



Church historians call it the Babylonian Captivity—the period in the Fourteenth Century when the papacy was “captured” and hauled off to Avignon to become a degraded instrument of the French Crown. Plowing through the transcripts of President Nixon’s incredibly sordid conversations with his trusted cronies, one comes to the somber conclusion that we are witnessing the Babylonian Captivity of the Government of the United States. Even in the truncated and expurgated form released to Congress and the public, replete with its “(inaudible)” and “(expletive deleted)” gaps, the White House transcripts establish beyond reasonable doubt that the pinnacle of the nation’s political power has been seized by a band of brigands who lack the common decency and compassion to be found even in the inner councils of Organized Crime.

Understandably, the House Judiciary Committee and the press are focusing on the passages from the White House tapes that deal, however obscurely, with the questions of who knew what and when about the Watergate burglary and its cover-up—the passages that suggest that the President, at the very least, took active part in the formation of plans to obstruct justice. At least as illuminating, however, are those extracts that simply reveal the mindset of the nation’s Chief Executive and his principal aides—the following exchange, for example, between the President (P) and his former counsel, John Dean (D), regarding the origins of Nixon’s famous “enemies list”:

P—We are all in it together. This is a war. We take a few shots and it will be over. We will give them a few shots and it will be over. Don’t worry. I wouldn’t want to be on the other side right now. Would you?

D—Along that line, one of the things I’ve tried to do, I have begun to keep notes on a lot of people who are emerging as less than our friends because this will be over some day and we shouldn’t forget the way some of them have treated us.

P—I want the most comprehensive notes on all those who have tried to do us in. They didn’t have to do it. If we had had a very close election and they were playing the other side I would understand this. No—they were doing this quite deliberately and they were asking for it and they are going to get it. We have not used the power in the first four years as you know. We have never

used it. We have not used the Bureau and we have not used the Justice Department but things are going to change now. And they are either going to do it right or go.

D—What an exciting prospect.

P—Thanks. It has to be done. We have been (*adjective deleted*) fools for us to come into this election campaign and not do anything with regard to the Democratic Senators who are running, et cetera. And who the hell are they after? They are after us. It is absolutely ridiculous. It is not going to be that way any more.



For those of us who have never expected anything but the worst from Richard Milhous Nixon, such exchanges merely provide proof positive of what we have believed all along—that he is utterly devoid of scruple, or even normal prudence, in his headlong pursuit of power. But there are others—politicians and commentators who have in the past succumbed to a more benign view of the President—for whom reading the White House transcripts has been a searing experience. Scotty Reston of *The New York Times* spoke for many of these when he wrote in an anguished column: “There must be some mistake about all these spectacular documents on the Watergate. These conversations can’t have happened in the White House. ‘P’ must stand for Pendergast or some other county courthouse boss. It’s ridiculous to suppose that the President would bug himself and then publish his own indictment.”

Why *did* he do it? The question is a matter of endless speculation, for it is generally agreed that in releasing the laundered transcripts the President has not only driven the final nails into his own political coffin, but has ensured himself of notoriety in history. Did he suppose that the 1,300 pages would not be read or, if read, would not be understood or, if understood, would somehow fail to elicit almost universal revulsion? Is the whole truth that is still to be divulged so monstrous that the released conversations seem to him mild by comparison? Is Nixon driven—has he always been driven—by some pathological impulse toward self-destruction?

We don’t know the answers to such questions, and

we may never find out. But what we know is sufficient to persuade even the President's most servile apologists that they have made a horrible mistake. Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, the Republican leader who only recently was issuing lame "exculpations" in behalf of the White House, was moved to characterize the conversations released by Nixon as "deplorable, disgusting, shabby, immoral performances." He sounded like a man ready, at last, to do his duty, and he is not alone.



What's on George Corley Wallace's mind now that he has won a resounding primary victory in his race for another term as governor of Alabama? Money, that's what—money to mount another Presidential campaign in 1976. "When you send me a contribution," the Governor wrote in a "Dear Fellow American" letter we received the other day, "that is your way of saying that you are tired of the mess in Washington and want to send the liberal and socialist politicians a message."

Well, we *are* tired of the mess in Washington, but Wallace seems to have a different mess in mind. "I am concerned," he wrote, "that in less than ten years America went from clear military superiority over the Communists to now being militarily weaker than the Communists. I am concerned that most politicians in Washington want to take a lot of your money and give a guaranteed income to people even if they are healthy and refuse to work. I don't want the Democratic Party to repeat what it did in the 1972 Presidential campaign. Inflation has been eating up your paycheck because the Federal spending has doubled in the last five years. The politicians and political leaders have done nothing to stop busing even though the people's message is clearly against busing."

That's Governor Wallace's program, and it raises a few questions we would just as soon have cleared up before we send him a check: How does he propose to cut Federal spending *and* restore "military superiority"? If "most politicians" favor a guaranteed income, why haven't they enacted one? And isn't there any other "mess" he might have heard about?



American ambassadors, like some members of Congress, are the best money can buy. Under the Nixon Administration, the auctioning of ambassadorships to major campaign contributors has become so blatant that the House Judiciary Committee is investigating whether it ought to be included as part of the possible Bill of Impeachment against the President.

The practice, however, far from being condemned by the Senate, has now been commended by members of its Foreign Relations Committee. Consider the case of

Leonard Kimball Firestone, the Ohio tire tycoon whose nomination as ambassador to Belgium recently sailed through the Senate on a voice vote. Firestone, whose only qualification for the diplomatic post was a term he served as president of the World Affairs Council of Los Angeles, contributed \$114,600—including thirty-three separate donations of \$3,000 each—to Nixon's re-election groups late in 1971. His children and other relatives contributed almost \$140,000 more between 1970 and 1974.

Such spending did not disconcert the Foreign Relations Committee. Rather, Senator John Sparkman of Alabama, acting as chairman in the absence of J.W. Fulbright, commended Firestone for his "public spirited" financial contributions to the political system. "We need a lot of public spirited citizens who will help those people who are worthy and deserving of help," said Sparkman, "and you have done it." He characterized Firestone's contributions as "nicely large, but not overwhelming."

Senator Jacob K. Javits, New York Republican, who received a \$2,500 campaign contribution from Firestone this year, also voted in favor of his confirmation as ambassador. So did Senator Stuart Symington, Missouri Democrat, who complained, "I am sorry to say Mr. Firestone never contributed to any of my campaigns."

Hang in there, Stu. Maybe next year.



A Drug Enforcement Administration report, bearing a "Sensitive" classification, recommends that U.S. narcotics-related intelligence activities be intensified if the Turkish coalition government proceeds with its plans to lift the two-year-old ban on opium production. The report concludes that removal of the ban seems inevitable and that the only possible obstacle is the resistance of Turkish military leaders, who are eager to maintain current levels of U.S. military aid.

The intelligence brief notes that jurisdictional disputes among Turkish narcotics enforcement agencies and deficiencies in training procedures and equipment—despite generous American assistance—limit the effectiveness of the Turkish anti-narcotics program. For example, the thirty-one sedans, forty-two station wagons, four observation trucks, and sixty-one four-wheel drive vehicles provided Turkey under a 1968 Agency for International Development (AID) program—intended for use exclusively in anti-narcotics efforts—seem to have been mysteriously "diverted" for some time. Through AID funds, the United States has also provided Turkish narcotics agencies with weapons, two-way radios, handcuffs, and other law enforcement hardware.

Finally, the report says the Turks are now anxious to buy additional items for surveillance and counter-surveillance. Perhaps the White House has some spare gear left over from its Plumbers Unit. Could Turkish narcotics agents use a red wig?

—Potomac