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Forgiving the fallen angel

The rehabilitation of Richard M. Nixon will not be complete until he is invited to deliver the keynote address at the next convention of Americans for Democratic Action.

That such an epiphany is not the impossible dream can be seen in the recent *Newsweek* cover of a handsome, smiling Mr. Nixon with the headline: "He's Back: The Rehabilitation of Richard Nixon, An Exclusive Interview." Marvelous woman, Kay Graham — first her daily *Washington Post* crucified him as Beelzebub, prince of the devils, and 13 years later, her news magazine has resurrected him as a fallen angel. To forgive is divine.

The Newsweek cover story says Mr. Nixon was guilty of "coverup, perjury, destruction of evidence, hush money, bugging, tax evasion, campaign-financing abuses, political dirty tricks, and use of IRS, the CIA, and the FBI to hound their enemies. Without Gerald Ford's pardon, Nixon might well have gone to jail." The concluding sentence of the

story says: "The nation he betrayed will never really understand him."

Venial sins all, for which, if you know how the wind blows, there are indulgences, dispensations, and pardons. The magazine says, "The newest Richard Nixon has rehabilitated himself, after a fashion — and he is expanding his influence in the White House and the Republican Party."

What is, obviously, cheerful news for the anti-Reagan *Washington Post-Newsweek* and its allies should be frightening news for conservatives, neo-conservatives, and the American voting majority. For one thing, Mr. Nixon is not a conservative. He's a Republican, but, then, so is Connecticut Senator Lowell Weicker. Mr. Nixon's probably increased influence with President Reagan and the White House staff may account for his newly found popularity with the liberal-left.

Let us recall that during his six years in office, President Nixon presented the electorate with:

- Federal wage and price controls for the first time in the nation's peacetime history.
- Fiscal and monetary policies

which drove the inflation rate to its highest peacetime level.

- Proposals for a \$20 billion guaranteed income welfare plan and a \$30 billion national health insurance plan.

- An agreement to expel Nationalist China from the United Nations followed by a concomitant accord with Communist China.

- Under Salt I, acceptance of inferiority in strategic arms vis-a-vis the U.S.S.R. and agreement to an illusory detente which disintegrated while he was still in office.

It was the bulletin of the *National Review* (April 19, 1974), which said that "Richard Nixon is himself not a conservative in any reflective or committed sense." It was a piquant irony, said William Buckley's publication, that many American conservatives had harnessed themselves "into tandem with one who is not and has never been a conservative in either theory or practice." And on the other end of the political spectrum, so stalwart a defender of Stalinism as Professor Eugene Genovese, the Marxist historian, described Mr. Nixon as a practitioner of "right-wing liberalism."

Two years earlier, the same bulletin had attacked Mr. Nixon because under his presidency "[the United States] has become a markedly less free society. In both procedure and substance, the New Economic Policy is authoritarian, regimenting, autarchic. With respect to the NEP, Richard Nixon is ruling by decree, not by law. Not in present fact, but in direction and tendency, the NEP is national socialist."

Conservatives were so disenchanted with Mr. Nixon that, according to the Nov. 8, 1971, *Newsweek*, William Buckley and "a dozen Tory ideologues" were then exploring a 1972 primary challenge against President Nixon. Given such a history, Mr. Nixon is an obvious candidate as an ADA keynoter, especially now that he has achieved the ultimate accolade, a *Newsweek* cover.

Why shouldn't Kay Graham resurrect President Nixon? If only he were five years younger, the 73-year-old Mr. Nixon might even be a candidate for president, despite the 22nd "anti-third term" amendment. After all, as *Newsweek* points out, "The

premise of his rehabilitation is that — Watergate aside — Nixon left a legacy of solid achievement, especially in foreign affairs." The magazine tells us that "Nixon has carefully staked out a slightly more moderate position than Reagan's on detente and terrorism."

"Slightly more moderate"? That code phrase will not be lost on ADA talent scouts. (Thank God, they must be thinking down at *The Washington Post*, somebody's got a rein on Mr. Reagan.) Mr. Nixon concedes that some people may not think he's anti-Communist but that's not so: "I happen to be anti-Communist, perhaps in a somewhat more sophisticated way than most of the current hawks ... and therefore considered by some of them to be a closet dove."

But there is every reason to consider Mr. Nixon a "closet dove," sophisticated or not, one whose ideas on foreign policy, if implemented, would injure U.S. security. A careful reading of his fall 1985 *Foreign Affairs* article, "Superpower Summitry," and his book, *No More Vietnams* should persuade an informed reader that Mr. Nixon is writing about a world that no longer exists, the world in which the Nixon-Kissinger-Sonnenfeldt combine persuaded itself that by being nice to Leonid Brezhnev and by exchanging bear hugs we could establish peace in our time and not worry that in military preparedness the United States had become No. 2. What else was Nixonian "detente"? Did it really differ much from the Carter-Vance-Shulman dealings with the Soviet Union? Mr. Nixon may claim he is not a closet dove, but how should we interpret his views on Nicaragua:

"Some of the hawks are saying, 'Let's go in and knock off the Sandinistas.' Well, we could do that, but ... what are you going to do with it when you conquer it? That's the problem with Nicaragua; who's going to run the damned place? Therefore the military option is not one that is very useful. That is why you have to have it done by Nicaraguans [the 'contras']."

Now that's really encouraging anti-Communist resistance. First, you create a fiction called "some of the hawks," then you present phony alternatives — invasion and occupa-

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tion. Last, you present a *reductio ad absurdum* issue: "Who's going to run the damned place?" — when the real issue is who's *not* going to run the damned place. The issue for Mr. Nixon is not Soviet imperialism and Communist Cuba, oh, no; it's "some of the hawks." And that's known as "a slightly more moderate position."

It is no wonder that Kay Graham and her merry band think that Nixon deserves a *Newsweek* cover story. It's the least they could do for Mr. Nixon, now that he has been so successfully rehabilitated that he is adviser-in-chief to President Reagan on foreign policy and Nevada Sen. Paul Laxalt, incredibly, has anointed him as the Republican Party's one and only "elder statesman."

The resurrection of Richard Milhous Nixon and a possible Nixon-Graham alliance may well require the resurrection of 'Deep Throat.' Messrs. Woodward and Bernstein, please note on Page 30 of the Nixon cover story the oh-so-infectious laughter and gaiety as President Nixon and Mrs. Graham rip hands.

Ts-ts-ts-ts. Was it all br naught?