

Tues. Jan. 23, 1973

WHITE HOUSE PARIS

The big story - the story we've all been waiting for is perhaps soon to come. As you know doubt have heard by now - Henry Kissinger was meeting in Paris today with Hanoi's Le Duc Tho; following which - he quickly boarded a flight back to Washington. While here at home - the White House suddenly called a press briefing.

Press Secretary Ron Ziegler announcing that President Nixon will address the nation - at ten tonight Eastern Time. Adding that the President intends to report on, quote - "the status of the Vietnam negotiations." Ziegler also saying the President's address will follow consultations with his cabinet and congressional leaders.

All the signs clearly pointing toward a cease-fire - to take effect - we are told - perhaps as early as tomorrow. The nation's longest war - at last drawing to a close.

AUSTIN

You of course all know by now about the death of Lyndon B. Johnson. His body tonight is lying in state - in the great marble hall of the L B J library at Austin, Texas, while tributes continue to pour in from U S and world leaders; first and foremost that of President Nixon; who sent a special message to Congress today proclaiming Thursday a day of national mourning.

The whole story of the Johnson years remains to be told - said the President - "and history has yet to make its judgement. But millions of Americans will always remember" he continued - "a bitter day in Nineteen-Sixty-Three; when so many of our people doubted the very future of this Republic - when so many were stunned that an American Chief of State could be assassinated - when so many abroad were fearful about the future course of American democracy - and Lyndon Johnson rose above the doubt and the fear to hold his nation on course.

The President adding that "Lyndon Johnson's influence on our times - which often seems so much larger than life cannot be stolen from us by death." "Not only the things he did"- said the President - "but also the spirit with which he did them - will be remembered long after time heals our sorrow at his leaving."

PRAISE FOLLOW AUSTIN

Others praising the former President include ranking members of both political parties; some of whom - were often his loudest critics. Also - Roy Wilkins of the N double A C P; who said that L B J had made "the greatest contribution of any president since Lincoln in the field of civil rights."

President George Meany of the A F L - C I O observing that L B J was "a true patriot ; a man who "was a firm believer in and protector of freedom and democracy for all men everywhere." While U N Secretary ~~General~~ General Kurt Waldheim ~~was~~ saying the former President had dedicated his life "to the creation of a just and great society." ^{Says} President Thieu of Vietnam ^{about} ~~saying that~~ L B J ^{that he} was "the man who turned the tide in favor of freedom."

Perhaps the most heartfelt tribute of all - that of Bess Truman, who lost her own husband less than a month ago. "I am extremely upset" - said Mrs. ~~Truman~~ Truman. Adding: "I share with the whole nation profound grief in the loss of one of our great Presidents and my personal friend."

PRESIDENT FOLLOW PRAISE

Lyndon Baines Johnson and Harry S. Truman in some ways alike. They both sprang from states closely bordering the deep south - they were both thrust into the Presidency where both compiled impressive records - only to fall victim to controversial wars. Indeed, L B J once saying, when pressed: "I don't have the guts of Harry Truman - but I do have guts." And he had proved it early and often.

The son of a man who lost or sold practically everything he owned during the depression - Lyndon Johnson worked his way through college; later joining Richard Kleberg of the King Ranch family - when Kleberg successfully ran for congress. In Washington serving as Kleberg's legislative assistant. Quickly gaining the favor of F D R - in part, through Sam Rayburn, an old friend of his father.

Finally marrying a Texas heiress - the former Lady Bird Taylor, he was on his way.

With ten thousand dollars borrowed from his father-

PRESIDENT FOLLOW PRAISE - 2

in-law - he successfully ran for Congress. And then - the Senate; winning elections to that body by a narrow eighty-seven votes - the closest election in Texas history. That was in Nineteen Fifty One. Barely six years later - he was elected Senate majority leader; at age forty-six - the youngest in U S history.

The secret of L B J's success - was his theory that "politics is the science of the possible;" a theory that was further expressed in his favorite Biblical quotation - "come let us reason together." His achievements in the Senate and later on as President - are almost too numerous to mention. Then - Vietnam with L B J announcing on March Thirty-One, Nineteen-Sixty-Eight that he would not be a candidate for re-election. Which he later spoke of as a "desperate" attempt to end the war. But it failed - North Vietnam simply refusing to engage in "substantive" talks. As he left office, L B J admitting sadly: "Peace has eluded me."

EPITAPH FOLLOW RETIREMENT

As for an epitaph - the best of all might be found on the black marble pylon - before which his body now lies. It's an inscription drawn from the former President's own words - stating: "I am a free man, and American, a public servant and a member of my party - in that order, always and only."

And below that - a further inscription saying: "The great society asks now not how much - but how good; not only how to create wealth - but how to use it; not only how fast we are going - but where we are headed. It proposes as the first test for a nation - the quality of its people."

Lyndon Baines Johnson - only sixty four - Bill; soon to return to the banks of his beloved Pedernales River - his home now for all eternity.

HOPE

As you know, the custom here calls for a closing story - preferably something light. And so this next - perhaps appropriate.

During the early war years - Bob Hope paying one of his Christmas visits to Vietnam. Telling the troops: "The White House is different now - Lynda Bird and Lucy Bird have flown the coop - and there's nobody left but Lady Bird and Cocka-doodle-do." A funny line - well received; but Bob Hope later cutting it from his T V show - fearing that L B J might find it offensive.

He needn't have bothered thought. The President heard about it and he loved it. He was soon repeating it - to all his friends.