



GUESS WHO FOR '72?

by Jeff Greenfield

An uncalled-for political announcement

A recurrent nightmare: I am condemned to spend Eternity in the space-time continuum of New York City between the present and July of 1972, shuttling from one cocktail party to another. Each one is louder, smokier, more desperately hysterical than the last. And worse, at each one I enter I can hear, faintly at first, then building to a roar, the Chant of the Eastern Liberal:
"Humphrey's impossible, Muskie's a cipher, McCarthy's a mystic, McGovern can't win; Jackson's a jingoist, Lindsay's incompetent, Teddy's not running, So Nixon is in!
(Pass me a Frito, We'll sing it again).
Humphrey's impos. . . ."

Waking in a cold sweat from this black dream, I conclude that only a sadistic Founding Father could have designed our politics so that the Presidential election year always has 366 days; amending M. Sartre, Hell Is Other People Talking About the 1972 Election.

Yet, because despair is alien to my nature, I have lately been soothed by an alternative vision. Yes, I have a dream:

It is July, 1972, at Miami Beach. A hopelessly deadlocked Democratic convention waits in urgent silence as a hastily convened Unity Caucus—George Meany, Jesse Jackson, Gloria Steinem, César Chavez, Senator Edward Kennedy, Sam Brown, Frank Rizzo, and Al Lowenstein—mounts the rostrum and speaks in unison:

"Ladies and gentlemen, we are proud to place in nomination the name of the one man with the record, the experience, and the appeal to win in November and reclaim America: the next President of the United States, the Honorable Lyndon Baines Johnson!" Cheers, nomination by acclamation, and glorious victory in November.

Do not say it is Impossible. That is no longer a valid objection to *any* political scenario. The Impossible is simply a working definition of the next news bulletin an instant before it hits the ticker; that is one lesson we have surely all learned from the Sixties. Only political columnists, their assumptions arrayed in an impregnable Maginot Line, pointing unerringly toward the last campaign, still hold to Impossibilities, the last certified Impossibility being that an incumbent President could not be turned out of office by his own party. Can we really say that a former incumbent President cannot be returned to office by his own party? No, it is on the merits and on the hard political realities that a Johnson Restoration must be debated; on both counts, the ex-President's strength is decisive.

No one—not his most serious detractors, not Barbara Garson, not Al Lowenstein—can argue the issue of Johnson's achievements and competence. Medicare, federal aid to education, the War on Poverty, the Voting Rights Act and the Public Accommodations Act, immigration reform, all accomplished within three years (before the war began to drain his energy). Worthy appointments to the bench and federal agencies, from Thurgood Marshall and Abe Fortas (brilliant if careless) to the Supreme Court, to mavericks like Nick Johnson on the F.C.C. A sense of Congress in sharp contrast to both John Kennedy (who could not get legislation through) and to Richard Nixon (who does not know what he wants apart from another term). Of all the Democratic candidates, only *one*—John Lindsay—has been tested in the crucible of contemporary executive pressure, and Lindsay is simply too new to the party and too burdened by the State of New York (pun) to be a serious contender. All of the others speak from the sanctuary of the Senate, their response to peril untested. A Johnson Restoration would bring to the Presidency the only man in contemporary history who would be certifiably unshaken by the burden.

But what of the Johnsonian character, the outsized, overwhelmingly personal Presidency, the sense of an enraged giant monitoring news tickers, plotting target-by-target bombing of North Vietnam, grabbing the nation by the lapels and shaking it into adopting his vision of national destiny? It is undeniable that by the start of 1968, when many of us, including myself, were seeking to unseat him, both Johnson's Presidency and the social fabric were at the breaking point, stretched beyond endurance. It was as though all of America was living Lyndon's twenty-hour-a-day pace, without benefit of his midday naps and retreats to the ranch. He pursued his causes with the patience and tranquillity of Ahab; by the end, we had all become his White Whale, shafted once too often by his harpoon.

But the three and a half years since he has left the White House have changed Lyndon Johnson fundamentally. For thirty-seven years, Johnson was ceaselessly involved with the exercise of power: from Congressional assistant to National Youth Administrator for Texas to Congressman, Senator, Majority Leader, Vice-President, and finally President. And the key to this experience is that power does not simply corrupt—it weakens. At each step, the distance from Johnson to the consequences of power extended. By 1968, that reach—from the jungles of Vietnam and the streets of

our cities—had become too far. Johnson's reach *exceeded* his grasp, and that gap had become his Hell.

Now, for the first time in his adult life, Lyndon has been away from power, free to contemplate the limits of human wisdom and the value of reflection. He seems to have become a man more at ease with himself, as we can see in his book *The Vantage Point*. Old enemies are treated with detachment; old quarrels with subordinates and political rivals are discussed thoughtfully, almost sorrowfully. If we recognize that men can change—Robert Kennedy after his brother's murder, Edmund Muskie with respect to the war—then why not Lyndon Johnson? Imagine Lyndon's drive, energy, knowledge, and competence, fused with wisdom and patience. Such a President could reshape the nation without forever jabbing its nerve ends.

There is, of course, the war. No doubt some will say that the man whose decisions took 45,600 American lives and the lives of hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese, devastated the life of one nation and divided another, and wasted \$120,000,000,000 should not rule again.

In the first place, nobody's perfect.

Second, the war is clearly winding down. Nixon has managed to replace American troops with American bombs and Asian boys. It is at least possible that, just as Nixon withdrew Lyndon's men, Lyndon could withdraw Nixon's bombers. Further, since the two Presidents have managed to level a working majority of Vietnamese hamlets and families, there just isn't that much more damage to be done. Indeed, if Vietnam was the turning point in American foreign policy, if its insanity showed even so professional an anti-Communist as Richard Nixon the need for détente with Moscow and Peking, perhaps Johnson will be recognized as the man who put into motion the policies that turned us away from nuclear holocaust. No doubt the surviving Vietnamese can be proud of the historical role their sons and brothers helped to play in the shaping of a great world community.

There is yet one more fundamental argument for a Johnson Restoration, but it is necessary first to face hard practical reality. Can he win? It is when we examine this issue that the genius of a Johnson candidacy becomes apparent.

First, L.B.J. would completely undercut a Nixon Southern strategy. He would come into a campaign with Texas and its twenty-six electoral votes in his pocket; and Texas is the linchpin of any Southern strategy. Further, Johnson's appeal in the South would all but erase the value of Nixon's choice of a son of Dixie as his running mate. And anytime you can remove a potentially attractive option of an opponent, you have scored a major triumph.

Second, Johnson is perhaps the *only* Democrat who could begin to match Nixon's money-raising capacities. The Democratic Party is so broke that the telephone company has threatened to refuse phone service in 1972 unless it pays the \$1,500,000 it owes from 1968. (The prospect of carrier pigeons and marathon runners for the 1972 campaign unnerves the most anti-Johnsonian of Democrats.) L.B.J., remember, managed to raise money from the United Auto Workers and Henry Ford II, from H. L. Hunt and the A.D.A., from bankers, blacks, and intellectuals, all at the same time. His firm stand in favor of the oil-depletion allowance should tap that source of funds. This means access to TV and radio time, and well-fueled political organizing, without which a Presidential campaign is doomed to defeat.

Third, Johnson is the only (Continued on page 159)

is cold, and maybe carrying a ladder for a long distance so you can staple an eighty-foot sign on the side of a barn. You don't feel like you're doing something romantic when you're on hands and knees in a sewer or hanging onto the side of a barn at four a.m.

"The question of legality always comes up. The stock criticism I get sick and tired of hearing is that two wrongs don't make a right. If I'm being strangled by someone, I don't need a judge and jury to decide whether or not this is actually a fact. I'll take the law into my own hands before they get around to deciding the legality of the action. I will always obey the law until something begins to threaten the health and safety of me and my fellowman. Then

I'll react as an animal reacts and take my consequences.

"When my time comes, I hope no one drains my veins of their sustaining fluid and fills them with formaldehyde, then wastes me by putting me in a concrete box in the ground for eternity.

"Rather, just a simple pine box with an acorn on top of it. Find a place where a tree is needed and return me to nature. When the acorn grows, I can nourish it and give back in some measure what I've taken. Maybe someday kids can crawl in my branches or a raccoon might curl up in my trunk or the larks can sing out from my leaves. At any rate, I would rather let an oak tree be my epitaph than a marble slab be my tombstone." #

THE LAST WORDS OF A SOLEDAD BROTHER

(Continued from page 111) state-counter-terrorism—is the real significance of the August 7th affair. To Jonathan, the striking exposure was "audacity, audacity, and more audacity." Theory and practice, strategy and tactics were based in his mind on actual confrontation within "this" particular historical development. He must have calculated that *foco* [people's] army activity that was hidden and nameless, operating where the objective conditions for revolution already existed and had existed for a dozen decades, would survive and grow if, at the same time, the Black Panther political apparatus continued to develop its autonomous infrastructure. Proof of his theory was built right into the action: five desperate men were offered arms as a means to freedom—three took them.

Proof of the role of law within the totalitarian-authoritarian relationship was also built into the action. In a fit of reckless, mindless gunfire, one hundred automated goons shot through the bodies of a judge, district attorney, and three female noncombatants to reestablish control over all activity. To prevent certain actions, no cost in blood is too high.

It would seem that so much free fire would be difficult to explain, but it is not. Freedoms are invariably being protected with this gunfire. Freedom must then be interpreted a thousand separate ways, but it actually comes down to freedom for a few families and their friends—freedom to prey upon the world.

Acceptance of enslavement is deeply buried in the pathogenic character types of capitalism. It is a result of the sense of dread and anxiety which is the lot of all men under capitalist rule. Compulsive behavior and disordered obsessional longings are actually made synonymous with "character" in our disordered society. But to emphasize these conditions before examining the institutions from which they spring is to confuse effect with cause and further cloud the point of attack. So far, cultural analysis has established that the psychosis is so ingrained, the institutions so centralized, that what is needed is total revolution, the armed struggle between the haves-nots with their vanguard and the haves

with their hirelings or macabre freaks that live through them, civil war between at least these two sections of the population is the only purgative. Total revolution must be aimed at the purposeful and absolute destruction of the state and all present institutions, the destruction carried out by the so-called psychopath, the outsider, whose only remedy is destruction of the system. This organized massive violence directed at the source of thought control is the only realistic therapy.

Analysis of the oppressed mentality and the psychopathic personality that accrue from contact with the prevarications of Amerikan culture must be carefully integrated with the analysis of the source. Simple interpretation of effects tends to calcify—it certainly promotes defeatism. "Action makes the front." One can quietly refuse to accept the constrictions of bourgeois culture,

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(Continued from page 113) Democrat with the proven ability to unite the essential elements of a Democratic victory: the South, labor unions, and racial minorities.

Labor, which supported both Johnson's domestic and foreign policies, would be a sure thing for Lyndon; a simple recitation of the unemployment figures would clinch it. Blacks and browns could contrast Johnson's achievements with the Supreme Court appointments and Justice Department behavior of Nixon and Mitchell. This leaves only leftist intellectuals to start a fourth party; a few reruns of, say, Nixon's Cambodia speech or the selected works of Spiro Agnew would scare most of them back to the Democrats. As for the rest, a handful of radicals, Yuppies, and New York elitists attacking Johnson should help Lyndon, by undercutting the "social" issue. Their opposition would give Lyndon a sense of moderation that would warm the hearts of Scammon and Wattenberg.

L.B.J. might even make substantial inroads into the disaffected conservatives.

"When I was President," he could say, "Red China was out of the U.N.; today, the flag of Communist China flies

can reject himself, hate the self and turn inward. By so doing he accomplishes a form of individual revolt, but here again we find another unconscious manifestation of the thing we hate—individualism—a now attitudinal instrumentality of bourgeois culture. We cannot escape—one simply cannot reject constrictions without rejecting and putting to death the constrictor. An armed attacker cannot be ignored. Gandhi and the gurus were all abject fools. I would certainly be dead if, when critical flash points matured, I hadn't backed my rejection with blows. I would hate to have been a Vietnamese in Mylai without arms. I hate encounters like the one at my last court appearance on April 6, 1971, when the enemies who attacked me had all the weapons. I would hate to run into freaks who have Mike Hammer/J. Edgar Hoover complexes without being armed. My pledge is to arms, my enemies are institutions and any men with vested interests in them, even if that interest is only a wage. If revolution means civil war—I accept, and the sooner begun the sooner done.

I don't think the enemy can be identified any more carefully than this. Further identification must be made in the process. I feel elated that my brother died with two guns in hand. I'm going to miss him and all the others, though death in our situation is only a release. I miss people intensely. I miss him intensely, but he and the others who sought freedom died at the throat of the principal repressive institution of the empire—they died making real attempts at freedom.

I paraphrase Castro on trial after Moncada: "I warn you, gentlemen, I have only begun!"

George

at the United Nations and the Hotel Roosevelt; Chinese agents walk the streets of New York. There were no bureaucratic wage and price controls strangling the free-enterprise economy." The editorialists of the *Chicago Tribune* and the *New York Daily News* would have a hard time rebutting that kind of campaign.

As for L.B.J.'s choice of running mates, there are two desirable possibilities. First, Edward Kennedy, who would be under strong pressure to reciprocate for what Johnson did in 1960. "I took second place to Jack Kennedy in 1960 and that won him the election," Johnson could say. "I campaigned for Bobby in 1964 when he ran 1,500,000 votes behind me in New York. Now I'm asking you to return the favor. I'm only eligible for one term; then the White House is yours in 1976, when you want it anyway."

If Teddy refuses, Johnson could then turn to another Democrat with strong labor and minority appeal, with a record of electoral success: Harry Truman. He is eligible under the 22nd Amendment, and his age could well bring out America's 20,000,000 senior citizens to back the man who first proposed National Health care more than twenty years ago. His anti-big-business rhetoric—muted though it may be—fits the new

Nader-populism mood perfectly.

But finally, as politics must always be, it is principle, not practicality, that must decide. If Johnson has changed in four years, so has the country. If there is less killing in Vietnam, less rioting on the streets and campuses, there is also far less excitement and energy in the bloodstream of America. Johnson took us on a speed trip—Nixon has shot us through with Novocain.

Now it is true that speed kills; but it also energizes. The explosion of creative energy under the Johnson years—in rock, movies, theatre, art—can in part be traced to the acceleration of the national pace, seeking to keep up with the Maximum Leader. Nixon has settled a cloud of lassitude on the country; the much-claimed Death of Rock can stand as a metaphor for the Death of Creativity under an insulated, artificial President, hidden from us but for the pronouncements of his Animatronics staff. The bellow of rage of the Sixties has been replaced by the yawn of the Fifties. (Did they *design* David Eisen-

hower to look like a cross between Howdy Doody and Dick Powell?)

The truth is, Nixon did much of what he promised in the sense of slowing down America and we are bored stiff. America has always been willing to pay in blood for its thrills—look at stock-car races and professional football—and Johnson offers us the prospect of both. He was a real human being, careening down dusty Texas roads hurtling beer cans to the wind, showing us the scars of the stomach and psyche, permitting newsmen to shape policy by his habit of doing the reverse of whatever was printed (an intelligent news corps could insure four years of peace by predicting the invasion of every nation in the world — Johnson would prove them wrong by invading nothing).

We need Lyndon Johnson to awake us from our sleep; to get the juices flowing again. Four years ago, Nixon promised to Bring Us Together—and we found out we don't like the crowding. Mr. Ex-President, please, your country calls: Pull Us Apart, Again. ##