Interior, and Henry Wallace, at Commerce, had remained in the first Truman Cabinet as advocates of liberal positions, but both were personally difficult and were closely identified with Roosevelt. President Truman justifiably distrusted them and rarely listened to them, and within a year, after much bitterness, both were gone.

By virtue of both his position and his wealth, Wallace's successor as Secretary of Commerce, Averell Harriman, should have also been a stalwart conservative. But Harriman, the son of the Union Pacific magnate, had left the Republican Party in 1928. A disciple of Harry Hopkins, Roosevelt's crusading adviser, Harriman had a highly developed sense of obligation toward the disadvantaged, which, he told me, had been instilled in him by his parents and his sister. To my surprise and pleasure, I found him a frequent ally in the battles of 1946-1948, generally supporting liberal positions, although he sometimes felt we liberals were going too far. This association was, for me, the beginning of a long and productive friendship, which reached its climax when we stood together in the great debate over Vietnam in 1968.

In those less complicated times, the difference between liberals and conservatives seemed relatively clear-cut to me. Battles ranged over many issues, but the fundamental difference usually stayed the same: the difference between the welfare of the many and the privileges of the few. The conservatives believed the country had had enough of New Deal experimentation and required retrenchment before anything else. Liberals like me thought the post-war world required us to address many long-deferred problems, including race, education, housing, and better working conditions. In retrospect, it may seem simple, and, in fact, it seemed fairly straightforward to me at the time. I was committed to the liberal agenda, although I approached strate-



"Hey! Forget your troubles. Come on, get happy!"

gy and tactics from a highly pragmatic point of view.

The turning point in the battle between the liberals and the conservatives for President Truman's heart and mind came unexpectedly. As often occurs in politics, a major disaster led to the turnaround. In this case, it was the first postwar, post-Roosevelt election—the congressional elections of 1946. I accompanied President Truman to Independence, Missouri, where he and his wife voted. After voting, we began the trip back to Washington by train, playing poker with a group that included Charlie Ross and the two senior wire-service reporters, Merriman Smith, of the United Press, and Tony Vaccaro, of the Associated Press. The returns trickled in as we rode East. About the time the train passed Cincinnati, we realized that the impossible had happened: President Truman would face a Republican Congress for the next two years. Furious at a national beef shortage, scornful of many of the same homespun characteristics that later immortalized Harry Truman, and swept up in a simple and brilliant Republican slogan ("Had Enough?"), the voters had wiped out the large Democratic majorities in both chambers, turning Congress over to the Republicans for the first time since 1931. It was one of the most decisive, sweep-

ing expressions of voter sentiment in this century. As New Dealers fell from power across the country, a new generation of Republicans, including Richard Nixon and Joseph McCarthy, entered Congress.

The President focussed intently on his cards, and showed little emotion and made few comments as the bad news continued to roll in. Our poker game went on until 2 A.M., and his principal comment was that he regretted the result mainly because it would weaken his efforts internationally. I was amazed at how calm he seemed in the face of such a political disaster. We returned to Washington, to find Under-Secretary of State Dean Acheson waiting alone on the platform at Union Station, an elegant symbol of loyalty at President Truman's political low point which he would long remember.

The conventional political wisdom at that moment was simple: Harry Truman was a caretaker President. In a proposal symptomatic of the President's weakened position, a promising young Democratic senator from Arkansas named J. William Fulbright, who had been deeply influenced by the British parliamentary system during his experience as a Rhodes Scholar, proposed that President Truman appoint the senior Republican senator,

Arthur Vandenberg, his Secretary of State, for then, with the Vice-Presidency vacant, Vandenberg would be next in line for the Presidency. (This was in the days before the Twenty-fifth Amendment created a formal procedure for filling the Vice-Presidency whenever it is vacant.) Then, Fulbright suggested, President Truman should resign the Presidency in favor of Vandenberg. In response to this strange proposal, President Truman referred to Fulbright forever after as Senator Halfbright.

On the afternoon of his return from Independence, President Truman called a staff meeting and told us that the election debacle had filled him with a new sense of freedom. Although no one realized it at the time, the 1946 election shifted the equation within the Administration in favor of the liberals. The conservatives had pushed a set of domestic policies that left the American public uncertain about the sort of President that Harry Truman was. Until the 1946 election, he had seemed to be moving away from the New Deal. To me, the message of the election was clear, then and now: a Democrat must run as a Democrat, not as a warmed-over Republican.

ALTHOUGH the conservatives controlled the Cabinet, at the sub-Cabinet level there were still a large number of liberals, either committed New Dealers or a generation of post-Roosevelt officials who felt that new circumstances required new solutions. They believed that the basic tenets of the New Deal should be adapted to the postwar environment, not abandoned. One of these men, Oscar R. Ewing, who was the acting chairman of the Democratic National Committee, had an idea. At the end of 1946, he decided that the liberals within the Administration needed some sort of informal network to discuss issues and influence policy, and he invited a half-dozen liberal sub-Cabinet officials to dinner at his apartment, in the Wardman Park Hotel, one Monday night and suggested they all meet on a regular basis to further the liberal agenda.

Thus, at the very time I was looking for ways to encourage more liberal policies, circumstances and personalities combined to bring me into the most effective group of political activists with whom I have ever been associated: a secret band whose existence was not

known publicly for years. The Monday Night Group met for four years, and was a vital part of my political education.

Starting early in 1947, we met Monday evenings at the Wardman Park. The meetings followed a fairly set pattern. We would gather at six o'clock in Ewing's apartment for a drink. By six-thirty, we were seated at the dining-room table, eating a fine steak dinner. After dinner, we moved into Ewing's spacious living room to continue the conversation. We did not keep records or notes.

In the absence of a regular forum such as the one provided by Ewing, most of us would have seen each other only in chance meetings, and would have never had an opportunity to develop and advance common positions. It was clear from the outset that the Monday Night Group's effectiveness depended entirely on our ability to influence the President. Because I saw more of the President than anyone else in the group, it was agreed that I would be the conduit for our ideas. It was also agreed that each of us would individually promote those ideas which represented a consensus of the group. We felt outnumbered by the conservatives within the Administration and misunderstood by most of the old New Dealers and ideological liberals on the outside. In consensus we saw strength, and we tried to work toward unified positions on key issues.

We did not include in the group "professional liberals," whose ardor and search for ideological purity, we felt, outweighed their discretion and their judgment. That decision reflected the perennial struggle in government between the ideal and the possible, between the perfect and the practical. There is no simple answer to this conflict; a government that represents all the people must balance many pressures. I have always respected the sincerity of those who commit themselves to the single-minded pursuit of an ob-

jective, but I am not one of them. For me, the question has always been: What is the most that can be achieved—in short, what is the best possible outcome?

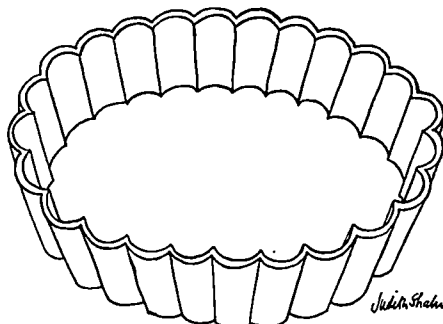
I brought my own ideas to the Wardman Park to test them against the collective wisdom of the others. The Monday Night Group helped shape my views and recommendations for a strong Civil Rights Act, desegregation of the armed forces, a special session of Congress in 1948, unification of the armed services and creation of the National Security Council, the veto of the Taft-Hartley Act (for which we invented the phrase, used repeatedly by President Truman, "the Slave Labor Act"), and much of the strategy for the 1948 campaign.

IN 1946, two of the most important sectors of the American economy—coal and the railroads—were almost simultaneously crippled by nationwide strikes. Those strikes brought me into extensive direct contact with the President, and led to a sharp disagreement between me and some of my White House colleagues. In the end, the President sided with me, with far-ranging results for my subsequent career.

The crisis began with coal. Worker demands that had been deferred during the war could be contained no longer. On March 31, 1946, four hundred thousand miners went on strike. Then, in May, two stubborn railroad-union leaders defied the President. The result was a period of nine months in which Presidential leadership was tested as it had not been in the domestic arena since before the war.

Coal and the railroads dominated the economy in 1946. They were then what airplanes and oil are today, only more so. Coal was still king, providing the fuel for ninety-five per cent of all locomotives, fifty-five per cent of all industrial energy, and sixty-two per cent of all electrical power. As for the railroads, in 1946 they still played a central role in American life—far more than it is possible to imagine today. Most Americans travelled by train rather than by car or airplane, and, with interstate trucking still in its infancy, the rails carried most of the nation's freight. A railroad strike, especially if it should be combined with a coal strike, could paralyze the nation.

The results of the coal workers' walkout were immediate: steel and au-



tomobile production dropped; railroad service was curtailed, and, to save energy, wartime dimouts were reinstated in twenty-two states.

In April of 1946, wage negotiations between the railroads and the rail unions collapsed. Eighteen of the twenty unions involved in the complex negotiations agreed to continue talking to management, but the two most powerful—the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen—flatly refused. The leaders of these two unions, Alvanley Johnston and A. F. Whitney, had been close political allies of President Truman. Now, however, they refused his personal request to avert a national emergency. Instead, on April 18th, they called a general strike, to start in thirty days.

During the first twenty-five days of the thirty-day period, the President left the problem in the hands of his chief labor adviser in the White House, John Steelman. Steelman met continually with all concerned parties, but made no progress. Johnston and Whitney were openly defying the government.

In mid-May, President Truman called Johnston and Whitney to the White House and, in their presence, signed an executive order for government seizure of the railroads in the event of a strike. At the same time, with the nation running low on coal, President Truman made his first move in the coal strike, ordering the Secretary of the Interior to seize the coal mines and force the miners back to work under federal supervision, and not long afterward the two sides reached an agreement that we thought gave us peace with the coal miners. On May 23rd, Johnston and Whitney, after delaying the railroad strike for five days, sent President Truman a note brusquely rejecting any compromise. They ordered their men off the rail lines at 4 P.M. The greatest transportation tie-up in the nation's history had begun.

President Truman now faced a fundamental test of his Presidency. About a million workers were out on strike, including a hundred and sixty-four thousand coal miners who were still defying his seizure of the mines. Did he have the personal strength and the political power to deal with American labor? If he did not, how could he deal

with the darkening world situation, so graphically outlined by Churchill in his "Iron Curtain" speech at Fulton, Missouri, only ten weeks earlier?

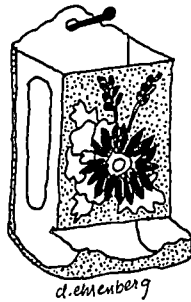
The President called a Cabinet meeting on Friday, May 24th, to discuss the situation. Still in my naval uniform, I felt oddly out of place as I sat behind the Cabinet table in a chair along the wall, and witnessed a Presidential anger I could not have previously imagined. He said he wanted to speak to a special Saturday session of

Congress the next day, and demand the toughest labor law in history. He would ask for the authority to draft strikers into the armed forces if the national security was threatened. He said he wanted to speak over a national radio hookup at ten o'clock that evening to prepare the American public for his ac-

tion. Then he pulled out of his jacket pocket a handwritten statement. "Here is what I want to say," he said, handing it to Charlie Ross.

Reading the President's draft message, Ross was horrified. It was surely one of the most intemperate documents ever written by a President. His opponents had "flouted, vilified, and misrepresented" his positions, the President wrote. Congress was "weak-kneed," lacked "intestinal fortitude," and was filled with "Russian Senators and Representatives." For his closing comment, the President had written an astonishing sentence: "Let's put transportation and production back to work, *hang a few traitors*, and make our own country safe for democracy." It was the sort of blunt "Trumanesque" language for which he later became famous, but if the President were to speak in this manner to the nation he would do himself immense damage, creating the impression that he was losing control of both himself and the government.

As soon as the Cabinet meeting ended, Ross went to the Oval Office to see the President alone. A gentle, unassuming man who had been a friend of Harry Truman's since high school, Ross could speak to the President as no one else could. He told the President that this message would backfire. The President, feeling better after having let off some steam, recognized that Ross was correct, and told him to ask me to draft a message more moderate in tone



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but still tough enough to make the point.

At the time, the President's handwritten message struck me as perilously out of control. I thought he had been saved from disaster only by the wise and firm intervention of Charlie Ross. Later, when I came to know the President better, I discovered that it was not unusual for him to work off some of his frustration by putting his innermost thoughts on paper. We all have moments when we allow the deeper recesses of our minds to entertain delicious private thoughts about the vicious things we would like to do to our adversaries. Harry Truman had the habit of writing some of those private thoughts down. They were either not shared with anyone or shown to only a few intimates, and if he had not been President they would have had little importance. He expected his trusted inner staff to prevent him from going public with his fury. The fail-safe system to protect him faltered once in a while—most notably when, enraged at a bad review of his daughter's singing, the President fired off his famous letter to the *Washington Post* music critic Paul Hume, mailing it himself in order to prevent his staff from trying to stop it. But that was generally accepted as the act of a devoted father, and actually ended up enhancing his reputation.

When Ross told me to draft this new message, only five hours were left until the President was scheduled to speak to the nation. This was the first time I had ever worked in the White House under the time pressures that are both the glory and the burden of service to a President. Ideas and advice came in from my old mentor, Sam Rosenman, who arrived late in the day, at the President's request, to lend a hand. In the early evening, Steelman, Ross, and John Snyder joined Rosenman and me in the Cabinet Room to review the draft. Skipping dinner, we produced a draft around 8 P.M. and I took each page in to the President as we finished reviewing it.

I tried to reflect the President's anger, but not his exact words, with an opening sentence calling the strikes "the greatest crisis in this country since Pearl Harbor." His anger of the night before had worked itself out, and the President, calm and focussed, took that bit of hyperbole out, but he left in the harsh sentence that followed: "The crisis of Pearl Harbor was the result of

action by a foreign enemy, whereas the crisis tonight is caused by a group of men within our own country who place their private interests above the welfare of the nation."

The speech was put into final form only fifteen minutes before airtime. I walked downstairs with the President to the room on the ground floor of the White House from which it would be broadcast, and watched him deliver it—rather atypically standing, instead of sitting, in front of the microphones. As soon as the speech was over, the President, Ross, and I walked over to the East Wing, and he posed for the newsreel cameras there. Then he met with members of the Cabinet to review the next steps. It had been a long and dramatic day, but the railroads were still not running, and the nation was heading for paralysis.

ON Saturday, the twenty-fifth, while Steelman was closeted with Johnston and Whitney at the Statler Hotel, Rosenman and I spent the morning working on the President's speech scheduled for the highly unusual Saturday joint session of Congress. Pleased with the previous night's speech, the President had asked me to coordinate this one.

About an hour before it was due to be given, Steelman called me. He said that Johnston and Whitney were feeling the mounting public pressure, and there was still a small chance for a settlement before the President addressed Congress. Rosenman and I wrote an alternative draft of portions of the speech, employing softer language, to be used if the strike was settled before the speech was delivered, and rushed both versions to the President.

The situation had reached fever pitch. The President delayed his departure for Capitol Hill while I tracked Steelman down again at the Statler; there was nothing new to report, although he thought he was making progress. Then, running out of the office so fast that I left my cap behind, even though I was in uniform, I joined the departing Presidential motorcade, handing President Truman the final pages of his speech as I climbed into his car.

The President went directly to the House chamber, where he received a tumultuous welcome that reflected the nation's frenzied mood and the anti-

union sentiment raging in Congress. I peeled off from the rest of the Presidential party and went to an anteroom near the House floor to await a call that I hoped would come from Steelman.

Meanwhile, the President began his speech, attacking Johnston and Whitney for their "obstinate arrogance," and asking for emergency legislation that would give him broad authority to deal with the crisis. The legislation would permit the President not only to seize industries but to subject any labor leader to an injunction and contempt proceedings, and would provide for criminal penalties for violators.

The telephone in the anteroom in which I was waiting rang. It was Steelman. "We have an agreement," he said. "The men are going back, on the President's terms." As Steelman talked, I wrote out a brief note:

Word has just been received that the railroad strike has been settled on the terms proposed by the President.

I ran into the House and handed my note to Les Biffle, the Secretary of the Senate, who was sitting just below the dais. As I entered, President Truman was reaching the climax of his speech, a request for authority to draft "into the Armed Forces of the United States all workers who are on strike against their government." As the members of Congress thunderously applauded this proposal, Biffle handed the President my note. He smiled slightly, waited for the noise to die down, and then read it to Congress. The House chamber erupted in cheering—longer, louder, and more sustained than anything the President had experienced before or was ever to experience again in Congress.

The railroad crisis had ended with a complete victory for President Truman. The scene was so dramatic that for a while some people thought it had been staged, as Senator Wayne Morse charged publicly, only to apologize after a talk with the President. For the first time since the end of the war, President Truman had shown strength and resolve under pressure. He had enraged big labor, but he calculated—correctly—that the rage would pass in time.

LATE in 1946, the President successfully faced another challenge to his authority which changed his political fortunes, revived his own spirits, and dramatically affected my standing and visibility within the White House.

This was one of the greatest conflicts in American labor history—the celebrated showdown between President Truman and John L. Lewis.

A good crisis needs a colorful central character, and the coal strikes of 1946 certainly had one in the person of John Llewellyn Lewis. For almost thirty years, Lewis had been the undisputed boss of his huge and powerful union. A former miner himself, Lewis had earned the unwavering loyalty of his rank and file over many years by fighting for much-needed reforms in working conditions and pay. Everything about him was dramatic; his personality and his speaking style could not be duplicated in today's homogenized television era. I cannot improve on the portrait of him by Cabell Phillips, of the *Times*: "A figure of almost unbelievable power and picturesqueness . . . a man of ponderous and majestic bearing with a billowing crown of gray hair and dark, baleful eyes peering from under immense eyebrows. His scowl had an Olympian ferocity, and his speech the cavernous tone and the measured cadence of a nineteenth-century Thespian."

On the eve of the 1946 elections, Lewis's monumental ego and ambition led him to demand the reopening of the entire May accords on the basis of a minor provision. Lewis made an explicit threat: if we did not renegotiate the entire contract, he would bring the nation to a standstill.

For the first time, I took an active role in a major policy debate as an advocate, not simply as a speechwriter. I felt that President Truman had reached a turning point. In my view, Lewis's behavior constituted a direct threat to the President's political survival. If he yielded to Lewis, I felt, he would have great difficulty governing for the next two years of the unfinished term of Franklin Roosevelt, and would surely be unable to get elected on his own in 1948. I was heavily outnumbered in the discussions that raged at the White House in the first two weeks of November, 1946. Interior Secretary Julius A. Krug and Attorney General Tom Clark sided with me in advocating a tough line, but, fearing Lewis's power, they were considerably more cautious than I was. On the other side of the debate were John Steelman and his supporters. They advocated a policy of conciliation and compromise, arguing that President Truman could not win



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against the formidable John L. Lewis.

The battle lines on this issue later gave rise to the erroneous view in some quarters in Washington that I was a conservative. While it was true that I had advocated a tough line against Lewis and, in May, had drafted the tough railroad speech, in policy debates within the White House I almost always favored labor's positions and objectives. In argument after argument with Snyder, Steelman, Clinton Anderson, and others, I was on labor's side, favoring positions that I felt would reduce inequality in American life. However, as special counsel to the President I was a firm advocate in behalf of the powers and the position of the President. It was my responsibility, as I saw it, to protect both the office and the man. In the coal-strike issue, I decided to weigh in heavily against the advocates of compromise and retreat. Lewis's threats were directed at both the Presidency and Harry Truman personally. If Lewis succeeded in breaking the agreement he had reached with the Administration only five months earlier, I saw no end to the erosion of Presidential authority.

The stage was thus set for my first open collision with Steelman, which took place late on the night of Saturday, November 16th, after the annual White House News Photographers Association dinner. The President knew that events were coming to a head, and he asked Krug, Clark, Steelman, Charlie Ross, and me to meet him in the study of the family quarters around midnight. Still in our dinner jackets, we debated our next moves until the early morning. The lateness of the hour, the intensity of the situation, the recent Democratic defeat in the congressional elections, and perhaps a slight amount of alcohol consumed by some people during the dinner all lent an odd air to the meeting. A combination of fatigue and tension made the meeting far more candid, and hence contentious, than would normally have been the case.

Stelman wanted to make a new deal with Lewis. He argued that a strike could be averted with relatively minor concessions. I argued strongly with Steelman that night, urging President Truman to stand firm and resist pressure for any further accommodation. I said that the majority of the people were opposed to Lewis's grandstanding, and that if the President held his

ground Lewis would be beaten in the court of public opinion. No one union or person could be bigger than the country. Somewhat dramatically, I said, "Mr. President, you have to take him on."

As our long and exhausting night of debate came to an end, the President made his decision: we would seek a court injunction against Lewis and, if necessary, file civil and criminal charges for violation of contract and for striking against the government. It would be, the President told us, "a fight to the finish with John L. Lewis." Steelman was openly furious at losing the President's support.

On Monday, November 18th, Attorney General Clark took Lewis to court and obtained from a federal judge in the United States District Court an order directing Lewis to cancel his plans for a strike on November 20th. Lewis thumbed his nose at the court order and, on the November 20th deadline, once more ordered his workers out on strike. After talking to the President, I asked Clark to request the court to cite Lewis for contempt. In the first week of December, the federal judge found the United Mine Workers guilty of contempt, slapping a three-and-a-half-million-dollar fine on the union, and an additional ten thousand dollars on Lewis personally. At our request, criminal charges were dropped. We did not want Lewis in jail; we wanted the strike settled.

Lewis was now in a quandary. The President and the courts were united against him, he faced an enormous fine, and jail remained a distinct possibility. He knew that, for the first time in his celebrated career, he had to back down. To ease the pressure, he tried to call President Truman directly. I recommended that the President not take Lewis's calls, because a conversation might reduce the pressure on Lewis. That was a risky decision. The nation was running out of coal in early December, and people were quite literally feeling cold as coal supplies and

"strikebreaker coal" ran short. But the President agreed not to speak to Lewis or any of his representatives while the U.M.W. was still out on strike. For the rest of the crisis, we rebuffed every one of Lewis's increasingly frantic attempts to send negotiators to the White House.

Late in November, I had set up a miniature command center in the Cabinet Room to coordinate the next steps. After careful consideration, the President instructed me to write a tough speech for delivery to the nation on Sunday, December 8th. Our plan was to create unbearable public pressure on Lewis to capitulate.

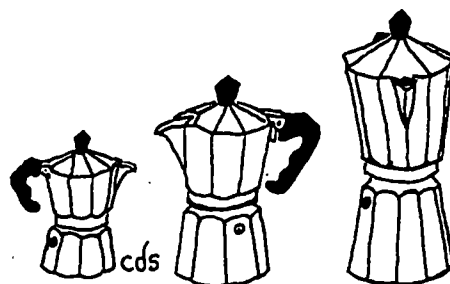
December 7th, like the Saturday of the railroad crisis six months earlier, was a day charged with the excitement that surrounds a major confrontation. Because it involved the theatrical Lewis, it had a special drama that the railroad crisis had lacked. We made sure during the day that rumors of the tough measures we were planning to announce reached the U.M.W. In the Cabinet Room, I drafted a speech beginning with these words:

I bring to you tonight a report on a major American disaster. By coincidence, it was just five years ago . . . that my predecessor spoke of another American disaster—Pearl Harbor. This present crisis has elements which make it just as ominous.

The attention of every American—and, in fact, of cold and hungry people in countries all over the world—is centered on the coal strike which is paralyzing our entire nation.

The speech was never given. By Saturday, Lewis knew that his dilemma would only get worse if he continued to defy the President. At four o'clock that afternoon, he suddenly called a press conference. As we listened over the radio in the Oval Office, Lewis spoke in wearied but measured cadences, ordering all his workers "to return to work immediately under the wages and conditions of employment in existence on and before November 20, 1946."

The Lord of Labor had capitulated. President Truman had succeeded where so many others, including F.D.R., had failed: he had trimmed the invincible Lewis down to size. He permitted himself a brief celebration in the Oval Office right after Lewis's surrender. As we celebrated, the President recalled what he felt had been his toughest decision—to rebuff all attempts by Lewis over the previous two weeks to open up a dialogue. "The



White House is open to anybody with legitimate business, but not to that son of a bitch," he said. We toasted him.

It was, journalists and labor experts agreed, the end of an era in American industrial relations. And the beginning of a new era for Harry Truman. He was suddenly praised effusively by the same journalists and commentators who had dismissed him a few weeks earlier (and would write him off again in 1948). Arthur Krock, the Washington bureau chief of the *Times*, wrote, "The President has greatly regained stature as a national leader." The columnists Joseph and Stewart Alsop called it "the first break he has had in considerably more than a year."

The coal strike was also a significant development for me. The press became aware that I had played an important role in the showdown with Lewis. On one occasion, Charlie Ross joked to reporters, "All I do around here is answer questions about Clark Clifford."

A most embarrassing event took place early in the new year, at the Gridiron Dinner, an annual event during which members of the Gridiron Club, all senior Washington journalists, entertain high government officials and other guests with irreverent skits. I have attended forty-five consecutive Gridiron dinners, including my first one, in 1946, and have observed some memorable events at them. But only once, in 1947, did I wish deeply, and with all my heart, that I could have been somewhere else. On that night, with President Truman watching, one of the skits showed him as a ventriloquist's dummy sitting on the lap of a smug, heavily made-up Clark Clifford. I was profoundly upset, and spent a restless night wondering if the President had been offended. On Monday morning, I went into his office alone and said, "Mr. President, I just want to express to you my deep embarrassment at the skit at the Gridiron. I wish neither of us had been there." He smiled for an instant, and said, "Clark, pay it no attention. That is what Washington is all about. Anyway, I am the target, not you, and they will always find something to use against me."

OF all the meetings I have ever had with Presidents, the one on May 12, 1948, remains the most vivid. Not only did it pit me against a war

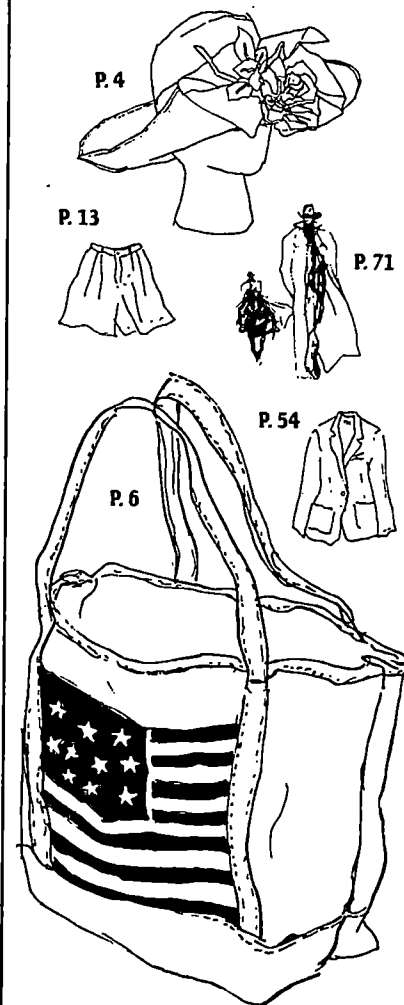
hero whom President Truman revered but it did so over an issue of fundamental and enduring national-security importance—Israel and the Middle East, an issue that remains as relevant in the nineteen-nineties, in the wake of the Persian Gulf War, as it was then. The President regarded the Secretary of State, General George C. Marshall, as "the greatest living American." Yet the two men were on a collision course over Middle East policy, and it threatened, if it was not resolved, to split and wreck the Administration. British control of Palestine would run out in two days, and, as it did, the Jewish Agency intended to announce the creation of a new state, still unnamed, in part of Palestine.

Marshall firmly opposed American recognition of the new Jewish state; I did not. Marshall's opposition was shared by almost every member of the brilliant and now legendary group of Presidential advisers, later referred to as the Wise Men, who were then in the process of creating a postwar foreign policy that would endure for more than forty years. The opposition included the respected Under-Secretary of State, Robert Lovett; his predecessor, Dean Acheson; the No. 3 man in the State Department, Charles Bohlen; the brilliant chief of the Policy Planning Staff, George Kennan; Forrestal; and a man with whom I would disagree again, twenty years later, when we served together in Lyndon Johnson's Cabinet—Dean Rusk, then the director of the Office of United Nations Affairs.

Forrestal's attitude was typical of the attitudes of the advisers opposed to helping the Zionists, as those supporting the creation of a Jewish state were called. Some months earlier, during a breakfast at his elegant Georgetown home, Forrestal had spoken emotionally about the issue. "You fellows over at the White House are just not facing up to the realities in the Middle East. There are thirty million Arabs on one side and about six hundred thousand Jews on the other. It is clear to me that in any contest the Arabs are going to overwhelm the Jews. Why don't you face up to the realities? Just look at the numbers!"

"Jim, the President knows just as well as you do what the numbers are, but he doesn't consider this to be a question of numbers," I replied. "He has always supported the right of the

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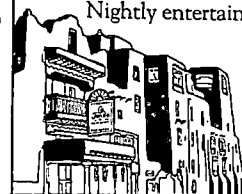
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Jews to have their own homeland, from the moment he became President. He considers this to be a question about the moral and ethical considerations that are present in that part of the world. For that reason, he supports the foundation of a Jewish state. He is sympathetic to their needs and their desires, and I assure you he is going to continue to lend our country's support to the creation of a Jewish state."

Forrestal replied bluntly, "Well, if he does that, then he's absolutely dead wrong." His attitude was typical of the foreign-policy establishment—especially the pro-Arab professionals at the State Department, who were deeply influenced by the huge oil reserves in the Middle East and by a desire to be on the side of the likely winner in the struggle between the Arabs and the Jews. Officials in the State Department had done everything in their power to prevent, thwart, or delay the President's Palestine policy in 1947 and 1948, while I had fought for assistance to the Jewish Agency. Watching those officials find various ways to avoid carrying out White House instructions, I sometimes felt that they preferred to follow the views of the British Foreign Office rather than the views of their President.

At midnight on May 14, 1948 (6 P.M. in Washington), the British would relinquish control of Palestine, which they had been administering under a mandate from the old League of Nations since the First World War. One minute later, the Jewish Agency, under the leadership of David Ben-Gurion, would proclaim the new state. (We assumed that the new nation would be called Judaea.) The neighboring Arabs made it clear that as soon as the British left, the fighting that had already begun would erupt into a full-scale war against the new state.

In response, the British and the State Department wanted to turn Palestine over to the trusteeship of the United Nations—a position I strongly opposed as dangerous to the survival of the beleaguered Jews of Palestine. I had already had several serious disagreements with General Marshall's protégé, Dean Rusk, and with Loy Henderson, the director of Near Eastern and African Affairs, over State's position. Henderson, a mustachioed, partly bald, tightly controlled, and somewhat pompous career diplomat, was strongly pro-Arab and was heavily influenced by

SHE THINKS OF HIM ON HER BIRTHDAY

It's still winter,
and still I don't know you
anymore, and you don't know

me. But this morning I stand
in the kitchen with the illusion,
peeling a clementine. Each piece

snaps like the nickname for a girl,
the tinny bite it was
to be one once. Again I count

your daughters and find myself in the middle,
the waist of the hourglass,
endlessly passed through and passed through

but holding nothing, dismayed
at the grubby February sun
I was born under and the cheap pleasure

it gives the window. Yet I raise the shade
for it, and try not to feel it is wrong
to want spring, to be a season

further from you—not wrong to wish
for a hard rain, a hard wind
like one we sat out in together
or came in from together.

—DEBORAH GOTTLIEB GARRISON

the British. He had no use for White House interference in what he saw as his personal domain—American policy in the Middle East. A number of Middle East experts in the State Department were widely regarded as anti-Semitic.

On May 7th, a week before the end of the British mandate, I met with President Truman for our customary private day-end chat in the Oval Office. In these informal sessions, which were never listed on his official schedule, he was often very blunt. No one else knew what passed between us in those sessions unless he wanted them to. In this case, he didn't.

I handed the President a draft of a public statement I had prepared, and proposed that at his next press conference, scheduled for May 13th, the day before the British mandate would end, he announce that it was his intention to recognize the Jewish state. The President was sympathetic to the proposal, but, being keenly aware of Marshall's strong feelings, he picked up the telephone to get the Secretary's views. As I sat listening to the President's end of the conversation, I could tell that Mar-

shall objected strongly to the proposed statement. The President listened politely, then told Marshall he wanted to have a meeting on the subject.

I was sitting, as usual, in a straight-backed chair to the left of the President's desk. On ending the conversation with Marshall, the President swivelled his chair toward me. "Clark, I am impressed with General Marshall's argument that we should not recognize the new state so fast," he said. "He does not want to recognize it at all—at least, not now. I've asked him and Lovett to come in next week to discuss this business. I think Marshall is going to continue to take a very strong position. When he does, I would like you to make the case in favor of recognition of the new state." He paused, and looked at me intently for a moment. "You know how I feel," he said. "I want you to present it just as though you were making an argument before the Supreme Court of the United States"—something that I had not yet done. "Consider it carefully, Clark, organize it logically. I want you to be as persuasive as you possibly can be."

President Truman had asked me to

debate the man he most admired, a man whose participation in the Administration was essential to its success. I was forty-one years old, in my third year at the White House as a Presidential aide. Virtually every American regarded General Marshall, then sixty-seven, with a respect bordering on awe. He had capped his central contribution to victory in the Second World War with his speech at Harvard a year earlier proposing what became known as the Marshall Plan. Alone among soldiers, he was now associated in the public mind with a peaceful purpose—the reconstruction of Europe. Alone among statesmen, he carried the credentials of a great soldier. Without his towering presence, the Administration would be much diminished, perhaps even mortally wounded, at home and abroad, in an extremely difficult time. The Soviet-inspired coup in Czechoslovakia had taken place only ten weeks earlier, and the Soviet effort to cut Berlin off from the West was heading toward a full-blown crisis, the worst since the end of the war. The Republicans controlled both Houses of Congress. How firmly would Marshall continue to oppose something that the President wanted? Could we in the Administration find a way out of the bind we were in? From a combination of respect for Marshall and a keen sense of his own political interests, the President knew he should not overrule Marshall directly. Rather, he would see if I could convince the great man.

Marshall did not like me. He regarded me as a domestic Presidential adviser, who had no business meddling in foreign policy. There was no national-security assistant in those days, and I often functioned in a manner that pre-saged the present system. In a sense, Marshall's attitude toward me foreshadowed the conflicts between the Secretary of State and the national-security assistant which later—especially in the Nixon, Carter, and Reagan Administrations—became part of the Washington landscape.

As I prepared for the showdown with Marshall, I felt that I knew what the President wanted and, more important, how he felt. From our many talks over the past year I knew that five factors dominated his thinking about the proposed Jewish state. For as long as he could remember, he had detested intolerance and discrimination. He had

been deeply moved by the plight of the millions of displaced people of the Second World War, and felt that, alone among the homeless, the Jews had no homeland of their own to which they could return. He was, of course, horrified by the Holocaust, and he denounced it vehemently as, in the aftermath of the war, its full dimensions became clear. Also, he believed that the Balfour Declaration, issued by the British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour in 1917, committed Great Britain and, by implication, the United States,



which now shared a certain global responsibility with the British, to the creation of the Jewish state in Palestine. (I recognize that historians have long disagreed over whether or not Balfour committed anyone to anything, but President Truman's view on this point was clear.) And, finally, he had been a student of and a believer in the Bible since his youth. From the Old Testament, he felt, the Jews derived a legitimate historical right to Palestine. He sometimes cited such Biblical verses as those from Deuteronomy 1:8: "Behold, I have given up the land before you; go in and take possession of the land which the Lord hath sworn unto your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."

From the beginning, I, too, had supported the desire of the Zionists to create a nation, even though this stand put me in opposition to an entire generation of senior foreign-policy makers whom I admired and numbered among my friends. I held it not only because I knew what the President wanted but because I considered the creation of a Jewish state in the Palestine region a historical and strategic necessity.

The Zionist position in 1948 was simple: partition Palestine into two parts—one Jewish, one Arab. On its surface, the joint British-State Department position favoring trusteeship may have seemed a reasonable way to avoid conflict, but the President feared that if Palestine were turned over to the United Nations the Arabs would combine military action and diplomatic foot-dragging in an effort to throttle the Jewish state at its birth. I fully agreed. I knew that Marshall and his deputy, Robert Lovett, would argue that we should continue to support trusteeship, and delay recognition of the new state. And by "delay," I believed, State really meant "deny."

My fears about the State Department

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had crystallized after a bitter incident in March, when, without informing the President, the State Department permitted the American delegation to the United Nations to reverse its support for partition, and switch to trusteeship for Palestine—a contradiction of a personal commitment that the President had given the previous day to Chaim Weizmann, the Zionist leader who later became the first President of Israel. Furious and depressed when he learned what had happened, President Truman wrote on his calendar for March 19, 1948:

The State Dept. pulled the rug from under me today. . . . The first I know about it is what I see in the papers! Isn't that hell? I am now in the position of a liar and a double-crosser. I've never felt so low in my life. There are people on the third and fourth level of the State Dept. who have always wanted to cut my throat. They've succeeded in doing it.

That afternoon, the President angrily instructed me to "read the riot act" to those "third and fourth level" people at the State Department. A few hours later, I held an angry meeting with Rusk, Henderson, and Charles Bohlen, the State Department Counsellor, which left us barely on speaking terms. But the President, despite his anger, had not ordered the State Department to reendorse partition, lest he create a crisis with Marshall. Thus, with the May 14th deadline fast approaching, the United States was in the awkward position of having its United Nations delegation still rounding up votes for trusteeship while the President favored partition and prompt recognition of the about-to-be-proclaimed new Jewish state.

Sixteen years as a trial lawyer in St. Louis before the Second World War had shaped my approach to the May 12th confrontation with Marshall. For me the key to successful advocacy is preparation—careful preparation. Even now, on a day when I'm going into court I rise very early, and rehearse my presentation as I shave, then sometimes go over it for several hours alone in my bedroom or my office. I have seen many good cases lost simply because they were badly presented. But this was the only time I would ever argue a case against General Marshall. Knowing that the President was privately on my side did nothing to reduce the difficulty of the task, since he was counting on my



presentation to turn Marshall around.

George Catlett Marshall was a man of the strictest rectitude. Not even President Truman called him by his first name; that privilege was reserved for his wife and a handful of early military contemporaries. And he called even his closest associates only by their last names. He had little noticeable sense of humor. He had planned to spend his time in quiet retirement with his wife at their home in Virginia, but when at the beginning of 1947, just as the Cold War was beginning its most dangerous phase, President Truman asked him to return from a thankless and unsuccessful mission as special envoy to China and to become Secretary of State he responded once again without complaint. It was this devotion to the President—or, more accurately, to the Presidency—that so impressed Truman, and everyone else as well, including me.

AT 4 P.M. on Wednesday, May 12th, a cloudless, sweltering day, seven of us joined President Truman in the Oval Office. The President sat at his desk, his back to the bay window overlooking the lawns; his famous "THE BUCK STOPS HERE" plaque stood on the front of his desk. In the seat to the President's left sat General Marshall, austere and grim, and next to Marshall sat Lovett. Behind Lovett were two State Department officials, Robert McClintock and Fraser Wilkins. I wondered why Rusk and Henderson, who had been centrally involved in every phase of the policy debate for months, were not present. Not until forty years later did I learn why: Wilkins told me then that just before the meeting Lovett had decided that the presence of Rusk and Henderson in the room with me would be too inflammatory, so he had substituted their two deputies. Another Presidential aide, David Niles, the appointments secretary Matthew Connelly, and I sat together in chairs to the right of the President. As the meeting began, exactly fifty hours remained before the new nation would be born.

The meeting opened in a deceptively calm manner. President Truman did not raise the issue of recognition; his desire was that I be the first to raise it, but only after Marshall and Lovett had spoken, so that he would be able to ascertain the degree of Marshall's op-

position before showing his own hand. Lovett began by criticizing what he termed signs of growing "assertiveness" by the Jewish Agency. "On the basis of some recent military successes and the prospect of a 'behind the barn' deal with King Abdullah," Lovett said, "the Jews seem confident that they can establish their sovereign state without any necessity for a truce with the Arabs of Palestine." King Abdullah of Transjordan, who was assassinated in 1951, was the grandfather of King Hussein of Jordan. Lovett was referring to highly secret talks between the Jews and the Jordanians. Some of the talks involved Golda Meir and King Abdullah himself, but that was not known at the time.

Marshall interrupted Lovett. He was strongly opposed to the behavior of the Jewish Agency, he said. He had met on May 8th with Moshe Shertok, its political representative, and had told Shertok that it was "dangerous to base long-range policy on temporary military success." Moreover, Marshall said, he had told Shertok that if the Jews got into trouble and "came running to us for help . . . there was no warrant to expect help from the United States, which had warned them of the grave risk which they were running." I was surprised to hear, from Marshall himself, how bluntly he had dealt with Shertok. He had laid down a tough opening position.

As Marshall was speaking, he was interrupted by an urgent message from his special assistant. The United Press had reported that Shertok had returned to Tel Aviv carrying a personal warning from Marshall to David Ben-Gurion. Marshall, clearly displeased, told us that not only had he not sent Ben-Gurion a message but he had never even heard of Ben-Gurion—a surprising statement about the man who was the leader of the Jewish Agency and was about to become the new nation's first Prime Minister. Marshall directed the State Department to refuse to comment on the U.P. news story, and then concluded his presentation. The United States, he said, should continue to support those resolutions in the United Nations which would turn Palestine over to the U.N. as a trusteeship, and defer any decision on recognition.

It was now my turn. Even though I disagreed with many of Lovett's opening statements, I had waited without

saying a word until the President called on me, in order to establish that I was speaking at the request of the President, and not on my own initiative.

I began by objecting strongly to the State Department's position paper reaffirming American support of Security Council efforts to secure a truce in Palestine. "There has been no truce in Palestine, and there almost certainly will not be one," I said. I reminded everyone that in a meeting chaired by the President on March 24th "Dean Rusk stated that a truce could be negotiated within two weeks," but that "this goal is still not in sight."

I went on to say, "Second, trusteeship, which State supports, presupposes a single Palestine. That is also unrealistic. Partition into Jewish and Arab sectors has already happened. Jews and Arabs are already fighting each other from territory each side presently controls."

The time had now come to join the issue. "Third, Mr. President," I said, "I strongly urge you to give prompt recognition to the Jewish state immediately after the termination of the British mandate on May 14th. This would have the distinct value of restoring the President's firm position in support of the partition of Palestine. Such a move should be taken quickly, before the Soviet Union or any other nation recognizes the Jewish state."

I knew that my comments would not please Marshall and Lovett, since I was implying that State had embarrassed the President by reversing the American position in the United Nations two months earlier. But I strongly believed that to be the case, and I saw no reason not to bring it up.

"My fourth point," I continued, "is that the President should make a statement at his press conference tomorrow which announces his intention to recognize the Jewish state, once it has complied with the provision for democratic government outlined in the U.N. resolution of November 29th. I understand this is in fact the case, and therefore presents no problem." I handed a proposed press statement around the room, and read aloud its conclusion:

I have asked the Secretary of State to have the Representatives of the United States in the United Nations take up this subject... with a view toward obtaining early recognition of a Jewish State by the other members of the United Nations.

Then I went on, "My fifth point

relates to the Balfour Declaration. Jewish people the world over have been waiting for thirty years for the promise of a homeland to be fulfilled. There is no reason to wait one day longer. Trusteeship will postpone that promise indefinitely.

"Sixth, the United States has a great moral obligation to oppose discrimination such as that inflicted on the Jewish people. Alarming, it is reappearing in Communist-controlled Eastern Europe. There must be a safe haven for these people. Here is an opportunity to try to bring these ancient injustices to an end. The Jews could have their own homeland. They could be lifted to the status of other peoples who have their own country. And perhaps these steps would help atone, in some small way, for the bestial actions, for the atrocities so vast as to stupefy the human mind, that took place during the Holocaust.

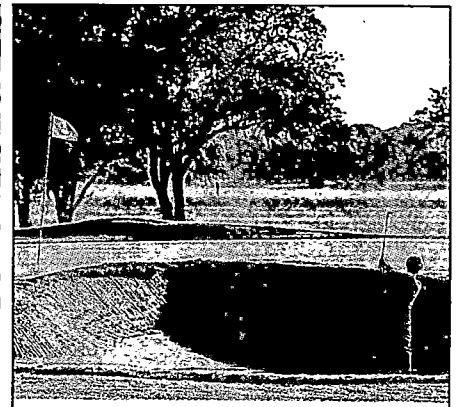
"Finally, I fully understand and agree that vital national interests are involved. In an area as unstable as the Middle East, where there is not now and never has been any tradition of democratic government, it is important for the long-range security of our country—and, indeed, the world—that a nation committed to the democratic system be established there, one on which we can rely. The new Jewish state can be such a place. We should strengthen it in its infancy by prompt recognition."

I had noticed Marshall's face reddening with suppressed anger as I talked. When I finished, he exploded. "Mr. President, I thought this meeting was called to consider an important and complicated problem in foreign policy. I don't even know why Clifford is here. He is a domestic adviser, and this is a foreign-policy matter."

I will never forget President Truman's characteristically simple reply: "Well, General, he's here because I asked him to be here."

Marshall, scarcely concealing his ire, shot back, "These considerations have nothing to do with the issue. I fear that the only reason Clifford is here is that he is pressing a political consideration with regard to this issue. I don't think politics should play any part in this."

Lovett joined the attack. "It would be highly injurious to the United Nations to announce the recognition of the Jewish state even before it had come into existence and while the General



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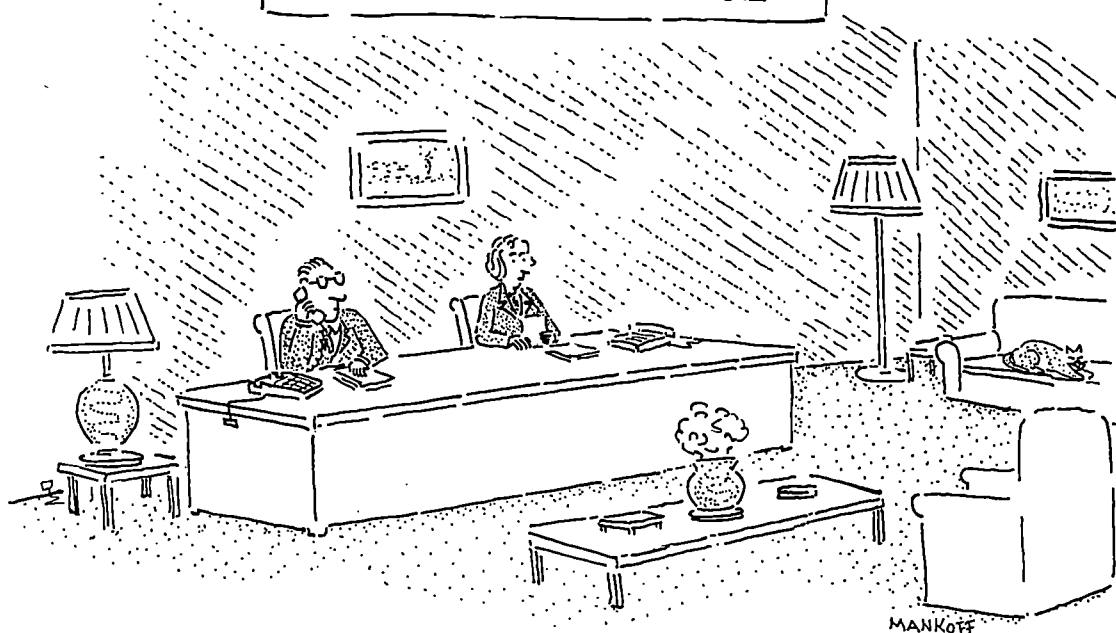


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Assembly is still considering the question. Furthermore, such a move would be injurious to the prestige of the President. It is obviously designed to win the Jewish vote, but in my opinion it would lose more votes than it would gain." Lovett had finally brought to the surface the root cause of Marshall's fury: his view that the position I presented was dictated by domestic political considerations—specifically, a quest for Jewish votes in the upcoming Presidential election.

"Mr. President, to recognize the Jewish state prematurely would be buying a pig in a poke," Lovett continued. "How do we know what kind of Jewish state will be set up? We have many reports from British and American intelligence agents that Soviets are sending Jews and Communist agents into Palestine from the Black Sea area." Lovett read some of these intelligence reports to the group. I found them ridiculous, and no evidence ever turned up to support them; in fact, Jews were fleeing Communism throughout Eastern Europe at that very moment.

When Lovett concluded his attack, Marshall spoke again. Speaking with great and barely contained anger and with more than a hint of self-righteousness, he made the most remarkable threat I have ever heard anyone make directly to a President. He said, "If you follow Clifford's advice and if I were to vote in the election, I would vote against you."

Everyone in the room was stunned.

Here was the indispensable symbol of continuity, whom President Truman revered and needed, making a threat that, if it became public, could virtually seal the dissolution of the Truman Administration and send the Western Alliance, then in the process of creation, into disarray before it had been fully structured. Marshall's statement fell short of an explicit threat to resign, but it came very close.

Lovett and I both tried to step into the ensuing silence with words of conciliation. We both knew how important it was to get this dreadful meeting over with quickly, before Marshall said something even more irretrievable. My suggested Presidential press statement was clearly out of the question, and I withdrew it. Lovett said that State's legal adviser, Ernest Gross, had prepared a paper on the legal aspects of recognition, and he would send it to us immediately.

President Truman also knew that the meeting had to be ended. He said that he was fully aware of the dangers in the situation, to say nothing of the political factors involved on *both sides* of the problem, and that those were his responsibility, and he would deal with them himself. Seeing that Marshall was still highly agitated, he rose and turned to him and said, "I understand your position, General, and I'm inclined to side with you in this matter."

We rose with the President and gathered up our papers. Marshall did not even glance at me as he and Lovett

the opposite. His record, exactly as he wanted historians to find it when it was declassified, almost three decades later, reads as follows:

I remarked to the President that, speaking objectively, I could not help but think that the suggestions made by Mr. Clifford were wrong. I thought that to adopt these suggestions would have precisely the opposite effect from that intended by Mr. Clifford. The transparent dodge to win a few votes would not in fact achieve this purpose. The great dignity of the office of the President would be seriously diminished. The counsel offered by Mr. Clifford was based on domestic political considerations, while the problem which confronted us was international. I said bluntly that if the President were to follow Mr. Clifford's advice and if in the elections I were to vote, I would vote against the President.

General Marshall's position was unfair. He had no proof to sustain the charge of a political motive on my part, nor did he offer any. My growing involvement in foreign policy was at the President's direction. I had not mentioned politics in my presentation. I believed then, as I do now, that the President's position was based on the national interest, not on domestic political considerations.

The view of Marshall and Lovett was based on the assumption that the Palestine issue would decide how Jewish Americans voted. In my opinion, their assumption was incorrect, and, in fact, a significant number of Jewish Americans opposed Zionism. Some feared that the effort to create a Jewish state under the conditions that existed then was so controversial that the plan

would fail. In 1942, a number of prominent dissident Reform rabbis had founded the American Council for Judaism to oppose the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. It grew into an organization of over fourteen thousand members, which collaborated closely with State Department officials, including Dean Acheson and Loy Henderson. Its leaders believed that the establishment of an exclusively Jewish state was "undemocratic and a retreat from the universal vision of Judaism," and would lead to "ghettoizing Jews by segregating them from their compatriots and turning them into aliens." Other individuals, including Arthur H. Sulzberger, the publisher of the *Times* (he supported the American Council for Judaism), and Eugene Meyer, the publisher of the *Washington Post*, opposed Zionism. Sulzberger's wife, the redoubtable Iphigene Ochs Sulzberger, who disagreed strongly with her husband, later recalled that "Zionism was a heavily debated issue among American Jews." Many Jews opposed American backing for any Jewish state in Palestine.

In any event, neither the President nor I believed that Palestine was the key to the Jewish vote. As I had written in 1947, in a lengthy memorandum to the President proposing a strategy for the 1948 election campaign, I believed that the key to the Jewish vote in 1948 would be not the Palestine issue but a continued commitment to liberal political and economic policies. Noting the sharp divisions over Zionism within the Jewish community, I had concluded, "In the long run, there is likely to be greater gain if the Palestine problem is approached on the basis of reaching a decision founded upon intrinsic merit."

Quite simply, I fully shared the President's conviction that it was proper for the Jews to have a homeland, and for our country to recognize the new state on its creation. I also believed that this was the decent, the compassionate, and the honorable course to follow.

IN the course of the meeting in the Oval Office, I had left the proposed press statement and some other papers on the front of the President's desk. I lingered a moment to pick them up. Marshall had deeply disappointed me. I thought his implied threat had crossed the bounds of what was permissible and proper in a meeting with the President. I also thought I had lost.

Seeing my face, President Truman apparently felt that I needed to be cheered up. "Well, that was rough as a cob," he said, using one of his favorite Missouri farm phrases. "That was about as tough as it gets. But you did your best."

"Well, Boss, this isn't the first case I've lost," I replied. "I've never expected to win them all." Then, to see if the President wanted to try again, I said, "Maybe it is not over yet. I would like approval to test the waters one more time."

The President's reply was ambiguous. "You may be right. I don't know. I never saw the General so furious. Suppose we let the dust settle a little. Then you can get into it again and see if we can get this thing turned around. I still want to do it. But be careful. I can't afford to lose General Marshall."

It might be argued that a Presidential telephone call to Marshall or Lovett would have resolved the issue. But that view, while normally correct in regard to relationships between the President and anyone in his Cabinet, did not fit this unique situation. Harry Truman, then an unelected President, was viewed by most people as a temporary custodian of the giant legacy of Franklin Roosevelt. Facing the central political fact of 1948—Republican control of both Houses of Congress—he could not afford an open break with Marshall. Besides, he genuinely liked and respected Marshall, and on every other important issue they were in agreement.

Thus, when I left the Oval Office I understood that the chances for salvaging the situation were very small—but not quite zero. As I was in my office going over the day's events with George Else, the telephone rang. It was Bob Lovett. "I have been deeply disturbed ever since the meeting in the President's office this afternoon," he said, and then he paused. I felt like saying, "You didn't help much," but, barely resisting the temptation, waited to see what was coming next. "It would be a great tragedy if these two men were to break over this issue," he went on.

I certainly agreed. "It would be about the worst thing that could happen to the President and to the country," I said. I was thinking of how difficult it would be to conduct our foreign policy if we lost Marshall, or even if his opposition and threat to

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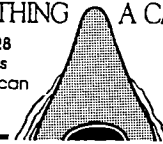
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President Truman on this issue became publicly known.

"Could you drop by my house for a drink on your way home tonight?" Lovett asked. "I would like to talk to you more about this."

I was delighted. I knew Lovett to be a sensible and thoughtful man. In informal settings, he was witty and charming, with a fine sense of detachment and irony, and he was one of the best raconteurs I have ever met. These qualities might have been of interest only to hostesses had they not also skillfully covered an immensely tough interior. All in all, he was close to the model of a perfect public servant. If anyone could turn Marshall around, it might be the man whose appointment as Under-Secretary of State the General had demanded almost immediately upon becoming Secretary, calling him, with a rare display of personal affection, "my old co-pilot." But was Lovett willing to try?

The Lovetts had rented a house in the Kalorama area, a quiet, tree-lined section of Washington off Connecticut Avenue, about ten minutes from the White House. When I arrived, Lovett and I went into his library. In those days, bourbon-and-branch-water was virtually the official drink of the Administration; I had one, and Lovett, always concerned about his health, drank a sherry.

Lovett opened on a positive note. A break between the President and General Marshall, he said, would have unacceptable consequences. We were in the midst of the most difficult months of the Cold War. We had to avert a split in our ranks. Any leak of the astonishing events of that afternoon would be catastrophic. Lovett stressed the reasonableness of his own views. "Let's get through this crisis, then sit down and review the issue again in a more thorough manner," he suggested.

Gentle and conciliatory though Lovett's style was, this seemed to be more of the same from State—delay and circumvention of the President's policy objectives. In order not to return to the contentious tone of the Oval Office meeting, I observed that the "very persuasive critique" by Lovett and Marshall had caused the President to set aside any thought of announcing recognition the following day. Lovett probed to see to what extent my comments in the meeting

represented the President's position.

"Do you think," Lovett said, "that if you were to present some modification of State's views to the President as something he could live with he might be persuaded to moderate his position and work something out with General Marshall that would get us past this crisis—at least, past the next two days?"

Lovett's question presented me with an immediate decision. I could have said I needed to check with the President and reply the next day. But, with time running out, I replied, "Bob, there is no chance whatsoever that the President will change his mind on the basic issue. My presentation today was

made at his instruction and represented his views. He wants to recognize the new state. So all I can say is that if anyone is going to give, it is going to have to be General Marshall, because I can tell you now the President is not going to give an inch." Because I saw no value in even hinting that compromise was possible, I had stated President Truman's views much more strongly than he would have stated them himself. It was essential to focus the pressure back on Marshall, and Lovett was the only channel through which to do it.

"Well, then," Lovett said thoughtfully, "let's see what can be done at State."

On that slightly encouraging note I left, hoping that Lovett could somehow bring his co-pilot around.

The next morning, Thursday the thirteenth, I began by reporting to the President on my meeting with Lovett. "O.K., this is part of the process of letting the dust settle," the President said. "Keep encouraging Lovett to work on the General."

In the middle of a day of tense waiting, Lovett called with a new suggestion—to make a formal decision to recognize the new state, but delay announcing it or carrying it out for an unspecified period.

I saw no value in this suggestion, and told Lovett so without checking with the President. "That's a nothing approach, Bob," I said. "I've talked to the President, and I want to tell you that he is not going to budge an inch in his basic view. He is rock solid."

Lovett raised with me the idea of recognizing the new state de facto instead of de jure. Here was an issue on



which I felt we could yield to State, and I did so, again without checking with the President. The difference, while extremely important to governments in defining and justifying international boundaries, was not something I felt was critical at this moment, since we could upgrade the nature of our recognition to de jure later.

Thursday ended with no resolution of the crisis. Amazingly, there had been no leaks. When the President was asked at his press conference what he planned to do when the Jewish state was proclaimed, he replied curtly, "I will cross that bridge when I get to it." As I listened, I thought, We get to that bridge tomorrow.

FRIDAY morning was the beginning of a historic day in Palestine, but the United States government had still not decided what it would do at 6 P.M. The weather in Washington, which had been unseasonably hot and muggy, finally showed signs of breaking. I reached the office earlier than usual and called Lovett. He was looking for ways to calm things down, but he and Marshall were still opposed to recognition of the Jewish state.

I was also in close contact, directly and through David Niles, with Eliahu Epstein, the Jewish Agency representative in Washington. From Epstein, I had been able to learn much about the situation in the Middle East and about the position of the Jewish Agency which went beyond the information that the State Department, with its pro-Arab bias, had allowed to filter across the street to the White House through official channels.

In our conversations, Lovett probed for the minimum that would satisfy the President. Finally, I had an idea. "Look, Bob, the President understands that General Marshall is not going to support him on this," I said. "Let's forget Wednesday. We're not seeking a formal retraction of what the General said. The President doesn't care whether he supports this now or never. If you can get him simply to say that he will not oppose this, that's all the President would need."

There was a brief pause at the other end of the line. "Let me see what I can do" was all that Lovett said in reply.

Even without a clear signal from Lovett and Marshall, I felt, we had to set in motion the machinery for recognition, in the event that a favorable

decision was made. At 10 A.M., I made a different call—one that I looked on later with great pleasure. "Mr. Epstein," I told the Jewish Agency representative, "we would like you to send an official letter to President Truman before twelve o'clock today formally requesting the United States to recognize the new Jewish state. I would also request that you send a copy of the letter directly to Secretary Marshall."

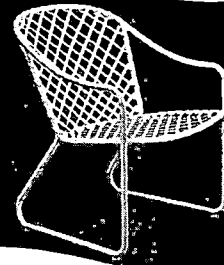
Epstein was ecstatic. He did not realize that the President had still not decided how to respond to the request I had just solicited. Epstein and I went over some important details of the letter. It was particularly important, I said, that the new state claim nothing beyond the boundaries outlined in the U.N. resolution of November 29, 1947, because those boundaries were the only ones that had been agreed to by everyone, including the Arabs, in any international forum.

A few minutes later, Epstein called me. "We've never done this before, and we're not quite sure how to go about it," he said. "Could you give us some advice?" I told him that I would check with the experts and get back to him. With my knowledge and encouragement, Epstein then turned for additional advice to two of the wisest lawyers in Washington, David Ginsburg and Benjamin Cohen, both of whom were great New Dealers and strong supporters of the Zionist cause. Working together during the rest of the morning, he and they drafted the recognition request, and Epstein called back and read it to me.

It was short. "My dear Mr. President," it began. "I have the honor to notify you that the state of—" Here Epstein and I had a problem. We did not know the name of the new state. After some discussion, Epstein said he would simply type in the words "the Jewish State," and he finished reading the draft. I asked him to be sure the letter explicitly referred to the November 29th U.N. resolution. The document ended with a minor rhetorical flourish, which we worked out over the telephone together: "With full knowledge of the deep bond of sympathy which has existed and has been strengthened over the past thirty years between the Government of the United States and the Jewish people of Palestine, I have been authorized by the provisional government of the new state to tender this message and to

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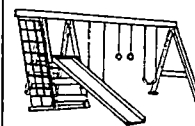
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express the hope that your government will recognize and will welcome the new state into the community of nations."

Epstein handed the letter to his press aide, Harry Zinder, and told him to take it to my office immediately. As I was anxiously waiting for it, Epstein got word on his shortwave radio that the new state would be called Israel. He immediately sent a second aide after Zinder to change the letter. Two blocks from the White House, Zinder, sitting in an automobile, crossed out with a pen the words "the Jewish State," and replaced them with "the State of Israel." Zinder then brought it to my office. That was how I learned the name of the new state.

With Epstein's letter in hand, Niles and I began drafting the reply, checking with State on technical details. Niles also checked with, of all people, Ben Cohen, who thus found himself on both sides of the first official exchange between the United States and Israel. However, there was still no word from either Lovett or Marshall. In the late morning, unable to contain my concern and tension, I called Lovett again and said we should move to resolve the matter. In response, Lovett suggested that we meet for lunch at a small, private club he belonged to—the F Street Club, not far from the White House.

The lunch with Lovett was a remarkable example of the way we were operating. With time literally slipping away, Lovett and I functioned in a sort of never-never land: while we calmly and professionally discussed technical aspects of the decision, we continued to disagree profoundly over whether or not the recognition should be offered at all. Lovett's ability to function effectively on such murky terrain was one of the reasons that I respected him so much.

I had brought with me Epstein's request for recognition, our proposed reply, and a draft Presidential

statement. I wanted to increase the pressure on State. In a friendly but firm manner, Lovett continued to argue against recognition. Delay, he said, was essential. Delay, I said, was the equivalent of non-recognition in the explosive conditions that existed at that moment in the Middle East.

Less than four hours remained before the new nation would be proclaimed. I picked my way carefully through the conversation, so as not to provoke State into seeking any further delay. "The President was impressed, as I was, by your argument, but at six o'clock tonight, without action by us, there will be no internationally recognized government or authority in Palestine," I said. "A number of people have advised the President that this should not be permitted. The President wishes to take action on recognition."

Lovett had still not given up. "Indecent haste in recognizing the new state would be unfortunate for the very reasons that I mentioned on Wednesday," he said. "Please get the President to delay for a day or so." He went on to question the urgency I attached to the issue. "It is hard for me to believe that one day could make so much difference," he said. "There will be a tremendous reaction in the Arab world. We might lose the effects of many years of hard work with the Arabs. We will lose our position with Arab leaders. It

will probably put our diplomatic missions and consular representatives in personal jeopardy."

"Speed is essential to preempt the Russians," I replied. I reminded him that he and Marshall had been expressing great concern lest the Soviet Union take advantage of indecision on our part to gain a foothold in the area. "And a one-day delay will become two days, three days, and so on," I said.

Lovett could see that our position was absolutely firm. If the State Department did not change its attitude, the feared explosion between the President and Marshall could not be averted. Marshall simply had to back down. "It is impossible to time our messages to arrive in so many distant capitals when we still don't know when the final decision will be made," Lovett said, somewhat weakly. He again suggested a one-day delay.

I replied, "We have the formal request from the Jewish Agency, and the President will make the final decision this afternoon." On this ambiguous note, our lunch—friendly in tone, adversarial in content—ended, and I returned to the White House still uncertain whether Lovett could "deliver" Marshall.

The President viewed my lunch as a sign that Lovett was trying to lead Marshall and his colleagues out of their bunker a step at a time by allowing me to reject their arguments one by one, partly in the name of the President. If Lovett wanted me to play the heavy in this minuet, I was more than willing. If Lovett was trying to get himself and the State Department off the hook by saying that the decision was dictated by domestic politics, I thought that not disputing the point was an acceptable price for us at the White House to pay to get the job done. The only important thing, with time running out, was to get it done quickly.

Around 4 P.M., Lovett made the tele-



"Cactus leaves, chayote squash, or tomatillos?"

phone call I had waited so long to receive. "Clark," he said, "I think we have something we can work with. I have talked to the General. He cannot support the President's position, but he has agreed that he will not oppose it."

"God, that's good news," I replied. I was truly thrilled. I thanked Lovett for his efforts, and asked if he could get Marshall to call the President directly with the news. Lovett said he would try. Marshall never did make the call himself—I assume that doing so would have been too painful for him—but Lovett confirmed Marshall's position directly with the President a few minutes later. As Lovett called the President, I called Epstein and told him, in strict confidence, the good news.

Only thirty minutes remained before the announcement would be made in Tel Aviv. The American segment of the drama was now coming to its climax in three places simultaneously: the mini-command center in my office; the State Department; and the floor of the United Nations General Assembly, then at Flushing Meadow, New York.

I thought the issue was finally behind us. But then, to my astonishment, Lovett called to suggest another delay. Would the President agree to defer any action until after the General Assembly adjourned, around ten that night?

Saying I would check with the President, I waited approximately three minutes, and then I called Lovett back to say that delay was out of the question. It was about five-forty, and the State Department had run out of time and ideas. I was not about to see the United States delay recognition for technical reasons.

But one last, suitably bizarre scene was still to be played out. At five-forty-five, I called Dean Rusk to ask him to inform Ambassador Warren Austin, the head of our delegation at the U.N., that the White House would announce recognition of Israel right after 6 P.M. I realized as I talked to Rusk that Lovett had not yet told him that the decision had been made. He reacted as if he had been stung. "This cuts directly across what our delegation has been trying to accomplish in the General Assembly, and we have a large majority for it," he said testily.

"Nevertheless, Dean," I replied, "this is what the President wishes you to do."

Reluctantly, Rusk called Austin off

the floor of the General Assembly and told him what was about to happen. Stunned by the news, Austin decided not to return to the General Assembly floor, in order to signal that he had not known in advance of the President's decision. Instead, he got into his car and went home. His colleagues in the American delegation, thinking that Austin had simply gone to the washroom, continued to round up votes for trusteeship.

Just after 6 P.M., I walked hurriedly past the White House press corps, lounging on the worn sofas in the lobby of the West Wing, to the office of the President's press secretary, Charlie Ross. Impatient to be told that there would be no more news that day, the reporters wondered what story they were waiting for at such a late hour. Handing Ross a piece of paper, I asked him to gather the press as quickly as possible. At 6:11 P.M., Ross read aloud to them the following message:

Statement by the President. This Government has been informed that a Jewish state has been proclaimed in Palestine. . . . The United States recognizes the provisional government as the de-facto authority of the new State of Israel.

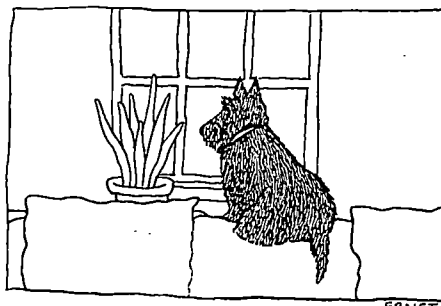
Back at the United Nations, the situation unravelled. Totally unaware of the White House announcement, the delegates continued to debate trusteeship status for Palestine. Suddenly, a rumor swept the floor: the United States had recognized the Jewish state. The *New York Times* reported the next morning, "The first reaction was that someone was making a terrible joke, and some diplomats broke into skeptical laughs." In the ensuing chaos, American delegates had to physically restrain the enraged Cuban delegate when he tried to march to the dais to withdraw his nation from the world assembly.

THOUGH it had been a near-run thing, the deed had been done. The United States had been the first to

recognize Israel, as the President had hoped and wanted. (The Soviet Union followed suit three days later.) The struggle with Marshall, Lovett, Forrestal, and the entire foreign-policy establishment had been contained—but only barely.

Lovett never told me exactly what had passed between him and Marshall in those last two days. From what he did tell me, I concluded that he had finally sat down alone with Marshall on Friday and said, in effect, that, having argued their position, they had an obligation to accept the President's policy or resign, and that this issue did not merit resignation. Although Marshall never forgave me, these events did nothing to impair my personal relations with Lovett. In fact, the curious combination of disagreement over substance and collaboration to resolve the crisis had forged stronger and closer bonds between us. Lovett remained adamant for the rest of his life, however, in his view that the President and I had been wrong. So did most of his colleagues. Nothing could ever convince him, Marshall, Acheson, Forrestal, or Rusk that President Truman had made the right decision. But never once, in these forty-plus years, have I wavered in the conviction that what Harry Truman did was correct. Under our system, political considerations are present in every important decision a President makes, but in this case they were not the central or driving factor. The charge that domestic politics determined our policy on Palestine angered President Truman for the rest of his life. I shared his feeling; it implied that the President and those Americans who supported the Zionists were somehow acting in opposition to our nation's interests.

What would have happened if President Truman had not acted as he did? History does not allow us to test alternatives, but in my view American recognition and the American support that followed were vital in helping Israel survive. Had the United States continued to support trusteeship status for Palestine, Israel's condition at birth would have been infinitely more precarious. In the war that ensued, the Israelis would have been at an additional disadvantage if we had continued to support trusteeship, as the State Department had wanted. Emboldened by weaker American support for Israel, the Arabs might have been more suc-



cessful in their war against the Jews. If that had happened, the United States might have faced a far more difficult decision within a year: either to offer the Israelis massive American military support or to risk watching the Arabs drive the Israelis into the sea.

Because President Truman was often annoyed by the tone and fierceness of the pressure exerted on him by American Zionists, he left some people with the impression that he was ambivalent about the events of May, 1948. This was not true. He never wavered in his belief that he had taken the right action. He felt particularly warm toward Chaim Weizmann, Israel's first President, and David Ben-Gurion, its first Prime Minister. In 1961, years after he left the White House, Harry Truman met with Ben-Gurion in New York. Ben-Gurion's memory of that meeting is revealing:

At our last meeting, after a very interesting talk, just before [the former President] left me—it was in a New York hotel suite—I told him that as a foreigner I could not judge what would be his place in American history; but his helpfulness to us, his constant sympathy with our aims in Israel, his courageous decision to recognize our new State so quickly and his steadfast support since then had given him an immortal place in Jewish history. As I said that, tears suddenly sprang to his eyes. And his eyes were still wet when he bade me goodbye. I had rarely seen anyone so moved. I tried to hold him for a few minutes until he had become more composed, for I recalled that the hotel corridors were full of waiting journalists and photographers. He left. A little while later, I too had to go out, and a correspondent came to me to ask, "Why was President Truman in tears when he left you?"

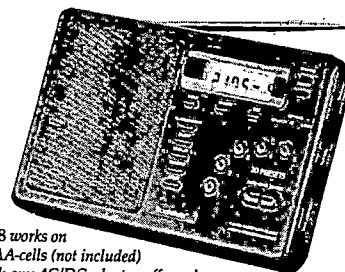
I believe that I know. Those were the tears of a man who had been subjected to calumny and vilification, who had persisted against powerful forces within his own Administration which were determined to defeat him. They were the tears of a man who had fought ably and honorably for a humanitarian goal to which he was deeply committed. They were tears of thanksgiving that his God had seen fit to bless his labors with success.

I admired President Truman enormously for the courage he showed in this crisis. But, then, I admired Harry Truman more than any other man I have ever known.

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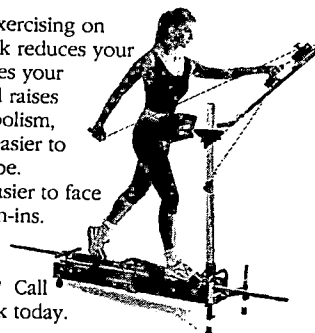
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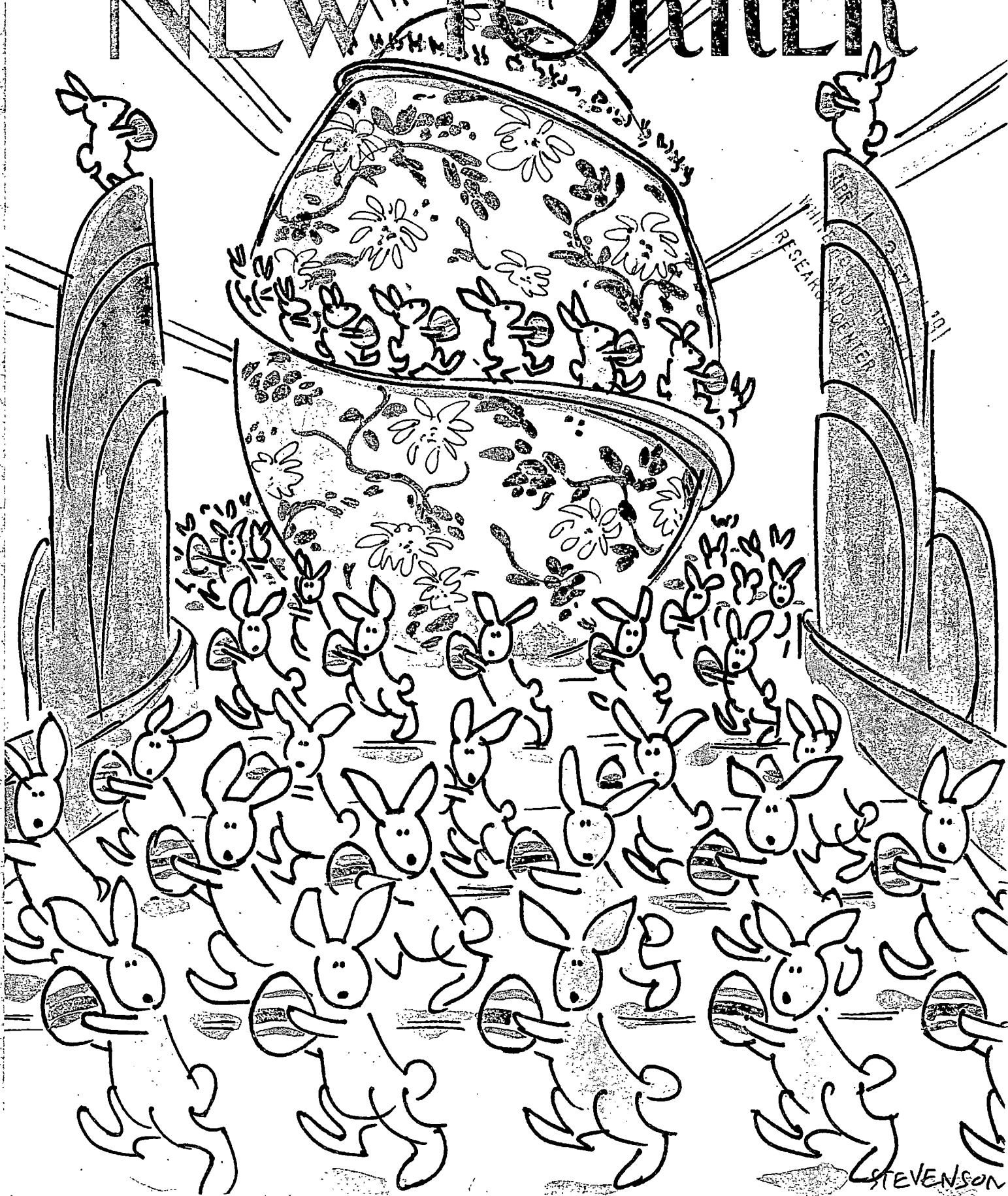
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THE TRUMAN YEARS—II

IN October of 1945, Dr. Franc McCluer, the president of Westminster College, in Fulton, Missouri, read that Winston Churchill, who had been out of office since July, was planning to visit the United States early in 1946. McCluer, whose odd-shaped head had earned him the nickname Bullet, asked his old Westminster classmate Harry Vaughan, who had become President Harry Truman's military aide, to get the President to endorse an invitation to Churchill to speak at Westminster College.

The President considered Churchill "the first citizen of the world." But he hardly knew him, having spent only nine days with him at the Potsdam Conference, in the summer of 1945, before Churchill, defeated in the British elections, left the conference. Wanting to get to know him better, President Truman wrote, "This is a wonderful school in my home state. Hope you can do it. I'll introduce you."

Although those of us on the President's staff—I had just begun service as the President's acting naval aide—did not know it, Churchill harbored deep reservations about President Truman, and, in his own later words, "loathed the idea of [Truman] taking the place of Franklin Roosevelt." But for some time he had wanted to make a major speech summing up his view of the world, and especially of the growing Soviet threat. What better auspices for such a dramatic statement than a speech introduced by the President of the United States? He accepted at once, and President Truman invited him to travel between Washington and Fulton on the Presidential train—a journey that would allow them several days of close contact.

As soon as the train pulled out of Union Station, on March 4, 1946, the President had drinks served to his guests. Churchill, as was his wont, drank Scotch with water but no ice, for he viewed adding ice as a barbaric American custom. Holding his drink, he leaned back and said, "When I was in South Africa as a young man, the water was not fit to drink. I have felt

that way ever since about water, but I have learned that it can be made palatable by the addition of some whiskey." Like everyone, I had heard of Churchill's reputation as a drinker, but it was my impression that he drank very slowly, nursing a single drink for hours.

As we relaxed on the sofas and easy chairs in the President's private car, President Truman turned to his guest and said, "Now, Mr. Churchill, we are going to be together on this train for some time. I don't want to rest on formality, so I would ask you to call me Harry."

Bowing his head slightly and gracefully, Churchill replied, "I would be delighted to call you Harry. But you must call me Winston."

The President said, "I just don't know if I can do that. I have such admiration for you and what you mean, not only to your people but to this country and the world."

Churchill, smiling broadly, settled the matter: "Yes, you can. You must, or else I will not be able to call you Harry."

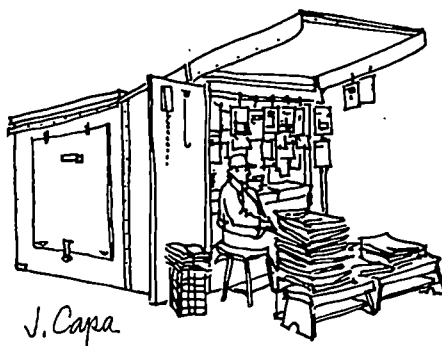
And President Truman, clearly pleased, agreed, saying, "Well, if you put it that way, Winston, I will call you Winston."

Churchill soon asked to be excused in order to work on his speech. His approach to speechwriting was in direct contrast to that of almost every American politician I have known. For one thing, he wrote each speech himself—something increasingly rare even then in American politics. He attached the greatest importance not only to his general theme but to the exact words

with which he conveyed it. Churchill did not know if he would ever be returned to office, but he wanted to warn the world, and especially the United States, about the dangers of Stalinism, just as he had warned the world in the nineteen-thirties about Hitler. He knew that his only influence lay in the power of his words, and he intended this speech to take its place alongside the wartime speeches with which he had rallied Britain in its moments of supreme peril.

President Truman had been in office less than a year. He was torn between a growing anger at and distrust of the Soviet Union and a residual hope that he could still work with Stalin. Just days before we boarded the train for Fulton, Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal had circulated to senior officials and military officers a lengthy telegram from the American Embassy in Moscow warning that the Soviet Union, out of a combination of insecurity and age-old ambitions, would be a dangerous and destabilizing element in the postwar world. The message, which was to become known as the Long Telegram, was probably the most important, and most influential, message ever sent to Washington by an American diplomat. Its author, George F. Kennan, was soon to become famous. Forrestal circulated the Long Telegram widely among his friends in Washington, and sent it to several hundred senior American military officers around the world.

Secretary of State James Byrnes had read a draft of Churchill's speech the day before the train left Washington and had briefed President Truman on its contents. The President had said he would not read the final text, in order to be able to say later that he had not endorsed or approved it in advance. Yet when Churchill's press aide handed out the final version of the speech to reporters on the train the night before it was delivered the White House staff also got copies. Reading it, I was deeply impressed by its sweep and its sense of history. As for President Truman, despite his earlier decision he



found he could not resist reading it.

It was a brilliant and admirable statement, he told Churchill, and would "create quite a stir." But it presented the President with a dilemma. He was not yet ready to endorse Churchill's view that we were entering an era of relentless confrontation with Moscow, even though his presence on the platform with Churchill certainly appeared to imply an endorsement. Still hoping to keep channels of communication open with Stalin, the President instructed me to put into his introduction of Churchill some positive words about Stalin which might have that effect.

After working on his speech that first evening on the train, Churchill rejoined us for drinks and dinner. During dinner, he turned to President Truman and said the magic words: "Harry, I understand from the press that you like to play poker."

"That's correct, Winston. I have played a great deal of poker in my life."

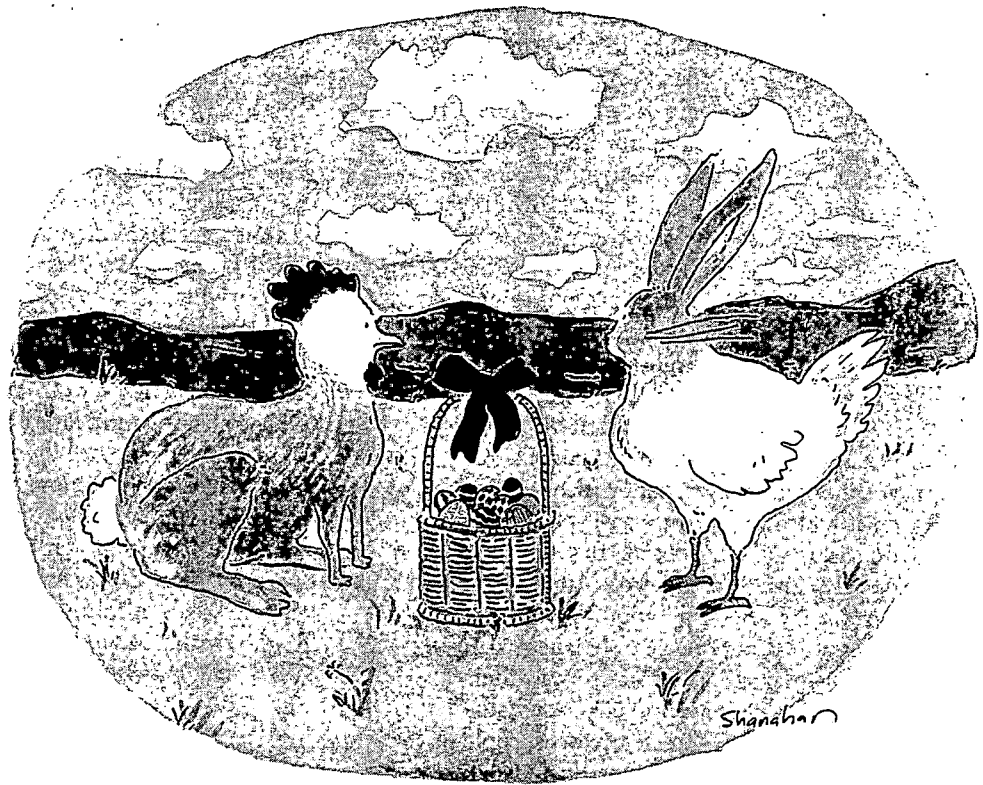
"I am delighted to hear it. You know, I played my first poker game during the Boer War. I like poker—a fine game. Do you think there is any possibility that we might play it during this trip?"

"Winston, the fellows around you are all poker players, serious poker players, and we would be delighted to provide you with a game."

A few minutes later, with dinner over, Churchill excused himself for a moment. As soon as he left, the President turned to us and said, in total seriousness, "Men, we have an important task ahead of us. This man has been playing poker for more than forty years. He is cagey, he loves cards, and is probably an excellent player. The reputation of American poker is at stake, and I expect every man to do his duty."

Churchill returned to the dining room dressed in his famous Second World War zippered blue siren suit, which I thought looked a bit like a bunny suit. The stewards had put green baize over the dining-room table, and six of us—the President; Churchill; Charlie Ross, the President's press secretary; Harry Vaughan; General Wallace Graham, the President's physician; and I—sat down for the most memorable poker game I have ever played in.

The truth emerged quickly.



Churchill was enthusiastic, and proud of his poker skills, but he was not very good at the game. I learned later that when he played his own card games in England, such as gin rummy and bezique, he was excellent. But in poker, with its bluffs, and the value of deception, and a certain code with which we were all familiar, he was, so to speak, a lamb among wolves. In addition, his terminology for the cards was foreign to us, and required constant clarification, which only increased our advantage. He called a straight a "sequence" and a jack a "knave"—a bit of British terminology that amused Harry Vaughan so much that he could hardly keep from laughing aloud.

After about an hour, Churchill excused himself briefly. The moment the door closed, President Truman turned to us with a grave expression and said, "Now, look here, men—you are not treating our guest very well." He looked at Churchill's dwindling stack of chips. "I fear that he may have already lost close to three hundred dollars."

Vaughan looked at his friend of thirty years and laughed. "But, Boss, this guy's a pigeon! If you want us to play our best poker for the nation's honor, we'll have this guy's pants before the evening is over. Now, you just tell us

what you want. You want us to play customer poker, O.K., we can carry him along all evening. If you want us to give it our best, we'll have his underwear."

President Truman smiled. "I don't want him to think we are pushovers, but, at the same time, let's not treat him badly."

Those were our ground rules for the rest of the trip. Churchill "won" some splendid pots, lost some others. At one point, I dropped out of a hand of stud poker, and noticed that Charlie Ross, who was sitting next to me, had an ace showing and an ace in the hole. I watched Ross raise Churchill and raise him again. Churchill, with only a jack showing, stayed right with him. Then, at the end, Churchill bet a substantial amount of money, perhaps a hundred dollars, right into this ace. Charlie studied what he knew had to be a winning hand, looked over at the President, gave what I thought sounded like a sigh, and folded.

Finally, however, as the evening was drawing to a close, we moved in a little on our guest. When the dust had settled and we tallied up, Churchill had lost about two hundred and fifty dollars. He had enjoyed himself thoroughly, but he had dropped just enough money so that he could not go back to London and, as

Vaughan put it, "brag to his Limey friends that he had beaten the Americans at poker."

At Fulton we were greeted by Bullet McCluer, all puffed up for his big day. I found the entire scene at Fulton immensely exciting. In a small town in my home state, the greatest statesman of our age was about to make a historic speech. We filed into the gymnasium and onto its stage in academic procession, Churchill dramatic in scarlet robes, President Truman less imposing, robed in black. In front of us lay a remarkable scene—a small-town convocation in a gymnasium decked out with bunting, waiting with polite anticipation to hear a speech that many of us fully expected to be of historic importance. The big windows of the gymnasium were open to let the warm spring air circulate. Professors in their academic robes, young clean-cut students, and well-dressed townspeople were all squeezed together on wooden bleachers. Thrilled by the worldwide attention, the entire population of Fulton, as well as thousands of people from the surrounding area, turned out, filling all twenty-seven hundred seats in the gymnasium and spreading onto the green outside to listen to the speech, which was broadcast nationwide on the radio.

I was seated almost directly behind the rostrum. After the President delivered a warm introduction, Churchill rose, put on his heavy glasses, and began to speak. He spoke for forty-five minutes—a long speech by present-day standards—but the audience was mesmerized. Churchill's grand theme was that the United States now stood at "the pinnacle of world power." It was a "solemn moment" for the nation, "for with this primacy in power is also joined an awe-inspiring accountability to the future." He turned to the question of tyranny: "A shadow has fallen upon the scenes so lately lighted by the Allied victory. Nobody knows what Soviet Russia and its Communist international organization intend to do in the immediate future, or what are the limits, if any, to their expansive and proselytizing tendencies." Then came the words that became part of the history of our times:

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of

HOUSE

Where it should have been there were only memories.
They liked it anyhow and lived there. For them
The moment it fell down was the moment it lifted up:
Livable-in at last.
A pantry full of regrets. A garden
Planned out in the shape of a plan, lush
With *What-might-have-been* and *O-if-only*;
A folly where . . . on fine afternoons . . .
And the parties they threw there then, or rather
Imagined themselves throwing, who had never been
Much for parties, but "Better late than . . ." and the rest
Of the phrase lost in laughter. Love bloomed
In the nonexistent parlor; the piano
That never was was closed, suddenly,
By the woman who looked at her hands so as not to see
The face of the young man who knelt at her side,
Enrapt. Impossible ever to know
If it was the sunlight which had faded those curtains
So slowly that no one had seen, or whether
They had been wrong about the color from the start.

—LAURA MULLEN

central and eastern Europe—Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Bucharest, and Sofia. All these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I might call the Soviet sphere, and are all subject, in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and in some cases increasing measure of control from Moscow.

As I heard Churchill proclaim those words, in his peculiar, rumbling cadence, I felt their force much more strongly than I had when I read the text the day before. But none of us realized then that a new phrase had entered the English language. Indeed, the next day's newspaper coverage focussed more on Churchill's call for closer Anglo-American cooperation than on his description of the Soviet Union.

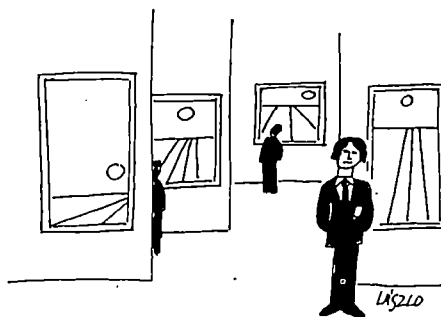
There is a natural tendency to simplify history—to give it a more coherent pattern than a detailed examination of the facts warrants. The Fulton speech is now treated as revelation and prophecy by Churchill, a turning point in the evolution of policy and of popu-

lar understanding of the Russian threat. But the initial reaction to the speech was divided, and editorial and public comment was, in his biographer Martin Gilbert's phrase, "almost universally hostile."

President Truman gave considerable attention to the distinction between his relationship with Churchill and his reaction to the speech, which he admired, but whose message he was not yet ready to embrace. The President recognized the power and the insight of Churchill's speech and also of Kennan's Long Telegram, but he still hoped that the Cold War—a phrase not yet in vogue—could be avoided.

DURING a staff meeting on July 12, 1946, the President began discussing his growing frustration with Soviet behavior. "The Russians are trying to chisel away a little here, a little there," he said, and, referring to a twenty-one-nation peace conference in Paris at the end of the month which was supposed to forge a unified position on a peace treaty with Germany, he went on: "If the Paris conference busts up, I want to be ready to reveal to the whole world the full truth about the Russian failure to honor agreements." Then, turning to me—I had by now been named special counsel—the President asked that I produce a record of Soviet violations of international agreements.

From the outset, I was aware of the



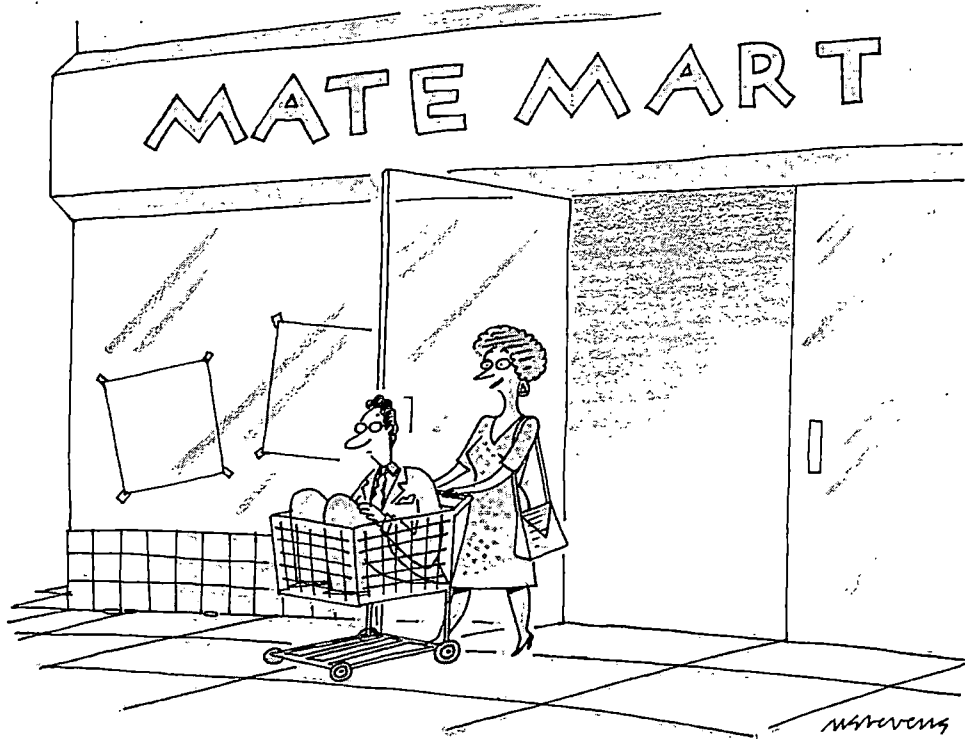
importance of this assignment, yet I knew I couldn't complete it and also carry out my other duties without assistance. Fortunately, the perfect person to help me was already in place. As always, I turned with confidence to George M. Elsey, my only aide, who had spent four years observing the relationship among the wartime Allies from the secret confines of the Roosevelt Map Room.

The President had asked only for a review of those agreements which the Soviet Union had broken, but as I discussed the assignment with Elsey we decided to suggest a different process. We agreed that Kennan's Long Telegram was brilliant, but Kennan had confined himself to analysis. Elsey suggested that we try to fill the gap between Kennan's analysis and policy recommendations by assembling the views of the senior officials most concerned with American policy toward the Soviet Union, to see what consensus, if any, existed. On July 16th, I proposed this procedure to the President, and he immediately authorized me to expand the scope of the project, asking only that its completion not be delayed.

I did not realize it at the time, but I had received permission to begin what turned out to be the first peacetime interagency foreign-policy review of U.S.-Soviet relations. Within two years, a formal National Security Council system and a national-security assistant would coordinate such studies. But in 1946 the National Security Council did not exist and the President turned to his special counsel.

Elsey and I drew up a short list of people whose views we would solicit: Admiral William D. Leahy, who spoke for the Joint Chiefs of Staff; James Byrnes and Dean Acheson at State; Secretary of War Robert Patterson; Forrester; Attorney General Tom Clark; and the former Central Intelligence Group director Sidney Souers. We made special use of George Kennan, who had returned to Washington, and, finally, we consulted Charles Bohlen, Kennan's close friend and colleague in the Soviet field.

On September 24th, I handed the President a printed and hardbound copy of our top-secret report, entitled simply "American Relations with the Soviet Union." Ross noted in his journal the next day:



Clark Clifford submitted his monumental top-secret report on our relations with Russia. This should be an extremely valuable source book. Only twenty copies have been prepared.

At about seven o'clock the next morning, my telephone rang at home. I was surprised to hear President Truman on the other end of the line. "I stayed up very late last night reading your report," he began. "Powerful stuff."

"Thank you, Mr. President."

"Clark, how many copies of this memorandum do you have?"

"Twenty," I replied.

"Have any been distributed yet?"

"No, sir. They are all in my safe at the office."

"Well, please come down to your office now, and get all twenty copies. I want them delivered to me at once." The President offered no explanation for his surprising instructions, but I set out for the White House immediately, got all twenty copies out of my safe, and took them to the President. "I read your report with care last night," he said. "It is very valuable to me. But if it leaked it would blow the roof off the White House, it would blow the roof off the Kremlin. We'd have the most serious situation on our hands that has yet occurred in my Administration."

What was in this report that caused it to disappear after a day? In three sentences near the beginning we sug-

gested a new foreign policy for the United States:

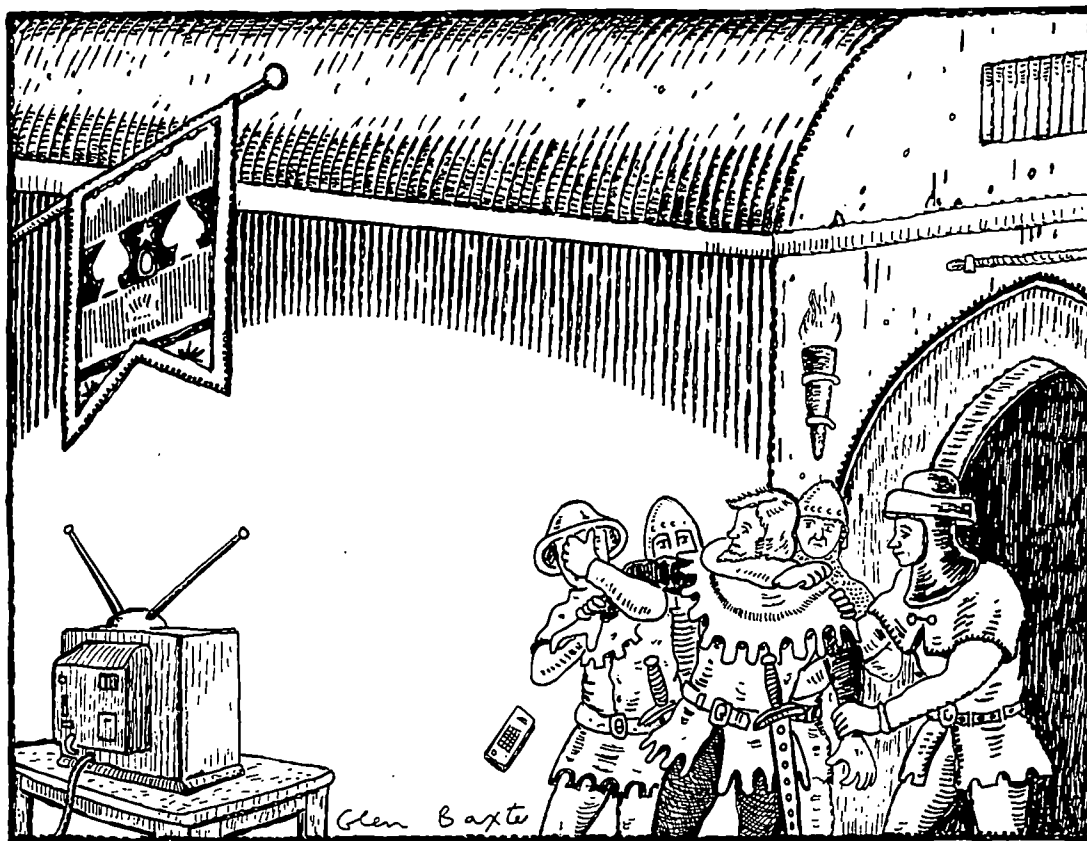
The primary objective of United States policy is to convince Soviet leaders that it is in the Soviet interest to participate in a system of world cooperation.

Until Soviet leaders abandon their aggressive policies . . . the United States must assume that the U.S.S.R. may at any time embark on a course of expansion effected by open warfare and therefore must maintain sufficient military strength to restrain the Soviet Union.

The United States should seek, by cultural, intellectual, and economic interchange, to demonstrate to the Soviet Union that we have no aggressive intentions and that peaceable coexistence of Capitalism and Communism is possible.

Today, these sentences may seem a self-evident summation of the policy followed by the nine Presidents from Harry Truman to George Bush. But in 1946 they were new. Others had warned of the Soviet threat, but no one had previously proposed a comprehensive American response to the Soviet challenge. Our summation indicated where we felt American policy should go:

In conclusion, as long as the Soviet Union adheres to its present policy, the United States should maintain military forces powerful enough to restrain the Soviet Union and to confine Soviet influence to its present area. All nations not now within the Soviet sphere should be given generous economic assistance and political support in their opposition to Soviet penetration. Economic aid may also be given to



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AFTER A FIERCE STRUGGLE, ROBIN AGREED TO RELINQUISH POSSESSION OF THE REMOTE CONTROL.

the Soviet Government and private trade with the U.S.S.R. permitted. . . . Even though Soviet leaders profess to believe that the conflict between Capitalism and Communism is irreconcilable and must eventually be resolved by the triumph of the latter, it is our hope that they will change their minds and work out with us a fair and equitable settlement when they realize that we are too strong to be beaten and too determined to be frightened.

The report gave President Truman a precise picture of what the Administration's senior officials were thinking in that critical year, when our nation was suspended between the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the Cold War. For the most part, they were far ahead of the American public in recognizing the dangers posed by the Soviet Union. Most of them supported a comprehensive policy of resistance to Soviet expansionism long before the formulation of the Truman Doctrine. Although the President felt that it was too early to tell the public how serious the Soviet threat was, the report helped prepare him for the challenge of the following year. If it had not been for the farsightedness of the

men who contributed to our report and fashioned policy in the late nineteen-forties, I believe, we would have been unprepared for the Soviet thrust into Eastern Europe, and our lack of preparedness would have encouraged Stalin to press further.

It was a short step from the report to the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and George Kennan's famous "X" article the following year. Anyone who played a role, even a small one, in the formulation of those policies, which represented the triumph of internationalism in America, has a right to say proudly, in Dean Acheson's grand phrase, that he was "present at the creation."

I HAD breakfast regularly with James Forrestal, the Secretary of the Navy, at his beautiful house in Georgetown. At almost every breakfast, he urged me to encourage the President to take a more active stand against the Soviet Union. I agreed with Forrestal's strategic assessment, but I told him such an effort could not

be undertaken unless the President was ready to exert strong leadership. I knew that the President understood the danger posed by the Soviet Union, and that in the near future he would step up to the challenge. However, the last few months of 1946 was not the time to begin the process of, in the words of our report, insuring that "the American people . . . be fully informed about the difficulties in getting along with the Soviet Union." I urged Forrestal to be more patient, but patience was not one of his strong suits, and he continued to press his case.

The electoral disaster of 1946, in which the Republicans gained control of both the House

and the Senate, changed the situation dramatically. Although we did not realize it at the time, it turned out to be easier to fashion a bipartisan foreign policy with a coalition of Republicans and conservative Democrats than with just the Democrats, for the Democrats were still divided between liberals and conservatives, neither of whom trusted President Truman. To a surprising extent, these foreign-policy alliances across party lines continued for forty years.

On February 21, 1947, I was alone with President Truman for our usual end-of-the-day discussion when Dean Acheson called from the State Department to inform him that the British government could no longer afford to supply assistance to Greece and Turkey, both of which were threatened by Communist expansion and revolution in the region. It was clear to me from listening to the President's end of the conversation that he was prepared for suggestions from Acheson to offer Greece and Turkey substantial aid—as much as four hundred million dollars, a staggering sum then, totalling about

one per cent of a federal budget of about forty billion dollars.

Acheson's first set of recommendations arrived at the White House early the following week. He saw an opportunity to create a policy that went far beyond Greece and Turkey. But, wise in the ways of Washington, he did not unveil his long-range objective until he could get a clear picture of the degree of Presidential commitment and of congressional sentiment.

The answers to both questions began to emerge later in the week. In a crucial meeting with congressional leaders on February 27th, the President, General George C. Marshall, who had replaced Byrnes as Secretary of State, and Acheson outlined the need to give large-scale assistance to Greece and Turkey. I did not attend this meeting, which has been described by many of its participants, but afterward President Truman told me that the Republicans, led by Senator Arthur Vandenberg, of Michigan, had shown willingness to support a request for such aid if, and *only if*, President Truman personally argued the case for such aid, and linked it explicitly to the survival of the Western world.

Watching President Truman tackle this challenge, I felt he had come a long way since the loss of Congress to the Republicans barely four months earlier. Now he seemed ready for what Senator Vandenberg told him was his "date with destiny." He was willing, he told me, to "lay it on the line" with the American people. He did not spend time, as most Presidents would have, studying "options papers." He simply wanted to see a speech draft before making a final decision.

Despite the historic importance of the speech, it was prepared in much the same way as routine Presidential speeches. The State Department prepared the first draft, and the rewriting and "Trumanizing" of it were done under my supervision at the White House. By the time the final draft was ready, so many hands had touched it that, despite some claims to the contrary, no single person could assert paternity.

The speech was delivered to Congress on March 12, 1947. Its three most memorable sentences ended a century and a half in which American foreign policy had been, in essence, reactive to specific events, and ushered

in an era in which we committed ourselves in peacetime to continuous and active leadership in international affairs:

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.

I believe that we must assist free people to work out their own destinies in their own way.

I believe that our help should be primarily through economic and financial aid which is essential to economic stability and orderly political processes.

The Truman Doctrine, as it came to be called, took more than forty years to succeed, was often controversial and expensive, and was at times misapplied—most notably in Vietnam. But a major war with the Soviet Union was avoided during a dangerous half century, and by 1989 it was clear that the Cold War, as we knew it, was over. This was the direct, if long-delayed, result of the policies laid out in 1947 by President Truman and followed, despite all the political controversies at home, by every one of his successors. No President could wish for a grander legacy.

Later that spring, another important document was being drafted in the State Department, outlining a program for massive economic assistance to war-torn Europe. Watching this speech take shape in mid-May, I knew that it would be one of the most important programs ever undertaken by an American government in peacetime. I suggested to the President that he deliver the speech himself, and that we name his proposal the Truman Formula, or the Truman Concept, or the Truman Plan.

President Truman smiled wryly at my suggestion and shook his head. "No," he said. "We have a Republican majority in both Houses. Anything going up there bearing my name will quiver a couple of times, turn belly up,

and die. Let me think about it a little."

A day or so later we returned to the subject. "I've decided to give the whole thing to General Marshall," the President said. "The worst Republican on the Hill can vote for it if we name it after the General." This exchange taught me a great lesson. Whatever my intention, I had been wrong, I realized, to propose that the program be named after President Truman. It would have weakened a program of immense historical importance. I was reminded of the old aphorism "There is no limit to what a man can accomplish if he doesn't care who gets the credit."

Marshall gave the speech at the Harvard commencement on June 5, 1947. Today, the phrase "Marshall Plan" has become synonymous with a massive aid program to deal with a crisis. Time and again, "a new Marshall Plan" is suggested to deal with some critical area of the world, or with some pervasive problem, such as drugs. But there will never be another Marshall Plan. The conditions that led up to it and made it successful cannot be re-created, and the scope of it defies modern budgets. It was sixteen per cent of the federal budget—an inconceivable proportion today, when defense spending and interest on the national debt alone take up nearly forty per cent.

The most wonderful part of the story of the Marshall Plan is that it worked. Winston Churchill called it "a turning point in the history of the world." Arnold Toynbee wrote, "It was not the discovery of atomic energy, but the solicitude of the world's most privileged people for its less privileged [that] will be remembered as the signal achievement of our age."

GIVEN the way the American government was organized, President Truman liked to say, the United States was lucky—"damn lucky"—to have won the Second World War. "We must never fight another war the way we fought the last two," he said to me in a moment of frustration. "I have the feeling that if the Army and the Navy had fought our enemies as hard as they fought each other the war would have ended much earlier."

Soon after Truman became President, he decided to reorganize not only the armed forces but the entire national-security structure. His reforms changed forever the way the United States gov-



ernment worked. Consider his achievement: in little more than three years, President Truman established the Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Security Council, the position of chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the first foreign-aid agencies. It was as if the nation had suddenly made the transition from horse-drawn carriages to the era of the automobile. When this surprisingly short period of explosive institutional creativity came to an end, it became almost impossible for the United States to turn away from global responsibilities, as it had done, with such disastrous results, following the First World War.

It was no accident that governmental reorganization coincided with the development of the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the technical-assistance program known as Point Four, and the policy of containment. These new policies required new machinery. Yet it was much easier for government officials to agree on major policy changes than on governmental reorganization. Even minor changes could cause major bureaucratic battles. Today's national-security structure was not a divinely inspired concept but the result of compromises that had to be made by President Truman as he waged a bitter bureaucratic struggle with Congress and many of his own civilian and military subordinates. That struggle involved numerous friends and close colleagues of mine, and ended tragically for one of the men to whom I was then closest, James Forrestal.

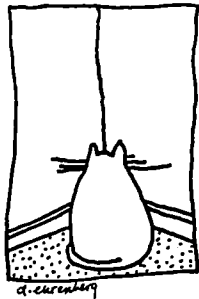
President Truman began the struggle by proposing nothing less than the most radical reorganization of our armed forces in the nation's history. On December 19, 1945, he sent to Congress a plan drawn up by Secretary of War Robert Patterson, a request for legislation "combining the War and Navy Departments into one single Department of National Defense."

The plan called for the creation of a Secretary of National Defense, a senior deputy, and three assistant secretaries, who would head "coordinated branches of the Department of National Defense: one for the land forces, one for the naval forces, and one for the air

forces." It also proposed the establishment of a single chief of staff, who would oversee the commander of "each of the three component branches." The position of chief of staff would rotate among the three branches, and possess genuine command authority. The President's proposal allowed the Navy to retain its own aviation. The President also agreed, reluctantly, to maintain the Marine Corps as a separate military branch within the Navy, instead of abolishing it, as both he and the Army desired. In his heart the President always felt that there was no need for a separate Marine Corps; over time, I reached the same conclusion. But the political power of the Marine Corps was overwhelming, as we both learned later. "They have a propaganda machine that is almost equal to Stalin's," Truman once said.

In terms of true integration, the President's proposal went beyond what exists in today's Pentagon. Had his plan been approved in 1945, with some modifications, the Pentagon would have been a much more efficient and less wasteful organization than it is today. But because the Navy and its most powerful supporter in the House, "Admiral" Carl Vinson, of Georgia, were dead set against them, the President's December 19th recommendations never had a chance.

Of all the President's proposals, Forrestal feared most the one recommending a single chief of staff as commander of all our land, sea, and air forces. He regarded it as an Army plot, spearheaded by General Eisenhower, and he set out to fight it. He called the President's proposal "completely unworkable," and told me that it would be impossible for him and senior Navy officers to testify in favor of it.



The revolt of the Navy officers against the Army plan was understandable, but what was driving Jim Forrestal, who fought even harder than the uniformed Navy to retain its special status? This question came to be asked often, by friend and adversary alike, as the puzzle of this extraordinary figure grew. Even though he and I were friends, I felt I never understood him, but I could see that by 1946 the Navy had become almost his entire life. His personal life was unhappy. His wife, Josephine, a beautiful, difficult, and

troubled woman, was drinking heavily. Forrestal had left the Catholic Church, and was deeply guilt-ridden. Possessing great energy but limited vision, he feared that the creation of a separate Air Force would make the Navy the odd man out in interservice fights, overwhelmed by the combination of the Air Force and the Army. "We are fighting for the very life of the Navy," he often told me in those early days, when he considered me a staunch ally.

A Senate committee, assisted by two senior military officers—Lieutenant General Lauris Norstad and Vice-Admiral Arthur W. Radford—tried, and failed, to resolve the disagreement between the two branches, and between their supporters. The debate dragged on into the spring of 1946. On May 12th, I told President Truman I had concluded that the Army's position might be correct on its merits but was politically out of reach. Our real choice, I said, was either concessions to the Navy or no bill at all. To achieve progress, I urged the President to order Forrestal and Patterson to reach an agreement as quickly as possible. The next day, the President called the two men to the Oval Office and told them he was tired of their inability to reconcile their differences. He asked them to reach agreement promptly on a "mutually acceptable plan of unification."

Yet even this Presidential order was inadequate. Two weeks later, the two Secretaries sent the President a joint letter listing four areas of continuing disagreement. "We regret our inability to bridge completely the gap between us," they said—a huge understatement. When I presented this letter to the President, he all but snorted in annoyance and contempt. The four disagreements, the President observed, were over "the basic issues": whether to establish a separate Air Force; whether to allow the Navy to retain land-based aircraft to support certain naval operations; what the role and mission of the Marine Corps should be; and, above all, whether to unify the services under a single secretary.

Two weeks later, after further discussions with Leahy and me, President Truman attempted once more to force the issue. I drafted letters, to Patterson, Forrestal, and the congressional leadership, in which the President offered his views on the four points still in dispute. First, he reaffirmed his support

for a single military department and a single Cabinet-level secretary. That remained his primary goal. But, he said, he would agree to allow the civilian chief of each service to retain the title of Secretary, although the chiefs would no longer be full members of the Cabinet. Second, the President reluctantly agreed to three services—an Army, a Navy, and an Air Force—and he dropped the idea of a single chief of staff. Third, he gave the Navy the right to retain land-based aircraft. Finally, recognizing political reality, he put aside his own doubts about the need for a separate Marine Corps and accepted its retention as a separate entity within the Navy, with its own air components.



In his letters the President also called for the creation of a National Security Council, a Central Intelligence Agency, an agency for military procurement, a national-security-resources board, a research-and-development agency, and a military-education-and-training agency. This farsighted set of proposals bears a clear resemblance to the organizations that were ultimately created. But at the time the President's letters did not produce results—only further argument between Forrestal and Patterson.

In a private talk with me, Forrestal referred to the Army in bitter and emotional terms. I set up a private meeting for us with the President. With tight-lipped grimness, Forrestal accused the Army of "steamroller tactics," and said he was totally opposed to the idea of a single Department of National Defense. Then, for the first time, he suggested that he might resign rather than support unification.

Threats to resign often present Presidents with genuine dilemmas. Letting Forrestal go may have tempted the President, but it would have enraged the Navy's powerful supporters in Congress, would have further entrenched the rest of the Navy, would have turned Forrestal into a martyr, and would have doomed hope for military unification on any basis. The President knew this, and began a slow, patient, and skillful strategy designed to move Forrestal as far as possible without losing him. The way to deal with the Navy, he felt, was to negotiate with Forrestal. It was the right strategy.

During this period, I remained closer to Forrestal than to any other official except my old Missouri friend Stuart Symington, who had just been appointed Assistant Secretary of War for Air. But a bitterly adversarial relationship developed between Symington and Forrestal as they defended their respective services, and the friction between them sometimes tested my friendship with Forrestal, which was built on relationships established in government service rather than on the sort of deep personal fellowship that bound me for life to Symington. Furthermore, while my original sympathies had been strongly pro-Navy, and I retained respect and affection for Forrestal, I gradually began to feel he was showing excessive rigidity.

Looking back, one can surmise that his extremely emotional behavior, his rigidity, and his intensity were all signs of mental illness, but at the time this possibility was not apparent to me or to anyone else. Later, I recalled little occurrences that I had dismissed at the time as quirks but that appeared ominous in retrospect. When Forrestal and I played golf, for example, he did not engage in casual conversation. Instead, he practically ran from shot to shot, pausing only a moment to line up the next effort. On the tennis court, where he was a scrappy competitor, we also rarely spoke. When he learned of the poker games on the Presidential yacht Williamsburg, he asked me to invite him into the game, and I did, but, because he was unable to relax, like the others around the green table, the President never let him become a regular.

It wasn't until January 16, 1947, that Patterson and Forrestal sent the President a joint letter offering the first real break in the logjam. The Patterson-Forrestal Agreement, as it came to be known, was possible only because the Army, at Eisenhower's instigation, dropped its insistence for a single department, and accepted the creation of a loose organization under the over-all direction of a "Secretary of National Defense." The Departments of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force would function independently, and each service secretary would have the right of direct access to the President. The flaws in this proposal were evident. It left real power in the hands of the services, and gave the Secretary

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of National Defense almost no real authority. But this was the best the President could get at the time, and he decided to accept it.

The National Security Act of 1947 had serious flaws. There was no chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, so the chiefs were left to quarrel among themselves without anyone except the President to settle their differences. The Secretary of Defense had no deputy and almost no staff. Nevertheless, the President felt, and I agreed, that this constituted an improvement over the system with which we had fought the Second World War. "Maybe we can strengthen it as time goes by," he said. In this hope President Truman was prescient. Despite its flaws, the National Security Act of 1947 was by far the biggest single step taken in the creation of the present-day national-security structure.

IN choosing the first Secretary of Defense, the President decided to name the man who had been most opposed to the creation of the position, and had succeeded in weakening it—James Forrestal. It was a brilliant tactical decision, and one that had a profound effect on the future of the Pentagon. The President's motive in choosing Forrestal was simple: if Forrestal remained Secretary of the Navy, he would make life unbearable for whoever was Secretary of Defense; if, on the other hand, *he* was the Secretary of Defense, he would have to try to make the system work.

Despite his original opposition to the

creation of the position, Forrestal accepted the appointment immediately. He was sworn in as the first Secretary of Defense on September 17, 1947, in an atmosphere of rising Cold War tensions. I think he sensed his dilemma as soon as he was offered the position: he now had to deal with the problems he had done so much to create.

In more than forty-five years in Washington, I know of no more dramatic metamorphosis than the one James Forrestal underwent in 1948. The process began almost immediately upon his moving to the Pentagon. Forrestal had to operate under the constraints that he himself had insisted on—a tiny staff, no deputies, and a very limited mandate. Understaffed and overworked, he had to do everything himself, relying on a few talented but also overworked personal aides. As early as March, 1948, after a four-day meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Key West, Forrestal asked the President to issue an executive order modifying his original instructions.

In our regular private breakfasts, Forrestal began to express increasing frustration at his inability to do his job. Then, in the summer of 1948, less than ten months after taking office, he made a startling statement to me. "Clark," he said, "I was wrong. I cannot make this work. No one can make it work." I knew how difficult it must have been for him to say that, even alone and to a friend. "You have done the very best you could, the best that anyone could have done," I replied. "You should go

see the President and discuss with him what might be done to improve the situation."

But before Forrestal was ready to see the President he convened a series of evening meetings in his Pentagon office with high-level officers. For the first time, Forrestal told me, he was finding that he trusted some senior Army generals more than his former Navy colleagues; Eisenhower and General Omar Bradley, in particular, had risen in his estimation. After these meetings, Forrestal said he was ready to see the President.

The meeting, delayed because of a long campaign trip by President Truman, took place on October 5, 1948. It was a remarkable moment: Forrestal told President Truman that he had been wrong in 1946 and 1947, and that neither he nor anyone else could make the existing National Security Act work. He was ready to support its revision. His mood struck me as a strange combination of suppressed emotion, courage, and a sense of defeat.

President Truman accepted Forrestal's change of heart in a matter-of-fact manner, with no gloating. With the election only a month away, Forrestal, who had told me he believed Thomas E. Dewey's victory in the upcoming election was certain, may have regarded his discussions as academic. But the President asked him to head up a new legislative drafting team, and ten months later, on August 10, 1949, with Truman reelected and after another round of arguments between the White House and Congress and, as usual, the Navy, the present Department of Defense came into existence.

JAMES FORRESTAL's legacy to the nation also included the creation of the National Security Council, although not in the form he originally wanted. He had long advocated an interagency group to coordinate foreign and defense policy, and he quickly converted me to the idea. We worked together to insure its inclusion in the final version of the revised bill on unification. But Forrestal wanted the Na-

tional Security Council to be part of the Pentagon. After examining the issue, I came to favor a National Security Council staffed primarily by civilians and responsible directly to the President. This meant another disagreement with Forrestal, which I regretted, but the stakes were high, and it was impossible to avoid choosing sides.

A meeting held on September 17, 1947—the day Forrestal was sworn in as Secretary of Defense—to discuss this matter was a star-studded affair, with all three service secretaries and the Chiefs of Staff, including General Eisenhower. As we had expected, Forrestal insisted that the N.S.C. report to him, and said that his decisions should be final and binding on the executive secretary. Forrestal also wanted the N.S.C. to be headquartered in the Pentagon and be staffed almost entirely by military officers.

At the meeting, I had no choice but to disagree with my friend. I said that the new N.S.C. system should not be used to circumvent the State Department or diminish the President's role. The State Department had to be centrally involved in decision-making, and the process had to be placed directly under the control of the President. I also opposed locating the N.S.C. staff in the Pentagon; the N.S.C. staff should be situated near the White House, I said, and not within the confines of any existing department. After the meeting, I asked Charles Murphy, a White House assistant who worked closely with me, to find space for the N.S.C. staff in what is now the Old Executive Office Building. He did, and the N.S.C. staff is still housed there today.

Thus was the National Security Council born, almost as an afterthought to military reorganization. President Truman wanted a small N.S.C. staff under his direct control, with its role restricted to coordination. When the Korean War began, this role expanded, but he still resisted a large staff, preferring to deal directly with his senior Cabinet officials. Over the next forty years, I watched the executive secretary of the National Security Council evolve into the national-security "adviser" and become a rival for power to the Secretary of State. That was clearly not our original intention, but it was an inevitable consequence of the growth of government, the desire of some Presidents to run the national-

security structure personally from the White House, and the personal ambitions of several men.

AN aura of mystery and controversy has surrounded the Central Intelligence Agency for most of the last forty years, but because its creation was a small part of the National Security Act of 1947 the struggle over the structure and mandate of the C.I.A. was obscured in the public eye by the noisy battles over the unification of the services and the creation of the N.S.C. Not that the C.I.A. came into being without fierce disagreement: for four months, between September, 1945, and January, 1946, a battle raged in Washington within the tightly knit but highly competitive intelligence community. This battle drew me into my first involvement with the world of intelligence—an involvement that was to resume later in my career.

President Roosevelt had given General William Donovan authority during the war to create the most romantic of all wartime organizations, the Office of Strategic Services, or O.S.S. But Wild Bill Donovan went beyond the legends he did so much to originate. His role in the creation of the modern American intelligence system cannot be overstated. In person, Donovan was not the dashing daredevil of legend, at least not when I came to know him. What he possessed in great measure was charm and effectiveness in bureaucratic warfare. Even before the end of the war, he proposed the creation of a permanent new intelligence agency, independent of both State and the military, and answerable only to the President.

Predictably, Donovan's plan enraged the State, War, and Navy Departments, all of which felt that it threatened their existing intelligence units. J. Edgar Hoover, who had feuded with Donovan throughout the war, objected

strongly to the creation of a permanent rival to the F.B.I. Donovan replied that no existing organizations possessed the talent or the mandate to meet the needs that would arise after the war. Even though he was correct, his enemies won the first round, when Hoover leaked a copy of Donovan's plan to two of the leading conservative newspapers in the nation, the *Chicago Tribune* and the *New York Daily News*, which called it the "Spy Director's Secret Plan" to create a "U.S. Gestapo." Amid the controversy, Donovan's plan foundered.

For reasons I never fully understood, President Truman didn't like Donovan. Perhaps he regarded Donovan as a self-promoter. On September 20, 1945, just weeks after the Japanese surrender, President Truman prematurely, abruptly, and unwisely disbanded the O.S.S., and directed Secretary of State Byrnes to develop a "coordinated foreign-intelligence program." Months of bitter argument within the intelligence community about how to replace the O.S.S. thereupon began.

By the end of the year, President Truman was becoming increasingly annoyed by the flood of conflicting and uncoordinated intelligence reports flowing haphazardly across his desk. Greater coordination of intelligence was essential. President Truman already had on his desk a revision of the Donovan plan that the wartime Chiefs of Staff had submitted to Franklin Roosevelt in late 1944, for a coordinating organization called the Central Intelligence Agency. The military plan vested joint supervisory authority in the Secretaries of State, War, and Navy. At the President's request, I urged the State Department to complete its own plan and to submit it with a copy of the Joint Chiefs' proposal and a detailed comparison of the two. The State Department responded, on December 27th, by proposing a National Intelligence Authority, or N.I.A. It recommended that State be designated the sole conduit of intelligence reports to the President.

The President listened to these conflicting views and rejected both. He agreed only to set up a loose coordinating group. He was not ready to create a new intelligence agency. Following his guidance, I prepared a directive establishing a National Intelligence Authority and a director of Central Intelligence. The President signed this ex-



executive order on January 22, 1946. It was the first postwar Presidential directive on intelligence. *Time* called it the end of our "historical innocence" in international intelligence.

Under this executive order, a director of Central Intelligence (D.C.I.) would coordinate a Central Intelligence Group (C.I.G.). We defined the C.I.G.'s functions so as to minimize friction with any of the other departments: the functions were "correlation and evaluation of intelligence relating to the national security," and the protection of foreign-intelligence "sources and methods."

We addressed directly what would become the longest-standing and most important controversy in American intelligence: operations within the United States. The directive that I drafted stated flatly, "No police, law enforcement or internal security functions shall be exercised under this directive. . . . Nothing herein shall be construed to authorize the making of investigations inside the continental limits of the United States." This prohibition made temporary allies of President Truman and J. Edgar Hoover, since Hoover wanted to keep any and all domestic-intelligence activities completely under the control of his F.B.I.



any involvement in domestic affairs; second, to keep the C.I.A. and the F.B.I. completely separate; third, to keep the F.B.I. outside the control of the director of Central Intelligence; and, finally, to preclude the C.I.A. from activities directed against Americans.

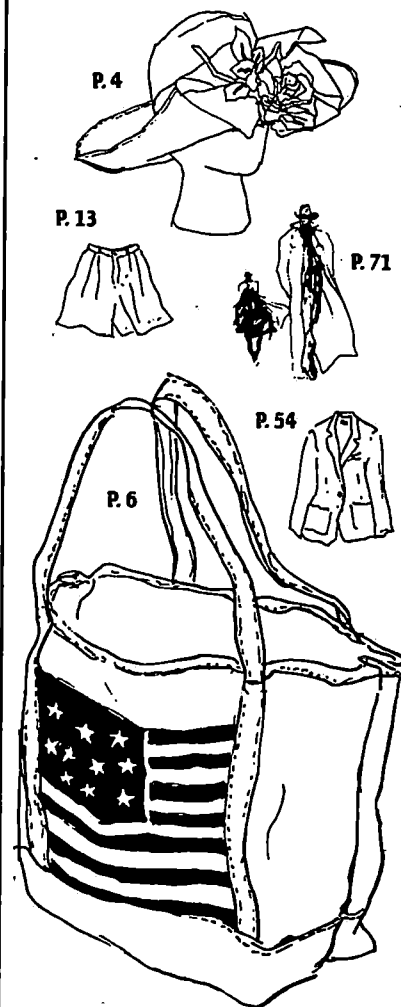
President Truman accepted my recommendations. He felt that he had given the C.I.G. concept a fair test and it had failed. As a result, Section 102 was now added to the National Security Act of 1947. It abolished both the National Intelligence Authority and the Central Intelligence Group, and established a Central Intelligence Agency. The director of the C.I.A. would continue to hold the title of director of Central Intelligence. In that capacity he would not only oversee the C.I.A. but also have authority over the rest of the foreign-intelligence community within the United States government. But in practice the military intelligence services resisted taking directions from the director of Central Intelligence rather than from their own chain of command, and to this day oversight of the intelligence committee by the director of Central Intelligence falls far short of our original intent.

Covert operations were placed under the new National Security Council through a carefully phrased "catchall" clause—Section 102(d)(5)—which provided that the C.I.A. shall "perform such other functions and duties related to intelligence affecting the national security as the National Security Council may from time to time direct."

I reviewed this critical sentence carefully at the time, but could never have imagined that forty years later I would be asked to testify before Congress on its meaning and intent. The "other functions" the C.I.A. was to perform were deliberately not specified, but we expected that they would include covert activities. We did not mention these by name because we felt that it would be injurious to our national interest to advertise the possibility of our engaging in such activities. We intended these activities to be separate and distinct from the normal activities of the C.I.A., and expected them to be limited in scope and purpose—hence the important limiting phrase "affecting the national security."

The National Security Act of 1947

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remains to this day the statutory authorization for covert activity. In the light of the continuing controversy over the role and the activities of the C.I.A., it bears emphasizing that it was by act of Congress that the C.I.A. was established and exists today: it was by act of Congress that covert operations were authorized.

During the seven years in the nineteen-sixties when I sat as a member and then as the chairman of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, I often reflected on the complexities of this problem. A great nation must have the capability to defend its own interests, and that capability includes a first-rate intelligence service.

I believed that a limited number of covert programs, tightly controlled by the President and the National Security Council, would be a necessary part of our foreign policy. But over the years covert activities became so numerous and widespread that they became in effect a self-sustaining part of American foreign operations. The C.I.A. became a government within a government, which could evade oversight of its activities by drawing the cloak of secrecy around itself.

My concern over this trend reached its height during the Iran-Contra scandal of the Reagan years. I came to the conclusion that we must reassess the very idea of conducting covert operations. Testifying before the House and Senate in 1987 and 1988, I expressed my concern:

If we are to continue with [covert operations] and gain any benefit from them, we must find a way to keep them consistent with the principles and institutions of the Constitution and our foreign policy. If we determine that this cannot be done, then again I say we are better off without covert activities entirely than with them out of control.

Some people mistook my statement for opposition to covert operations, but the fact is that I was simply supporting legislation (opposed by the Reagan and Bush Administrations) designed to prevent the recurrence of the outrageous—and, I believe, unlawful—activities of the C.I.A. in the Iran-Contra affair. On the advice of the C.I.A. and the Justice Department, President Reagan, ignoring existing laws, did not keep Congress informed of the C.I.A.'s covert activities in Iran and Central America. To avoid a repetition of this lamentable event, I supported legislation that tightened the

requirements for the President to consult and inform the congressional intelligence committees. I urged that teeth be put into the law in a way that everyone could understand: criminal penalties for "knowing and willful" violation of the law.

THE strain on Forrestal had increased steadily during 1948. The debris of his personal life added to the pressures building up in him. The Forrestals seemed to live separate lives. His wife's behavior was an increasing mortification to Forrestal. At one dinner they gave, in honor of Randolph Churchill, Mrs. Forrestal did not come downstairs for over an hour after the first guests had arrived. Finally, she appeared, after too much to drink, at the top of their magnificent staircase, and, looking down at the guests, said loudly, "Good Lord, what in the world do all these people have to say to each other?" Randolph Churchill, who enjoyed drinking as much as anyone, found this remark amusing, but Forrestal felt humiliated by it.

On another occasion, I asked Forrestal if he would act as host on short notice for the President's poker game—something he felt greatly honored to do. Throughout that day, I learned later, Forrestal, worried that his wife might appear during the evening and create an incident, tried to persuade her to go to New York, on the ground that the Presidential poker evenings were stag affairs. When she refused, Forrestal became nearly frantic with apprehension over what she might do. Finally, just before the guests arrived, he persuaded her to go upstairs and not greet the guests. He was afraid throughout the evening, though, that she would emerge without warning and repeat her performance of the Churchill dinner. As time went on, her condition came to be an open secret around Washington.

Forrestal also became a target for

some powerful journalists. For months, Drew Pearson and Walter Winchell, the two most widely read columnists of the time, attacked him as a tool of Wall Street, and, after his opposition to Israel became known, he was deeply upset by the charge that he "cared more for oil than he did for the Jews." He was not a man who could put a quarrel behind him and move on, an important attribute for longevity in Washington. He told me that the attack that had upset him the most was an accusation by Pearson that he had fled in fear when his wife was held up outside their Manhattan town house in 1937; the truth was that he had been asleep upstairs and unaware of the incident until after it was over. He expressed bitterness at this assault on his honor and personal courage. Finally, there were rumors in Washington that Forrestal, assuming a Republican victory in 1948, had been in secret contact with Dewey in the hope of staying on as Secretary of Defense. (I never knew whether these stories were true.)

Work had become Forrestal's life, or perhaps the sanctuary from the rest of his life, but by the end of 1948 he had begun to deteriorate. He was worn out from trying to make the 1947 act function. Often unable to sleep, he began calling his friends in the middle of the night just to talk. When he called me, I listened carefully, but with increasing puzzlement. Like most people in the nineteen-forties, my understanding of emotional disorders was quite limited, and I had no idea how serious an illness depression can be. I remember only one glimpse into the bottomless darkness of his internal crisis. Sitting directly behind him during a Cabinet meeting near the end of 1948, I noticed that he had scratched raw a spot on the top of his head with his fingernails. As the meeting progressed, he continued to scratch until it was the size of a half-dollar. I watched in silent horror as blood slowly oozed from this spot.

Symington and Forrestal, in the course of working together in 1947 and 1948, had argued bitterly over the size of the Air Force budget. In those days, Symington was a tenacious defender of air power, and he had given Forrestal a difficult time, adding to Forrestal's distress. In 1949, Symington, too, caught a glimpse of Forrestal's anguish. Forrestal called to ask for the name of a good lawyer, because, he said, he needed to change his will right away.



Though puzzled at the urgency of the request, Symington recommended Paul Porter, one of Washington's most prominent lawyers. A few days later, Porter called Symington and said, "This man is crazy. He is raving. He doesn't know what he wants." Despite our friendship, Symington did not tell me about this incident until it was too late. Something in our backgrounds, some combination of respect for Forrestal's privacy and inability to recognize the danger signals, kept us—and, it turned out, everyone else—from comparing notes and coming to his aid.

Forrestal apparently confided the extent of his distress to no one. Had the roots of his suffering been understood, his departure from office would, of course, have been handled differently, but at the time even his closest friends thought that he was simply exhausted.

In the second half of 1948, because the Presidential election had become my overwhelming preoccupation, I saw less of Forrestal than usual. Our private breakfasts were no longer as frequent. Forrestal, in contrast to Symington, was not the sort of person with whom one could disagree on issues without straining a friendship, and we had disagreed frequently over the N.S.C. and the role of the Navy.

The President respected the courage it took for Forrestal to admit that he had been wrong on military unification, but he was increasingly disturbed by Forrestal's indecisiveness. "Jim has trouble making up his mind," the President said to me in 1948. Treasury Secretary John Snyder, a friend of Forrestal's, told the President that Forrestal was behaving strangely. Vaughan succeeded in raising doubts in the President's mind about Forrestal's loyalty during the 1948 campaign. For all these reasons, and also out of a sense that it was time for a post-election reorganization of the Administration, President Truman, in March, 1949, asked Forrestal to resign.

On the day Forrestal left office, the President presented him with the Distinguished Service Medal. Unable to respond to the President's generous words of praise, Forrestal was led, speechless, from the room. It was suddenly clear to everyone that something was very wrong.

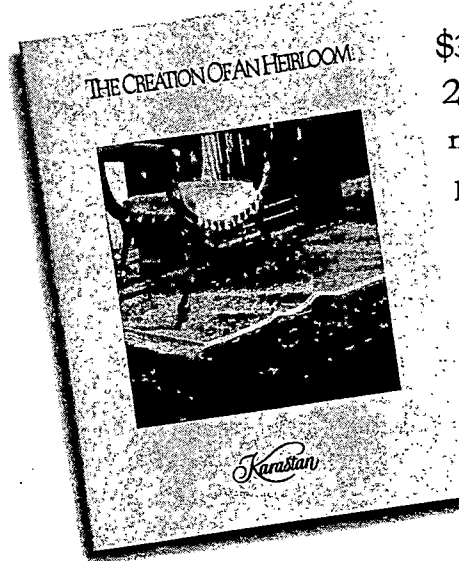
Arrangements were made for him to fly to the quiet, secluded resort of Hobe Sound, Florida, to rest. But demons were inside him, and rest could not

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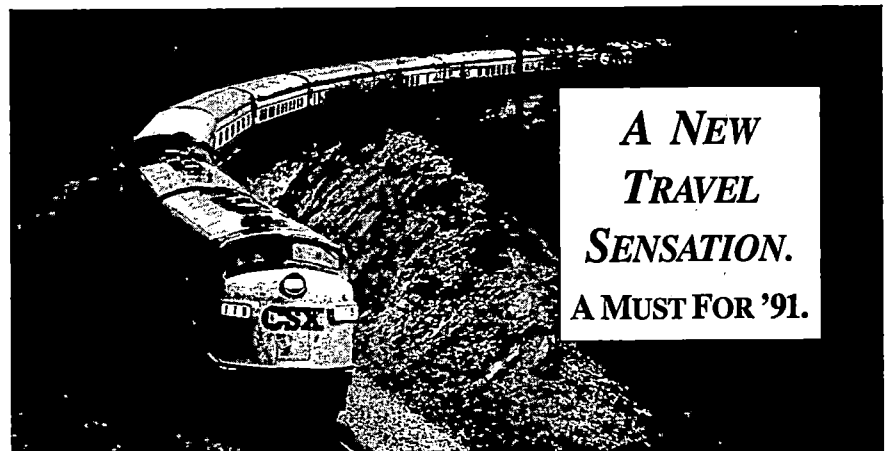
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quiet them. As Robert Lovett, the former Under-Secretary of State, told Synington and me later, he met Forrestal at the airport, prepared to take his mind off Washington with golf and swimming, but Forrestal quickly pulled him aside. "I must talk to you," he whispered. "The Russians are after me, the F.B.I. is watching me, the Zionists are after me." Lovett was stunned. At Lovett's house, Forrestal searched the closets and looked under beds for hidden microphones.

The famous psychiatrist Dr. William Menninger was flown to Hobe Sound to examine Forrestal. He saw at once that the man was desperately ill, and advised immediate professional attention. Too ill to make decisions for himself, Forrestal was flown back to Washington on a military plane. In a tragic error of judgment, the Navy, concerned that he might blurt out national-security secrets to the wrong people, vetoed suggestions that he be sent to the Menninger Clinic or another private facility specializing in mental disorders. With Mrs. Forrestal's assent, they insisted that he enter Bethesda Naval Hospital, a military facility whose staff lacked both the experience and the understanding to deal with his illness. Once there, he was assigned to the V.I.P. suite of rooms, on the sixteenth floor.

After he had been at Bethesda a month, his friends were told that he appeared more relaxed and was recovering. But on May 22, 1949, in the middle of the night, Jim Forrestal jumped out of an unguarded hospital window. On the desk in his room he left a handwritten copy of the Chorus from "Ajax," by Sophocles, in which the suicide of Ajax, a man gripped by insanity, is explained and lamented:

... Better to die, and sleep
The never waking sleep, than
linger on
And dare to live, when the soul's
life is gone.

PRESIDENT TRUMAN's loyalty program got under way in 1946-47, and as I look back on my career in government my greatest regret is that I did not make more of an effort to try to kill at its inception this misguided and pernicious effort to eliminate "subversives" from the government. I did not pay enough atten-

tion to it, and by the time the full dangers of the program were evident it was too late: the Korean War had started, McCarthyism had begun to flower in America, and the Administration had lost its chance to control the issue.

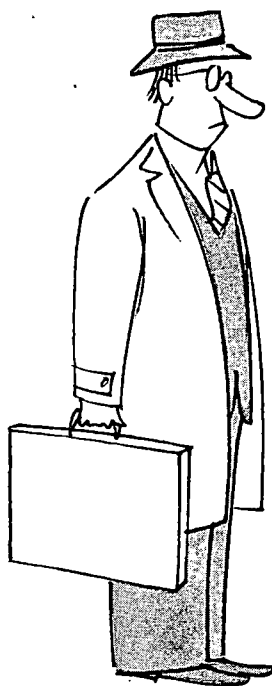
The program had its beginnings at a time when the Soviet challenge was moving to center stage. As the Administration proclaimed the dangers of Communism abroad, conservative politicians, encouraged by J. Edgar Hoover, claimed to have found evidence of a subversive Communist threat on the domestic front. The search for "the enemy within" was not confined, as it should have been, to the search for Soviet spies, a legitimate and important function of the F.B.I. and American counter-intelligence; it spread into a twentieth-century witch-hunt for "disloyal" Americans. On the crest of this issue, a new generation of right-wing politicians, dominated at first by Senator Joe McCarthy, began its rise to national prominence; two future Republican Presidents, both from California, used the issue as their launching pad into national politics (Nixon as senator, Reagan as president of the Screen Actors Guild). At first, we in the White House paid insufficient attention to the politics of the issue, because more urgent and more serious matters constantly demanded the attention of the President and his senior

advisers. This is an explanation, however, not an excuse for what happened.

The need for the nation to protect itself against Soviet espionage was made clear by the frequent exposure of Soviet spies within the American, Canadian, and British governments. President Truman supported F.B.I. and C.I.A. efforts to that end. But Hoover believed that the national security was threatened not only by Soviet agents but by anyone who expressed views that might be characterized as "pro-Communist" or "socialist," or even "leftist." He sought authority to dismiss from public service anyone whose views were politically suspect. The Truman Administration resisted Hoover's efforts to control the process throughout the federal government, but, in 1947, in the course of resisting them, it created a different structure, loosely called the federal loyalty-security boards. The intention was to prevent a concentration of power in the hands of the F.B.I. and its political allies, but the result was an unhappy one. The Administration, by compromising with its critics, created a poorly conceived and poorly executed program that satisfied neither the conservatives, who wanted a far more aggressive hunt for subversives, nor the liberals, who believed that any loyalty program was an infringement of the First Amendment.

J. Edgar Hoover was fifty-two years old in 1947. He had served in the Department of Justice since 1917, and had been the nation's chief domestic-intelligence officer since 1924. His hatred of Communism was genuine, and he felt that everyone in the Truman Administration was a novice compared with him, especially on this issue.

Thus began the attack of "the primitives," as Dean Acheson aptly called Hoover and his allies in Congress, who included a young first-term congressman from California named Richard M. Nixon. President Truman, a great optimist about his nation and its resilience, paid little attention to a possible threat from internal Communist subversion. He concentrated on what could be done to defeat Communism in those areas overseas where it might take root unless America acted to prevent such a thing. His attitude, and mine, could be summed up in a saying that became common



BORN IN CAPTIVITY

around the White House as the primitives grew louder in the next two years: Communism was a threat to America, but not a threat in America.

The Republican sweep in the 1946 congressional elections emboldened Hoover and his allies. From that point on, they treated the Administration as a group of very lame ducks. Just days after the election, Hoover began pressing for a tough line on the issue of loyalty in the government, and shamelessly leaked information to his favorite columnists, most notably Walter Winchell. President Truman was in a trap. He did not like Hoover, but in 1947 the F.B.I. director was widely regarded as a genuine American hero, who had protected the nation against gangsters and Nazis. To a certain extent, those feats were skillfully manufactured public-relations myths, but they prevented the President from even thinking about getting rid of Hoover. Meanwhile, Attorney General Tom Clark, who shared Hoover's views, constantly urged the President to expand the investigative authority of the F.B.I.

On November 25, 1946, the President, yielding to pressure from Hoover and Clark, moved to take the initiative from the Republican Congress and established a Temporary Commission on Employee Loyalty. The commission, chaired by an assistant attorney general who was Hoover's stooge, was told to come up with recommendations for a permanent program. The result was Executive Order 9835, which was issued on March 21, 1947—only nine days after the Truman Doctrine speech—and established the loyalty program. It authorized the Civil Service Commission to conduct a loyalty investigation of every new federal employee, and set up in every department or agency a loyalty board empowered to recommend "the removal of any officer or employee . . . on grounds relating to loyalty." This executive order was drafted by the F.B.I. and the Justice Department, and went through my office before it was approved by the President. Hoover had wanted both investigatory and review power vested in the F.B.I., but the order put the Civil Service Commission, rather than the F.B.I., in charge of the investigations. As for the review process, the order left it up to the separate departments or agencies.

Although Executive Order 9835 was subsequently criticized by liberals for failing to protect the civil rights of government employees, the first assault on it came from the right, which raged at its "weakness." Hoover was infuriated, and concluded that the President was not serious about domestic subversion. He was particularly angry at what he regarded as two deliberate insults to the F.B.I.: assigning responsibility for examining new government employees to the Civil Service Commission,



and leaving each agency in charge of its own loyalty review of its employees. Almost immediately, he publicly criticized the Administration, in fiery testimony before the new chairman of the House Un-American Activities Committee, J. Parnell Thomas, of New Jersey. From that point on, Hoover continually sought full control of the program.

Our efforts to resist Hoover's grab for power diverted our attention from the real defects of Executive Order 9835. The first was inherent in the word "loyalty." The word was vague and suggested the wrong intent. Since Communist espionage and subversion were the stated objectives of the program, it should have been called a "security program." Security can be defined; loyalty, however, is an intangible quality, defined differently by different people. The second defect in the program was more specific. An official charged with disloyalty was granted the right to an "administrative hearing before a loyalty board in the employing department," but the executive order allowed a loyalty board to keep details of the charges against the individual secret if it wished to do so for security reasons. Furthermore, no specific finding that the individual was a security risk was necessary for dismissal; all that was required was the government's view that "reasonable grounds exist for belief that the person involved is disloyal to the Government of the United States."

In late April and early May of 1947, as the Marshall Plan was being drafted and we fought to salvage the National Security Act from Congressman Vinson and the Navy, the backstage struggle between the Civil Service Commission and the F.B.I. over control of the loyalty program burst into open warfare—a struggle eventually won by Hoover, through intense lobby-

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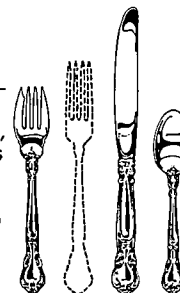
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ing and public-relations efforts. On August 17th, the F.B.I. began fingerprinting incumbent government employees, and on October 1, 1947, the loyalty program was officially launched.

Thus began an era in which every aspect of a person's private opinions on political issues suddenly seemed open to public scrutiny. The loyalty program gave rise to myriad similar programs in the private sector, which were often run with even less justice or justification. One of the most famous, in Hollywood, led to the blacklisting of many prominent members of the film community, and brought Ronald Reagan into his first important involvement in politics. Even people's reading habits could cause their dismissal, and even an unproved accusation of attendance at a meeting sponsored by a leftist group could destroy a person's career. The State Department witnessed many of the most dramatic and most memorable battles of the era, including the tragic destruction of the Foreign Service Office careers of John Stewart Service, John Carter Vincent, and John Paton Davies. Not one of these men was a Communist, but each had made the mistake of frankly reporting why Communism was gaining strength, especially in China.

President Truman abhorred what was happening. But events took the issue out of his hands. The defection of a code clerk, Igor Gouzenko, from the Soviet Embassy in Canada generated enormous interest in the United States, and his testimony about Soviet espionage in the United States fuelled the right wing. The Alger Hiss affair began its long voyage through American history. In October, 1949, China fell to Mao. Four months later, Senator Joe McCarthy made his infamous speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, charging that the State Department was harboring Communists. Four months after that, the Korean War began. All the conditions for the right-wing assault on American civil liberties which we now call McCarthyism were in place.

The trend had begun to alarm President Truman well before the start of the Korean War. After the 1948 election, he indicated to me his growing dissatisfaction with both Hoover and

the atmosphere that had been created. But never once did he indicate that he thought the loyalty program had contributed to that atmosphere, or even that it was a mistake; in his eyes, the program had been originally designed to prevent only the excesses that were taking place, and would not have become a problem if Hoover had not perverted it. He felt that without the loyalty program the political pressures from the right wing would have been much greater, and more difficult to resist. At the time, I agreed with him; later, I came to a different conclusion.

There has probably been no one, in my years in Washington, who amassed and abused power more shamefully than J. Edgar Hoover. As the disclosures of recent years have shown, his agenda for the F.B.I. was highly personal, and included vendettas against Robert F. Kennedy, Martin Luther

King, Jr., and a host of other people whose views or behavior had somehow offended him.

In the nineteen-forties, we could only suspect the dimensions of his megalomania. By the nineteen-seventies, evidence was beginning to emerge about some of his activities. But even today, I think, there is a great deal we do not know about the uses to which J. Edgar Hoover put his vast array of agents, networks, and resources. He was very close to being an American Fascist. It is unfortunate that the new F.B.I. headquarters on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington still bears his name.

HISTORY will always treat Harry Truman's "whistle-stop" campaign by train across America as the dramatic highlight of his stunning upset victory over Thomas E. Dewey, but it did not seem so at the time. I remember it as a miserable, ceaseless, exhausting treadmill. Months after the 1948 campaign was over, I still woke occasionally in the middle of the night from a nightmare that I was trapped on that train. Only later did any of us aboard realize that riding the rails with Harry Truman in 1948 had conferred on us the status that goes with participation in a mythic event—the centerpiece of the greatest political upset in American history, and one of the last Presidential elections conducted before television,

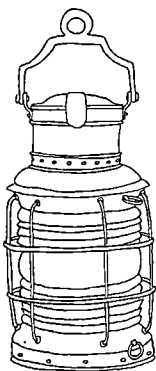
jet travel, political consultants, modern polling and communications changed politics forever.

Many Democrats did not want or expect President Truman to run: they considered him an unelected usurper of F.D.R.'s mantle, with no chance against the Republicans. But I and many of my friends expected Harry Truman to run, and wanted him to run, even though his national campaigning thus far had been limited to an unremarkable run for the Vice-Presidency in 1944. Like everyone else, however, we were not sure he could win.

He was apparently not so sure himself, for in 1947 he secretly sent word to General Eisenhower that he would step aside if Eisenhower wanted the Democratic nomination. Neither President Truman nor anyone else had the slightest idea of Eisenhower's political views, and in the luminous aura that surrounded the war hero no one bothered to ask. Although Eisenhower declined President Truman's suggestion, the "Ike factor" was to cast a continuing shadow over the campaign until the very eve of the Democratic Convention. (Many liberal Democrats, including Hubert Humphrey, preferred Eisenhower to Truman.)

Of the President's secret offer to Eisenhower I knew nothing at the time. I am sure President Truman realized that I would have tried to dissuade him from such an action, so he simply did not tell me. The only occasion on which I heard the two men even touch on politics was during a luncheon that Eisenhower, then the Army Chief of Staff, gave President Truman at the Pentagon in early 1946. In a lighthearted manner, President Truman turned to Eisenhower and said, "General, if you ever want to go into politics, come to me and I'll sure endorse you." Ike just smiled his famous smile, and the conversation moved on. In any case, the possibility of Eisenhower's accepting the 1948 Democratic nomination (it was his for the asking) worried Truman for many months.

The obstacles to President Truman's reelection were staggering. Roosevelt's coalition was fragile and in danger of breaking up. Both Houses of Congress were in Republican hands. Part of the South followed Strom Thurmond, then the Democratic governor of South Carolina, in a regional



D'Addetta

revolt, and Thurmond would run for President on the States' Rights, or Dixiecrat, ticket. And Henry Wallace, still smarting from being fired from his position as Secretary of Commerce in 1946, was running as a left-wing third-party candidate.

By the summer of 1947, we knew we were heading into uncharted and difficult waters. We lacked any plan or over-all strategy for the campaign. As I talked over our strategy with my friends, I felt the need for a comprehensive approach to the election, and in November of 1947, after consultations with political experts in Washington who agreed with me that President Truman should run as a liberal and reassemble the key elements of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal coalition, I submitted to the President a forty-three page memorandum offering seven major predictions about the coming campaign and suggesting a strategy for victory. (The memorandum was an extensive revision of a draft originally prepared by James Rowe, one of the most brilliant political thinkers of the New Deal era. Unfortunately, President Truman disliked Rowe, and had refused to read the draft, suggesting that it be given to me. Since President Truman would have refused my memorandum, too, if he had known that it was associated with Rowe, I did not refer to his role in its drafting.)

In the light of history, I am struck now by both what we got right and what we got wrong. Our predictions were, as these things go, surprisingly accurate: six out of seven right—enough on which to base a winning strategy.

Our most serious error was taking the South for granted. We did not anticipate the Southern revolt that would lead to Strom Thurmond's fourth-party candidacy. I can only smile ruefully when I reread my assessment of the South: "As always, the South can be considered safely Democratic. And in formulating national policy, it can be safely ignored."

Since Reconstruction, black Americans had favored the "party of Lincoln." F.D.R. had broken the Republican lock on the black vote, and it could go either way in 1948. Anticipating a major effort by Dewey to win black votes, we recommended "a determined campaign to help the Negro (and everybody else) on the problems of high prices and housing," explaining, "Un-

less there are new and real efforts . . . the Negro bloc, which, certainly in Illinois and probably in New York and Ohio, *does* hold the balance of power, will go Republican." What a sense of the passage of time these words evoke! In recent years, it has been the black vote that the Democrats have taken for granted, while white voters in the South have usually voted overwhelmingly Republican in Presidential campaigns. We did not realize how quickly Southern whites would abandon the President if he supported equal civil rights for all Americans.

With that important exception, the memorandum was surprisingly accurate. We called "the Winning of the West" our "Number One Priority," and planned a special campaign targeted at farmers. That turned out to be a critical decision: it was President Truman's success in the Farm Belt that provided him with the cushion he needed to withstand the shock of the loss of the South.

The memorandum identified several groups besides farmers which would require special appeals. They included independents, progressives, labor-union leaders and members, Catholics, Italians, Jews, and "liberals." This last group was up for grabs between Wallace and the President. While the liberals were numerically small, they were "far more influential than mere numbers entitle them to be," we wrote. "The businessman has influence because he contributes his money. The liberal exerts unusual influence because he is articulate. The 'right' may have the money, but the 'left' has always had the pen."

I assumed that the key foreign-policy issue would be United States relations with the Soviet Union. Relations would get worse, we predicted, and the worsening would strengthen the President, who was "comparatively invulnerable to attack because of his brilliant appointment of General Marshall" as Secretary of State. But the major issue

of the 1948 election, we predicted, would be the high cost of living, heightened by a continuing housing shortage. This prediction led to the most important recommendation of the memorandum:

The Administration should select the issues upon which there will be conflict with the majority in Congress. It can assume it will get no major part of its own program approved. Its tactics must, therefore, be entirely different than if there were any real point to bargaining and compromise. Its recommendations—in the State of the Union Message and elsewhere—must be tailored for the voter, not the Congressman; they must display a label which reads "no compromises."

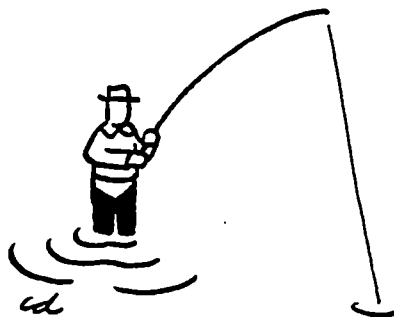
It was in this brief and blunt passage that the glimmerings of a strategy for the campaign first emerged. The President would run not against his opponent but against the Republican Party's record in Congress.

Style is always a vital part of campaigning. Harry Truman was never comfortable with actions that seemed self-serving or phony. He had a tendency to let members of his Cabinet claim the limelight when some major announcement was made. I felt that this tendency, while admirable, was not politically effective. We urged the President to adjust his style to reflect a stronger sense of personal leadership.

At the end of the memorandum I wrote, "The campaign of 1948 will be a tough, bitterly fought struggle." I had no doubt about that. Things did not seem as bleak in November of 1947, however, as they became by the middle of 1948, and as I gave the President the memorandum I had no idea of how tough and bitter the campaign would in fact become. He liked the memorandum, and kept it in his desk drawer throughout the campaign for handy reference. It received no further distribution.

ONE of the problems we faced in 1948 was the President's speaking style. He generally read poorly from written texts, his head down and his words coming forth in what the press liked to call a "drone." He waved his right hand up and down as if he were chopping wood. The contrast with the brilliant and compelling style of his predecessor made the problem all the more serious.

We had tried various devices to improve the President's speaking style, which even he realized was uninspiring. One, in late 1947, I found partic-

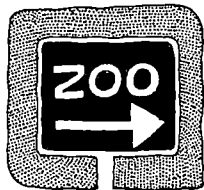


ularly memorable. I thought that perhaps the President's style would improve if he read from large cue cards, placed just out of sight of the cameras. I brought several large cards, about three by four feet, to a staff meeting in October. With a few staff members looking on, the President cheerfully agreed to try out the idea. He read the cards with interest when I placed them on his desk, but as soon as I moved them just three feet away he told us that he could not read them, despite their huge lettering. "My eyes have been like this since I was a boy," he explained, and that was the end of that experiment.

Ross, Charles Murphy, and I finally hit upon a successful approach: having the President speak extemporaneously. He agreed to try it, and with this new approach Harry Truman's natural, down-to-earth style emerged, complete with an informal ease that his prepared texts could not capture. For his Convention acceptance speech, in Philadelphia, we urged him to continue the experiment of speaking from just an outline. Many politicians would have considered that too risky, but he agreed, and asked me to pull the materials together.

Our train arrived in Philadelphia shortly before ten in the evening. Some Southern delegates had already bolted the Party, because they considered Truman too liberal. "I'm just mild about Harry" and "To err is Truman" were common slogans even at the Convention. Unlike most subsequent national political conventions, where events have been carefully scheduled to attract the largest possible television audience, the 1948 Democratic Convention was a chaotic affair, run not by the White House but by Sam Rayburn, the House Democratic leader, and various Party officials. President Truman had expected to go directly to the convention hall to deliver his speech, in what would today be referred to as prime time. But the Southern walkout that evening delayed the President's speech. As the fractious Convention kept him waiting and the hour grew late, the national radio and television audience dwindled. President Truman had been offered a room at a nearby hotel in which to wait, but, underestimating the length of the delay, he had said he preferred to wait at the Convention. As a result, we were ushered

into a small makeshift office, which in my memory resembled the Black Hole of Calcutta. There we waited for almost four hours in sweltering heat as the delegate voting process inched along. I worried about the President's energy level, and feared for his white linen suit, wilting in the humidity. Unknown to all but a tiny handful of the people around him, the President had been suffering for some hours from a gastrointestinal upset, and that added greatly to his discomfort. Finally, the heat became unbearable, and he went outside and sat on a ramp near the stage entrance overlooking the railroad yards.



Almost an hour after midnight, Harry Truman was finally nominated by the Democratic Convention, with 947½ votes. In a final insult to President Truman, those Southerners who had not walked out mounted a last-minute effort to nominate Georgia's Richard Russell, and garnered 263 votes, another indication of the crisis we now faced in the South. And no one moved that the nomination be made unanimous—the first time that traditional courtesy had ever been denied to an incumbent Democratic President.

It was about one-thirty in the morning when Alben Barkley was formally nominated for Vice-President. Rayburn suggested that the Convention adjourn for the night and hear the President's acceptance speech the next day, but some instinct in Harry Truman told him that he should seize the moment, despite the lateness of the hour, to deliver some fighting words to the deeply wounded Convention and Party. He told Rayburn he wanted to go on immediately.

I was gravely worried. The evening had been truly draining. At one-forty-five in the morning, Harry Truman and Alben Barkley, the Vice-Presidential nominee, came out on the stage. I followed them out into the vast crowd, taking a seat just below the speakers' platform.

Then occurred the incident I have often looked back on as the low point of the year. Just as Rayburn was beginning his remarks, a rather large national committeewoman from Pennsylvania named Emma Guffey Miller—she was described as "matronly" by reporters the next day—bustled over to the microphone and interrupted Ray-

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burn. With an air of great importance, she said she had the honor to present the President with a surprise tribute from the host city, a huge Liberty Bell made out of flowers.

It was a surprise all right. Inside the floral arrangement was a flock of forty-eight white pigeons, which Emma Guffey Miller referred to as "doves of peace." As she presented the Liberty Bell to the President, the birds—or, at least, those still alive—were suddenly liberated from the stifling quarters in which they had been cooped up all evening. At that point, they did exactly what one would expect birds confined to a tiny space for a long time to do: they went wild, flying into the rafters, getting caught in the bunting, swooping and dive-bombing the President and others on the platform. Worst of all, although the press delicately did not mention it the next morning, Emma Guffey Miller's doves of peace began, not surprisingly, to drop the inevitable product of their hours of imprisonment on any delegates who had the bad luck to be underneath them. Farmers in the crowd shouted "Watch your clothes!" and after the long hours of tension and animosity the hall seemed united in the childish glee brought on by the absurdity of the moment. Standing on the floor just below the speakers' platform, I saw one pigeon land on a large fan, where it looked as if it were about to be minced. To gasps and cheers, Rayburn snared it and threw it back out toward the crowd. Directly in front of me I saw my wife, Marny, struggling to calm one of the birds, which had landed in her lap. She eventually fashioned what she later described as "a dove diaper" to protect herself. Even as President Truman accepted his party's nomination for the Presidency of the United States a few moments later, after most of the birds were recaptured, I could see several of them still circling above us in the harsh spotlights. Marny held on to the one that had landed in her lap.

After Mrs. Miller's ludicrous pigeons of peace, I thought I was ready for almost anything. But I was not ready for the effectiveness of President Truman's speech. Facing an exhausted audience at 2 A.M., an exhausted Harry Truman unveiled a new and dynamic speaking style. Using some of the notes we had given him but ad-libbing more than half of his speech, his voice a high-pitched staccato instead of its

LATE NIGHT ODE

(HORACE IV. i)

It's over, love. Look at me pushing fifty now,
Hair like grave-grass growing in both ears,
The piles and boggy prostate, the hanged man's penis,
The sour taste of each day's first lie,

And that recurrent dream of years ago pulling
A swaying bead chain of moonlight,
Of slipping between the cool sheets of dark
Along a body like my own, but blameless.

What good's my cut-glass conversation now,
Now I'm so effortlessly vulgar and sad?
You get from life what you can shake from it?
For me, it's g.-and-t.s all day and CNN.

Try the blond boychick lawyer, entry level
At eighty grand, who pouts about the overtime,
Keeps Evian and a beeper in his locker at the gym,
And hash in tinfoil under the office fern.

There's your hound from heaven, with buccaneer
Curls and perfumed war paint on his nipples.
His answering machine always has room for one more
Slurred, embarrassed call from you-know-who.

Some nights I've laughed so hard the tears
Won't stop. Look at me now. Why *now*?
I long ago gave up pretending to believe
Anyone's memory will give as good as it gets.

So why these stubborn tears? And why do I dream
Almost every night of holding you again,
Or at least of diving after you, my long-gone,
Through the bruised unbalanced waves?

—J. D. McCLATCHY

usual drone, President Truman roused the sluggish audience, and to my amazement and pleasure it roared its approval and gave him a prolonged standing ovation at the end.

In President Truman's tone and manner that night I thought I saw the beginning of a new and different sort of leader, a man who, finally nominated in his own right to head the party of Franklin Roosevelt, was ready to come into his own, win or lose. Never once referring to his opponent, he focussed his fire entirely on the Republican Congress, as the November memorandum had proposed.

In the middle of the speech, President Truman revealed his secret punch—a special session of Congress for which I had been lobbying. In urging the President to proceed, I had said we were on our own one-yard line and needed some "razzle-dazzle" to break

out of our defensive position. I think it was the disastrous events of the day that finally convinced him that he somehow had to seize the initiative, and that this was the best available idea.

He added a highly personal touch to his surprise announcement, a homespun phrase that took him back to his Jackson County farm-country origins: "On the 26th day of July, which out in Missouri we call 'Turnip Day,' I am going to call that Congress back, and I am going to ask them to pass laws halting rising prices, and to meet the housing crisis." President Truman later took pleasure in explaining that he had in mind an old Missouri saying, "On the twenty-fifth of July, sow your turnips wet or dry." Since July 25th fell on a Sunday in 1948, he simply moved the date for the special session to the following day.

The Turnip Session, as it inevitably

came to be called, turned out exactly the way we had hoped. On July 27th, the President went up to the Hill to tell Congress that his highest priority was to stop inflation and solve the housing shortage. The Republicans were not about to do anything on either issue, and they attacked virtually every proposal that President Truman sent up. When the session was over, I prepared a detailed list of all the proposals Congress had not enacted. We released the list in conjunction with a press conference, on August 12th, in which President Truman used for the first time an expression that we thought had punch and staying power, and it did indeed become part of the American political language. The Turnip Session, the President said, had been a "do-nothing" session—part of a "do-nothing Congress."

At the time of the campaign, I had never met Tom Dewey. Later, when I came to know him personally—I even once spent a pleasant golfing weekend with him in California—I found him a decent and moderate man, though without much of a sense of humor. But in 1948 he ran an amazingly poor campaign, behaving as if its purpose were merely to ratify an outcome that was not in doubt. That was exactly the sort of arrogance the American electorate does not like, and it gave us an easy chance to poke fun at the stately procession toward the White House which Dewey thought he was leading.

The President almost never attacked his opponent directly. Dewey had been a decent governor, with an outstanding reputation as a prosecutor in cases of organized crime. But since he did not emphasize that record the President was also able to ignore it. At the same time, Dewey chose not to counter President Truman's highly effective attacks on the "do-nothing" Eightieth Congress.

Dewey's speaking style was soporific, and his speeches, carefully prepared through a cumbersome staff process structured more for an incumbent President than for a candidate, were bland. By contrast, President Truman's speeches became steadily more animated and aggressive as the campaign proceeded. Dewey opted for fewer days on the campaign trail than President Truman, because he wanted to spend time in Albany as governor. President Tru-

man ran as the underdog and outsider, and he eroded the image of inevitability that the press had woven around Dewey. A visitor from another planet might have reasonably concluded that Thomas Dewey was the incumbent, Harry Truman the challenger.

As I directed the preparation of drafts of the President's speeches, we focussed on four groups: labor, farmers, blacks, and veterans—which in today's terms would mean, to a considerable extent, consumers. (Because of Strom Thurmond's Dixiecrat candidacy, we assumed that the Deep South was lost.) A memorandum submitted to the President in August stated that our primary objective was "to win a large majority of the 15,000,000 independent voters who overwhelmingly followed the liberal leadership of the Democratic Party in the last four elections." In regard to the black vote, the memorandum urged the President to "speak out fully on his Civil Rights record," and noted, "His record proves that he *acts* as well as *talks* Civil Rights. The Negro votes in the crucial states will more than cancel out any votes the President may lose in the South."

The memorandum recommended several long train tours of the nation, targeting specifically the states that had been most closely contested in 1944—especially California. It also reviewed the main lessons we had learned during a "nonpolitical" June train tour. We needed advance men at every stop at least a day ahead of the President; this was a technique that became a routine part of all campaigning but until then had been used only for major occasions. We did not want empty halls or any confusion. Spring training is over, I thought. This is the big leagues now.

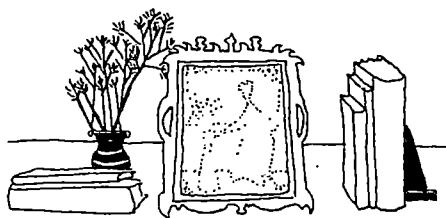
The first full-scale whistle-stop trip got under way on the morning of Friday, September 17th. George Marshall and Alben Barkley saw us off at Union Station. As we pulled out, Barkley yelled out, "Mow 'em down, Harry!" The President smiled and yelled back, "I'm going to give 'em hell!"

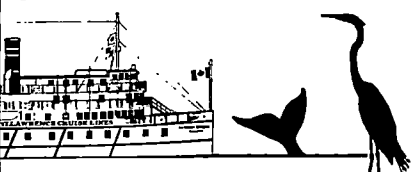
The train on which Harry Truman

was to make history had sixteen cars, including a dining car that had been converted into staff office space, and a second that would serve as a travelling newsroom. The President's car, the Ferdinand Magellan, had been built for President Roosevelt by the Association of American Railroads. It was a heavy, bulletproof, armor-plated affair, which contained luxurious sleeping quarters for the President and his family, and also a bath, a dining room, and a wood-paneled sitting room. As for the rest of us, we slept in cramped quarters, and, as time went on, the question of how and when to get our laundry done became something of an obsession.

What was whistle-stopping like? September 30th was a fairly typical day. We had already been on the train for thirteen straight days, sleeping in far from stately staterooms—except for the rare and treasured night that we slept in a hotel in a major city. On this particular day, we stopped, and the President spoke, in Mount Vernon, West Frankfort, Herrin, Carbondale, Marion, El Dorado, and Carmi, all in Illinois; Mount Vernon and Evansville, Indiana; and Henderson, Owensboro, Hawesville, Irvington, and Louisville, Kentucky—fifteen speeches in all, twelve from the back of the train and three on quick visits into larger towns. Every stop required something new, something local, something to satisfy the politicians who usually boarded the train a stop ahead of their home town. And without telephones on board, almost every stop, no matter how short, meant a frantic race to call Washington to see if there was any business requiring Presidential attention. And so it went, for well over two hundred and fifty speeches.

As time went on, we developed a pattern for the typical stop. The President would emerge at the back of his car, make a few nice remarks about the town he was in, and then launch into an attack on the "do-nothing Eightieth Congress." He would ask the crowd "How would you like to meet my family?" and wait, with his head cocked, for the response. Then he would introduce Bess Truman, always referring to her as "the Boss." After that, he would present his daughter, Margaret (in the border states, "Miss Margaret"), "who bosses the Boss." Then, as the train started to pull away, Margaret





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would toss a red rose to someone in the crowd.

My role during these short stops varied. Sometimes I worked feverishly to communicate with Washington about a breaking news event. But I often left this job to Elsey and wandered through the crowd to overhear what was being said about the President. We were not organized well enough to have a claque positioned at every stop, so the subtle assignment of stirring up crowd enthusiasm sometimes fell to the President's physician, Brigadier General Wallace Graham, and me. The show we put on so amused one journalist—Richard Rovere, of this magazine—that he described the two of us as “shills” in a political version of the carnivals that used to wander through small American towns. Of all the things I ever did in government, this may have been the least dignified, but, after all, we were shorthanded on the train and very far behind in the polls—and, to tell the truth, I enjoyed it.

Most of the major public-opinion surveys stopped polling long before the election, because, in the light of Dewey's large lead, further surveys seemed unnecessary. Elmo Roper stopped his sampling in early September—one of the classic errors in polling history. The Democrats did not have enough funds to conduct polls of their own, and the Republicans saw no need for any more. Instead of an expensive national poll, *Newsweek* decided in September to query fifty of the leading political journalists in America, and run the results in their October 11th issue. We awaited this article anxiously, since it included some of journalism's brightest names.

Early in the morning on the day the issue of *Newsweek* was due on newsstands, I slipped off the train at the first stop and found it. I opened the issue and received a huge shock: every single one of the fifty pundits predicted that Dewey would win.

I had to pass through the President's car to get back to my stateroom. The President was sitting on a sofa reading a newspaper, so I tucked *Newsweek* under my jacket and tried to slip by.

But the President stopped me. “What does it say, Clark?” he asked.

“What does what say?” I said, trying to look innocent.

“What have you got under your coat, Clark?”

“Nothing, Mr. President.”

“Clark, I saw you get off the train just now, and I think that you went in there to see if they had a newsstand with a copy of *Newsweek*. And I think that maybe you have it under your coat.”

Reluctantly, I handed it over. I hated to be the one who broke the bad news to the President.

He looked at the article for a while, and then handed the magazine back to me, seemingly unperturbed.

“Don't worry about that poll, Clark,” he said. “I know every one of those fifty fellows, and not one of them has enough sense to pound sand into a rathole.”

Did I think that Harry Truman could win? I have been asked that question so often in the years since then that I am no longer sure exactly what I did think, and when. As the campaign unfolded, my hopes went up and down. At times, I thought the President was either fooling himself or putting up a brave front to keep *our* spirits up. But our job was to stay at it, no matter how hopeless things seemed. We did not have time to sit around and analyze our chances. This is how campaigns are: while the rest of the world argues over who is leading, at the center of the enterprise the staff staggers on, worrying only about the next event, counting down the days until, win or lose, it is finally over.

On Election Night, almost everyone thought the result would be settled early. The Democratic National Committee was so pessimistic that it had not even bothered to reserve a ballroom at the Mayflower Hotel, the traditional site for such affairs. By eleven, when it was clear the election would be much closer than anyone had expected, I went to the home of a friend who was among the first people in the neighborhood to own a television set, and together we settled down to watch.

I planned to stay only about an hour. But as the election hung in the balance none of us watching could tear ourselves away from my friend's new toy. On chalkboards behind the commentators on the screen, the numbers indicated an incredibly tight race. Twice during the night, Herbert Brownell,



Dewey's campaign manager, came down to the ballroom in New York's Roosevelt Hotel to claim victory for his candidate, but the race was not over; it was going down to the wire in four states that held the key to the outcome—Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, and California. From Truman headquarters, at the Muehlebach Hotel, in Kansas City, no claims were made. At the nearby Excelsior Springs, the President, in one of the most remarkable examples of inner serenity that I've ever heard of, ate a sandwich, drank a glass of milk, and went to bed early. He woke around midnight, and, as he was to recount many times, heard over the radio the gravelly voice of the famous commentator H. V. Kaltenborn saying that, although the President was a million two hundred thousand votes ahead, Dewey would win when the farm vote came in. President Truman went back to sleep, and woke up again at about 4 A.M., to hear radio commentators still predicting a Dewey victory.

Shortly after 9 A.M., I got the most gratifying telephone call of my life. It was Harry Truman, just arrived at the Muehlebach. With jubilation, the President told me that Illinois and Ohio were going into the Democratic column. The victory was his.

What can explain an outcome so unexpected and so stunning? Certainly Dewey's arid personality and his passive, overconfident campaign gave President Truman an easier target than anyone had anticipated. And the defections of both Wallace and Thurmond gave President Truman an unexpected opportunity to present himself as the true heir to F.D.R.—but at a cost. Good weather and a grain-storage-bin shortage helped in the Farm Belt. Organized labor, after some initial ambivalence and internal bickering, had helped organize a vast effort on Election Day to get out the vote. Black Americans rallied to the Democrats in record numbers, and may actually have provided the margin of victory for the President in several key states. In short, the pieces of the puzzle for the most part fell into place in November of 1948 much as we had hoped when we prepared the strategy memorandum, a year earlier.

But one factor clearly transcended all others—Harry Truman himself. Without question, what rallied the nation was his tenacity, his indomitable spirit, his ability to keep himself and his

supporters going through the bleak and seemingly hopeless campaign, and his unwillingness to give up. As he fought overwhelming odds, he gained America's respect. That respect turned into affection, and the affection turned into votes. Now he was no longer the man sitting in Franklin Roosevelt's chair. He was the elected President of the United States.

WHILE the surprise outcome of the 1948 election was, without question, the most satisfying political event of my life, even as we celebrated it, I was beginning to wonder how much longer I should stay in the government. Nearly five years had elapsed since I made the trek to the top floor of the Missouri Pacific Building, in St. Louis, to join the Navy. The price my family had paid was high. My three daughters were growing up without me. I was also facing growing financial pressures. (The annual salary of the special counsel to the President was twelve thousand dollars a year.) There was a third factor as well—less tangible but equally important. I was reaching the point of diminishing returns in my government service. I was worn out: I felt not the simple weariness that a week or two in Key West or some other vacation spot could cure but that penetrating fatigue which comes when one's intellectual resources have been depleted. I had always liked fresh challenges, but I could feel the excitement oozing out of the job. It seemed to me that my speech drafts for the President had all begun to sound alike.

What I felt intuitively in 1948 I now believe to be a basic rule. After four or five years of service in the same position at one of the higher levels of government, one begins to lose effectiveness. The time comes to either move on or move out.

After I left the White House, in January of 1950, and began practicing law in Washington, President Truman and I kept in close touch. He invited me to join him on some of his Key West vacations. He relied heavily on his staff for day-to-day assistance, and I was no longer part of it, but, at his request, I continued to arrange the

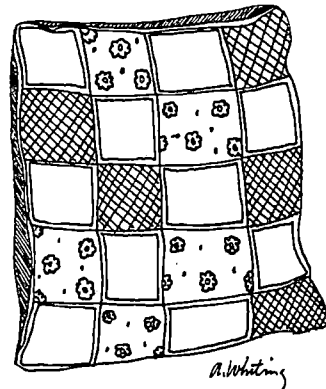
poker sessions on the Williamsburg or at private homes.

By sheer chance, the timing of my departure turned out to be crucial. Barely nineteen weeks after I left the White House, the North Koreans attacked South Korea—a fundamental test of the Truman Doctrine, the United Nations, and the depth of America's commitment to its friends and allies. Had I still been in the Administration on June 24, 1950, it would have been impossible for me to leave before the end of President Truman's term.

IF President Truman could have picked his successor, he would have chosen Chief Justice Fred Vinson. On October 11, 1951, the President invited me to dine with him and Vinson at Blair House, where he was living while the White House was being refurbished. At the dinner, he promised Vinson his full support if he would run. Flattered by the offer, Vinson listened, but three days later he informed the President that he was not much interested in becoming a candidate. I was relieved, for Vinson—a decent and amusing person, whose friendship I valued—had hardly shown special leadership qualities either as Secretary of the Treasury or as Chief Justice.

What about Ike? The President still had a warm spot for General Eisenhower. Had Ike run as a Democrat, President Truman would have been delighted. Neither the President nor I realized at the time that Eisenhower had no intention of running as a Democrat, because he privately disagreed with much of both the New Deal and Truman's Fair Deal.

When Ike finally made clear his party preference, and his availability for a draft, in January, 1952, President Truman felt tricked by Eisenhower's skillful evasions over the years, and he told many of us that he now felt a strong, new distaste for the General. Thus began a deterioration of relations between President Truman and General Eisenhower, which was never repaired, and which caused all of us around the President much anguish. Before the end of the 1952 campaign,



it exploded in a particularly ugly manner.

The strongest Democrat now available seemed to be the governor of Illinois, Adlai Stevenson. President Truman spent some time in the early months of 1952 trying to persuade Stevenson to run, but after each meeting the President's opinion of the Governor declined. President Truman was plainspoken and direct, a nineteenth-century man of strong and simple values. Stevenson was almost his exact opposite: wealthy, divorced, cosmopolitan, elegant, even eloquent. The more the President pressed Stevenson, the more frustrated he became with Stevenson's elusiveness. I thought I saw in the Governor's style a deliberate pattern; he enjoyed the chase, and took on a leisurely, self-indulgent, slightly self-satisfied attitude as others told him what a fine President he would make. For President Truman, however, this act wore thin rather quickly, and it led to a lifelong feeling on his part that Stevenson was simply too weak and indecisive to be President. I had more respect for Stevenson's intellect than President Truman did, but, like my old boss, I became frustrated with a man who insisted on playing Hamlet in the face of such great issues. In normal circumstances, Stevenson's ambivalence would have denied him the nomination, but 1952 did not thrust up a natural candidate, and it went to Stevenson almost by default. Nevertheless, after Stevenson won the nomination Truman gave him public support—stimulated in part by several incidents that helped to destroy relations between President Truman and General Eisenhower forever.

The first of those incidents occurred in August, when President Truman offered both candidates a White House briefing from the C.I.A. director, Walter Bedell Smith, who had been Eisenhower's chief of staff during the Second World War. Eisenhower refused the offer. President Truman, deeply offended, wrote Eisenhower a bitter personal note, saying that in suggesting the meeting he had merely sought to insure "a continuing foreign policy," and adding, "You know that is a fact, because you had a part in outlining it." Rather regretfully, the President closed, "I am extremely sorry that you have allowed a bunch of screwballs to come between us. . . . From a man who has always been your friend and who always intended to be!"

Any chance for a post-election reconciliation between Presidents Truman and Eisenhower was doomed forever by the second incident—a dreadful mistake that Eisenhower made in early October. For the rest of his life, whenever Ike's name came up in conversation it was to this incident that President Truman turned.

Senator Joe McCarthy had attacked General Marshall several times in the previous year, charging him with, among other things, responsibility for the fall of China to the Communists. On October 4th, while campaigning by train with the Senator in McCarthy's home state of Wisconsin, Eisenhower, in deference to McCarthy, deleted from a prepared speech a paragraph praising General Marshall. During the rest of the campaign, in the face of continued attacks by McCarthy on Marshall, Eisenhower remained silent.

President Truman's fury at Eisenhower for what he regarded as an act of political cowardice was unrestrained. He felt that Eisenhower owed Marshall, who had chosen him as Supreme Allied Commander in Europe in the Second World War over many more senior generals, a special loyalty. When Eisenhower failed to stand up for his old boss, the President's reaction was immediate. "I never thought," he said, "the man who is now the Republican candidate would stoop so low" as to abandon his "great friend and benefactor." Furthermore, had Eisenhower stood up to McCarthy it might have resulted in McCarthy's defeat in the Wisconsin Senate race, which McCarthy won by far less than Eisenhower's margin in Wisconsin.

THE YEARS AFTER TRUMAN

I HAD liked Eisenhower. During the years in which we worked together on military unification and other



issues, he and Mrs. Eisenhower had come to my house a few times for dinner. On at least one occasion, they joined a group of friends around our piano, singing old songs, and once or twice, when Ike was travelling overseas and my wife was at our summer house in Nantucket, I had escorted Mamie Eisenhower to Saturday-afternoon parties our mutual friend George Allen gave at Pimlico Race Track, in Maryland.

During our work together on the unification of the armed services, I had found Eisenhower a reasonable and thoughtful man. When he was nominated by the Republicans in 1952, I felt that, of all the possible Republican candidates, he was undoubtedly the best. His opponents in the Republican Party—most notably Senator Robert Taft—were much more isolationist than he was, and further removed from the great policymaking period of the late nineteen-forties. If the Democratic era was going to come to an end, it seemed to me better that it end with Eisenhower than with anyone else.

Looking back today on the nineteen-fifties, I still feel that way. Eisenhower had the stature for the Presidency, both at home and abroad. He was what the nation wanted, and perhaps needed, at that time. He left behind some solid accomplishments, and did not create any major international crises. Yet I was disappointed in his tenure. I do not think he ever understood either the potential or the dynamics of the Presidency. To be fair, it was unlikely that he could have. He had spent his entire life in the military, and taken little interest in politics. I felt that he allowed the nation to drift, and that, given his enormous popularity and the capacity it gave him for positive leadership, he took far too passive a stand on several key issues—especially civil rights and McCarthyism.

In any case, Eisenhower and I saw relatively little of each other during his Presidency. I shared President Truman's feeling that he had behaved badly during the campaign and afterward, not only toward General Marshall but also toward President Truman. I made no effort to maintain contact with him. He asked me to serve on one Presidential commission—the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial Commission, which was established to consider what permanent memorial should be established in Washington in

honor of F.D.R.—but that was my only official involvement with the Eisenhower White House.

THE first observation I would add to the enormous amount written about John F. Kennedy is that while he was alive no one imagined that he would, after his death, become a mythical figure in American culture and American history. When we first met, he was a young man of immense charm and political promise, the son of an overbearing and, to my mind, highly unattractive father. First, we were acquaintances; then I was his lawyer; and, finally, as a result of all we went through together, John Kennedy and I became friends.

As our relationship developed, Kennedy called on me for advice on a broad range of political, governmental, and personal matters. I knew Kennedy well, and I think I understood his character. As his lawyer, I saw him in situations of extraordinary professional and personal stress, and nothing that I ever encountered or learned made me question his fitness or his ability to be a superb President. (In some of the matters I handled for him, the constraints created by the lawyer-client relationship still exist today.) When I think of Kennedy now, I remember first his incomparable grace. This rare quality, hard to define but easy to recognize, was undoubtedly innate, but Kennedy enhanced it through his superb political skills. He knew how to win friends and charm people as well as anyone who has ever practiced the art. But behind his appeal and elegance lay a highly retentive mind, a quick intellect, and a useful pragmatic cynicism toward events and people. Unlike most politicians, he did not respond well to the excessive or empty flattery that is such a large part of normal political intercourse, and he looked for deft ways to deflate or deflect it. His wit, much of it highly sardonic, was justly celebrated.

Another quality, equally important, has been less remarked upon: it was his ability to approach events, even those directly involving him, with both an uncommon objectivity and something rare and valuable in politicians—a sense of irony. He brought more genuine intellectual curiosity into decision-making than any other President I have known, and perhaps more than any other President in this century. Where Harry Truman usually reacted sponta-

neously, and Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, and Jimmy Carter personalized almost every situation, John F. Kennedy approached people and decisions with cool detachment and calculation. Where both President Johnson and President Nixon took North Vietnamese attacks on Americans as personal challenges, for example, President Kennedy saw such events as part of the dangerous game of international power politics: something to respond to, but not to take personally.

Kennedy was unusually successful in maintaining objectivity under pressure. I felt on occasion that as he dealt with personal or professional crises he was able to step away from himself and look at a problem as though it involved someone else. Sometimes, watching him during a discussion of some contentious issue, I felt as if Kennedy's mind had left his body to observe the proceedings with a detached, almost amused air. Something within him seemed to be saying, "This may seem supremely—even transcendently—important right now, but will it matter in fifty years? In one year? I must not permit myself to become involved to the point where my judgment is suspect."

This attitude may have run through his personal relationships as well. I believe that between him and the large number of men and women who were devoted to him and considered themselves his special friends there was a deeply impersonal factor at work. Perhaps this was no more than a protective layer, accumulated in response to unusual difficulties in his early life—his older brother's death in the Second World War, his own near-death in the Solomon Islands and his recurring medical problems, the death of one sister in an airplane crash and the mental retardation of another, the influence of his cynical and power-hungry father—but I felt that (aside from his unique relationship with his brother Bobby) he kept a very tight rein on his personal emotions, enjoying immensely the company of many people, from all walks of life, but never allowing intimacies to go beyond a certain point, and never losing control of his own emotions.

AFTER Kennedy entered the House of Representatives, in 1946, I met him socially on many occasions. But, while we were friendly, we were not close. This was probably my fault; in

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the nineteen-forties and fifties, I associated him with his father, whose public opposition to the Marshall Plan had offended me, striking me as particularly inappropriate for a former Ambassador to the United Kingdom.

On the morning of Monday, December 9, 1957, Kennedy came to see me. He was very unhappy, and wanted immediate assistance. "Did you see 'The Mike Wallace Interview' Saturday night?" he asked. When I told him that I had not, he described to me an exchange between Wallace, whose weekly program, broadcast nationally on ABC, had already established him as America's leading television interviewer, and Drew Pearson, the most widely read political columnist of his time. Pearson had charged that Kennedy's Pulitzer Prize-winning "Profiles in Courage" had been ghostwritten for him. Kennedy said he had come to me with the full knowledge and concurrence of his father, who was even angrier than he was. "I cannot let this stand," he said. "It is a direct attack on my integrity and my honesty." If Pearson's charge was not dealt with, Kennedy explained, he could see further consequences, including a possible withdrawal of the Pulitzer Prize.

I said he could sue Wallace, Pearson, and ABC for libel or slander, but that would be a lengthy process, with court proceedings and substantial publicity, which in itself could be damaging to him. The best solution, I said, would be to obtain a quick retraction from everyone involved, before the story grew and developed a life of its own.

Kennedy asked me to represent him with ABC. As we were discussing how to proceed, the telephone rang. It was Ambassador Kennedy, who, either by prearrangement or by coincidence, had found his son in my office. I could hear the old man yelling at Jack. Very calmly, Kennedy said, "I will let you talk to Clark, Father."

I got on the telephone. Before I could even say hello, Joe Kennedy said, "I want you to sue the bastards for fifty million dollars. Get it started right away. It's dishonest and they know it. My boy wrote the book. This is a plot to poison the well."

"Mr. Ambassador," I said, "I am

preparing at this moment to go to New York and sit down with the people at ABC."

"Sit down with them, hell! Sue them, that is what you have to do—sue them!" he shouted in my ear. His son watched me with a faint air of amusement.

"Well," I said, "we may have to do that, but first we want to try to see if there isn't some other solution."

This did not soothe Joe Kennedy. He continued to demand that we sue ABC, Pearson, Wallace, and anyone else in sight. But, watching Jack Kennedy's calm countenance, I could see that he understood the desirability of a more restrained course of action. When I got off the telephone, he said to me, "Well, that's just Dad. Let's deal with this thing."

I asked Jack to assemble everything that he could find concerning the writing of "Profiles in Courage"—handwritten notes, notebooks, records, comments by anyone who had seen him working on the book. After he left, I set up a meeting with Leonard Goldenson, the president of ABC, for Thursday, December 12th, in New York.

The materials we needed in order to deal with ABC were assembled by a young man I had not met before—Kennedy's closest aide and adviser, Theodore C. Sorensen. One of the most thorough and precise men I have ever met, he did a splendid job of collecting every scrap of paper that could be located on such short notice, plus a list of possible witnesses who had observed Kennedy working on the manuscript.

The next day, I took a train to New York, and Kennedy and I plunged into a long and difficult day of meetings at ABC. We had agreed that we would stay at ABC as long as was necessary to get what we needed. The network executives called Pearson, who now identified the ghostwriter as one Theodore C. Sorensen. Kennedy and I produced Sorensen—he rushed over from a nearby hotel—and ABC finally agreed that a network vice-president would read a retraction of the charge at the beginning of the following week's "Mike Wallace Interview."

Afterward, I suggested to Kennedy that when things had cooled down a bit

he invite Pearson to his office for a private chat, to see if he could take the venom out of Pearson's dangerous and influential sting, and Kennedy agreed to do so. Pearson's diary entry for the meeting, which took place January 14, 1958, gave a fine picture of the effect of Kennedy's dazzling personality and charm on even a cynical journalist:

Talked to [Kennedy] for about an hour. He showed me his original notes, and unquestionably he did conceive the idea of his book *Profiles in Courage*. . . Sometimes I'm a sucker for a nice guy who presents an appealing story. . . He didn't ask for a retraction, but I think I shall give him one. He got a whale of a lot of help on his book. I'm still dubious as to whether he wrote too much of it in the final draft himself. . . But he also showed enough knowledge of the book, had lived with the book, made the book so much a part of him, that basically it is his book. . . "Ted [Sorensen] did an awful lot of work," he said.

Pearson's final judgment on where the credit lies for the book was, in my opinion, pretty close to the mark. Kennedy had help, and plenty of it, but the book was his.

True to his word, Pearson inserted a small item in his column about a month later crediting Kennedy with authorship of the book. Kennedy was delighted. Even his father indicated eventually that we had followed the right course—an acknowledgment that was as close as the old man ever came to an admission of error.

My success on his behalf had changed my relationship with Kennedy, and I began handling his personal legal affairs. He told me privately why he and his father had pursued ABC with such unusual vigor. He had definitely decided to seek the 1960 Democratic nomination, he said, and he felt that if the question of authorship of his book was not laid to rest immediately he would have to deal with it continually during the campaign. "It could have destroyed my candidacy," he said.

In the summer of 1960, Kennedy asked me to breakfast with him at his home, on N Street. He was not much interested in the losing Democratic campaigns of 1952 and 1956. "Tell me about the last one we won," he said, and we had a long and detailed discussion of the 1948 election. We then discussed the forthcoming campaign.

Kennedy said he wanted to use me in various ways during the campaign. Near the end of our conversation, he made a request that had no precedent in



American politics. "Clark, I've been thinking about one matter where you could be of special help to me," he said. "If I win, I don't want to wake up on the morning of November 9th and say to myself, 'What do I do now?' I want to have a plan. I want someone to be thinking about that between now and November 8th." Would I, Kennedy asked, undertake the additional task of preparing a memorandum—"a plan of takeover," to be ready on Election Day—that would outline the main tasks for the new Administration, if he won?

Kennedy also asked my assistance with regard to former President Truman, who disliked him because of his youth and his religion, and whose hostility toward him was well known and very damaging—especially insofar as it touched on the extremely delicate issue of Kennedy's Catholicism. On July 1st, just before the Convention, President Truman had lashed out at Senator Kennedy in a remarkable and unfortunate manner. "Senator, are you certain you are quite ready for the country, or that the country is ready for you in the role of President in January, 1961?" he asked, in a televised statement that rocked the Kennedy camp. "May I urge you to be patient?" Now Kennedy asked me to obtain public support from the former President.

In a handwritten postscript scrawled across a letter to me on another subject he wrote, "Lyndon said the President [Truman] is in a difficult mood. Perhaps you could intervene as I should like to see him." He felt that Truman's support would be particularly helpful with Baptists and Freemasons (President Truman was a Thirty-third Degree Mason)—two of the groups that seemed most disturbed by the idea of a Catholic President.

Accordingly, Lyndon Johnson, Acheson, Governor Abraham A. Ribicoff, of Connecticut, and I all pleaded Kennedy's cause—and the cause of Party unity—with President Tru-

man. Ribicoff, an unusually gentle and subtle politician, visited Independence as Kennedy's personal emissary. After some grumbling, the former President agreed to see the Democratic nominee, and the meeting was finally arranged for August 20th, at the Truman Library, in Independence. Leaving Stuart Symington, who had accompanied Kennedy, on the steps of the Truman Library, the former President pulled Senator Kennedy into his office with the words "Come right on in here, young man. I want to talk to you." Forty minutes later, they emerged with the announcement that President Truman would campaign for the ticket. Truman was immediately badgered by journalists about his earlier statements that Kennedy was too young to be President, and the former President dismissed them with characteristic bluntness. He said the Convention had nominated Kennedy "and I am going to support him—and what are you going to do about it?"

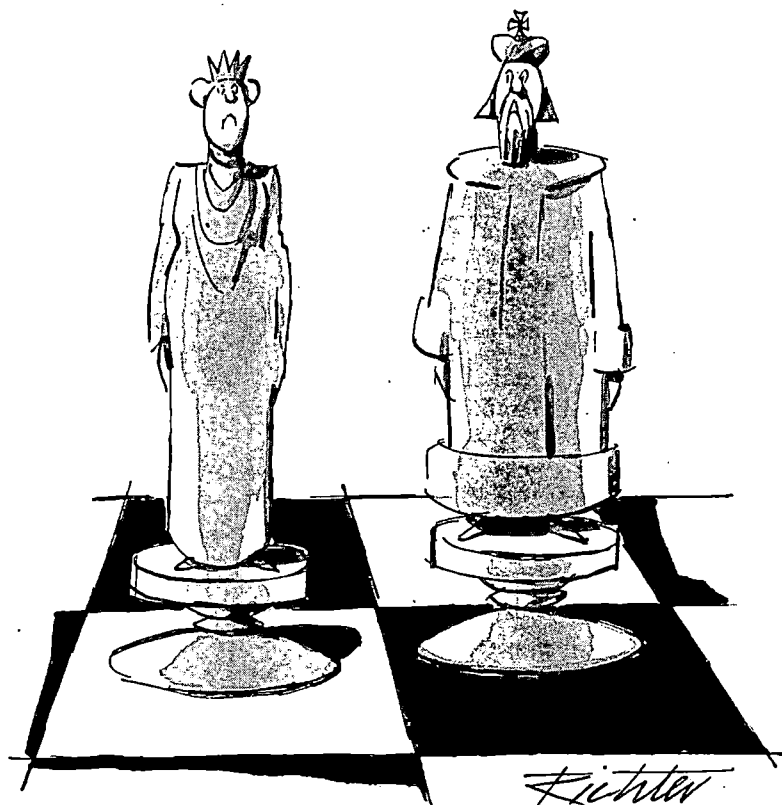
ON November 9th, the transition memorandum that President-elect—or, as he preferred to be called until Inauguration Day, Senator—Kennedy wanted from me was ready, twenty-one pages long and bound in

stiff covers. Within hours, a Secret Service courier came to my office to pick up the copies and take them to Hyannis Port. The arrival of the Secret Service reminded me instantly of the enormous changes that come over a man the moment he is elected President. Soon it would be "Jack" no longer but, rather, "Mr. President," even to his closest friends, and, no matter how informal a relationship he tried to maintain, a curtain would descend between him and everyone else. The following day, November 10th, Senator Kennedy met with his advisers at Hyannis Port to discuss what to do with the seventy-one days remaining before the Inauguration.

Most historians view the 1960 transition as a dramatic change from all previous transfers of the Presidency. While they are right, the transition is also often described as setting the pattern for subsequent transitions. This statement is incorrect. Current transition practice is quite different from ours in 1960. In 1960, no public funds were available either for the transition or for members of the new Administration. Many of the future members who came to Washington early to prepare themselves, at Kennedy's request, could ill afford the out-of-pocket expense. Later, when President Kennedy became

aware of the problem, he asked Congress for a small appropriation for future transitions. Thus was born the Presidential Transition Act of 1963.

I strongly supported this act, but I never had in mind the vastly oversized "transition teams" that have become a periodic, but permanent, part of the Washington scene and a sorry example of the government's penchant for self-indulgence at the taxpayers' expense. The Presidential Transition Act unintentionally created a form of life that could originate only in Washington—a seventy-day monster that springs up overnight once every four years, has no purpose except its own



"Damn it, Gwendolyn, you knew when you married me I only moved one square at a time."

existence, feuds with itself, and then on January 20th suddenly disappears, leaving nothing behind except empty cardboard boxes.

In 1960, my memorandum to the next President was based on a very simple premise: never again should a transition be handled as poorly as the transitions of 1932-33 and 1952-53. I foresaw a far easier transition than in 1952. "Much of the 1952-53 experience is irrelevant," I wrote, because "the Kennedy Administration will not be suspicious of or hostile to the Federal bureaucracy." Nonetheless, I stressed that "the President-elect should consolidate the reins of power and leadership in his own hands as soon as possible, and not merely rely on good will and experience." The new President would inevitably encounter "pockets of resistance" in Washington, and I urged him, as his top priority, "to get off the mark quickly with [the] New Frontier program."

A key question was whether a White House chief of staff was desirable for an activist, hands-on man like John F. Kennedy. Such a system had fitted the military style of Dwight D. Eisenhower, but, I concluded, "a vigorous President in the Democratic tradition of the Presidency will probably find it best to act as his own chief of staff, and to have no highly visible majordomo standing between him and his staff (and, incidentally, between him and the public)."

Just before noon on Thursday, November 10th, the President-elect called me from Hyannis Port. President Eisenhower had just phoned him and urged the appointment of a liaison with the White House on the question of transition. "Clark, I feel that you are qualified to handle this," he said. "Would you accept?"

I said that I would be happy and honored to do so, but that I had one condition. "I want you and your entire staff to know that my only function will be to assist you in the takeover of the government. After that, I will fade from the picture.

"Why is that?" Kennedy asked. He seemed genuinely surprised.

I said, "There will be a lot of tugging and pulling around you for jobs. I think I can be of more service to you if everyone around you knows I am not their competitor or enemy. It will be easier for the members of your staff to work with me if they know we are not

in competition in any manner whatsoever."

Kennedy was silent for a moment. Then he said, "Well, that makes a good deal of sense. I will pass the word on to my staff."

It was clear that Bobby Kennedy would receive a major job. He had performed brilliantly during the election campaign, and he was, of course, the person closest to the new President. At the same time, there were suspicions about him in many quarters. Some people, having felt his wrath, saw him as ruthless and difficult. Others worried about his early association with Joe McCarthy. The question of nepotism also came into play: many people, including me, simply did not like the idea of concentrating so much power in the hands of members of a single family.

I had heard rumors from staff members that Bobby might be offered the post of Attorney General. At first, I could not believe it, since the idea seemed so farfetched. In a session with the President-elect in Palm Beach, beside a swimming pool, I made a little speech about the special role of the Attorney General, without mentioning Bobby Kennedy. I said that in several earlier Administrations, including those of Ulysses S. Grant and Warren G. Harding, politically selected Attorneys General had rendered a terrible disservice to their Presidents and left lasting stains on the history of those Administrations.

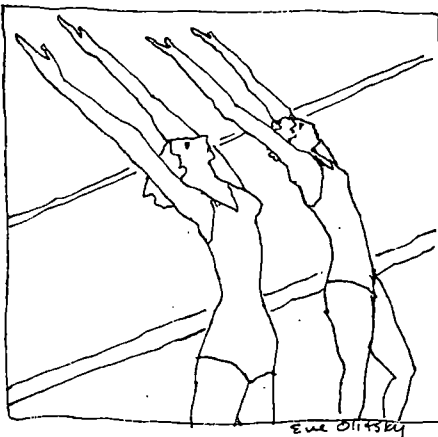
Later that day, Senator Kennedy took me into the house for another private meeting. "Let me tell you about the Attorney Generalship," he said. "My father wants me to appoint Bobby. My concern is that Bobby has never practiced law. Bobby says he does not want the job. He thinks it will hurt me. I would rather put him into the De-

fense Department as the No. 2 man, and then let him succeed to the top after a while. Or keep him around the White House to help me out. I have told my father that Bobby would create a real problem as Attorney General." As I listened in amazement, he continued, in a grave, low, intense voice, "My father said, 'That doesn't make any difference. I want Bobby to be Attorney General. He's a lawyer, he's savvy, he knows all the political ins and outs, and can protect you.' I agree with what you have said about the job. So does Bobby. I think my father might listen to you. He speaks highly of your contribution to the campaign and the family, and you have good standing with him. I'd like you to go to New York and talk to him about this."

"Of course," I said. But I thought, *This is truly a strange assignment—the President-elect asking a third party to try to talk to his father about his brother. Only the Kennedys!*

A few days later, I called on Ambassador Kennedy in New York. The meeting started pleasantly, with a discussion of the splendid occurrences of recent months. I steeled myself for the main event. "Mr. Ambassador, there is an important matter that the President-elect has asked me to raise with you," I said, finally. "That is the question of the appointment of Bobby to be Attorney General." Joe Kennedy said nothing, and looked at me with total concentration. I made a carefully prepared presentation of why it was not in the interests of the new President, the Kennedy family, the entire Administration, or Bobby Kennedy himself to become Attorney General. "Bobby is very valuable," I said. "He is young. He has time. Start him somewhere else, perhaps No. 2 at Defense. Give him the chance to grow. He will be outstanding." I was pleased with my presentation; it was, I thought, persuasive.

When I had finished, Kennedy said, "Thank you very much, Clark. I am so glad to have heard your views." Then, after pausing a moment, he said, "I do want to leave you with one thought, however—one firm thought." He paused again, and looked me straight in the eye. "Bobby is going to be Attorney General. All of us have worked our tails off for Jack, and now that we have succeeded I am going to see to it that Bobby gets the same chance that we gave to Jack."



I will always remember the pleasant and matter-of-fact tone with which he spoke. There was no rancor, no anger, no challenge. He did not resent my presentation, or my opposition to the appointment. He was simply telling me the facts. For a moment, I glimpsed the inner workings of that remarkable family, and, despite my admiration and affection for John F. Kennedy, I could not say that I liked what I had seen.

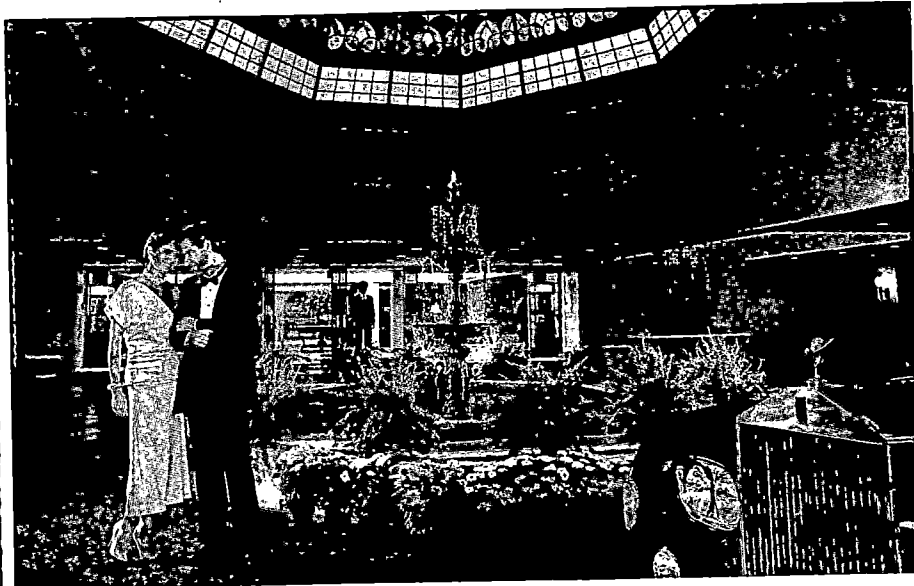
EISENHOWER's chief of staff, General Wilton Persons, and I prepared carefully for the first Eisenhower-Kennedy meeting, laying out an agenda composed of items suggested by each side. We knew that this was an important moment; we did not want a repetition of the memorable sourness that marked the Hoover-Roosevelt and Truman-Eisenhower encounters.

I gave Persons a list of the subjects that Kennedy wanted to discuss. At the top were Berlin; the Far East, especially China; and Cuba. Kennedy also wanted Eisenhower's views on the National Security Council and on White House machinery, and advice on three important world figures with whom he would have to deal—British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, French President Charles de Gaulle, and West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer.

Arriving at the White House at the appointed time on the morning of December 6, 1960, the President-elect drove slowly up the driveway as a Marine band played "Stars and Stripes Forever." It was a moving and symbolic moment even for those of us who were used to such ceremonies—the first meeting between the youngest elected President in history and the seventy-year-old war hero, who was the oldest President up to that time.

The two men met alone for an hour and forty-five minutes, while Eisenhower's three senior Cabinet members—Secretary of State Christian Herter, Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates, and Secretary of the Treasury Robert Anderson—waited, with Persons and me, in the Cabinet Room. Then they joined us in the Cabinet Room, and we continued the discussion until after noon.

Watching them carefully, I felt that Kennedy had made a good impression on the old General. The conversation was easy and relaxed. Kennedy asked



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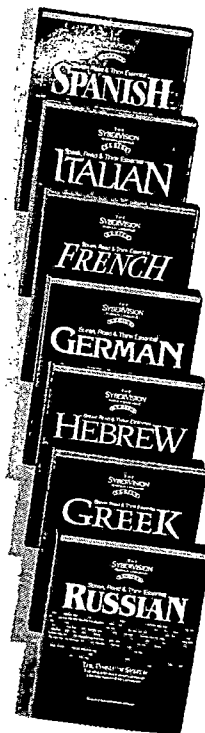
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Eisenhower if he could be available, from time to time, to serve the nation in some special capacity. Pleased by the request, Eisenhower replied that he would try to do so, but added that he thought he had earned the right, after many long years of service and "in view of my age," to limit the requests. He especially did not want to be asked to travel—"run errands," as he put it.

Later that day, Persons called to tell me that President Eisenhower, who had previously referred to Kennedy as a "young whippersnapper," had been "overwhelmed" by him. "What impressed the President most," Persons said, "was your man's understanding of world problems, the depth of his questions, his grasp of the issues, and the keenness of his mind."

I passed Persons' comments on to Kennedy. He was pleased, but he had not been similarly impressed by Eisenhower. He still felt that Eisenhower was a "non-President," with only limited understanding of the powers available to him, but he had been struck by the strength of Eisenhower's personality, and said that he understood Ike's success and popularity better now.

There was one last meeting between the two men before the Inauguration, and it had important historical consequences. It took place, at Kennedy's request, on Eisenhower's last full day in office—January 19, 1961. Herter, Gates, and Anderson were present once again, and this time the President-elect was able to bring their successors—Dean Rusk, Robert McNamara, and Douglas Dillon. We met in the Cabinet Room. More than we could have realized, the agenda reflected crises to come.

At the top of Eisenhower's agenda was the situation in Laos. It may seem incredible today, but the outgoing President considered the fate of that tiny, landlocked Southeast Asian kingdom the most important problem facing the United States. The way Eisenhower discussed the issue that day made an important, and unfortunate, contribution to the development of American policy toward Indo-China, and especially Vietnam.

Eisenhower began with a dramatic

statement. As though he had years left in office rather than only one day, he said that the United States was determined to preserve the independence of Laos. If Laos were to fall, he said, it would be "a great tragedy," and "just a question of time" before South Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, and Burma collapsed. This was the grand design the Communists had for all of Southeast Asia, and it must be stopped in Laos. We could not let the Communists participate in any sort of coalition government in Laos—it would be fatal to American interests in all of Asia if that was permitted to happen.



We knew, of course, from intelligence briefings that a Laotian general named Kong Le had just staged a coup, creating a political crisis, but I was surprised to hear President Eisenhower link America's national security directly to the fate of Laos.

The mood in the room had turned from businesslike to grim. Herter made it even grimmer: if our efforts to achieve a political settlement failed, "then the United States must intervene in concert with our allies," he said. "If we are unable to persuade our allies, then we must go it alone."

Eisenhower concurred with Herter's astonishing remark. "If we permit Laos to fall, then we will have to write off the entire area," he said, with emotion. "We must not permit a Communist takeover. Unilateral intervention would be our last, desperate hope if we cannot get others to go along with us."

I watched Senator Kennedy. Calmly, he asked how long it would take to put an American combat division into Laos.

From twelve to seventeen days, Gates replied.

This discussion was a real turning point, I thought. This was the handing over of the baton; in a few hours, Laos—and everything else—would become the new President's problem. With no warning, his predecessor was raising the possibility of deploying American troops overseas. In April, 1954, Eisenhower had refused to intervene to save the French position at Dien Bien Phu in Indo-China, despite pressure from

Vice-President Nixon, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (who had also advocated the use of nuclear weapons): But on his last day in office Eisenhower was taking a far tougher stand than at any time during his previous eight years in office.

The tone of the old soldier—on his last day of public service, half a century after entering the United States Military Academy—had a powerful effect on Kennedy, Rusk, McNamara, and me. None of us had been prepared for the seriousness that Eisenhower now attached to Southeast Asia. I did not then have enough knowledge of Southeast Asia to challenge Eisenhower's assessment of the situation, even if I had had the inclination to do so.

Before that January 19th meeting broke up, Eisenhower turned briefly to Cuba. He said we must support "to the utmost" anyone who opposed Fidel Castro. Without going into details, he added that the United States was helping to train anti-Castro guerrilla forces in Guatemala. It was the new Administration's responsibility, he said, "to do whatever is necessary" to make their efforts succeed. This understated presentation of the C.I.A.'s efforts to overthrow Castro was the first inkling I had had of the preparations for what was later to grow into the Bay of Pigs disaster.

In retrospect, I believe that President Eisenhower, while sincere, did a disservice to the incoming Administration. This new line in Southeast Asia—far tougher than he had taken on his own watch—cast a shadow over the early decisions of the next Administration, not only on Laos but, more important, on Vietnam and Cuba. In the first two months of his Administration, President Kennedy, as Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., later noted, "probably spent more time on Laos than on anything else." Sixty days after he became President, the Laos obsession reached its height with a remarkable nationally televised press conference. Standing before three maps of Laos designed to illustrate the advance of the Communist guerrillas, President Kennedy consciously echoed the theme we had heard from Eisenhower in the Cabinet Room on January 19th: "Laos is far away from America, but the world is small. . . . Its own safety runs with the safety of us all." Eisenhower himself

had never said anything so strong in public about Laos.

Finally, the outgoing President offered Kennedy best wishes. He wanted us to know he would support—or, at least, not criticize—the new Administration in the area of foreign policy. There was only one issue on which he was taking an absolutely clear position in advance: China. If Kennedy recognized the People's Republic of China, as some liberal Democrats were urging him to, Eisenhower said, he would attack the decision and try to rally public opinion against it. Kennedy did not comment, but I had no doubt that Eisenhower's warning had its desired effect.

UNDoubtedly the worst disaster of the Kennedy Administration was the invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs. Launched on the morning of April 17, 1961, it was poorly planned, poorly executed, and heavily infiltrated by agents of Fidel Castro. Almost the entire invasion force was either killed or captured.

The Bay of Pigs changed the course of the Kennedy Administration. President Kennedy would never again accept anything that resembled conventional wisdom or bureaucratic momentum without intense questioning. He might make mistakes in the future, but they would be *his* mistakes, not someone else's. It had taken a catastrophe to turn the rhetoric about a new beginning into a harsh reality, but that had now happened.

The moment I entered the Oval Office for the first time after the Bay of Pigs, I could see a change in the President. His mood was somber, his normal grace concealed in a shell of regret, anger, and distress. I had never seen him so depressed. As he had already publicly stated, he accepted the ultimate responsibility as his own. But he was angry. He wanted to prevent such a tragedy from ever recurring.

"Let me tell you something," he said. "I have had two full days of hell. I haven't slept. This has been the most excruciating period of my life. I doubt my Presidency could survive another catastrophe like this."

He did not dwell on the details of the disaster. He knew that, like the rest of the country, I was well aware of what had happened: that, contrary to C.I.A. predictions, the people of Cuba had not

rallied in support of the invasion force; that air cover for the invasion had not been planned properly; that Castro's agents had infiltrated the invasion force in advance; that the C.I.A.'s role in the invasion was going to be fully revealed; and that the whole operation had been ill conceived from the outset.

The President analyzed his predicament in precise, biting, angry words I will long remember: "I made a bad decision. The decision I made was faulty because it was based upon the wrong advice. The advice was wrong because it was based upon incorrect facts. And the incorrect facts were due to a failure of intelligence." He continued, "You were one of the main drafters of the legislation that created the C.I.A., and watched it develop since its birth. I want you to join a Presidential board to oversee the operations of the intelligence community." Referring to the condition I had set when I went to work on the transition, he said, "This is not a full-time job, and I consider it important that you participate as a member of this board."

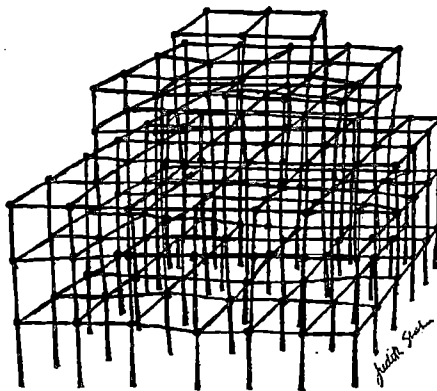
Thus began almost seven years of service on one of the least-known and most sensitive organizations in the United States, the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, or P.F.I.A.B.—first as a member and then, for almost five years, beginning in April, 1963, as its chairman. I found the P.F.I.A.B., which still exists, though in greatly weakened form, to be one of the most rewarding governmental activities in which I had ever been involved. We met regularly, and reviewed hundreds of issues, ranging from satellite reconnaissance to every form of scientific and human intelligence. We made a hundred and seventy recommendations to President Kennedy in the space of only twenty-nine months, most of them relating to intelligence activities within the Depart-

ment of Defense, the rest to those in the Department of State, the C.I.A., and other departments. The President approved a hundred and twenty-five of our recommendations, disapproved two, and deferred action on the rest. At the time of his death, eighty-five of the hundred and twenty-five approved recommendations had been carried out. The rest were completed under President Johnson, and we continued to make recommendations at about the same pace throughout Johnson's tenure. We felt that the era of cloak-and-dagger operations had more or less run its course. To be sure, there was still a role in the world for the daring agent operating inside another government, or in a closed society such as the Soviet Union. We did not advocate any curtailment of such activities, but we felt that Allen Dulles, the director of the C.I.A., was insufficiently alert to the importance and the possibilities of collecting intelligence by utilizing new technologies. Under the tutelage of two brilliant scientists who served on the committee—Edwin Land, the inventor of the Polaroid Land Camera, and William Baker, vice-president of research for Bell Labs—I became a strong advocate of "collection by technical means." These two men were our teachers, turning all of us on the committee into missionaries for the view that the United States should vastly increase its commitment to the finest state-of-the-art technologies in the field of electronic, photographic, and satellite espionage.

From time to time, President Kennedy called on the P.F.I.A.B. to investigate the performance of the intelligence community. He wanted case studies by the P.F.I.A.B. of major intelligence failures, and he hoped that such studies would reduce the number of times we were surprised by events. In this last hope Kennedy, and the nation, were sorely disappointed, but he deserves praise for his intentions.

SOME questions, even though they can never be answered, constantly recur, and deserve attention. That is true of a question I have been asked repeatedly since Dallas: Would Kennedy have handled Vietnam the same way Johnson did? Obviously, history does not allow us to test such alternatives; one must rely on one's instincts.

The two Presidents had the same



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advisers and would have confronted the same situation. It is safe to assume they would have been given more or less the same advice. One can argue that, for these reasons, Kennedy would have followed the same policies that Johnson did in Vietnam. That is my conclusion in regard to the main events of the election year of 1964, when I believe that President Kennedy would have done more or less what President Johnson did. Those actions—the continuation of the advisory buildup, the effort to improve the South Vietnamese Army, the attempt to stem the infiltration from the North, and the effort to encourage political stability—were all consistent with the policies followed in 1963 by the Kennedy Administration. Even the controversial Gulf of Tonkin incident, in August, 1964, might have unfolded in much the same manner, given the fact that Bob McNamara, as Secretary of Defense, would have interpreted events in the Gulf the same way for either President.

But I do not believe that Kennedy would have followed the same course as Johnson in the all-important year of 1965, when the major decisions to escalate the ground war and start bombing North Vietnam were made. On the basis of personal intuition and a knowledge of both men, I believe that, because of profound differences in personality and style, John Kennedy would have taken a different path in his second term.

I often saw President Johnson personalize the actions of the Vietcong, interpreting them as somehow aimed at him. He reacted by thinking, They can't do this to Lyndon Johnson! They can't push me around this way!

President Kennedy, on the other hand, would, I believe, have treated the attacks as a problem in international affairs—a very serious problem, of course, but not something aimed particularly at him. Of the same events he might have thought, I don't like the looks of this. I don't like the smell of it. Sending more troops may just increase the costs. Let's hold off for a while and see what happens. I'm not going to get us more deeply involved.

I think President Kennedy, confronted with the decision to either send American ground troops to South Vietnam or risk almost certain defeat, would have looked at Vietnam with that detached eye of his, asked different

questions, and reached a different conclusion. After the Bay of Pigs, President Kennedy was far more skeptical of official predictions, and after the Cuban missile crisis he was increasingly confident of his own instincts. I believe that his questioning of the military buildup would have been more intense than President Johnson's, and would have exposed the underlying fallacies of his advisers' recommendations.

ONE of my happiest memories of the Kennedy years concerns the annual Dinner of the Alfalfa Club. The Alfalfa Club Dinner, held in January, is similar to the Gridiron Dinner, but its members are businessmen, politicians, and private citizens, rather than journalists. Its distinguishing feature is that each year, amid much ribbing of the politicians present, it nominates its own "candidate" for President.

In 1961, the Alfalfa Club chose me as its candidate. The outgoing President, Stuart Symington, asked Bob Hope to make the traditional nominating speech. Among the guests that night were President Kennedy, former President Truman, most of the Supreme Court, Vice-President Johnson, and almost the entire new Cabinet. When President Kennedy spoke, he made a joke that I would always treasure:

Clark Clifford is a wonderful fellow. He was enormously helpful during the campaign. After I was elected, he handled the transition. He picked the Cabinet, set up the command posts in the old Administration, and even rode a buffalo in the Inaugural parade. But after the election, when everyone else was seeking a reward for their contributions to the Democratic victory, he didn't ask me for anything. So I said to him, "Now, Clark, you've done so much for me. What can I do for you?" And Clark said, "Nothing, Mr. President. You can't do anything for me. But if you insist, the only thing I would ask is to have the name of my law firm printed on the back of the one dollar bill."

I sat next to Hope, just below the head table, and I recall at one point during the evening looking up with pleasure at a scene that I had long wished to see—the two Presidents I most admired, Truman and Kennedy, seated side by side, chatting pleasantly with each other.

—CLARK CLIFFORD
WITH RICHARD HOLBROOKE

(This is the second part of a two-part article. Further articles, dealing with Vietnam, will appear in future issues.)