

# The Prose Of Richard M. Nixon

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*"I believe that of all the potential candidates . . . on the American scene today, I have set forth with greater precision and in more detail my views on the major issues than any of the others."*

—Richard M. Nixon, June 9, 1960.

THE TENDENCY to change an opinion is by no means rare among politicians, but the student of Richard Nixon's prose is at first overwhelmed by the number and variety of what appear to be total reversals. The Nixon of 1956, for example, who opposed the suspension of nuclear-weapons tests as "catastrophic nonsense," was followed by the Nixon of 1959, who after tests had been suspended was against the resumption of underground tests. Then on July 23, 1960, Nixon said that he agreed with Governor Rockefeller that underground tests *should* be resumed immediately, although less than a month later, on August 13, he opposed their resumption.

Those who have claimed at various stages in his career that there is a "new" Nixon have certainly been right. For there is always a new Nixon, as he shuttles back and forth between polar positions that seem diametrically opposed. On the subject of economic growth, to cite an-

other instance, the new Nixon of July 23, 1960, said that he agreed with Governor Rockefeller that it is imperative that we accelerate our economic growth rate as promptly as possible to five per cent, although an older Nixon of June 21, 1960, had denounced the "growthmanship" of those who, warning of the gains of the Soviet economy, suggested acceleration to five per cent; it was "no service to America or the free societies," that Nixon had commented, "to overestimate Communist achievements." A somewhat older Nixon of April 24, 1958, however, had declared that the Soviet economy was growing faster than ours and had supported a recommendation that we try to achieve a five per cent rate of growth. Among all these Nixons, we must not overlook the Nixon of 1954, who responded to Adlai Stevenson's warning that the Soviet economy was growing faster than ours with the observation that Stevenson was "spreading pro-Communist propaganda as he has attacked with violent fury the economic system of the United States . . ."

If drastic changes of position are found to occur, then, within the span of a few weeks, it might be supposed that they are tailored to

the expectations of different audiences. Further examination of the texts, however, reveals that the switches from yes to no, from black to white, frequently occur within the confines of a single speech. In Nixon's widely reported address on economic growth in St. Louis this spring, for instance, he came out emphatically both for and against government spending. The first part of the speech, which was highlighted in the press, ridiculed those who assume that "government activity is in itself good." But, Nixon added, getting ready to start off in another direction, "It is just as wrong to assume that government activity is in itself bad." He then proceeded to call for government funds in support of public education, transportation, urban renewal, natural resources, and scientific and technological programs.

## The Short Bridge from (a) to (b)

The standard pattern of Nixon's prose goes something like this: statement of one side of the case (a), followed by a statement of the other side of the case (b). Although the bridge from (a) to (b) is usually the word "but," other familiar locutions such as "at the same time," "on the other hand," and "however" also

enable him to take a position and warn against it at the same time. When he is in good form the transition can be made in a single paragraph or even a single sentence.

As reported in the press, his remarks are easily identifiable as castings from the same mold:

“Vice-President Richard M. Nixon predicted here last night that most of the present population would live to see racial integration accomplished in the nation’s public schools. At the same time, he warned that the most nearly perfect law was only as good as the will of the people to obey it. . . .”—October 19, 1956.

“Vice-President Richard M. Nixon gave qualified endorsement today to Federal assistance for projects aimed at increasing the physical fitness of youth. However, he warned the President’s Council on Youth Fitness against trying to impose ‘a single straightjacket program’ on the country. He said the United States must not emulate the Soviet youth festivals, which, he declared, ‘stress the mass and ignore the individual.’”—September 9, 1957.

“Vice-President Richard M. Nixon warned today that the United States must not become a ‘pale carbon copy of the scientific materialism which the Soviet Union offers to the world.’ At the same time he said the nation must not fail ‘to develop the economic, the psychological and other forces to keep free nations and so-called uncommitted nations from falling under the domination of Communist powers.’”—November 24, 1957.

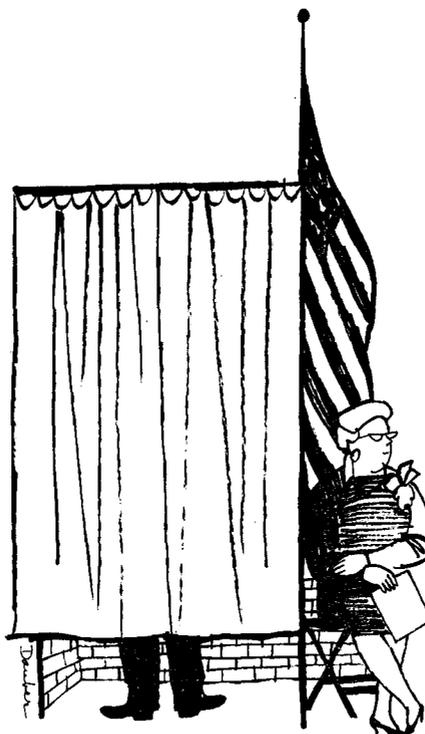
A reporter for the *Christian Science Monitor* recently attempted to convey, in more detail than a press report usually allows, exactly what Nixon was saying on his Southern tour. “The Vice-President,” William H. Stringer wrote, “likely will make these points, though the wording will be stronger or milder, depending on whether he is speaking in North Carolina or in Mississippi: 1. ‘Everyone is aware of my strong convictions on civil rights. I believe in the civil rights plank in the Republican platform.’ This is Mr. Nixon’s opening statement. 2. But the Vice-President will add, ‘I know this is a difficult problem—because I lived in the South . . .’ 3. Then—a debater’s effective technique—Mr. Nixon will

charge that the Democratic civil rights plank is unsound because ‘it promises too much. . . .’ 4. About here, Mr. Nixon will declare—and this brings a strong round of applause—that ‘laws alone are not the answer.’ He will remark that, as he learned in law school, a contract is only as good as the will of the parties to keep it.”

### A Way Must Be Found

When Nixon cannot gracefully avoid making known his choice between (a) and (b), he often provides us with (c), which differs from separately acknowledging each side of a question only in that it acknowledges them both at once.

For when it comes right down to proposing a solution to a problem or an answer to a question, Nixon is the first to acknowledge that A Way Must Be Found. Sometimes this sentiment appears in the form of a call for more research, an expanded program of study, or a pledge to look into the problem. In the Nixon Kit recently sent out from his campaign headquarters in Washington



and entitled “Become Better Acquainted With Richard Nixon,” he is asked whether he favors “any legislation or steps to curb big union monopolies . . . to limit their power, or to apply perhaps anti-trust legislation to big unions such as the Steel

Workers or the Auto Workers.” The Vice-President replies that he does not think “the effect of anti-trust legislation would be to realize the objective which those who favor it would want to realize.”(a) However, there are serious problems “when we have great power in our industrial complex, concentrated power so great that a dispute can go on so long that the public interest is endangered.”(b) Nixon then declares: “I am currently making a study of this concentration of power to see what legislative approaches could be made which would protect the public interest in these disputes from excessive use of power by labor or by management.” (c: A Way Must Be Found.)

Another way to find a way is to call on others to exert leadership or, at the very least, to behave themselves. Again in the Nixon Kit, when asked whether we should leave Southern problems alone or have “more Federal government force,” the candidate answers first that we cannot leave the problem alone, citing the Voting Referee bill (a), adding a warning that there is a “limitation” on government policy (b). Federal law alone will not solve the problem, we are told. After calling for the development of local leadership, Nixon concludes:

“Because, in the final analysis, might I say, this is a domestic problem for us, but there is nothing that harms the United States more abroad than the spectacle of our failing to live up to the precepts of freedom at home [a]. It is not easy, and we must not be intolerant of our friends and neighbors in the South who have this problem [b]. But we must move forward with progress [a]—but with sensible, achievable progress; not with demagoguery [b], but with the hard work and the leadership that the nation and this problem deserve [c].”

### The Straw Men

When Nixon is called upon to explain an action or defend a policy from which he cannot disengage himself merely by pointing out that A Way Must Be Found, he frequently responds by providing a ringing answer, directly and with no hint of hesitation, to a question that has not been asked or, then again, by reject-

ing a proposal that has never even been made.

In 1956 Nixon converted Adlai Stevenson's proposal for a cessation of nuclear testing into a proposal for unilateral disarmament and went on to let the American people know exactly what he thought of the proposal Stevenson had not made. "We're fortunate that we have a President of the United States who has no greater desire than to remove the threat of H-bomb or any kind of war from the face of the earth," Nixon told a campaign audience in Pennsylvania, "but we're also fortunate that we have a President of the United States who isn't a sucker and who isn't going to be made one and who says we will not disarm unless we have inspection that proves our potential enemies are doing so also."

This spring after the collapse of the summit conference, when the Senate Foreign Relations Committee announced its intention to investigate the circumstances surrounding the handling of the U-2 incident, Nixon responded in much the same manner: "Feeling confident the public is behind him," the *Wall Street Journal* reported, "Mr. Nixon began at Buffalo yesterday to attack the administration's critics as people who would abandon Berlin to the Reds and who want the U.S., by restricting its intelligence activities, to remain ignorant of Soviet military power."

**T**HE ever-new Nixon rarely if ever runs against his actual opponent. "I welcome the opposition of the PAC with its Communist principles and its huge slush fund," Nixon announced in his 1946 campaign. "We welcome the opposition of the Communist Party in this campaign—and we are going to beat them; no question about it," he told a Montana audience in 1954.

The identification of his opponents with Communism is generally considered to be a chapter from Nixon's past. In not very subtle ways, however, he has managed to assert throughout the last two years that those who have criticized him or the Eisenhower administration or the Republican Party on matters ranging from the economy to national defense have not in fact attacked those policies but have attacked



America itself. The implication is either that they have suggested we adopt a Communist system, or, when this won't do, that they have not criticized a policy but a basic American institution. "It's time to stop selling America short" appears to be the grand theme of his campaign for the Presidency, suggesting as it does some unspecified deficiency of patriotism in his opponents.

Take the matter of economic growth. "The critics," Nixon declared this spring, during his brief respite from being one of them, "argue that if we would just adopt their pet philosophy we too would grow like the Soviets." He went on to suggest that they were in some way urging us to emulate the Communists. The same association occurred a few weeks later in Nixon's acceptance speech when he declared: "At a time when the Communists have found it necessary to turn to decentralization of their economy and to turn to the use of individual incentive to increase productivity, at a time, in other words, when they are turning our way, I say we must and we will not make the mistake of turning their way."

Refusal to answer a question while setting up a straw man to attack instead is a not uncommon device of debating. But in Nixon's prose the straw man emerges as more than a debating device: it is an innate feature of his thinking. Nixon appar-

ently finds it almost impossible to make a statement that is *not*, in some manner, an argument. Ideas never quite exist for him until they have been pitted against something else—an extreme danger, a radically different point of view, or a potential attack from some sinister quarter. He will urge boys and girls to read books in *This Week* magazine because the Communists are "waging an all-out war for men's minds" and knowledge "is the key to survival." If he discusses traffic deaths before a Safety Council meeting, he will claim that the highway toll puts the American system on trial. In urging his followers to be more judicious in their charges of subversion against others, he will argue that the reason is that we must be fair, and add that being fair will help us to catch more Communists. Books, death, and justice cannot quite stand on their own as matters of serious concern.

When Nixon sets forth his views, the alternative is nearly always perdition, and he spends a great deal of his time describing in fearsome detail what he does not think, putting it in such a way that no one else could possibly have thought it. Unreal people and unreal situations are regularly conjured up against which to contrast what he is about to say. "There are those . . .," "Some of you may say," "I have heard it said . . .," Nixon confides. "As a

matter of fact," Nixon told a television audience before whom he was discussing McCarthyism in 1954, "I heard people say, 'After all, they are a bunch of rats. What we ought to do is go out and shoot them.' Well, I agree they are a bunch of rats [a], but just remember this. When you go out to shoot rats you have to shoot straight [b], because when you shoot wildly . . ."

Sometimes the straw men come in pairs, and he then rejects both of them, thus placing himself comfortably in the middle. His appeal this fall, we learned not long ago, will be to "positive, progressive conservatism." What is that? It is reported to be a "philosophy that rejects the all-out programs of the Left and the negativism of the far Right without ignoring or failing to deal with genuine social and economic problems."

### The Slippery Would-Have-Been

Another technique Nixon has perfected for winning fights against phantoms is to tell us what would have been or what might still be—if we fail to heed his warning. "I have just been thinking what would have happened if Mr. Stevenson had been President for the last three years," he told an audience in 1956. "We of course do not know the answer to that question, but of these principles I am sure: indecision, weakness, retreat, and surrender do not bring peace in dealing with dictatorial, aggressive Communism." Here is the Would-Have-Been in its purest form.

And just as the alternative in this case to a Republican victory would have been, once again, an advance for international Communism, so in defending his part in the January steel-strike settlement against charges that it was an inflationary solution, he argued that the alternative would have been nothing less than the end of the free-enterprise system. "The price the union would have insisted upon would inevitably have gone up rather than down," Nixon explained, and the government would have been forced to intervene. But ". . . any government-imposed settlement that the Congress would have brought about through compulsory arbitration, plant seizure or some other government device, would have been higher than the one

agreed upon at this point. . . . the result would not only have been a government-imposed settlement of this dispute but a real possibility of the enactment of permanent legislation which would have provided for some form of government-imposed compulsory arbitration in all major labor disputes. . . . government arbitration means government wage fixing and . . . government wage fixing inevitably means government price fixing. Once we get into this vicious circle not only collective bargaining but the productive private enterprise system, as we know it, is doomed."

This technique has recently been applied even to the matter of Federal contributions to teachers' salaries: school buildings are apparently safe enough, but if one dollar of Federal funds had gone to teachers, he cautions, it would have been the end of educational freedom in our country.

Nixon's obsession with the ruinous possibilities that gape on either side



has apparently played a part in making him into a stand-patter by default, scarcely a statesman who moves toward his goals one step at a time.

### Character References

One goal he has steadily if somewhat erratically pursued, however, is the constant retouching of his own public image. NIXON'S AIM: TO PORTRAY HIMSELF AS A REGULAR GUY, a New York *Herald Tribune* headline said this summer. NIXON BUILDS A 'NICE GUY' ROLE, as the *Times* put it. HE'LL

CAMPAIGN AS MAN TO STAND UP TO SOVIET AMID RISING TENSION, the *Wall Street Journal* revealed. What does this latter role mean? "If East-West tensions continue high. . . ." the *Journal* reports, "and Americans seem disposed to stand up to Premier Khrushchev, the Vice-President will picture himself as a man who knows how to talk tough to the Russian boss and win his respect with firmness."

Foremost among the roles that Nixon has consciously assumed is that of statesman-companion to the great. In 1955, for example, Nixon boasted that he had "visited thirty countries, meeting two emperors, three kings, seventeen presidents, six prime ministers, and two governor generals." He has added to his collection since then, and he informed an interviewer this spring that he has now had discussions with "thirty-five presidents, nine prime ministers, five kings, two emperors, and the Shah of Iran."

By means of this laundry-list approach to foreign policy Nixon apparently aims to achieve an aura of leadership by association, and he has repeatedly undertaken to answer questions on foreign affairs in terms of his special understanding of the world figures involved. To be sure, it has been a year since he set out to explain the true attitude of the underprivileged peoples toward freedom by saying, "As Mr. Castro told me . . ."

It is characteristic that the case for Nixon's expertise on foreign affairs is not based on the validity of his past judgments. The same man who called for intervention in Indo-China at the time of Dienbienphu and opposed any political settlement based on accepting the division of either Indo-China or Korea was later able to boast that thanks to the Eisenhower administration, we had "not only been gotten out of one war, we had been kept out of others." All we are told is that he has gained invaluable experience the past seven and a half years just by being around with a lot of important people.

As a further help to the voters in appraising his qualifications, Nixon modestly offers his own character reference: he is the opposite of a politician. "Politics" is always a bad word in his vocabulary, and he

regularly calls attention to the political bravery of the utterance he is making as well as the nonpolitical nature of his views. This role is put to two very practical purposes. One is to justify his position by indicating that the alternative would be the "political" and thereby self-serving course to take. "The usual political thing to do when charges are made against you," Nixon began his famous "Checkers" address in 1952, "is to either ignore them or deny them without giving details." Having deprecated the usual political thing, he proceeded to improve on it by ignoring the pertinent charge while inventing others that he denied in copious detail.

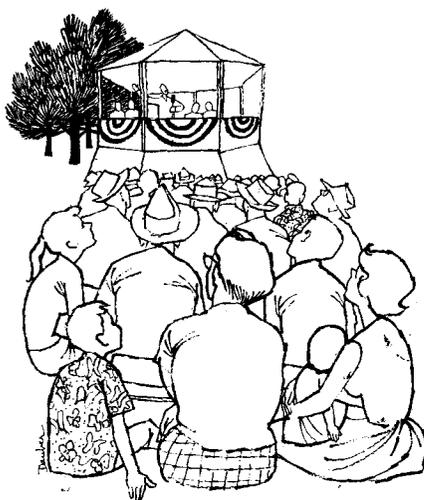
Another proof of his high-minded motivations was offered when he told David Susskind and a large television audience about his famous kitchen debate in Moscow. Had he "talked back in kind" to Khrushchev in the kitchen, Nixon said, it would "have created an incident which might have built me up, but it certainly, might I say, would not have been in the best interests of the United States." It just showed, Nixon said, what "a man in public life must do at times." This was a curious statement in view of the fact that a photograph of Nixon poking his finger in what looks like righteous indignation at Khrushchev's lapel and captioned with a stern comment adorns nearly all of Nixon's political literature in this campaign. It becomes even more curious when we consider that the stern comment in the caption was not actually spoken in the course of the debate at all.

### The Poor Man's Adlai

In the constant retouching of his image, Nixon frequently draws inspiration from other public figures. Among these figures, oddly enough, the one Nixon has copied most assiduously is Adlai Stevenson, whom Nixon has variously described as "Adlai the Appeaser" and "a man of integrity and character." Despite the violence of his attacks on him, there is, in Nixon's prose, evidence both of cribbing from Stevenson and of an attempt to approximate Stevenson's public image—at least as Nixon understands it.

Nixon's reference to "pockets of poverty" in 1956, for example,

prompted a *New York Times* correspondent to note that the phrase was originally Stevenson's and that, in fact, Nixon's program for social and economic reforms seemed "to coincide with Mr. Stevenson's 'new America.'" At the same time, Nixon was able to say of Stevenson's "new America" proposals that "His intemperate attacks on the American economy, in which he has pictured us as a nation ridden with poverty and injustice, is grist for the propaganda mills of those who are trying to tell the uncommitted peoples of the world that their best hope for a better way of life lies in turning to-



ward Communism rather than freedom." Things are bad(a). But saying so harms us abroad(b).

Nixon is not, of course, the only politician who has adopted the jargon of decision, sacrifice, crisis, and greatness. But in his appropriation of phrases and affectations—down to the inevitable high-minded quotation from Woodrow Wilson—he displays an unflinching instinct for the windier, more pompous aspects of Stevenson's rhetoric. And Nixon presents himself to us now in the role of a humble, self-effacing man who is only in all this to answer a great summons and who is sorely troubled by a sense of personal unworthiness. "My only prayer as I stand here is that in the months ahead I may be in some way worthy . . .," he confessed to his convention audience. ". . . It would be difficult for any man to say that he was qualified . . .," he began his peroration, having already declared, in Stevensonian rhythms: "Let me tell you

something of the goal of this better America toward which we will strive. In this America . . ."

### Interchangeable Parts

There can be no question about Nixon's adroitness at mastering the various roles he assumes. An off-the-cuff television appearance, "creating an illusion of intimacy so desirable to winning the viewers," as the *New York Times* quoted him, takes hours of preparation, and he implied that "very little done or said could be termed genuinely impromptu." The record bears out this observation and suggests a few more.

The extent to which Nixon memorizes his lines has never been fully appreciated. The "Checkers" speech is a case in point. Even though it was billed and reviewed as a spontaneous expression based on a few notes, texts of whistle-stop speeches are extant in which he declaimed some of the same paragraphs and phrases—almost verbatim—that were to be heard on the nation-wide broadcast.

In his Presidential campaign he has been making full use of his extensive collection of interchangeable, pre-tested paragraphs. Along with the "Don't Sell America Short" theme, for example, he was reported by Chalmers Roberts in the *Washington Post* to be getting "a good response with a line he used in the 1958 Congressional campaign: 'You can have the best Social Security, the best medical care, the best education in the world but it won't do you much good if you're not around to enjoy it.'" This piece is at least as old as the 1954 Congressional campaign, although its meaning has not become much clearer with the passing of time. For the stand-bys of Nixon's repertory are usually those most remote from the practical concerns of politics. They are his inspirational set pieces, some of which Nixon repeated to such excess in 1956 that reporters traveling with him took to referring to each paragraph by name. The part about President Eisenhower being a man you could hold up to your children thus became the "weight-lifting" theme.

When called upon to give his views on the struggle between East and West, Nixon has relied

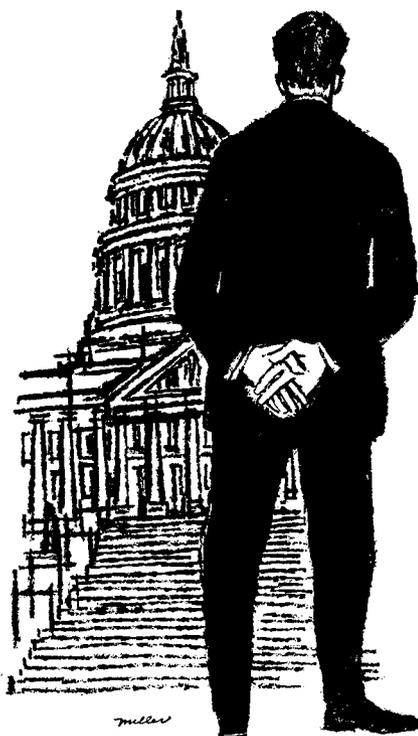
on a number of such set pieces. One of them has turned up in innumerable speeches, at a post-convention interview, and in the middle of the acceptance speech: "Let us speak less of the threat of Communism and more of the promise of freedom," it goes in one version (London Guildhall, 1958); "Let us adopt as our primary objective not the defeat of Communism but the victory of plenty over want, of health over disease, of freedom over tyranny." Dressed up for the acceptance speech it reads: "our answer to the threat of the Communist Revolution is renewed devotion to the great ideals of the American Revolution . . . let the victory we seek be not victory over any other nation or any other people. Let it be the victory of freedom over tyranny, of plenty over hunger, of health over disease in every country of the world." In Moscow, Nixon tactfully left out the part about the two revolutions and the victory of freedom but retained the general form: "Let us work for victory not in war but for the victory of plenty over poverty, of health over disease, of understanding over ignorance, wherever they exist in the world."

WHATEVER anyone else may think about Nixon's tendency to repeat himself, Nikita Khrushchev was apparently not much impressed in the extraordinarily overrated "kitchen debate" when Nixon continued to respond to the Soviet leader's harassment with a vigorous call for "a free exchange of ideas." "The Americans," Khrushchev said with a sneer, "have created their own image of the Soviet man and think he is as you want him to be. But he is not as you think. You think the Russian people will be dumbfounded to see these things, but the fact is that newly built Russian houses have all this equipment right now. Moreover, all you have to do to get a house is to be born in the Soviet Union. You are entitled to housing. I was born in the Soviet Union. So I have a right to a house. In America if you don't have a dollar—you have the right to choose between sleeping in a house or on the pavement. Yet you say that we are slaves of Communism." This tirade was omitted in Nixon's book, and so was the

reply: "I appreciate that you are very articulate and energetic."

### Finding the Words

If his stock of memorized lines did not serve him well in the Russian kitchen, Nixon does not seem to have lost confidence in their usefulness for addressing the American people. His acceptance speech was largely a pastiche of the same set pieces he has counted on to communicate his deepest convictions to the Russians, the British, and the Republicans of Milwaukee. Although he told reporters that he had been meditating and reading philosophy for a week in preparation for the big event, the



speech itself was a recital of paragraphs used on countless occasions and a compendium of nearly all his most familiar rhetorical devices:

¶ There was the nonpolitical man responding to the Democratic program with a bold refutation of a straw man: "what should our answer be? And some might say, why, do as they do. Outpromise them, because that's the only way to win. . . . I serve notice here and now that whatever the political consequences, we are not going to try to outpromise our opponents in this campaign."

¶ There was the predictable contradiction between this declaration and what followed: a promise of higher wages, increased health pro-

tection for the aged, better education and schools, prosperity for the farmer, support for the scientists, further development of natural resources, and "the greatest progress in human rights since the days of Lincoln."

¶ There was the carefully planted hedge about how these promised programs were to be achieved: "A government has a role and a very important one [a], but the role of government is not to take responsibility from the people but to put responsibility on them, [b] It is not to dictate to the people but to encourage and stimulate the creative productivity of 180,000,000 free Americans. That is the way to progress in America. [c]"

¶ There was the conversion of the critics of Republican policy into critics of the country itself who "refuse to see what is right about America."

¶ There was the list of faraway places where the itinerant statesman had been getting on-the-job training: "in the Kremlin . . . in Caracas . . . in Jakarta . . . in Bogotá . . . in Warsaw."

¶ There was the phrase borrowed straight from Stevenson about a "time for greatness."

¶ There was an old inspirational set piece: "One hundred years ago in this city Abraham Lincoln was nominated for President of the United States. The problems which will confront our next President will be even greater than those that confronted him. The question then was freedom for the slaves and survival of the nation. The question now is freedom for all mankind and the survival of civilization . . ."

("An even greater challenge confronts the Republican Party and the nation today than was the case in 1860. The issue in Lincoln's day was freedom for the slaves and the survival of the nation. But the issue today is, literally, freedom for all mankind—and the survival of civilization." Milwaukee, February 8, 1960.)

¶ There was Nixon's own commentary on the speech and his attitude toward it, again at variance with the evidence of the text. ". . . never have I found it more difficult to find the words," he told his audience.

There was, in short, Nixon.



# The Cornerstone of Europe

EDMOND TAYLOR

“HERE is the ever-restless sea; here is the ever-changing sky; and here is the granite of Brittany—which never changes.”

This fragment of noble prose was uttered by President Charles de Gaulle—who else could have said it?—during his recent tour of Brittany. The words were spoken on the Isle of Sein, a foam-flecked reef off the tip of the peninsula that is one of the shrines of the Gaullist faith; in June, 1940, 120 local sailors and fishermen, responding to de Gaulle’s first radio appeal, put out from Sein in their frail craft for England.

AT HIS press conference on September 5, de Gaulle spoke mostly of the storms that are gathering in the international and particularly in the interallied areas. The long soliloquy was not one of de Gaulle’s most effective performances; at moments it sounded like a debate between the archaic and the modern elements in his intensely personal philosophy of history, but to an objective listener it seemed to offer little justification for some of the harsh European comments that have been made upon it. The general’s comments on the problem of achieving European unity were not only sober but on the whole constructive. If de Gaulle seemed to imply that disagreement with France’s western partners was

inevitable, “. . . there is no question of parting one from another,” he said, “for never has the Atlantic Alliance been as profoundly needed.” The warmth and vigor of his voice as he spoke these words contrasted with his somewhat mechanical delivery when he reiterated long-standing French complaints about the way NATO has been functioning.

The real heart of the tension developing between France and its allies—not to mention its African protégés—is the Algerian question, particularly the crucial issue of a cease-fire in Algeria. In his press conference the general was careful to avoid slamming the door on the possibility of a peaceful solution to the Algerian rebellion, and in several of his Brittany speeches he seemed to be hinting at French readiness to accept an informal truce in Algeria that might pave the way for resumption of the cease-fire talks with the F.L.N. Again and again, de Gaulle declared, there was only one condition that France insisted on before renewing talks with the Algerian nationalists: that they “leave their knife in the cloakroom.”

During his tour of Brittany de Gaulle also went further than ever before toward meeting one of the essential Algerian demands: that Algerians have an adequate voice in determining the basis and the mechanism of the self-determination ref-

erendum he offered them last year. “France invites all factions without exception to come and discuss both the preparation of the referendum and afterwards the organization of Algeria,” the general said at Rennes.

But in the kind of war, mainly based on terrorism, that is being fought in Algeria, a truce or cease-fire leaving in suspense such political problems as the policing of an eventual plebiscite would be advantageous to the French. At least the F.L.N. leaders think it would. Therefore they are now demanding international guaranties, preferably under U.N. auspices, both for the cease-fire arrangements and for the actual plebiscite. This demand de Gaulle totally rejects.

### Bourguiba’s Brinkmanship

One of his reasons for ruling out U.N. intervention in Algeria is the likelihood that accepting U.N. “interference” would produce a French military revolt in Algeria and the overthrow of his régime. A number of French liberals who formerly supported de Gaulle now say that his apparent failure to impose unquestioning discipline on the army is a serious reflection upon his leadership. On the other hand it seems something of a tribute to his leadership that less than two and a half years after the military and nationalist *coup d’état* that brought him to power in the name of *l’Algérie française*, he can publicly commit himself—as he did in his press conference—to a self-governing *Algérie algérienne*, linked to France by unspecified ties, without provoking anything worse than mild grumbling from the professional soldiers who during the last six years have been risking their lives in Algeria. In time he can undoubtedly lead the French Army and the European settlers in Algeria much further along the road of decolonization, as he has already led his countrymen along that same road in Black Africa.

The tragedy is that time appears to be running out faster than de Gaulle or anyone else expected. According to reliable reports from Tunisia, President Habib Bourguiba, the unnamed but unmistakable target of de Gaulle’s sharpest thrusts during his press conference, now ac-