

The remote Mr. Nixon

By WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY Jr.

On the whole, it is sensible to take the side of Congress against the Executive, up until you come close to spilling over into the kind of chaos mercifully ended by Charles de Gaulle when he filled up the great cavities of the Fourth Republic. We are not near to that kind of anarchy in the United States, and it is therefore the operative presumption that the White House has entirely too much power.

That said, one makes the distinctions. The Congress of the United States has luxuriated in hypocrisy for a very long time. On the one hand it resents characteristic executive usurpation, on the other hand it a) does nothing about it; and b) is always there strengthening the hand of the executive.

The typical bill passed nowadays by Congress gives the President the power to invoke or not to invoke this or that measure; gives him the responsibility for

naming the members of this or the other board; passes sense-of-the-Congress resolutions while ignoring the simpler remedy of decreeing how things shall be.

And of course in matters economic, it is particularly fond of passing lazy inflationary bills and expecting the President to veto them; or, if he fails to do so, contriving somehow to blame the President for the inflation that ensues.

The focus of Congressional resentment, at this writing, is the recent bombing of North Vietnam, and the refusal of Mr. Rogers and Mr. Kissinger to appear before a Senate committee to "explain" the President's decision. All kinds of things are being deduced from the President's recent reclusiveness, but a few critical observations are usually left unmade, to wit:

1) A president who plays with the press, as kittenishly as FDR or JFK is potentially more dangerous than the President who is aloof from the press. Better that the press should be presumptively skeptical of presidential operations, than that it should

treat the President unctuously, in reaction to his charm or openhandedness.

2) What is it expected that Mr. Nixon could have said to the press to explain his decision to proceed with the bombing?

"Mr. President, do you really believe that the carpet bombing of North Vietnam is going to bring Hanoi to the negotiating table with further concessions?"

How would Mr. Nixon have answered that question responsibly?

If he had said that he did believe the bombing would work, he'd have strengthened North Vietnamese resolution to resist the pressure of the bombing.

If he had said that he did not believe the bombing would work, he'd have raised the question why he had resorted to it.

If he had said that he did not know whether the bombing would work, he'd have said in effect that he was indulging a petulance. Since presidential petulance has the firepower of a dozen Hiroshima bombs, it isn't prudent to expect that the public will favor its indulgence.

3) But if he had looked calmly at his

tormentors and said: *Nemo me impune lacessit*, and walked back into the Oval Room, why he'd have been arrested moments later as the murderer in cold blood of Tom Wicker and Anthony Lewis. There are things you simply don't say: even though you give them expression. NO MAN WHO TRIFLES WITH ME DOES SO WITH IMPUNITY.

That is the national motto of Scotland, and it is a maxim appropriate not to Dr. Strangelove, but to Aristides. It is a personalization of the rules of good international behavior which support the peace. But it is uncouth to invoke such truisms, in mid-discipline: and the wise ruler will avoid the temptation to sin, even rhetorically.

It is altogether obvious what Richard Nixon is up to. Those who disagree with his decision are perfectly free to do so. Why should he give them a more elaborated scaffold on which to hang him? He is right, at this moment, to be silent. Who wants a chatty executioner?

The patriot's dilemma

By GARY WILLS

To the anti-American American (and, alas, there is such an animal) Vietnam has been a rich opportunity to be seized. That is why the whole Vietnam venture is a crime.

To the simply chauvinist American, Vietnam is an opportunity lost, a chance not taken, the excuse to bomb another country back into the Stone Age, yet we just bombed it into hard resistance.

The issue is simple, for such men; and difficult only for that rare man, the patriot. The patriot I take to be a man who loves his country too much to feel that it needs flattering; loves it, also, too much to abet its folly; yet, in the end, loves it, and would not stand with its enemies. But there's the irony, and problem. How to separate enemy from friend in this whirligig of undeclared destructiveness? We are not even supposed to hate something coolly named "the other side"—any more than we are expected to love the shifting half-allies of "our" side (Saigon—remember?).

To come right out and call "the other side" our enemy would be to admit we are at war. And that raises problems, doesn't it? Who declared the war, and when? No, it is somebody else's fight (Vietnamized). And we are withdrawn from it—though our bombers still fly, destroy, and are destroyed.

Secretary of State Rogers (remember him?) made a great deal of the admission, during Hanoi's spring offensive, of its own troops presence in South Vietnam. Even though Hanoi never quite denied its presence there; what it denied was the separate existence of South Vietnam. Still, Mr. Rogers scored debating points over that bloody admission of reality. But when are we going to admit the obvious? Twenty years later, as with the recognition that mainland China is China?

It is a hard time for the patriot, who is expected to discount enemy propaganda about bombed hospitals, though our own government first hid, then hedged, then equivocally admitted the propaganda "allegations." At least the other side spoke out, when our own was afraid to.

During the last presidential campaign, it was bootless for the (totally unmemorable) Democratic challenger to call out our electoral champion for debate. Why tarnish one's crown by parley with such a loser? But one must take a different view of the president's subsequent refusal to speak or explain, to Congress or the people—his only voice the replication of bombing noises relayed to us in alien reports. We cannot even know what is done in our name. Nixon would not even do his own lying. Nonentities did it for him. Not

much, here, for a patriot's pride. Not much

return on our bombs, and dollars, and men, and honor. No wonder Nixon is afraid

to face patriotic Americans and tell them the truth.

Letter

Hear from blind

The Oct. 30 issue of *TIME* has Henry Kissinger on the cover with the caption "On The Brink Of Peace." On page 13, we find "The War-Cover Story—At Last, the Shape of a Settlement." Some weeks after the Presidential election, we discover that Kissinger's "Peace is at hand" really was a "Cover story"—one of those fabulous yarns spun by the Nixon Administration to win the vote of simple-minded folk who cannot admit that an American President would deliberately lie to an American citizen.

Last week I heard a fine Christian lady say that Christian ministers should not accuse Mr. Nixon of immoral behavior in renewing the bombing of North Vietnam because "he has more information than ministers."

Obviously, if you've got the proper kind of information, lying and killing does not

violate the Ten Commandments. Besides, winning is the real test of what is right and just, isn't it? As long as you fight to win, what difference does it make how many widows, orphans, prisoners of war and cripples you produce? The killing, the lies, the destruction tells the world how our hearts bleed for peace. And when a Nixon man solemnly declares that North Vietnam will be held responsible for any P.O.W.'s our bombs might kill, there's not a guilty blink.

As everyone knows, the enemy is always responsible, no matter what happens. After all, the credibility of Mr. Nixon and Mr. Kissinger is above reproach, isn't it? Why, they wouldn't lie to anybody unless it was to their personal advantage to do so.

For a people who love to revel in the most grotesque self-deception everything is as it should be. So let's hear it again from the lame, the halt, and the blind (and I do mean BLIND): Four More Years.

Harold Bock
Graduate, Education

