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VIII

Leaders and Leadership
Of Presidents and Personages

~~"The Choice and Master Spirits of This Age."
Julius Caesar, III, 1.~~

I was listening to Herbert Hoover make a speech, out under the trees in the Bohemian Grove. In the background near me was a young Armenian. If I ever saw adoration in a man's eyes, I saw it then. He was a waiter, working for a prosperous Armenian who dropped all his business affairs each year and came up to the Grove to take care of the Chief, and who did so because he believed, no doubt correctly, that neither he nor his family would be alive if it had not been for Hoover's relief efforts after the first war. There was a large section of the American public that thus revered Herbert Hoover. The rest of the public did not really begin to understand him until near the end.

Hoover was the first of a series of presidents that I had the privilege of serving in one way or another. And he was a fellow engineer, so we had a firm meeting ground.

He was a great organizer, and a go-getter in the best sense. But he was no politician as the word is usually understood, even although he became president. I think this

Mitchell
was not because he failed to grasp the politician's arts; he just disdained them. Those arts can be genuine, legitimate, and essential for the workings of a democratic system. But they can also be despicable. There is no more sordid chapter than the attacks on Herbert Hoover by ~~Mitchell~~ *Michelson* during the 1932 campaign. I witnessed a bit of its effect when I found myself, during the war, reporting for a time, on quite different bases, to both Hoover and Roosevelt, and ~~it strongly influenced my estimates of the latter for I never understood how he could let such scurrilous attacks occur.~~ *for it still affected Hoover's attitude* It also furnished moments when I had to be sure I remembered which one I was with.

Hoover's experience of being unfairly attacked in a cruel manner, and Roosevelt's failure to work things out with him during the interregnum, did great harm to the American people. One wonders how long it will take the public to become sufficiently perceptive so that political maneuvers that shock our sense of decency, or that injure our true interests, will certainly backfire. This sounds like a utopian ideal. I am not so sure about that; the American public are not quite as dense as they are often assumed to be, and I have seen backfires recently. At least I can testify that there is more ~~decency~~ decency in the political scene than there was when Hoover was reviled. I suspect that part of this is due to the fact that the public can read character in faces, on the TV screen, much more accurately than they are given credit for.

Hoover had none of the charm of Roosevelt or Churchill, none of the engaging wit of Lovett or Acheson. He was deep

rather than brilliant, even although his failure to grasp economic trends as the whole country went beserk in 1929 furnished the saddest chapter in his remarkable career. He wasn't alone. Roosevelt did not understand, either. Witness the series of tax increases throughout the great depression, when even a little economics called for just the opposite. How is it possible for a man such as Hoover to understand the ways of

business - for he did and made a fortune quite legitimately by his efforts in that field - and fail to understand mass psychology and the vagaries of the public? How could he grasp so well the distress of millions after World War I and do something about it in magnificent fashion, and fail to ^{meet} see the plight of the bonus marchers? No one has yet explained it, and it should be done, for we could all learn much if we could see why the gap was present.

One time I was fishing for bass with him, sitting in a rowboat on a pond, dangling lines over the side. Neither of us cared for that sort of fishing, but we had to be courteous to our host, who thought we liked it. We had not had a bite for an hour or so, and he was giving me a lecture on economics. It was a good lecture, although the economics he expounded was obsolescent. He was in the middle of a sentence when a bass struck his line. He got the fish under control, and finished the sentence. No one else I ever knew would do that.

He was a keen fisherman, and he wanted to match his wits against the fish. Why do men like to fish? Many, undoubtedly, do ~~so~~ because they grasp the opportunity to relax and enjoy

the beauty of nature. This has never been well expounded in the mountain of books on fishing, except by Earl Grey, and he did it so magnificently that there is no need for anyone else to try. Still I think there are few who fish for that reason. I know that when I am working up a nice hole in a brook a bird would have to peck me on the ear to get my attention, and a spray of blossoms would distract me only if it entangled my dry fly. We can also disregard those fishermen who try to make a contest out of it, or who find their joy in prancing into camp with a heavy basket; John Buchan has pretty well taken care of their motivations. My guess is that most men that like to fish do so because they want to demonstrate to themselves that they can think like a fish, even although many generations have passed since this was an essential element of survival. And I think Herbert Hoover was thus motivated. Once a thunder shower interrupted our attention to an attractive brook and we sought refuge for an hour on an abandoned piazza. He told me some fascinating yarns about his early days as a mining engineer, in Burma and elsewhere. But I do not remember that he mentioned a bird or a flower, or remarked on the pattern of drops on the quiet surface of the brook.

The way in which I met him is revealing. We were guests of William Cameron Forbes on Naushon Island. And, to present

all the implications I need to digress to write something about Cam Forbes, who was one of the last of the old tribe of Boston Brahmins.

That tribe was descended from pioneers, those who sent the Clipper ships to China and the Gold Coast of California, or who brought rum from the West Indies. Some of these old timers were slavers, but that aspect of their activities was not ^{admitted} admitted. Cam's father was one of the organizers of American Telephone and Telegraph Company, and Cam never let anyone forget it. He himself had been Governor of the Philippine Islands and he never let anyone forget that either.

The tribe felt it had the right, and also the duty, to run everything in sight. There were of course members of the tribe who had no such urge, and some who were bewildered, as John P. Marquand, and to some extent Cleveland Amory, have made clear. But I am concerned with those who felt strongly that they should carry on in the spirit of their ancestors, even although some of the ancestors had not enhanced the public's welfare appreciably. They accepted outsiders, whose ancestors had not done anything striking, into their circle, but only after testing them to be sure they should not be thrust into outer darkness.

Now Cam was the monarch of Naushon Island, the sole trustee, who paid the bills. And all the nephews and

nieces and so on kowtowed or kept out of his way. He was Chairman of the Board when I joined the Carnegie Institution of Washington, and a minor battle was needed before it became clear who was running the show. I remember one session of the Executive Committee, where I was trying to settle a matter of policy, and Cam took up all the meeting criticizing the English in my report. Fortunately I was sitting beside Walter Gifford, then President of A. T. & T., and as my steam pressure was reaching the explosion point, he whispered in my ear, "Keep your shirt on, Van; he does the same thing to me."

But don't let me give the wrong impression; Cam had skills, and he developed them. He could work a sailboat out of a crowded anchorage, with a head wind and a stiff breeze, and he could do it far better than I could, as I know, for I tended backstays for him and got well soaked in the process. He kept a fine stable of horses, played match polo until he was sixty, furnished mounts to the Harvard Polo Team. At his place in Georgia he drove a coach and four through narrow crooked roads. He did this to show me he could, and to impress upon me that I could not. On that occasion I had a fortunate break. Returning from a ride, my wife and Cam went into the gardens, and I rode back to the stables with the Irish stablekeeper. On

the way back to the stable the whole equipage became thoroughly messed up, horses all tangled up in the harnesses, facing the wrong way, rearing and snorting. I think a bee bit a horse. I stood watch to warn if Cam approached while the stablekeeper unsnarled. The next morning Cam and I went to the stables, the Irishman paraded the horses, and one had a yellow chafe mark on his flank. When Cam yelled, "What's that?" I remarked quietly, "I wondered what that was when we were down here yesterday morning." Cam was not easily fooled, but I took him in that time. I also acquired an Irish friend for life. That friendship saved me many a grief; when Cam would put me on one of his smart polo ponies, I trust just under the mistaken impression that I could ride a horse, and not under some impulse to see me dumped in the bushes.

Cam and I would come out of the Manor to where the Irishman was holding two beautiful mounts. I would greet him formally, look at the scenery, and say softly, "What am I up against?" The reply would be likely to be, "For God's sake don't stick your foot out where this nag can see it." One time we were out on a sheep drive, a young member of the clan was having trouble, his mount was rearing, coming down stiff legged, and looked as though he might bolt. Cam said, "Doctor, I wish you would take that

boy's horse, I am afraid he will get hurt." Whether he worried about the boy or the horse I do not know. ^{He certainly didn't worry about me.} So I said, "Very good, Governor" and stopped by the Irishman for a moment, who said, "The horse is all right, he just has a sore mouth." So I told the boy the Governor wanted us to exchange horses. "I don't wanna change horses." "Get off that horse, you young squirt, before I pull you off." So I put him aboard my mount, headed his toward a clump of bushes so that he would at least have to turn before bolting, and swung into the saddle. Nothing happened. I rode him the rest of the day, guiding him by knee and voice, and I never rode a better behaved horse. I never once touched the bit to his mouth.

So, it was in the Manor House at Naushon that Herbert Hoover and I met. It was a Sunday morning, everyone else had gone to church; I was sitting on the piazza watching the gulls, and Hoover was in the front room writing a speech. After a while he came out and said to me that he had to give that speech the next day, there was something wrong with the last part, and would I look it over and tell him what caused the disquiet. After reading the speech carefully, I did make a suggestion. He agreed, and the speech was fixed. But no man with an inflated ego ever does that sort of thing with a younger man, and very few men

who have held the greatest posts in the country would come anywhere near it. I promptly joined the ranks of the considerable company who were proud to call him "Chief."

The other incident was still more revealing. Hoover and I were chatting in a room of the Manor, probably called the parlor. Cam came in, and, in my presence, proceeded to take Hoover to task for violating one of Cam's many rules, and smoking in the wrong room. Whereupon he left. I was obviously wishing there were a trap door I could drop through, and could not get out a word. But Hoover said "Forget it. We both know the old man. And he can't help it." It has been said that Hoover was not a keen judge of his fellowmen. He certainly was in that instance. For one thing he created in me a devotion which never left me.

So much has been written about Franklin Roosevelt that I hesitate to add. But there are one or two incidents that illuminate an aspect of his character which has received little attention. He was a master of the dramatic at times, but he was also, responsibilities aside, essentially simple in his relations with friends and family.

My wife and I went to a state dinner for the Queen of Holland. The gold service was out, and all the uniforms were spick and span and the gowns were of course stunning, although I cannot remember ever having been personally stunned by a gown. There were about forty couples and a great oval table. As the dinner ended Mrs. Roosevelt attempted to break it up. But the President was deeply involved in discussion with the two ladies at his sides. Did she call a waiter and send a message? Not at all. She said, loudly enough to penetrate the conversation, "Yoo hoo, Franklin," and that did it.

The ladies left, and the men gathered in knots of six or eight. The group around the President kept changing, for no one would appear to monopolize that position. Then the President started to rise. There was complete silence, all came to attention, and the group about him drew back. He slowly snapped the iron braces into position on his legs, braced himself on the arms of the chair, slowly rose, and then took the arm of his aide and withdrew. Here was the most powerful man in the world, surrounded by powerful men, with a severe physical handicap which he could disregard, or which he could use to give an unequalled dramatic touch. Did he do it that way on purpose? Of course he did. Why not?

One time, when the submarine war on shipping was critical, but the tide was beginning to turn because of the advent of two new antisubmarine weapons, one British and one American, I was reporting to him on the subject, and was answering his questions, which were very much to the point. The door of his office opened, and in came Mrs. Roosevelt who had been away on a short trip. She went around behind his chair, kissed him, greeted me by my nickname (which nearly everyone uses, presumably because they cannot pronounce my full name), sat down across the room and said, "Go ahead, Franklin, we have plenty of time." So we continued our discussion. Once in a while she would ask a question, and the President would turn and explain the point to her. ~~I had seen just a bit of a similar wholesome relation, between Winston Churchill and his lady.~~ And I came out wondering if people would ever believe that great men, carrying enormous burdens, would thus exemplify what is most heartening, and least recognized, in happy relations between husband and wife. The greater men are, I am convinced, greater in the best sense, the more simple are their relations likely to be, the more wholesome, in their homes and with their real friends.

This quality in President Roosevelt -- this quality of warm heartedness -- ran through other experiences that I knew about. For instance, one time well along in the war, Niels Bohr, the great Danish physicist who was in this country doing what he could to help with the scientific war effort, got the idea that he must see the President about some plan that he had for the end of the war and the peace terms. He explained it to Tolman and Tolman told me the problem he had before him. The trouble was that, while Bohr could discuss physics with physicists in masterly fashion, when he stepped out of his normal field he was very hard to follow. I saw the President one day and I said to him, "I would appreciate it, Mr. President, if you would see Professor Bohr for a few minutes." I told him who he was, and what an eminent scientist he was. I said, "He is very anxious to see you and I think it would help toward good will if you would personally talk to him." The President said, "What's he want to see me about?" And I said, "He has a plan regarding ending the war, and peace terms." He said, "Do you think I will be able to understand him?" And I said, "No, I do not think you probably will." He said, "Never mind, bring him in." I did and Bohr said his say and went away happy. I feel sure the President treated him with the utmost courtesy. I do not

think that the President really understood him at all, but, with all the load he carried, the President had time and energy for the proper friendly gesture.

I think of another incident, trivial in its way but with a lot of meaning for me. One of the troubles with life in Washington during the war was that air-conditioning raised the very devil with anyone who had to move about the city. I had offices in the Joint Chiefs' building and in the Carnegie Institution of Washington building; I was often in the Pentagon, sometimes up on the Hill; and O.S.R.D. was spread through several buildings -- with the result that I was likely to be all over the city. When I was, I was in and out of air-conditioning -- out into 110-degree heat in a car, and in to 70 degrees in an office -- and it was **very** trying indeed. I do not think enough attention is paid to this. It seems to me it puts quite a strain on the human system to make that kind of abrupt transition a dozen times a day.

One day I was due at the White House, and I got so busy that I did not realize, until it was too late, that I had thoroughly sweated through the summer suit I had on. It was a queer white thing, one of those wrinkled summer suits -- seersucker. By the time I started for the White

House, I suddenly realized that I was pretty damp and ruffled. But I went right ahead, and when I went in to see F.D.R., he took a good look at me, and got a great laugh out of the fact that I was thoroughly soaked. Then he said, "How do you like the temperature in here?" "Since you ask me, Mr. President" I said "I think it is too damned cold." "Is it?" said he. "Yes," I said, "you freeze your visitors."

A few weeks later I went again to see him, and his first words were, "Well, Van, how do you like the temperature in here now?" The remarkable thing about this is that F.D.R., with all that he had on his mind at that time, could be enough concerned with how he handled his visitors to change the temperature in his quarters. He was a kindly individual at heart, even if he did at times undoubtedly put a subordinate on the spot for the fun of it.

A far cry, but consistent in character, is another incident. During the development of the atomic bomb, I reported regularly to the President, told him of the schedule on the bomb, our estimates of enemy progress, the costs of the program, and so on. Of course I never told him that we were sure we could produce it, and I never told him that we were sure that we could stick to the schedule. One day I said to him, "You know, Sir, if

we do not get this thing by the end of the war, we may be in a tough spot" having in mind that it would be fully as serious for him as for me. "Well," he said, "We must get it, because when we come to the end of the war, the country will relax, as it did at the end of the first war; if the program is continued at all, it will be cut way back." And he said, "If this bomb is going to be what you tell me, it had better come into existence in our hands." Now I am not quoting him verbatim, and I made no record of that conversation, but I am sure that was the general tenor of it. F.D.R. took quite a chance in backing me up, and in backing up the whole Manhattan District program, for that matter. But I think it is obvious he also considered the bomb to be inevitable at some time, and that for the sake of the free world it must certainly appear in our hands, and not in hostile hands. I still shudder when I think what sort of a world it would have been if we had quit, and Russia had completed the job.

I learned early that, when the President asked me a question I had better answer it. One day he asked me about a matter that was way out of my field, and I tried to tell him so. All I got was, "Never mind that, you answer my question." So I said, "Yes, Sir," and I did.

I suppose he did this with many of his visitors and that this was an effective, but dangerous, way of learning what was going on. Every president needs some way of finding out about things, in addition to official channels, a kennel of bird dogs or the equivalent. Roosevelt had many such informal channels, Truman a few and rather faulty ones. Eisenhower, unfortunately, had very few, and we all suffered a bit from that lack.

My relations to President Roosevelt on scientific and technical subjects were primarily as an intermediary. If he asked me a question about weapons or something of the sort, I would answer it on the spot to the best of my ability. Then I would turn to the best experts on that particular question, ask them to analyze the situation, and post me. Thus I would transmit to the President their opinions, not mine, for they were the experts in the field. Of course, I did not go back unless I had found that my own first statement had been incorrect or incomplete. But I always took the point of view that one of my jobs was to bring to bear the best scientific judgment that could be found on any point in which the President was interested. That is the situation that has obtained in recent years under Killian, ~~and Wiesner,~~ Kistiakowsky, (^{Wiesner, and Hornig}), who have served as scientific advisers to the President.

The men who served as Winston Churchill's advisers on scientific matters -- first ~~Sir Henry Tizard~~ ^{notably} and then Professor Charles Lindemann who became Lord Cherwell -- had a far more difficult job. Churchill treated Cherwell as his personal scientific adviser and wanted his personal opinions. I think that this was primarily Churchill's fault, yet I do not believe that Cherwell could have got the opinions from the experts readily in any case, for many just did not like him. I know how badly they thought of him because one night out at Oxford in one of the colleges some of the dons recited to me a poem about Cherwell which was scandalous to say the least. I liked Tizard very much indeed and worked with him closely as British-American interchange on weapons began. He did a magnificent job in getting these relations onto sound ground. I was very much interested by Cherwell, and with both of them I had pleasant relationships. There has been a good deal of talk about the battle between them; this I know -- no matter if they did have a personal feud, neither would have allowed that to stand between him and doing what he felt to be his best duty toward Britain in the war.

The British organization, as I have said, was very different from ours. It did not head up anywhere in the civilian area, as ours did, so that the adviser to Churchill

was in a very different position. He did not have an organization under him that encompassed the whole range of activities. In other words, the British scientific effort was split up among a whole lot of committees. How the British ever made this work I never could understand. They did make it work, but only Britishers could have done it.

The relations of Cherwell to Churchill thus were very different from mine to the President of the United States. F.D.R. never interfered. He was interested in all aspects of what was going on but never did he tell me that I was to do this or that in regard to any item, and he never took steps in regard to them. Moreover, although there were a few attempts to short-circuit me, to get to FDR with a pet scheme without going through channels, they never succeeded in confusing relations.

Churchill, on the other hand, butted in on all sorts of technical matters. Churchill, of course, had an ego that has never been matched anywhere. Just as he did not hesitate to represent himself as an expert on military strategy and tactics, he did not hesitate to consider himself an expert on the application of science to weapons. Cherwell, in the position of carrying out Churchill's orders, was bound to be in conflict with all sorts of committees and individuals; and he was.

This was apparent when I was in England on anti-submarine matters in 1942. Churchill called a meeting of the anti-submarine committee of the Cabinet, so-called, at which he presided. I imagine there were twenty men there in the Cabinet Room at 10 Downing Street -- the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Air Chief Marshal and many others, ~~all~~ around the table. The Americans there were Aver^eill Harriman, Admiral Stark, and myself. Of the three, I was the only one, of course, who was thoroughly posted on the anti-submarine technical situation as it was developing. Stark, I believe, was not abreast of the most recent developments or plans, but he was most helpful, as he had been earlier, in regard to my relations with the Navy. When the Navy had balked and refused to give N.D.R.C. the information it needed to proceed on anti-submarine devices, Stark, the CNO, called a meeting -- I was alone -- and there were six or eight admirals. I made no argument, simply stated they had the orders of their Commander-in-Chief, and I assumed they would follow them. After some discussion, Stark told them bluntly to turn over such information as was needed. Even then the Navy held back for a long time.

? *Heck*

But to get back to the Downing Street meeting, during that conference, Churchill twice took a crack at Cherwell. I always thought he did this primarily to show me, and perhaps Harriman and Stark, how he handled his scientific crew. At any rate, he was decidedly rough on Cherwell, and Cherwell never batted an eye. Apparently he was used to it, and I judge the rest of the British were too. If Roosevelt had ever landed on me like that, I would have been looking for an exit. But Roosevelt treated me with courtesy -- even when he was aroused about some matter.

Later on, there was another session at 10 Downing Street which was quite an affair. This was in 1943 when the atomic energy effort was ~~in~~ full steam ahead and I knew before I went over there probably would be some quarrel with the British over our system of interchange of information. Before I left the United States, therefore, I went to see the President, said that I thought this subject of interchange would come up, and asked for his instructions in case it should. As usual in such circumstances, I got no instructions whatever.

The system was this: the O.S.R.D. and the Manhattan District had both provided in our rules that any man engaged in the development of a project was entitled to all

the secret information he needed, of any sort, to carry that project forward. On the other hand, he was not entitled to information which did not meet this criterion. In the field of atomic energy, this meant that the British were brought into consultation, and given full information, on any phase of activities in which they were also engaged. If they were doing fundamental physics or fundamental chemistry on a particular phase of the subject, then they were brought into it. But if they were not working on a particular phase, they were not brought in. This made sense. Groves was administering the Manhattan District, of course, and ^{THE RULE} ~~it~~ was fully enforced. But the British, or some of them, objected. They also avoided the rule as far as they could. If it had been rigorously enforced the Fuchs affair would have been less damaging, and Russia would not have built an atomic bomb so soon.

When I got to London on this occasion, I went in to pay my respects to the Prime Minister. The Minister for Air, Sir Stafford Cripps, took me in, and I expected the proceedings would take thirty seconds. But Churchill sat me down and the Minister left, and Churchill spent ten or fifteen minutes bawling me out on the interchange affair; it was unfair, it was unreasonable, it did not make sense, he did not like the arrangement, and he damned well did not

like me. He was sitting at the table in the Cabinet Room and he had a cigar he was trying to light. I judge he had not bitten the end off it, and he kept throwing burnt matches over his shoulder in the direction of the fireplace. He kept the First Lord of the Admiralty and somebody else waiting in the anteroom while he hopped all over my frame. I said nothing. When at last he had come to the end of his tirade, I said simply, "The American Atomic Energy development is now under the Army. The Secretary of War of the United States is in London, and I certainly do not propose to discuss this subject in his absence." "Very well," said Churchill, "we will have a full-dress discussion." That ended that particular session. But during the time Churchill had been jumping on me, he had given away most of his arguments, and on these I had two or three days to check up and get posted. When the full-dress session did occur, I was in shape.

During the time between the first session and the full-dress session, F.D.R. wrote me a letter. It went to 1530 P Street in Washington and there Conant received it. He cabled its contents to me in London. In going through coding and decoding it got more than a little mixed up. So when I received it and read it, I said, "Well, this simply tells me to do what I am now doing." So I ~~never~~ ^{did not} alter ~~ed~~ my course. Not until I got back to the United

States and saw F.D.R.'s original letter did I find out that it, in effect, ordered me to accede to the British position. I do not know whether Churchill talked to F.D.R., or sent him a message on this, but I did adhere to the American position. Churchill finally accepted it, and it was approved at Quebec. F.D.R. did not take me to Quebec, although this was one of the items that was approved there.

Moreover, F.D.R. never again mentioned this subject of interchange to me. I have always felt that he just did not care to bring up the fact that he had been persuaded by Churchill to take a stand that would have been very unfortunate. So very naturally I did not mention it either. But F.D.R. had ordered me to make practically full interchange, and such a course would have made all sorts of trouble for him after the war, had he lived. The Senate could and probably would have raised hell about it. The only reason for acceding to the British position would have been to aid them in their post-war use of atomic energy. This was not a war matter, and thus F.D.R.'s broad war powers did not include it. So F.D.R. accepted what happened at that meeting, and said nothing.

To return to the full-dress discussion at 10 Downing Street, the talk was almost entirely between Churchill and

myself. Lord Cherwell and Sir John Anderson were there and, of course, Secretary Stimson and Harvey Bundy. Before we went to the meeting, ^{Mr.} Stimson and I had a talk about what we were facing, and I put the case strongly for the American position. He contested it, tried to pick holes in it, and went after me on it. When I put up one argument, he said, "That's the argument of a police court lawyer." But as we were starting into 10 Downing Street he said to me, "Van, I want you to handle this matter." I said, "You mean, Sir, that I am to handle it in accordance with my ideas of how it should be done?" "Of course," said he. What ^{Mr.} Stimson had been doing was to make sure that I had my arguments in order.

Churchill started the session with a harangue following much the lines as when he had had his private session with me. I was ready for it this time. Moreover, I was not happy over the way he had gone at me. One of the first things he said was, "Now you understand, I am interested only in fighting this war; I am not interested at this time in any question of the post-war affairs of Great Britain, and specifically not interested in atomic energy for peaceful purposes at this time." I said, "If that is so, Sir, how does it happen that your representative on this subject in the United States for some time has been

an engineer of Imperial Chemical Industries?" Churchill looked at Sir John Anderson and Cherwell to get a negative, did not get one, and went on to the next point. He said in regard to one detail of the program, "Now we developed this particular method of construction and then we turned it over to you Americans to manufacture." And I said, "Well, Sir, I have before me the records on that particular point, and I find that the British advice on it began only after we had it on ~~our~~ stream." After two or three occasions like that, he stopped and looked at the ceiling. There was a long pause, and then he said, "I will make you a proposition."

He proceeded to state what was practically the American position and the American plan -- in very different words from those usually used, but that was it. Stimson and I said that we felt sure that the President would be in agreement, and with that the session ended. In other words, finding that he had been given incomplete and incorrect information, probably through his own fault, and finding that he had thus taken himself out on a limb, Churchill abandoned his contention and conceded the position of the opposition. This, very likely, was characteristic of him. But I came out of there quite sure that, if I had had him as my chief, I would not have lasted long.

Sir John Anderson and I were now detailed to put this agreement in form. Sir John came over to the United States^e, we worked on it and formalized it. It originally had some clauses in it that were not concerned with the development but with political matters. I, of course, said to him that I had no authority to agree on the political clauses. He took this up with ~~Mr.~~ ^{Mr.} ~~Stimson, and Stimson~~ ^{Stimson, who} said the same thing. These clauses were largely left out, although I believe one of them somehow got into the document at Quebec.

I saw Churchill only those two times during the war. I did not see him again until he came over to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology at the time of the big celebration in 1949, where he was guest of honor, and in quite a little group I was introduced to him. He met me with all indications that he had never seen me before, and never heard of me. I feel quite sure that he knew me the instant he saw me, unless his memory had become very bad. Because, for one thing, when we had finished our wartime full-dress session and were about to leave, he shook hands with me, and after he got hold of my hand he pushed me around a bit, looked me in the eye and said, "I want to see some more of you."

meaning, I think, "God help you if I ever catch you out on a limb." But when he did see me again, he did not know me. This perhaps was just the fact that he had seen a thousand men and his memory had its limits. I rather suspect that he did not want to take the chance of bringing the subject up again, in the light of the Fuchs episode.

Some while later, I was lunching with Secretary Stimson in the dining room of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Vigorous conversations were going on all over that room: the DUKW had just been very successful in Sicily. ^{Mr.} Stimson said something about it and wanted to know who it was in the Army who was primarily responsible for the success. He knew it was my organization that did the development. I told him, "General Devers tested it under conditions where he probably exceeded his orders, and Tony McAuliffe encouraged it." "But," I said, "officially, the Army opposed its development and your representative on N.D.R.C. voted against it." He said, "Who was that?" And I said, "General Williams, but he acted under orders." He said, "Why do you tell me all this?" And I said, "Because it is your Army." He said, "It seems to me you are kind of rough about it." So I said, "Well, Mr. Secretary, you must remember that it is only about five weeks ago in London

that you called me a 'police court lawyer'." We left it at that. But I did get a chance to have some of the Joint Chiefs' personnel overhear this conversation and I hoped they would pass it around.

The contrast in operations between Churchill and President Roosevelt seems to me to be an accurate reflection of their different personal qualities. Each was devoted to duty, each was vigorous and hard-driving, one could delegate and then refrain from arbitrary interference, and the other could not. I imagine it was to **this** ability to delegate that Roosevelt owed the equanimity that was part of his greatness, even although we do have to admit that sometimes he got his delegations confused, and gave essentially the same task to two men at the same time. I am inclined to think that, occasionally, he even did this on purpose.

This does not mean that he did not occasionally get stirred up. Once I went in to him with a sheet of paper on which I sought an "OK-FDR." It was an important move, I remember, something to do with the atomic energy program, on which I had to be very sure he agreed. But he had just seen deGaulle, or had received some word from him. The Grand Charles had a way of annoying his fellowmen which was superb in its way, and which he has apparently been

perfecting ever since. The President told me about it -- in detail, with gestures. In fact he continued to do so until I had to leave, with my little paper still untouched.

I always tried to come out of that office still in possession of any paper or report I took in, and there was good reason for this; I did not trust the White House handling of such documents, not that there was anything sinister about it: just confusion. Once I missed, and, as it later appeared, so at the same time did General Marshall who left behind a report of his, also without question full of dynamite. For several days I kept telephoning but could not locate ~~my report~~. Finally the White House called and said, with much relief, that they had found it. Up came a young lieutenant with a sealed envelope and in it a report. Fortunately I opened it at once, and it was Marshall's report! So I promptly sealed it again and dictated a memorandum in which I carefully recited that I had merely looked at the title page. I got the lieutenant to witness this, and sent him back. Then I called Marshall's aide and told him I could tell him where the General's report was located, much to the expressed relief of the aide. I told him it was in the hands of a lieutenant, in a car, en route to the White House. My

own report had gone to the General, so that got back to its home also. But this episode caused me to hang onto reports with still more tenacity.

It was a pleasant thing to watch Secretary Stimson and President Roosevelt together. ^{Mr.} Stimson paid the president all the deference due to his office. And F.D.R. treated ^{Mr.} Stimson with all the respect due to his long career as a statesman. But they talked about matters directly and frankly, so everything was as it should be.

^{Mr.} Stimson and I often went in together, and one time I had a really important report, for the atomic energy program was nearing its climax, and the last page of the report had several definite recommendations. The President listened and nodded, said he would read the report carefully, but I got no "OK-FDR." So I asked if I should not come back as he read it to answer questions. In fact I tried one or two other mild prods. Finally the Secretary said, "Mr. President, this young chap is trying to get you to look at that report now." The President grinned, and after a while I came out with my OK-FDR and the report.

Mr. Stimson had many younger men about him, and he liked to work with young men. But, almost entirely, he dealt with men who were members of his own vast organization, or with other Cabinet members, so that the relations were bound

to be a bit formal. On the other hand I was entirely independent, and with me he could relax. He treated me as he would a son. We became friends, he with kindness, I with the respect due an elder statesman. But this did not prevent me from putting in a light note once in a while, and he enjoyed it. There were not many humorous moments in his daily life.

Many of the men in the highest posts during the war, as I shall illustrate later, took the point of view that scientific or highly technical matters were not their concern or responsibility, and that they had plenty to do without trying to grasp their solutions. Not so the elderly Secretary. I remember one day showing him a photograph of an early test of a new sort of smoke generator. A great cloud of smoke was rolling down a valley from the new machine. Alongside of it the output of one of the old types looked as though someone had dropped a cigarette in the grass. The Secretary was, at that time, much worried about a possible air attack on the Panama Canal, and this seemed to him to provide a needed link in defense. I tried to tell him that the device was in an early experimental stage, that it needed to be tested under a variety of conditions, that it would take time to tool up for production. But it was of no use. The power of the

Secretary's office was brought to bear to get such smoke generators immediately. And the power of the procurement people went after my hide. I was more careful after that.

We kept up reasonably good relations with procurement in spite of our opposing interests. General Somervell, head of the Service of Supply, once said to me, "Bush, you and your crew are a damned nuisance." Of course I explained to him that, when we ceased to be, we would not be doing our job. As the DUKW, the amazing amphibious vehicle of which I ^{have spoken earlier} ~~shall speak later~~, approached the point of procurement, he told me that the Army did not want them, and would not use them if they got them. But they got them nevertheless, and they certainly used them, in the landings in Sicily and Normandy and elsewhere.

Secretary Stimson operated at times by bursts of righteous indignation. When he was really on a tear generals got under their desks and clerks trembled. One day he landed on me with both feet when I went in to see him; I forget what I had done to arouse his ire. I sat and smiled. Suddenly his expression changed, and I could see him say to himself, "This man is not in my outfit." He stopped in the middle of a sentence, there was a pause, and then he went ahead on an entirely different subject, and in an entirely different tone of voice.

There were no big scandals over procurement during the war. To anyone who can remember the Spanish War, or even World War I, this fact was heartening. I have no doubt that the Secretary's violent reaction, when he suspected chicanery, seeped down through the whole organization so that even the sergeant in a PBX hesitated to slip a carton of cigarettes to his buddies. The fact that ^{Mr.}Stimson made it clear that he controlled the Army, aggressively, not from an armchair, was, I know, at times a trial to General Marshall. Yet their relations remained excellent throughout. This condition was partly due to Marshall's calibre as a leader; it was partly due to ^{Mr.}Stimson's wisdom. But much also was due to the fact that the Secretary never interfered with military judgments, and confined his acts to ensuring that those judgments were being made by the ablest men that could be found.

Probably the most disagreeable task I had during the war was to prevent the Army, and Selective Service, from taking key men out of the laboratories and putting them into uniform. My toughest antagonist on this subject was Lucius D. Clay. He just could not understand how any sane man could struggle to keep young men out of the army. I could not understand how he could miss the fact that the whole practice of warfare was being revised by the labora-

tories. So we went at it, in gentlemanly fashion, but none the less vigorously. I remember one meeting at which he presented the army position under orders from the Secretary, which were far from his own point of view. He did so accurately and fully. Then, when he sat down side of me I got his own reactions emphatically in my ear, along with the warning that he had just started to get his way. Yet, since each of us respected the other's sincerity, we became friends. After the war, when he was sent to Germany as High Commissioner, I wrote him a letter in which I said I knew of no man in the Army in whom I had more confidence for that difficult task. He dropped around to my office to thank me. And his achievement fully justified the confidence of all his friends.

If the efforts to move men from the laboratories had been successful, there would have been no short wavelength radar, no proximity fuze. There would still have been an A-bomb, for Groves with ^{Mr.} Stimson's support, and with the drive that Groves could exert, could protect his organization against all comers. There was a cry for equality of sacrifice, with of course exception for organized labor, to replace a policy of placing men where they could best contribute. Sadly, among senior officers,

there were still remnants of the conviction that all wars would be fought with the weapons which existed at the beginning of the war.

One day I met ^{Mr.} Stimson on the Pentagon steps and walked up to his office with him. He asked me how things were going, and I told him as usual, the Budget was trying to control my funds, and the Army was trying to swipe my men, but otherwise things were in order. He said, "Now, Van, when you have a really tough problem with the Army, you bring it to me." However I explained to him that this would not do, my people and his were working together, or contesting with one another, at all levels, and the atmosphere, generally excellent, would be polluted if I engaged in end runs. He understood and we parted.

Some weeks later a really dangerous situation arose. A new regulation was promulgated under which men engaged in research or development would be exempt from draft only if engaged on a project certified by Army or Navy. I immediately insisted that as head of O.S.R.D. I also have authority to certify, and I got nowhere. This was a critical matter; all sorts of things could be abruptly terminated by such a regulation. Military officers usually became convinced of the value of a development only when it had been fully demonstrated, and the officers involved

in manpower requirements were hardly the ones that should judge such matters. I did not go to the Secretary, but I certainly went all over the Pentagon. My language was unconventional; I probably insulted a few.

By the end of a day or two a group of officers, who thought I would go to the Secretary, and did not know I would not, aimed to precede me there. Apparently they told the Secretary I had gone beserk, that I did not make sense. He asked, "What does he want?" "Why," they told him, as I got the story later, "a perfect absurdity, he wants a ruling that, when he certifies a project, the Army certification will be automatic." "That seems to be perfectly reasonable," said the Secretary, "we will do it that way." That afternoon I had a group of officers in my office proposing a compromise. Naturally I knew that when that particular band of officers softened up there was a good reason, and so I was stiff and unreasonable and got what I wanted. ^{Mr.} Stimson was a wise man. Incidentally much of the harmonious relation which finally developed between O.S.R.D. and the Services, was due to the fact that it was well known that I could take an appeal directly to the President, and also known that I never did . . .

Once in a while Mr. Stimson would send me word that he wanted to talk over a matter with me, and ask me to

drop around to his house after dinner. My wife and I would go. The Secretary would take me to his study, leaving the ladies to chat. It would not take us long to discuss the problem; there usually wasn't any. Then we four would sit around and talk about ^{Mr.}Stimson's early experiences, delve into albums, and discuss anything but the war. This was the way in which he relaxed. He could not do it quite this way with someone who reported to him.

He used to indulge in exercise, under the impression that it kept him in good physical condition. I have always preferred the theory that, the older a man gets, the less he needs exercise, and that excess is dangerous. This is a much more comfortable point of view. But Mr. Stimson played deck tennis. One day he met me in the corridor and invited me to join him. "I'm sorry, Mr. Secretary (I never called him anything else), I have an important appointment at that hour." He pointed his finger at me and said, "You're afraid I'll trim you." "I know damned well you'd trim me," I said, "but that isn't the reason I won't play." "What is the reason?" "Well, Mr. Secretary, if you will be as careful as I am and refrain from these dissipations such as deck tennis, then when you get to be as old as I am, you will be in my obviously fine physical condition." He loved it, probably because he saw no one, day after day, who dared to joke with him.

One more story, and this a sad one. Some weeks before President Roosevelt died I received a letter from him. From its nature, and from the shakiness of the signature, I knew he had not dictated it, and I doubted if he had read it before signing. It was also evident that Mr. Stimson had a similar letter. So I went to his office. After a brief greeting I laid the letter before him, and said nothing. After a bit he took a letter from the drawer of his desk and placed them side by side. After a long pause he looked up and said, "Van, I hope we are not in for another Wilson episode." I just bowed. We shook hands solemnly and I left.

The day he left Washington, to retire on Long Island, he took me to a Cabinet meeting with him and then we lunched together. I told him that, as an older man, I felt I had a duty to give him some advice. So I spoke of the inevitable reaction on dropping a heavy load suddenly, and the tendency of frail man to conjure up imaginary ills. Then he picked up Mrs. Stimson and drove to the airport. Every general officer in Washington was there, drawn up in lines from the car to the plane. General Marshall joined him and they walked down between these lines to the plane together. Never was a Secretary more respected and revered. Some months later he had a

slight heart attack from which he quickly recovered. He wrote me a note, which is among my most prized treasures, in which he recalled that lunch and the advice. What a man he was!

One further recollection of President Roosevelt should be set down; it centers on Henry Wallace, whom I had come to know before the war. In fact, when I lived in a Washington hotel, he had a suite over mine and sometimes we would take a walk together on a Sunday morning. He was a delightful individual to be with. I remember visiting his Beltsville show where we took great joy in kidding some of the people who were raising turkeys and what not. He and I played the game back and forth for the fun of it. He had a good knowledge of biology; he was a good fellow to reason with, and he had a sense of humor.

Then during the war the first way I encountered him was this: Just as the atomic energy enterprise began to have very large implications, when it had become clear that the bomb could be built, I said to the President one day, "Mr. President, I am carrying quite a load of responsibility on this thing, and it is a matter requiring strange judgments. I would feel a little more comfortable if I had someone else, some group

to report to, so that I would not be bothering you any more than necessary as this project ^{was} proceeds." He said, "Very well, let's have a policy committee." He named Mr. Stimson, General Marshall, James B. Conant, Henry Wallace, and of course myself. I said to him, "How about Mr. Knox?" He looked at me with one of his strange smiles and said, "No, I guess not, not now."

I do not think that there ever was any formal appointment of that committee. It certainly ^{never} met, but after that whenever I had a report of any consequence to go to the President, I would go to each of these individuals beforehand, tell him what was in it, and talk to him about it. With Mr. Stimson I would be likely to go into it in some detail; with General Marshall I would just mention it, he would not show much interest and I would not go much further, or Mr. Stimson would indicate that he would take it up with the General. I also took it up with Henry Wallace. Then one day I went in with a report to the President. When I gave it to him I said, "Mr. President, your policy committee has approved this, with the exception of Mr. Wallace, who is not available." He grinned at me and said, "Well, Henry's out West making political speeches. I do not think we need to worry him." That was my cue and I never went near Wallace on atomic energy matters after that.

That is the way Roosevelt operated on such things. He would not say flatly, "Now we will drop Wallace off the committee," or anything like that. He would just give an implication and expect me to catch it. So that was that. There were no hard feelings between Wallace and myself as a result. But I think that was the time when Roosevelt had decided that he would not continue to regard Wallace as the man to take the Vice Presidency -- and that is how Harry Truman came to be President of the United States.

When Truman became President, just after Roosevelt died in Warm Springs, he was visited by Henry Stimson who told him that there existed, in development, a very important weapon and that I could tell him the full story of it. So I was called to the White House, sat down with President Truman, and gave him the full account of the atomic bomb as it then stood -- its power, its schedule, and what our enemies were doing. This was the first time Truman had ever heard of it. It was also the first time that I had ever seen Truman. I got on a good basis of exchange with him at that first session. Later on, he relied heavily on me, for a while, for information on scientific and technical matters. We had an interesting relationship, as long as it lasted.

I developed great respect for President Truman. I saw him in action several times when he was a real statesman. I saw him display superb courage. In regard to the briefing on the bomb, there was not much to it. I simply told him the full story, which produced a few remarks that would be regarded as characteristic of Truman.

I might as well pause on this and tell about how I first told General Styer about the bomb. When I told Mr. Stimson that the progress on the bomb had reached the point where a very large amount of money had to be spent for manufacturing facilities and so forth, I suggested to him that the Army take over at that point, and the Manhattan District was formed. Stimson put the job of forming it into the hands of General Styer, who was a very able general indeed. He was deputy to Somervell. Styer met with me and discussed it, then he came over to get posted on the affair. I told him the general outlines, what the bomb would be like, if it ever came to reality, and suggested that he go over some of the records on it which I had got^{ten} out of the safe for the purpose. I sat him down in an adjoining room to spend his time looking these over. And every little while I would hear exclamations out of him -- profane exclamations, incidentally.

That was the sort of thing that had occurred with Truman when I went through the story. This was typical whenever I briefed anyone -- first interest but skepticism, and also no doubt disbelief -- they would not at first really take in the significance. Then, as figures began to sink in, surprise, then excitement.

Later, after the bomb had done its work and the war was over, the question of making public some knowledge of the whole enterprise had to be faced, and here President Truman was, in my opinion, magnificent.

Toward the end of the war, Henry D. Smyth of Princeton compiled a summary volume on atomic energy in order to tell American science all that could be told about the affair in all its phases. His instructions were to put in everything that would be helpful to American science in pursuing the subject further, but not to put in anything unless it was known to the Russians. Groves with his counter-espionage work knew well what had been transmitted to the Russians, and he knew well how it had been done. Under the conditions of the war, with Russia as an ally there was not a great deal that one could do if he came across such a trail except to pinch off its source of information, whereupon it would merely turn elsewhere.

But Groves was in touch with all the preliminaries of the Smyth report and he went over the final document with great care. Groves, Conant, and I were all in the position to say that this book contained nothing that the Russians did not already know, but it contained a great deal that Americans needed to know. Then Admiral Leahy objected to its publication.

We met in the President's office. President Truman sat at his desk, and the rest of us gathered around -- Groves, Conant, myself, Admiral Leahy, Smyth, and a few others. After a bit of discussion, President Truman went around the room, and said, "I want each one of you to state fully your opinion and the reasons for it." Then he sat back as one after another of us ^Spoke up.

Groves, Conant, and I described the care with which the report had been prepared, outlined the good it could do as we looked forward to atomic power, and held that it would not benefit the Russians. But Admiral Leahy objected to release. Of course he did not know much about the subject, but that did not deter him. At one time during the war he was similarly stating, presumably to F.D.R., that rockets had long ago proved useless in war. To a certain type of mind, fortunately to few, high command brings a conviction of omniscience. So he was

very positive. His view was like the post-war attitude of the public, and of many in Congress: there was an atomic bomb "secret," written perhaps on a single sheet of paper, some sort of magic formula. If we guarded this we alone could have atomic bombs indefinitely.

When we had all spoken, the President sat back. There was a silence; he looked at the ceiling. Then he said, "I regret that I have to make decisions such as this." There was another pause, then, "You will release the report; the meeting is adjourned." I came out walking on air. We had a real leader. Later I was to find that we also had, at crises, a real statesman. I respected him enormously after that meeting, and after other incidents such as a moment when he and Forrestal and I were talking about something, and Forrestal spoke of the political implications of the decision. President Truman said to him, "Look, Jim, when you take a thing as serious as this to the American public you should forget political considerations." I believe that was an honest statement and that is what he actually did when he faced a tough question.

The next step on the bomb after the war was a Cabinet meeting on the subject of how to handle the atomic energy problem in the days of peace. Should we go to the United Nations with it? If so, should we discuss this with Russia

before doing so? Stimson took me with him to the meeting, to present one aspect on which he and I were fully agreed. There have been various reports on that meeting, mostly wrong. The papers came out with an account of a "Wallace plan." If there was such a plan, I did not hear it. Forrestal's diary has an account. I do not know how it got in there in the form in which it appeared. Certainly it is not in accord with my recollection.

But I do remember clearly one incident. At a point in the discussion Forrestal made a remark which indicated that we were to make some sort of majority decision, and the President at once picked this up. "Jim, you forget, this is a Cabinet. Each of you will give me his full advice and I will make the decision." Truman certainly understood what it meant to be President of the United States. At the end of the meeting he said each of us would put a brief statement of his position in his hands the next day. Naturally, as I was the only non-member present, I asked him if I was also to do so. "You're damned right you are, what the hell do you think?" I do believe not ~~think~~ I ever learned any new profanity from Truman, but I occasionally got refreshed on the use of some of old vintage.

Next was the so-called Attlee Conference, primarily concerned with tactics in the approach to the United Nations, the principals at which were the President, Prime Minister Clement Attlee, and Prime Minister MacKenzie King of Canada, I never heard of an international conference that was worse conducted. It came out all right in spite of this fault, but it nearly did not. A few days before it convened I found that almost nothing had been done about it, and so I visited Secretary Byrnes and urged that there be an American program prepared, that a State Department committee be put to work, and a secretariat appointed. Byrnes asked me what I meant by a program and I told him, following what had in my judgment been the President's plan for going to the United Nations. Byrnes told me to write it up, and I did so that evening. The next day he and I visited the President, and that became the American program. This was certainly one hell of a way to put such an important matter together. I hustled around to see Ben Cohen in the State Department to tell him I was not trying to run off with the ball, that in fact I was trying to get his chief to use his own team.

The conference went smoothly enough, but with no recording secretariat present. Late in the afternoon everything seemed to be agreed to. A committee hence was

appointed to draw up the declaration of the conference to be presented for approval the next morning. This consisted of Sir John Anderson, Lester Pearson of Canada, and myself. I had worked smoothly with Anderson before, and knew his skill in such matters, so I was not worried. We all went to a dinner at the British Embassy, but Anderson and I cut our dinner short and went to work. Pearson got lost somehow; I do not know that he ever found out he was on the committee.

Sir John and I were getting on rather well -- we even had a first draft typed out -- when, about 9:30, word was brought to us that the conference would convene again at ten o'clock. So we went, each with a first draft, and still no recording secretary. We read, and the conference made changes in wording, which I inserted in longhand in my copy. As it got a bit complicated Sir John got lost, and I had the only fully corrected copy. Along toward midnight they were all satisfied and told me to read it back as it stood, which I did successfully but with some difficulty with my inserted scrawls. Everyone was happy, the meeting adjourned; we all had a drink, and I left the White House with the only copy of the conclusions of the conference in my pocket. I remember also seeing

Jimmy Byrnes leave, his straw hat just a bit aslant, with apparently not a care in the world.

The next morning at eight o'clock I was again in the White House. The declaration was gotten on the cable to London; clean copies were made for signature by the President and the two Prime Ministers. At one point I found a duplication, the same phrase in two places. So I went into the next room to see the President. He told me to take either one out and he would tell the Prime Ministers. The formal signing went smoothly enough, except that Senator Connally took the President to task, a bit roughly and in the presence of our guests, for failing to consult the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. When it was all over, the President sought me out and said some kind things to me. So did Attlee a year or two later at a meeting in England. But this was no way to run an important conference. ~~which I shall mention in a digression later in this chapter.~~

There was an amusing incident some time later concerning this declaration. At a meeting in the Joint Chiefs organization I got into a bit of an argument with a general I had not met before, and it turned on the possibility of biological warfare. He smacked the table and said to me, "Don't you realize that the Attlee declaration contains the words" "and other methods of mass destruction?"

"Yes," I said, "I knew they were in there; in fact I put them in." He did not believe me, naturally, but it happened to be true. I had suggested it, and Sir John had promptly agreed. We both thought that, while we were attempting to bring reason to bear on one terrible weapon, we might as well include another that could be equally terrible, and which might indeed have thus become if the atomic bomb had not taken the center of the stage.

The next step was to get the plan ready for the United Nations. I do not need to review this in detail. A committee was set up by Dean Acheson, and we worked hard on it; the fact that we felt that the U.S.S.R. would block action in the United Nations was no excuse for not trying. Then Bernard Baruch was called in to make the presentation to the United Nations, and it promptly became the "Baruch Plan." This annoyed the hard-working group, but they were more annoyed when they heard that Baruch's team was going to revise the plan. I was still more annoyed when the papers carried a note that Conant and I were going to serve under Baruch. But I knew Bernie well, and it did not take long to get these matters straightened out. I had to tell him that, when I started to work for him, Hell would be frozen over. Of

course the approach to the United Nations got nowhere, but we all felt better for the try.

Insert A
(7 pages)

Some time later, after
→ ~~After~~ the National Science Foundation has^d been established, the President was about to appoint the board specified in the legislation. At the time there was an Armed Services Day dinner at which I presided, and the President spoke. It was in the Mayflower, and I met the President at the entrance for automobiles, and conducted him in. Knowing the President's habits pretty well, I said to Mr. Truman, "Mr. President, I am afraid this is going to be a dry dinner. Would you like a drink before dinner?" and he said, "I certainly would." We turned aside into a room, and left the Secret Service men outside, and at the end of the room was a little table with a chap with a white hat on, and the President walked up and we had a drink. He had his drink in his usual manner; in other words, he took his whiskey neat, and followed it with a chaser later. So of course I did the same thing, hoping that I would not choke when I tossed the neat whiskey down my throat. Then we proceeded in to the dinner.

During the dinner he sat on my right hand and Louis Johnson, Secretary of War, was sitting beyond him. Apparently he had talked to Johnson all he wanted to, so

Went A, p 51 L + L

I want you a few pages back that I planned a discussion. Here it comes. It is ~~V. Bush~~
5/17/68

~~Insert for L. L. SALISBURY PLAIN~~

~~not a discussion entirely, however, for it is basically concerned with leadership in one special form.~~

I have enjoyed associating with military men more than with any other group, scientists, business men, professors. Part of this is due, no doubt, to the fact that widely diverse backgrounds lead to interesting and useful interchange. But I think most of it is due to something else. Military men learn the art of command; it is central to their whole professional careers. They also learn to behave well in tight groups, and this again is necessary, for the wardroom of a ship, operating for long monotonous months, would be a shambles if officers had not developed a code of conduct which preserves decorum. It is not a stiff code; it is decidedly flexible, but it is an incorrigible officer indeed who does not emerge with an exceedingly attractive attitude of courtesy in places where courtesy is called for. At any rate, with very rare exceptions, military men are an admirable crowd, with whom I have been privileged and happy to associate.

One of the most pleasant experiences of the sort occurred soon after the war when I was invited by the Royal Air Force to exercises at a station on Salisbury Plain. General Spaatz and I were the invited brass; there were a number of American officers also. We had red carpet treatment; for

example, I was promptly assigned a bat man, as is the British practice.

The subject of the exercise was planning for R.A.F. action should Britain be attacked again with the next few years. About a hundred officers were present; the discussion was vigorous, but the atmosphere was a bit gloomy, for Britain, and especially the R.A.F., was weary, and the economic outlook was grim.

On the second day I was surprised that no mention at all had been made of guided missiles in the defense of Britain. This was long before the days when practical inter-continental missiles became possible; the problems of adequate rocket engines, guidance, re-entry, were by no means solved. But rocket missiles that would automatically home on a hostile aircraft or ship had been made and used in various forms; ~~the~~ forerunners of our A.B.M. (*) system. Some were heat seekers, some were radar guided, some were even controlled by television schemes. One of my worries toward the end of the war had been that the Nazis would begin to use them against our bomber fleets. But one of the foolish things they did was to neglect this possibility.

During a break I inquired of Tedder, who was in charge, whether this subject had purposely been left out. He told me

it had not, and urged me to introduce it. Naturally, I told him that, being a guest, I would not want to start an argument. But he said, "You just mention it and I will follow up."

So, when we again convened I made some mild remark to the effect that I assumed we would come to missile defense later. Whereupon Air ~~(Chief?)~~ Marshal Slesor^S rose and gave his group the devil, the core of his remarks being that they had better learn to think in modern terms. He had taken a piece of shrapnel in his hip in some fracas, so he steadied himself with two canes as he faced the group. Just as he got going all out, a cane slipped and he nearly went to the floor. A junior officer in a front seat caught him and steadied him back on his feet. Whereupon he said, "Damn that leg. Excuse me gentlemen. As I was saying...." When we broke up toward the end of the afternoon, I had lots of questions on American experience in the development of guided missiles, and on their probable future. None of us at that time thought we would shoot them across an ocean, and be able to hit something, in the foreseeable future. That capability waited for computer development and inertial guidance. But we all thought enemy skies would be tough places to fly in. In fact I, for one, thought flying over a fully defended area would become suicidal. It has not worked out quite that way.

Sometimes
Chief of
the Coastal
Air Com-
mand,

Those post session gatherings, in the bar, were an important part of the exercise. We signed chits, bought one another drinks, and discussed the future. I promptly arranged so that I could sign chits, to avoid embarrassment, but, when I came to leave, I was told that somehow all my chits had become lost. The last event was a dinner; Prime Minister Atlee came down; he seated me beside him, and we talked about the U.N., and atomic bomb control. I had great respect for his keen understanding.

One day I told Tedder that I had always wanted to drop a dry fly into a British chalk stream, for that is the last word in delicate fishing. I should have known what would occur. I was promptly invited by Air Marshal (I must get the name) to spend a day at his home beside the (I will remember the stream). Sir Henry Tizard and I went down there, were entertained in the heartening British manner, and spent a most enjoyable day. One fishes with a number 22 fly, on a nine foot fine leader. The fish are highly educated. One fishes lightly, fine and far off, or he might as well quit. I hooked one fish, and lost him in the weeds. My host apologized that, because of the war, they had not been able to keep the weeds ~~moved~~ ^{mowed} out of the stream. I had a bottle of bourbon, and a happy evening. The British learned the virtues of bourbon during the war.

This reminds me of a party in London, just as the tide was turning in the anti-submarine battle of the Atlantic. I had been in Britain for a week, and many had been kind to me. So, trying to express appreciation, I set up a cocktail party at Claridges before I left. Bennett Archambault, head of my London office, told me we would have some Scotch at that party, if I would not inquire where it came from. So, when we assembled, about two hundred of us, there was a long table at one side of the room lined with bottles of Scotch. No one went near it. Apparently the presence of that much Scotch in London was considered an impossibility. So I got up in a chair, told the group that, unless a miscalculation had been made, there were ~~ten~~^{two} drinks there for each man, that I judged the Scotch had crossed the ocean twice, and that it would be sad for it to cross a third time. It promptly disappeared.

To return to the Salisbury Plain exercise - tobacco was also scarce in England at that time. So, I found out later, were matches and soap. In getting ready to go to England for the Salisbury affair, I had put a lot of tobacco in my suitcase, in plastic pouches I could pass to addicts. There was a limit on how much tobacco one was allowed to take in, so the Customs Officer who opened my suitcase noted

that I had a lot of tobacco. I told him I was a heavy smoker. So he smiled and closed the suitcase.

Matches were different. I had put in two boxes of about a hundred folders of paper matches each, and had opened one of these and used a few packs. When I left Salisbury my batman packed. I had inquired about tips, and had given him a dollar American. But, as he was about to put in the opened box of matches I told him he could have them, little realizing that he could sell the folders for a few cents each. This had a strange sequel.

I went from Salisbury to Lincoln College, Oxford, to visit my old friend Professor Sedgwick. He put me in a room that was furnished about the time of Queen Elizabeth (look up dates). When I rejoined him, he asked me if I had brought any soap. It seems soap was so scarce, at least in the civilian population that they had stopped dressing for dinner, a hardship on any British group, because they did not have soap with which to wash their stiff shirts. I told him that, unfortunately, I had no soap. But, when I went back and opened my suitcase, there was a complete layer of soap on top, which I gathered up and dumped on Sedgwick's desk. That evening at dinner when I was introduced to some professor he would say, "Oh, you're the chappie that brought the soap." Explanation?

Well, I think my batman was so grateful for the matches, that he gathered the soap all over the floor of the barracks and put it all in my suitcase.

One more small event. I left Oxford and went to visit my old and valued friend Cockcroft, where we discussed civilian uses of atomic energy, which Cockcroft guided for some years with great skill. When I left he furnished me with an automobile driven by a nice looking Waaf. We started for London, and I told her I was going to the Atheneum to meet some friends. I was astounded when she told me she had never before driven into London. So I told her to just follow the crowd, and after a while I began to recognize places, and we got to London without having to ask directions. Sheer luck. I am sure I could not have done it in Los Angeles.

~~While I am on the subject of happy relations with British friends, I have one more pleasant thing to record. I have already told about the conferring of post-war honors, which was carried out, with some difficulty, in ways that I hope were gracefully conducted. At least J. B. Conant and I tried to make it so.~~

~~(I think I have written the yarn about the degree at Cambridge. If I have not, I will).~~

~~(Pray do)~~

~~Here ~~my~~ ~~four~~ ~~and~~ ~~disposition~~ the discussion I fore-
warned about comes to an end, and we return to
Washington, where, after,~~

~~End here~~

he talked to me. The subject of the science board came up, and I said, "Mr. President, I wish you would leave me off that board; I know my name is on the list but I wish you would leave me off." He said, "Why?" and I said, "Well, I have been running about everything scientific during the war, and somewhat since, and I think people are getting tired of seeing this guy Bush run things around here. I think this outfit would do better if it had some new leadership. If you put me on the board, they will elect me chairman, and I do not think that the body of scientists are going to like this continuation of one man in the top post. So I think you would do better to let somebody else do it." Well, after a bit more talk, he agreed to leave me off the board. Then he said, "Well, Van, you are not looking for a job, are you?" And I said, "No, Mr. President, I am not looking for a job." He said, "You cannot say I went looking for this job that I am in." And I said, "No, Mr. President, not the first time," which tickled him a bit. He poked me in the ribs, and he said, "Van, you should be a politician. You have some of the instincts." I said, "Mr. President, what the hell do you think I was doing around this town for five or six years?"

That was my relationship with Truman. Very pleasant, very informal, and on a basis which I enjoyed greatly. For quite a while, I was close to him and I helped him all I could. But then it all stopped. ~~I believe it is seldom realized how important it is for the President to have capable, loyal aides about him. Harry Hopkins was my ideal in this regard.~~ I always thought, perhaps without reason, that I became inconvenient to Truman's palace guard, and got poisoned. At any rate all contact ceased. I never knew why. One time I was talking with Senator Anderson, and he said something about a thing I ought to take up with the President. I said, "Clint, I have no influence in the White House whatever." And he said, "What happened to you?" and I said, "I don't know, I guess I got in the way, and I got poisoned." He said, "You know, that happened to me once, and the President would not talk to me for months, and I never did find out what it was all about." And I never did find out, either, what it was all about. But that is what happened.

To continue the story, when Truman wanted a report on post-war science he named as chairman one of his staff, John Steelman. He appointed a committee, but Steelman did the work and wrote the report. I had been Chairman, after the war, of the Joint Research and De-

velopment Board, of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. When the Unification Act was passed it provided formally for a Research and Development Board, and Forrestal asked me to take the post of chairman, and I said to him, "Jim, it's no good. The President has lost confidence in me; it would not work." "Well," he said, "we had better see the President."

We went to see Truman and Truman said, "I want you to become chairman of that board," and I said, "Mr. President, it is no good; you have evidently lost confidence in me; you had better have a man that you have full confidence in." He hit the roof, and used characteristic language for Truman, and said, "What makes you think so?" I said, "For example, when F.D.R. wanted a report on post-war science he called on me. When you wanted a report, you called on John Steelman." "Yes," he said, "but you were on the committee." I said, "Sure I was on the committee but I never saw the report until it was in print." There was quite a silence after that. I do not think he had realized anything of the sort. Then he gave me a long harangue to the effect that he had full confidence in me, he wanted me to do this job, that he was going to lean on me just as much as he

ever had, and so forth and so on. I said, "Very good, Mr. President, I will take the job," and I did. After which he did not call on me again.

Now I do not know what came in to spoil that relationship. I probably never will know. But there is a possible though seemingly trivial explanation. It has to do with awards and honors. After the war, as after all wars, there was considerable to-do about recognition, credit, and so on, for work done. Lists of proposed recipients of medals and certificates were being put together by various agencies.

The Army and Navy had gotten out a list of civilian scientists and, as it appeared, it was not very good, not very accurate in appraisal of contributions. Conant and I felt we must delay this, and we delayed it by the simple statement that we would not join in that list and accept a medal unless ^{THE LIST} it was made better.

It was made better, but doing so took quite a little while. In the course of the time that we were waiting and getting it revised, the White House called me up and told me to be down there at eleven o'clock the next morning, to get decorated. I replied, "Unfortunately I cannot do so. I have the influenza." I had no influenza. But that was about the only basis on which one could refuse to go to the White House. I think somebody told Truman

that I ducked a ceremony of that sort, and I think that may have been why, or one reason why, he got mad at me. He certainly sounded mad the next time I saw him.

I also think that Truman later found out that there was nothing in it, and this is the reason I think so. A few years ago, one of my friends went into the museum where Truman's papers are being collected. I have never been there, but I would like to go there for this reason: when this friend of mine went in, one of the first things he saw was my picture hanging on the wall. Now it was not in a collection of pictures, according to him. It was sitting off by itself. I rather think that Truman found out later somehow that the fairy tale he had accepted had no basis in fact. He did not want to say so, and I have never met him since those days, so that I could bring it up, but I think when he was arranging things for his museum, he just stuck that picture up on the wall for that reason. This is pure surmise, but it may be so. If he did, it would be just like him.

Finally ~~on this~~ let me say this: not only were my relations with Truman excellent, but I really had admiration for the man. I saw him act as a statesman on a number of occasions. I saw him make tough decisions, and I think he was extraordinary. He enhanced my faith that our sometimes absurd political processes can and do produce leaders of stature.

Life in Washington can have its light moments. In fact I often tell friends that no one should work in government, with all its frustrations, unless he has a well developed sense of humor. At one time Truman was finally going to pin a medal on me. This promised to be interesting, for I thought he was still a bit mad at me at the time; ^{as I have said,} I had declined the medal only a little earlier until the list of honors had been cured of some of its defects. My wife, a young grandson, and I were waiting in the anteroom. In came a chap, then "Hello, John." "Hyar you, Van" and so on, and he went out. "Who is that?" said Phoebe; "That," said I, is "John Steelman." "But I thought you did not like John Steelman." "I don't, he hates my guts." "But you greeted each other like old friends." "That," I said, "is the custom of the town." The ceremony went smoothly enough; Truman was not mad at me after all; he took my grandson on his knee and presented him with a pen marked "Swiped from the desk of Harry S. Truman."

~~That about marked my exit from the national scene. Soon I was to give up, also, my position on the Research and Development Board. That was a frustrating experience, and I finally cracked up a bit under it. I had plenty of responsibility, but no backing from Secretary Forrestal.~~

How could he back me, in the job of sorting matters out between services? He never should have become Secretary of Defense; as Secretary of the Navy he had vigorously opposed unification, and then he stepped in to administer it. We all know the result. I should have had sense enough not to get involved in an impossible situation. And I was glad ~~xxxxxx~~ to get out of governmental affairs altogether.

duplication

Neither Truman, nor for that matter Eisenhower, at first understood the art of effective relations between the President and the scientific and engineering fraternity. It revolves about working with and through men who are genuinely and widely accepted as belonging to an unorganized but nevertheless real central group of leaders in the field. Fortunately, Eisenhower later saw the real point, and when Kennedy took over, he understood it very well indeed, and effective lines of communication were again established, and have continued ever since. True, we no longer have an independent agency on the development of new weapons. There is much doubt whether any such organization could succeed, in times of peace, or for that matter in times of limited war. Certainly it could never perform except under a president who took a real interest in it.

This brings me to a matter that has puzzled me deeply. In my opinion our military leaders during the war were by

far the finest this country ever produced. This is not merely that they were masters of military strategy, which they were. It is not merely that they thoroughly understood the handling of men, and how to inspire them to supreme effort. In addition, they caused a military alliance to operate effectively in ways ^{IN WHICH} ~~that~~ no such alliance had ever operated in the history of warfare.

In thinking about this matter, we need of course to distinguish Army and Navy. We also need to distinguish between those who operated at the top, close to the political system, concerned with grand strategy, and on the other hand the commanders in the field of battle. In the Navy Admiral King was in the first category, and a group of extraordinary leaders with the fleet. I have no hesitation in according tribute to King, even though I ~~shall~~ ^{HAD} have a bit to say ^{EARLIER} ~~later~~ about the difficulty of working with him. In the Army, and in the first category, Marshall and Eisenhower stand alone. Among field generals, I would place Bradley at the very top; I think he was the greatest field commander this country ever produced. Every citizen has a right to his opinions on such matters. Mine are tempered, inevitably, by the relations to military men to the advent of new, and revolutionary, methods of warfare. But it should be noted that all three of the

generals I here hail had very little indeed to do with the development of new weapons.

Neither Marshall nor Eisenhower had close contact with the advent of new weapons. Both of them dealt with interference from above, the ⁹fibes of jealous men, and were not deflected in the slightest degree from pursuit of their real objective. I link them in this tribute, although they differed greatly in personality. Yet neither was deeply interested in the evolution of modern weapons, an evolution which revolutionized the art of warfare which they had studied all their lives. Most of this gap was due, no doubt, to the fact that they were so burdened that there was not time for them to become acquainted with what was going on. Yet it was hard for me to understand; the new weapons as they appeared modified, sometimes radically, the massive effort they controlled, yet, as far as I know, neither attempted to look ahead to visualize what might be coming. Marshall was formally in the direct line of responsibility on the atomic bomb. I never discussed the subject in any detail with him. The only time he asked me about a new weapon it was on a very minor matter. When I went to France and took up the introduction of the proximity fuze into land combat, a move which Patton said **revealed** that the principles of

such combat had become obsolete, it was Bedell Smith I talked to at Versailles, not Eisenhower. So it was then I discussed whether Nazi progress on the atomic bomb threatened to become **determining** in the last days of the war in Europe.

There was one time only when I discussed new weapons with Eisenhower, and that was just after he became Supreme Commander for Overlord, the invasion of Normandy. We had long known of the German program on missiles. For the V-1, the buzz bomb, the Germans had constructed numerous launching sites on the Pas de Calais, in our full view. We had a group of civilians working closely with Army Intelligence on the matter. This group was headed by Alfred Loomis. There could not have been a better man for the purpose, for he had a unique background. He had made a fortune in the organization of public utilities, and later had been elected to the National Academy of Sciences on the basis of a distinct scientific accomplishment; not many men ever made that combination. There was no doubt of the German plan, the date of introduction of the buzz bomb, its general characteristics, the numbers per day that it was proposed to launch. Only the nature of the payload remained a mystery, even although the intelligence

group had interviewed a French contractor who had built one of the launching sites. We feared that some of the strange construction indicated a payload of poison gas, or even radioactive materials.

It became my task to brief Eisenhower on the threat. I did so, and said that, if the German program went as scheduled, with the buzz bombs directed on Plymouth and Bristol, it might well knock the plans for Overlord into chaos. When I finished Ike said, "You scare the hell out of me. What do we do?" I told him that was out of my field, but that it seemed to me intense bombing of sites was the only answer. Of course there were many other conferences on the matter. We know the outcome. The sites were bombed; Overlord went through as scheduled. Later, when radar-controlled anti-aircraft guns, using proximity fuzes, were mounted on the coast of Britain, the buzz bomb was completely countered.

The day the first buzz bomb fell on London, Secretary Stimson and I were bound for Capitol Hill in Washington, for a conference with Congressional leaders about the budget. As we rode along Pennsylvania Avenue, both of us thinking silently of the buzz bomb news, he put his hand on my knee, and said, "Well, Van, how do you feel now?" I said, "Very much relieved." That was all. The payload

of the buzz bomb was conventional explosive. If it had been nerve gas, civilization would have had a heavier jolt even than the one received at Hiroshima. And even nerve gas would have been less terrible than the possibilities of biological warfare.

When Eisenhower became president he appointed Lewis Strauss chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, and thereafter Strauss became his link for a time, as far as there was one, between the President and American science. The word is that the appointment was made at the recommendation of Herbert Hoover. Certainly neither one discussed it with me, or, as far as I can determine with anyone who had had close association with the field of atomic energy. I am not here going to analyze the career of Lewis Strauss, although it would be a fascinating subject for a biographer. Suffice it to say that Strauss was not accepted as a fellow member by the scientific community. One does not enter that community through success in banking, unless there is also a real contribution to scientific knowledge as was the case with Loomis. Strauss was not anxious for my collaboration on liaison between the White House and science. So I never saw Ike while he was president, except on a social basis. There

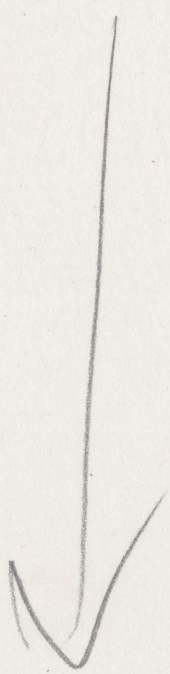
he was his genial attractive self. We were always thus on good terms. But I regretted that I could not be of more aid to him, for scientific and technical matters were still boiling in the country.

Later, as we know, just after the flight of Sputnik, Eisenhower brought in James R. Killian as Scientific Adviser to the President, together with a scientific advisory committee. This form of organization has persisted, and it certainly provides a direct means by which the President can obtain promptly the best of scientific advice on any problem before him. It will not work, of course, unless the President wants to use it. But it is excellent in concept. Through the members of the advisory group there is a linkage with all aspects of American science. We have had, ever since Lincoln established it, a National Academy of Science^s, supplemented by the National Research Council, charged with advice to government on scientific matters. For long years it operated feebly, for neither the Administrative branch nor the Congress knew how to use it, or cared to. This ^{CONDITION HAS} ~~is~~ much changed, and ^{THE ACADEMY NOW} ~~it~~ is decidedly active on all sorts of problems. It is to be noted that the advice is not rendered as the opinion of the Academy. It is the opinion of a small group, chosen by the Academy and Council, not necessarily

from its own membership, selected merely on the basis of competence. Thus, while I am a member of the Academy, it does not disturb me to see an opinion rendered with which I disagree heartily. Through the organization now existing in the President's office, this whole mechanism is now directly available to him, and to his Cabinet members and Bureau chiefs. The recent establishment of a National Academy of Engineering should also help. In addition there have been established within the military establishment offices held by scientists or engineers, advisory to the Secretaries, charged with supervision of the scientific and technical research and development conducted by Army, Navy, Air Force, both within their own organizations and by contract with universities and industry.

This is certainly a well-rounded organization for providing scientific and engineering advice where it is needed. There are two points that need comment. First, the Committees of Congress still get their scientific and technical advice in strange ways, or not at all. On the whole, they do not utilize the machinery which is readily available to them for getting expert unbiased advice along those lines, as they need to. There are exceptions of course, for there are a few men in the Congress who know

a great deal about science and engineering. But scientists and engineers seldom sit in legislative bodies. Neither do physicians, nor for that matter men from active business, nor men from the ranks of organized labor. Legislatures are made up principally of lawyers. I have nothing against lawyers as a group. But our lawmakers would do a better job if they represented all phases of American life, especially of the professions. But, ^{as with} ~~like~~ many other minor defects of our political system, we seem to be stuck with this one. The best we can hope for is that legislators will learn to get sound independent professional advice when they need it. They have not learned yet.



~~21 March 1968~~

~~Continuation for Presidents and Personages, or
Leaders and Leadership.~~

66

This history has been set down with two momentous subjects in view. The first is the relation between government and science, or, more specifically, between government and the broad process by which new technological ideas are fostered and developed for security and progress of the country. In the military field, we can view the relation with some satisfaction. Before World War II there was no really workable organization for the purpose in existence. Under the pressure of war, as has been told in another chapter, new organization was hastily innovated, and fortunately it worked. Since then an elaborate pattern has been developed, which is, without question, adequate for its intended purpose, provided it is really used.

No matter what the organization may be, unless the President wishes to use it and knows how to do so, it will be futile. This does not mean that the President must be burdened with one more task, added to the nearly impossible burden he inevitably carries. Rather, it merely means that interest and understanding on his part are required. For, if that interest is present and made evident, his senior subordinates, civilian and military will heed it, and the organization will be effective. He will see that they heed it, for he makes the choices of

our leaders in Cabinet and Armed Services. Unfortunately, the converse is also true. If his genuine interest and encouragement are not present, the whole thing will falter. And, when it does, the real leaders in science and technology will become discouraged and look the other way. This is not just a question of the further development of military weapons and systems. Advanced technology enters inevitably in all sorts of ways in our modern affairs, in urban renewal, transportation, crime control, pollution, and a dozen other serious subjects. Does this mean that we need presidents with scientific or technical backgrounds, a modern form of Plato's philosopher-king? Not at all. It ~~means~~ ^{calls for} leadership in a far broader sense. It involves the ability to use, to inspire, to sustain and encourage all sorts of men of ability, to earn their loyalty and urge them on. That is what a President is for.

This takes me to the second subject with which this history is concerned. As I think over the six Presidents I have had the privilege of serving under, or to whom I have had relations in less formal ways, my prime impression is that we, the American people, have had far better leaders than we deserve, far better than one would think our political process would produce.

For our method of electing a president is crude in the extreme. Pre-convention juggling with local political bigwigs is obscure, (often one fears, on a low plane) and it, and the travel and speechmaking cost millions, the sources of which are sometimes ~~obscure~~ ^{questionable}. Our national conventions are -- at best -- ludicrous, and at worst scandalous. ^{questionable.}

They are conducted by delegates, chosen oft times without much attention to the public will, and committed to vote in strange ways, or not committed at all. Out of all this appears a nominee and a platform, the latter often drawn by others, to which ~~he~~ ^{the nominee} is assumed to be committed, but to which no one pays much attention. Then follows the campaign -- more travel, speeches, television interviews, which would exhaust a Spartan. Finally then eventuates, not an election, but the action of a thoroughly obsolete electoral college, which may elect a man, and has done so, with fewer votes than his opponent, or which may elect no one and throw the ultimate choice into the House of Representatives, where each state has one vote, and Alaska is as powerful as New York or California. What an absurd performance.

Yet, out of it, have appeared great presidents, ranging from men such as Hoover or Eisenhower, of no apparent political skill, ^{to} such as John F. Kennedy, as skilled a man politically as this country has produced, yet one who developed an approach to the minds and hearts of people, not only here but everywhere in the world, such that when he died he was mourned more sincerely than any man since Lincoln. Or Truman, picked as Vice Presidents usually are merely to garner a few more votes for the ticket, who became a statesman under stress. Or, ~~finally~~ Roosevelt, who, whatever else might be said, led us out of the wilderness.

There must be something more, beyond the absurd machinery, some subtle way in which the public will becomes exerted, some force beyond political manipulation, unrecognized yet powerful. I believe there is, and that I have seen it work.

And I believe this is becoming more effective as the years go by. We are slowly becoming more mature. Television has helped here, whatever it may have done in the way of instructing potential criminals. So have more facile transportation, the press, and the commentators. When I get downcast I read history. On this matter I go

back and read about Tipp^ecanoe and Tyler too --
slogans, mudslinging, torchlight processions, and not
a policy or principle in sight. We may yet be crude,
but we have come far.

So I end by paying tribute to the Presidents who
have touched and altered my life, and the lives of
millions: far different one from another, human, with
human frailties, but also with human capability to
rise to the occasion, great men all.

Old copy

VI

Of Presidents and Personages

"The choice and master spirits of this age."

-- Julius Caesar, III, 1.

I was listening to Herbert Hoover make a speech, out under the trees in the Bohemian Grove. In the background near me was a young Armenian. If I ever saw adoration in a man's eyes, I saw it then. He was a waiter, working for a prosperous Armenian who dropped all his business affairs each year and came up to the Grove to take care of the Chief, and who did so because he believed, no doubt correctly, that neither he nor his family would be alive if it had not been for Hoover's relief efforts after the first war. There was a large section of the American public that thus revered Herbert Hoover. The rest of the public did not really begin to understand him until near the end.

Hoover was the first of a series of presidents that I had the privilege of serving in one way or another. And he was a fellow engineer, so we had a firm meeting ground.

He was a great organizer, and a go-getter in the best sense. But he was no politician as the word is usually understood, even although he became president. I think this

was not because he failed to grasp the politician's arts. He just disdained them. Those arts can be genuine, legitimate, and sometimes essential for the workings of a democratic system. But they can also be despicable. There is no more sordid chapter than the attacks on Herbert Hoover by Mitchell during the 1932 campaign. I witnessed a bit of its effect when I found myself, during the war, reporting for a time, on quite different bases, to both Hoover and Roosevelt, and it strongly influenced my estimate of the latter for I never understood how he could let it occur. It also furnished moments when I had to be sure I remembered which one I was with.

Hoover's experience of being unfairly attacked in a senseless manner, and Roosevelt's failure to work things out with him during the interregnum, did great harm to the American people. One wonders how long it will take the public to become sufficiently perceptive so that political maneuvers that shock our sense of decency, or that injure our true interests, will certainly backfire.

Hoover had none of the charm of Roosevelt or Churchill, none of the engaging wit of Lovett or Acheson. He was deep rather than brilliant, even although his failure to grasp economic trends as the whole country went beserk in 1929

furnished the saddest chapter in his remarkable career. How is it possible for a man to understand the ways of business - for he did and made a fortune quite legitimately by his efforts in that field - and fail to understand mass psychology and the vagaries of the public? How could he grasp so well the distress of millions after World War I and do something about ^{it} /in magnificent fashion, and fail to see the plight of the bonus marchers? No one has yet explained it, and it should be done, for we could all learn much if we could see why the gap was present.

One time I was fishing for bass with him, sitting in a rowboat on a pond, dangling lines over the side. Neither of us cared for that sort of fishing, but we had to be courteous to our host, who thought we liked it. We had not had a bite for an hour or so, and he was giving me a lecture on economics. It was a good lecture, although the economics he expounded was a bit obsolescent. He was in the middle of a sentence when a bass struck his line. He got the fish under control, and finished the sentence. No one else I ever knew would do that.

He was a keen fisherman, and he wanted to match his wits against the fish. Why do men like to fish? Many, undoubtedly, do so because they grasp the opportunity to relax and enjoy the beauty of nature. This has never been

well expounded in the mountain of books on fishing, except by Earl Grey, and he did it so magnificently that there is no need for anyone else to try. Still I think there are few who fish for that reason. I know that when I am working up on a nice hole in a brook a bird would have to peck me on the ear to get my attention, and a spray of blossoms would hear from me only if it entangled my dry fly. We can also disregard those fishermen who try to make a contest out of it, or who find their joy in prancing into camp with a heavy basket; John Buchan has pretty well taken care of their motivations. My guess is that most men that like to fish do so because they want to demonstrate to themselves that they can think like a fish, even although many generations have passed since this was an essential element of survival. And I think Herbert Hoover was thus motivated. Once a thunder shower interrupted our attention to an attractive brook and we sought refuge for an hour on an abandoned piazza. He told me some fascinating yarns about his early days as a mining engineer, in Burma and elsewhere. But I do not remember that he mentioned a bird or a flower, or remarked on the pattern of drops on the quiet surface of the brook.

The way in which I met him is revealing. We were guests of William Cameron Forbes on Naushon Island. And,

to present all the implications I need to digress to write something about Cam Forbes, who was nearly the last of the old tribe of Boston Brahmins.

That tribe was descended from pioneers, those who sent the Clipper ships to China and the Gold Coast of California, or who brought rum from the West Indies. Cam's father was one of the organizers of American Telephone and Telegraph Company, and Cam never let anyone forget it. He himself had been Governor of the Philippine Islands and he never let anyone forget that either.

The tribe felt it had the right, and also the duty, to run everything in sight. There were of course members of the tribe who had no such urge, and some who were bewildered, as John P. Marquand, and to some extent Cleveland Amory, have made clear. But I am concerned with those who felt strongly that they should carry on in the spirit of their ancestors, even although some of the ancestors had not enhanced the public's welfare appreciably. They accepted outsiders, whose ancestors had not done anything striking, into their circle, but only after testing them to be sure they should not be thrust into outer darkness.

Now Cam was the monarch of Naushon Island, the sole trustee, who paid the bills. And all the nephews and

nieces and so on kowtowed or kept out of his way. He was Chairman of the Board when I joined the Carnegie Institution of Washington, and a minor battle was needed before it became clear who was running the show. I remember one session of the Executive Committee, where I was trying to settle a matter of policy, and Cam took up all the meeting criticizing the English in my report. Fortunately I was sitting beside Walter Gifford, then President of A. T. & T., and as my steam pressure was reaching the explosion point, he whispered in my ear, "Keep your shirt on, Van; he does the same thing to me."

But don't let me give the wrong impression; Cam had skills, and he developed them. He could work a sailboat out of a crowded anchorage, with a head wind and a stiff breeze, and he could do it far better than I could, as I know for I tended backstays for him and got well soaked in the process. He kept a fine stable of horses, played match polo until he was sixty, furnished mounts to the Harvard Polo Team. At his place in Georgia he drove a coach and four through narrow crooked roads. He did this to show me he could, and to impress upon me that I could not. On that occasion I had a fortunate break. Returning from a ride, my wife and Cam went into the gardens, and I rode back to the stables with the Irish stablekeeper. On

the way back to the stable the whole equipage became thoroughly messed up, horses all tangled up in the harnesses, facing the wrong way, rearing and snorting. I think a bee bit a horse. I stood watch to warn if Cam approached while the stablekeeper unsnarled. The next morning Cam and I went to the stables, the Irishman paraded the horses, and one had a yellow chafe mark on his flank. When Cam yelled, "What's that?" I remarked quietly, "I wondered what that was when we were down here yesterday morning." Cam was not easily fooled, but I took him in that time. I also acquired an Irish friend for life. That friendship saved me many a grief, when Cam would put me on one of his smart polo ponies, I trust just under the mistaken impression that I could ride a horse, and not under some impulse to see me dumped in the bushes.

Cam and I would come out of the Manor to where the Irishman was holding two beautiful mounts. I would greet him formally, look at the scenery, and say softly, "What am I up against?" The reply would be likely to be, "For God's sake don't stick your foot out where this nag can see it." One time ^{when} we were out on a sheep drive, a young member of the clan was having trouble, his mount was rearing, coming down stiff legged, and looked as though he might bolt. Cam said, "Doctor, I wish you would take that

boy's horse, I am afraid he will get hurt." Whether he worried about the boy or the horse I do not know. So I said, "Very good, Governor" and stopped by the Irishman for a moment, who said, "The horse is all right, he just has a sore mouth." So I told the boy the Governor wanted us to exchange horses. "I don't wanna change horses." "Get off that horse, you young squirt, before I pull you off." So I put him aboard my mount, headed his toward a clump of bushes so that he would at least have to turn before bolting, and swung into the saddle. Nothing happened. I rode him the rest of the day, guiding him by knee and voice, and I never rode a better behaved horse. I never once touched the bit to his mouth.

So, it was in the Manor House at Naushon that Herbert Hoover and I met. It was a Sunday morning, everyone else had gone to church; I was sitting on the piazza watching the gulls, and Hoover was in the front room writing a speech. After a while he came out and said to me that he had to give that speech the next day, there was something wrong with the last part, and would I look it over and tell him what caused the disquiet. After reading the speech carefully, I did make a suggestion. He agreed, and the speech was fixed. But no man with an inflated ego ever does that sort of thing with a younger man, and very few men

who have held the greatest posts in the country would come anywhere near it. I promptly joined the ranks of the considerable company who were proud to call him "Chief."

The other incident was still more revealing. Hoover and I were chatting in a room of the Manor, probably called the parlor. Cam came in, and, in my presence, proceeded to take Hoover to task for violating one of Cam's many rules, and smoking in the wrong room. Whereupon he left. I was obviously wishing there were a trap door I could drop through, and could not get out a word. But Hoover said "Forget it. We both know the old man. And he can't help it." It has been said that Hoover was not a keen judge of his fellowmen. He certainly was in that instance. For one thing he created in me a devotion which never left me.

So much has been written about Franklin Roosevelt that I hesitate to add. But there are one or two incidents that illuminate an aspect of his character which has received little attention. He was a master of the dramatic at times, but he was also, responsibilities aside, essentially simple in his relations with friends and family.

My wife and I went to a state dinner for the Queen of Holland. The gold service was out, and all the uniforms were spick and span and the gowns were of course stunning, although I cannot remember ever having been personally stunned by a gown. There were about forty couples and a great oval table. As the dinner ended Mrs. Roosevelt attempted to break it up. But the President was deeply involved in discussion with the two ladies at his sides. Did she call a waiter and send a message? Not at all. She said, loudly enough to penetrate the conversation, "Yoo hoo, Franklin," and that did it.

The ladies left, and the men gathered in knots of six or eight. The group around the President kept changing, for no one would appear to monopolize that position. Then the President started to rise. There was complete silence, all came to attention, and the group about him drew back. He slowly snapped the iron braces into position on his legs, braced himself on the arms of the chair, slowly rose, and then took the arm of his aide and withdrew. Here was the most powerful man in the world, surrounded by powerful men, with a severe physical handicap which he could disregard, or which he could use to give an unequalled dramatic touch. Did he do it that way on purpose? Of course he did. Why not?

One time, when the submarine war on shipping was critical, but the tide was beginning to turn because of the advent of two new antisubmarine weapons, one British and one American, I was reporting to him on the subject, and was answering his questions, which were very much to the point. The door of his office opened, and in came Mrs. Roosevelt who had been away on a short trip. She went around behind his chair, kissed him, greeted me by my nickname (which nearly everyone used, presumably because they cannot pronounce my full name), sat down across the room and said, "Go ahead, Franklin, we have plenty of time." So we continued our discussion. Once in a while she would ask a question, and the President would turn and explain the point to her. I had seen just a bit of a similar wholesome relation, between Winston Churchill and his lady. And I came out wondering if people would ever believe that great men, carrying enormous burdens, would thus exemplify what is most heartening, and least recognized, in happy relations between husband and wife. The greater men are, I am convinced, greater in the best sense, the more simple are their relations likely to be, the more wholesome, in their homes and with their friends.

This quality in President Roosevelt -- this quality of warm heartedness -- ran through other experiences that I knew about. For instance, one time well along in the war, Niels Bohr, the great Danish physicist who was in this country doing what he could to help with the scientific war effort, got the idea that he must see the President about some plan that he had for the end of the war and the peace terms. He explained it to Tolman and Tolman told me the problem he had before him. The trouble was that, while Bohr could discuss physics with physicists in masterly fashion, when he stepped out of his normal field he was very hard to follow. I saw the President one day and I said to him, "I would appreciate it, Mr. President, if you would see Professor Bohr for a few minutes." I told him who he was, and what an eminent scientist he was. I said, "He is very anxious to see you and I think it would help toward good will if you would personally talk to him." The President said, "What's he want to see me about?" And I said, "He has a plan regarding ending the war, and peace terms." He said, "Do you think I will be able to understand him?" And I said, "No, I do not think you probably will." He said, "Never mind, bring him in." I did and Bohr said his say and went away happy. I feel sure the President treated him with the utmost courtesy. I do not