



Breach of Faith: The Fall of Richard Nixon

Theodore H. White

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The Nixon crisis of 1973-74 threatened the state in ways not immediately understood. Stripped of drama & confusion, however, the problem was that the President had placed himself above the law. The nation had to decide whether that could be allowed. Theodore H. White starts this story with the last days of Richard Nixon in the White House--as those closest recognized he'd deceived them & that they must force him out. He follows the thread of manipulation back to its origin 20 years earlier & shows how the Nixon team came to see politics as war without quarter, in which the White House was a command post where ordinary rules didn't apply, where power could be used without restraint.

Let justice be done

The politics of manipulation

Poor Richard: how things work

The team: from politics to power

The White House of Richard Nixon: from style to heresy

The underground: from crime to conspiracy

Victory 1972: design for control

The tapes: a tour inside the mind of Richard Nixon

The systems respond: Spring 1973

Firestorm: Fall 1973

The question period: Winter-Spring 1974

Judgment: Summer 1974

Breach of faith

Appendix A: The articles of impeachment

Appendix B: Richard Nixon's farewell statement, 8/8/74

Breach of Faith: The Fall of Richard Nixon Details

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From Reader Review Breach of Faith: The Fall of Richard Nixon for online ebook

James says

I enjoyed reading Theodore H. White's "Making of the President" books and I found this to be even better. His insight into the psyche of Nixon and adumbration of the hubris of a very intelligent man impressed me. With his account of the decline and fall of Richard Nixon, Theodore White not only succeeded once more in transforming presidential politics into best-selling nonfiction, but also demonstrated that the loss of power can be made as fascinating and satisfying a story as its acquisition.

BJ Cefola says

Worth reading the last chapter for a discussion of American mythology, how people including Nixon were influenced by it, and how Nixon ultimately violated it.
Great context for understanding the chasm opened by the election of Trump.

Drnick says

I've only managed to read part of this book, but it is a fascinating look inside Nixon's white house. It gave me a deeper understanding of the personal traits which lead to Nixon's mistakes. It may also provide some insight into G.H.W. Bush's failed presidency as well.

Will says

This book is a well-written and sympathetic account of Nixon's presidency with a focus on Watergate. However, it is likely Mr. White's weakest book on American politics. His prose is especially purple and his similes are occasionally painful. He gets caught up in detail, losing the significance of Watergate, although the parts of the book where he examines the social and political implications of the scandal are incredibly thought-provoking. However, it seems that he could have benefited from more time as later details of Watergate emerged. His closeness to the subject keeps him from fully examining the results. While the book contains bits of White's genius at times, it also displays his weaknesses more blatantly than desired.

Aaron Million says

This book seemed to break Theodore White out of his string of *The Making of the President* series of books, as he did not write any others after he finished chronicling Richard Nixon's downfall. The title seems to reflect White's own disappointment, although he does not come directly out and say that. Instead, he frames it as much more of the breach of the faith that Americans previously had in their presidents, and the office of the presidency, in general.

While there is no question that Nixon's unethical behavior and constant lying seriously damaged the presidency in the minds of Americans and others throughout the world, White fails to connect this theme with the previous erosion of trust that really began under Lyndon Johnson. Actually, one can trace it back further, to when Dwight Eisenhower got caught in a lie in 1960 concerning a U-2 spy plane that got shot down over the Soviet Union. Eisenhower's reputation was so high with the American people, that this one incident did not do significant damage to him, and coming as it did at the end of his tenure in office, it was mainly a blip on the radar.

While John F. Kennedy had the implosion of the Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba, and paved the way for disaster in Vietnam by sending in American "advisers" who really were combat soldiers, Johnson ruined himself, divided the country, and almost destroyed his Great Society programs by the lies and deception that he practiced while he was in office. This is to take NOTHING away from the out of control, above-the-law mentality that permeated Nixon's Administration, which is a direct result of what Nixon himself wanted, but the point is that when White writes in generalities about Americans losing trust in the presidency, he needs to step back a bit to include the actions of Nixon's predecessors that helped contribute to the climate that Nixon came to office in.

White begins the book by writing of the final days of the Nixon Administration, when the damaging June 23, 1972 tape surfaced showing Nixon and Haldeman scheming to cover-up Watergate by having the CIA lie to the FBI and tell them to back off their investigation as it was supposedly getting close to a covert CIA operation. This chapter is excellent as White really gets the mood of the embattled White House, the determined Congress, and the confused American people correct. It is disappointing that this also happens to be the most interesting chapter of the book. White quickly goes back into various facets and personalities in the Nixon White House and in Congress. Nothing riveting is uncovered here, and reading it now, over forty years later, it is quite dated.

However, White is still a superb writer, and frequently is able to add perspective to the men involved because he knew many of them and had access to them. This is something that would be almost impossible to do today as most of the major participants are dead. And even for the ones still alive, memory was no fresher than it could have been back when White wrote this book. Therefore he is able to provide something that we cannot get now: the raw feeling of what people felt at the time, without the benefit of what time did to the country as it tried to move forward and put this scandal behind it. And for that alone, plus some good writing by White, this book is still worth a look to anyone interested in reading about Watergate.

Christopher Saunders says

Theodore White's *Breach of Faith* has the wounded tone of someone atoning for a mistake. In *Making of the President '68 and '72*, White shed his Kennedy worship and embraced Tricky Dick as the great statesman of the age, a calming panacea in a chaotic age (he was far from alone in that). Here, White treats Nixon's disgrace as both a national and personal betrayal, with the latter often outweighing the former: sometimes White, in his anguished self-justification, seems less contrite than angry that Nixon made *him* look bad. Still, White's an engaging writer on his worst day, and the book flows well-enough: he recounts the inner workings of Nixon's White House, the single-mindedness, arrogance and isolation that enabled Watergate with skill and verve. He's less interested in recounting the minutia of the break-ins, the Senate hearings and public reaction than probing how a great man destroyed himself, and as such it's a worthy addition to the voluminous Watergate literature.

James says

A thoughtful and fair examination of Richard Nixon's downfall due to Watergate. Since he is neither Woodward nor Bernstein, White brings the detachment necessary for objectivity. He is at times sympathetic towards Nixon, but unsparing in his assessment of the causes and damage Nixon inflicted on our nation and the presidency.

This book was written in 1975 when the wounds of Watergate were still open and raw. White is prescient in his views of how the scandal would affect future presidencies. It is easy to draw parallels between Nixon and Trump: faith in undeserving subordinates, hatred of the media, distrust of civil servants. Nixon would have loved the phrase "deep state" — because he was a true believer.

I highly recommend this book because, decades after its release, it remains vital and relevant.

Erik Graff says

I actually went out to see Richard M. Nixon once during the 1972 campaign, visiting a tepid rally the Republicans were holding with him outside Maine West High School in Illinois. He was about two inches tall from where Arthur Kazar and I were standing with a bunch of protesting farmworkers (UFW).

The Watergate scandal began to hit the news during that campaign, mostly in terms of the break-in at Ellworth's psychiatrist's office by the Plumbers, but not soon enough and with not enough coverage to much help George McGovern. Nixon was re-elected and the war in Southeast Asia and against progressive domestic organizations continued. When the investigations stemming from the break-in proliferated during the Watergate hearings, however, the daily news actually became cheering and my friend Martin and I would, probably for the only time in our lives, purchase both Time and Newsweek magazines to follow it. As we were living in the woods in rural Michigan at the time, the press and the radio were our only sources of information. We followed both eagerly.

White's critique of the Nixon administration is that of an old-school liberal. White himself lacked the ability to appreciate the New Left. Indeed, his attitudes in this regard are not much different than Nixon's, just a bit more liberal. Other than that, this is a decent representation of what may be understood to be "the Establishment's" take on some of the crimes of Richard Nixon's administration.

Donna says

This turned out to be a very good refresher course for recalling the Watergate fiasco and the downfall of an American president. Over forty years after the events and this book's publication, White's erudite rhetoric has proven somewhat overblown. The consequences of Nixon's failure have cycled so far away from the expected path that now the actual crimes and "breach of faith" of Watergate seem almost quaint when compared to the 2017 election and the days through which America is now floundering. Does America have faith in any president anymore? Or even in America? I think I'm sorry I read this book right now; it's depressing.

Stuart Townsend says

Simply my favorite book - a delight to read, to think about, to cherish. It is writing at its finest. He tells the story of the fall of Richard Nixon with such eloquence. If I had just one book I was allowed - this would be it. It is a book which leaves me in awe. I have read it perhaps 6 times. I still find more in it each time.

The Just-About-Cocky Ms M says

A cautionary tale, to be sure, although since this was published in 1975, no one knew we would have Nixon and his smarmy crew of crooks reinvented in 2017 by a reality show host and his con men.

Straightforward, polished, almost sparse writing, but gripping nevertheless in the unfolding of facts we know, and the background we didn't know. I almost OD'd on Watergate books in 2016--seeing what was coming, perhaps--and this book was the cherry on top.

Recommended except for die-hard Tricky Dickwad fans.

Monte Lamb says

This book tells the story of the fall of Richard Nixon. It is very well written and does a good job of telling the steps of his fall. Reading this book in 2015, it was very interesting to read the final chapter which asks many questions as to what the future will be and how Nixon's acts might affect them. It asked the right questions and knowing how many of them have been answered, the author understood what might happen in many areas.

Bob Koelle says

Really nice view from the inside of the Nixon White House, by someone who had the cooperation of many who worked there. It's like the mirror image of All The President's Men. White wants to tie the paranoid White House to both Nixon's past political struggles as well as the ideological turmoil of the day, and he's much more successful at the former, which makes up most of the book. Much of the final chapter can be disregarded as pointless analysis by someone who was not removed far enough in time from the events.

On a side note, White is way too generous in praising Nixon's foreign policy successes, because the backlash was still yet to be recognized in 1975. And there's a quite tragically humorous statement made about the 1968 election: "Nixon was scrupulous in the support he gave Lyndon Johnson's efforts at peacemaking [in Vietnam]." Now we know that Nixon's greatest crime was treason in 1968, encouraging the Hanoi delegation to break off talks with Johnson, promising them better terms. Even George Will conceded this recently. His instincts were correct; Johnson's announcement of a hiatus in bombing the week before the election almost derailed Nixon's campaign, and certainly a peace deal would have iced it. So Nixon gave us 5 more years of war, tens of thousands more dead American soldiers and untold dead Vietnamese, expansion into Cambodia

and transformation of the Khmer Rouge from hill bandits into a homicidal regime killing 2 million there. Presidents have since carefully read about his political crimes and avoid them, but apparently nobody bothered to learn from his bigger more lethal crimes, because they don't even recognize the criminality.

David says

This is the best book I've read about Richard Nixon and the Watergate scandal. Theodore H. White wrote some compelling books about the presidential elections of 1960, 1964, 1968 and 1972. His account of the fall of Richard Nixon, in a Shakespearean-like tragedy, was no less compelling. His chapter about the tapes that led to Nixon's demise is one of the finest I've ever read on the subject. To understand Nixon and Watergate, it is essential to read this book.

P.S. Winn says

I enjoy reading the history of Nixon, especially in this day and age of a man in the White House who will also change history in ways we can't possibly expect. Taking a look at Nixon through the eyes of those who saw the steady decline is interesting.
