

PRESIDENTIAL POWER

The Politics of Leadership
from FDR to Carter

Richard E. Neustadt
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

MACMILLAN PUBLISHING COMPANY
New York

COLLIER MACMILLAN PUBLISHERS
London

CHAPTER 3

The Power to Persuade

The limits on command suggest the structure of our government. The constitutional convention of 1787 is supposed to have created a government of "separated powers." It did nothing of the sort. Rather, it created a government of separated institutions *sharing* powers.¹ "I am part of the legislative process," Eisenhower often said in 1959 as a reminder of his veto.² Congress, the dispenser of authority and funds, is no less part of the administrative process. Federalism adds another set of separated institutions. The Bill of Rights adds others. Many public purposes can only be achieved by voluntary acts of private institutions; the press, for one, in Douglass Cater's phrase, is a "fourth branch of government."³ And with the coming of alliances abroad, the separate institutions of a London, or a Bonn, share in the making of American public policy.

What the Constitution separates our political parties do not combine. The parties are themselves composed of separated organizations sharing public authority. The authority consists of nominating powers. Our national parties are confederations of state and local party institutions, with a headquarters that represents the White House, more or less, if the party has a President in office. These confederacies manage presidential nominations. All other public offices depend upon electorates confined within the states.⁴ All other nominations are controlled within the states. The President and congressmen who bear one party's label are divided by dependence upon different sets of voters. The differences are sharpest at the stage of nomination. The White House has too small a share in nominating congressmen,

THE POWER TO PERSUADE

and Congress has too little weight in nominating Presidents for party to erase the constitutional separation. Party links are stronger than is frequently supposed, nominating processes assure the separation.⁵

The separateness of institutions and the sharing of authority prescribe the terms on which a President persuades. When one man shares authority with another, does not gain or lose his job upon the other's whim, his willingness to act upon urging of the other turns on whether he conceives the action right for him. The essence of a President's persuasive task is to convince such men that what the White House wants of them is what they ought to do for their sake and on their authority.

Persuasive power, thus defined, amounts to more than charm or reason or argument. These have their uses for a President, but these are not the whole of his resources. For the men he would induce to do what he wants done on their own responsibility will need or fear some acts by him on his responsibility. If they share his authority, he has some share in theirs. Presidential "powers" may be inconsequential when a President commands, but always remain relevant as he persuades. The status and authority inherent in his office reinforce his logic and his charm.

Status adds something to persuasiveness; authority adds still more. When Truman urged wage changes on his Secretary of Commerce while the latter was administering the steel mills, he and Secretary Sawyer were not just two men reasoning with one another. Had they been so, Sawyer probably would never have agreed to act. Truman's status gave him special claims to Sawyer's loyalty, or at least attention. In Walter Bagehot's charming phrase "no man can *argue* on his knees." Although there is no kneeling in this country, few men—and exceeding few Cabinet officers—are immune to the impulse to say "yes" to the President of the United States. It grows harder to say "no" when they are seated in his office at the White House, or in his study on the second floor, where almost tangibly he partakes of the aura of his physical surroundings. In Sawyer's case, moreover, the President possessed formal authority to intervene in many matters of concern to the Secretary of Commerce. These matters ranged from jurisdictional disputes among the defense agencies to legislation pending before Congress and, ultimately, to the tenure of the Secretary, himself. There is nothing in the record to suggest that Truman voiced specific threats when they negotiated over wage increases. Given his *formal* powers and their relevance to Sawyer's other interests, it is safe to assume that Truman's very advocacy of wage action conveyed an implicit threat.

A President's authority and status give him great advantages in dealing with the men he would persuade. Each "power" is a vantage point for him in the degree to which other men have use for his authority. From the veto to appointments, from public budgeting, and so down a long list, the White House now controls the most encompassing array of vantage points in the American political system. With hardly an exception, the men who share in governing this country are aware that at some time, in some degree, the doing of *their* jobs, the furthering of *their* ambitions, must depend upon the President of the United States. Their need for presidential action

or their fear of it, is bound to be recurrent if not actually continuous. Their need or fear is his advantage.

A President's advantages are greater than mere listing of his "powers" might suggest. The men with whom he deals must deal with him until the last day of his term. Because they have continuing relationships with him, his future, while it lasts, supports his present influence. Even though there is no need or fear of him today, what he could do tomorrow may supply today's advantage. Continuing relationships may convert any "power," any aspect of his status, into vantage points in almost any case. When he induces other men to do what he wants done, a President can trade on their dependence now *and* later.

The President's advantages are checked by the advantages of others. Continuing relationships will pull in both directions. These are relationships of mutual dependence. A President depends upon the men he would persuade; he has to reckon with his need or fear of them. They too will possess status, or authority, or both, else they would be of little use to him. Their vantage points confront his own; their power tempers his.

Persuasion is a two-way street. Sawyer, it will be recalled, did not respond at once to Truman's plan for wage increases at the steel mills. On the contrary, the Secretary hesitated and delayed and only acquiesced when he was satisfied that publicly he would not bear the onus of decision. Sawyer had some points of vantage all his own from which to resist presidential pressure. If he had to reckon with coercive implications in the President's "situations of strength," so had Truman to be mindful of the implications underlying Sawyer's place as a department head, as steel administrator, and as a Cabinet spokesman for business. Loyalty is reciprocal. Having taken on a dirty job in the steel crisis, Sawyer had strong claims to loyal support. Besides, he had authority to do some things that the White House could ill afford. Emulating Wilson, he might have resigned in a huff (the removal power also works two ways). Or emulating Ellis Arnall, he might have declined to sign necessary orders. Or, he might have let it be known publicly that he deplored what he was told to do and protested its doing. By following any of these courses Sawyer almost surely would have strengthened the position of management, weakened the position of the White House, and embittered the union. But the whole purpose of a wage increase was to enhance White House persuasiveness in urging settlement upon union and companies alike. Although Sawyer's status and authority did not give him the power to prevent an increase outright, they gave him capability to undermine its purpose. If his authority over wage rates had been vested by a statute, not by revocable presidential order, his power of prevention might have been complete. So Harold Ickes demonstrated in the famous case of helium sales to Germany before the Second World War.⁶

★ [The power to persuade is the power to bargain. Status and authority yield bargaining advantages. But in a government of "separated institutions sharing

powers," they yield them to all sides. With the array of vantage points at disposal, a President may be far more persuasive than his logic or his charm could make him. But outcomes are not guaranteed by his advantages. There remain counter pressures those whom he would influence can bring to bear on him from vantage points at their disposal. Command has limited utility; persuasion becomes give-and-take. It is well that the White House holds the vantage points it does such a business any President may need them all—and more.

II

This view of power as akin to bargaining is one we commonly accept in the sphere of congressional relations. Every textbook states and every legislative session demonstrates that save in times like the extraordinary Hundred Days of 1933—virtually ruled out by definition at mid-century—a President will often be unable to obtain congressional action on his terms or even to halt action he opposes. The reverse is equally accepted: Congress often is frustrated by the President. The formal powers are so intertwined that neither will accomplish very much, for a long time, without the acquiescence of the other. By the same token, though, what one demands the other can resist. The stage is set for that great game, much like collective bargaining, in which each seeks to profit from the other's needs and fears. It is a game played catch-as-catch-can, case by case. And everybody knows the game, observers and participants alike.

The concept of real power as a give-and-take is equally familiar when applied to presidential influence outside the formal structure of the Federal government. Little Rock affair may be extreme, but Eisenhower's dealings with the Governor and with the citizens—become a case in point. Less extreme but no less pertinent is the steel seizure case with respect to union leaders, and to workers, and to company executives as well. When he deals with such people a President draws bargaining advantage from his status or authority. By virtue of their public places or their private rights they have some capability to reply in kind.

In spheres of party politics the same thing follows, necessarily, from the confederal nature of our party organizations. Even in the case of national nominations a President's advantages are checked by those of others. In 1944 it is by no means clear that Roosevelt got his first choice as his running mate. In 1948 Truman, then the President, faced serious revolts against his nomination. In 1952 his intervention from the White House helped assure the choice of Adlai Stevenson, but far from clear that Truman could have done as much for any other candidate acceptable to him.⁷ In 1956 when Eisenhower was President, the record leaves obscure just who backed Harold Stassen's efforts to block Richard Nixon's renomination as Vice-President. But evidently everything did not go quite as Eisenhower wanted, whatever his intentions may have been.⁸ The outcomes in these instar-

bear all the marks of limits on command and of power checked by power that characterize congressional relations. Both in and out of politics these checks and limits seem to be quite widely understood.

Influence becomes still more a matter of give-and-take when Presidents attempt to deal with allied governments. A classic illustration is the long unhappy wrangle over Suez policy in 1956. In dealing with the British and the French before their military intervention, Eisenhower had his share of bargaining advantages but no effective power of command. His allies had their share of counter pressures, and they finally tried the most extreme of all: action despite him. His pressure then was instrumental in reversing them. But had the British government been on safe ground *at home*, Eisenhower's wishes might have made as little difference after intervention as before. Behind the decorum of diplomacy—which was not very decorous in the Suez affair—relationships among allies are not unlike relationships among state delegations at a national convention. Power is persuasion and persuasion becomes bargaining. The concept is familiar to everyone who watches foreign policy.

In only one sphere is the concept unfamiliar: the sphere of executive relations. Perhaps because of civics textbooks and teaching in our schools, Americans instinctively resist the view that power in this sphere resembles power in all others. Even Washington reporters, White House aides, and congressmen are not immune to the illusion that administrative agencies comprise a single structure, "the" Executive Branch, where presidential word is law, or ought to be. Yet we have seen in Chapter 2 that when a President seeks something from executive officials his persuasiveness is subject to the same sorts of limitations as in the case of congressmen, or governors, or national committeemen, or private citizens, or foreign governments. There are no generic differences, no differences in kind and only sometimes in degree. The incidents preceding the dismissal of MacArthur and the incidents surrounding seizure of the steel mills make it plain that here as elsewhere influence derives from bargaining advantages; power is a give-and-take.

Like our governmental structure as a whole, the executive establishment consists of separated institutions sharing powers. The President heads one of these; Cabinet officers, agency administrators, and military commanders head others. Below the departmental level, virtually independent bureau chiefs head many more. Under mid-century conditions, Federal operations spill across dividing lines on organization charts; almost every policy entangles many agencies; almost every program calls for interagency collaboration. Everything somehow involves the President. But operating agencies owe their existence least of all to one another—and only in some part to him. Each has a separate statutory base; each has its statutes to administer; each deals with a different set of subcommittees at the Capitol. Each has its own peculiar set of clients, friends, and enemies outside the formal government. Each has a different set of specialized careerists inside its own bailiwick. Our Constitution gives the President the "take-care" clause and the appointive power. Our statutes give him central budgeting and a degree of personnel control. All

agency administrators are responsible to him. But they *also* are responsible to Congress, to their clients, to their staffs, and to themselves. In short, they have five masters. Only after all of those do they owe any loyalty to each other.

"The members of the Cabinet," Charles G. Dawes used to remark, "are President's natural enemies." Dawes had been Harding's Budget Director, Coolidge's Vice-President, and Hoover's Ambassador to London; he also had been General Pershing's chief assistant for supply in the First World War. The words are highly colored, but Dawes knew whereof he spoke. The men who have to serve many masters cannot help but be somewhat the "enemy" of any one of them. In the same token, any master wanting service is in some degree the "enemy" of such a servant. A President is likely to want loyal support but not to relish trouble on his doorstep. Yet the more his Cabinet members cleave to him, the more they may need help from him in fending off the wrath of rival masters. Help, though, is synonymous with trouble. Many a Cabinet officer, with loyalty ill-rewarded by his lights and help withheld, has come to view the White House as innately hostile to department heads. Dawes's dictum can be turned around.

A senior presidential aide remarked to me in Eisenhower's time: "If some of these Cabinet members would just take time out to stop and ask themselves, 'What would I want if I were President?', they wouldn't give him all the trouble he's been having." But even if they asked themselves the question, such officials often could not act upon the answer. Their personal attachment to the President is all too often overwhelmed by duty to their other masters.

Executive officials are not equally advantaged in their dealings with a President. Nor are the same officials equally advantaged all the time. Not every officeholder can resist like a MacArthur, or like Arnall, Sawyer, Wilson, in a rough descending order of effective counter pressure. The vantage points conferred upon officials by their own authority and status vary enormously. The variance heightened by particulars of time and circumstance. In mid-October 1950, Truman at a press conference, remarked of the man he had considered firing in August that he would fire the next April for intolerable insubordination:

Let me tell you something that will be good for your souls. It's a pity that you . . . cannot understand the ideas of two intellectually honest men when they meet. General MacArthur . . . is a member of the Government of the United States. He is loyal to the Government. He is loyal to the President. He is loyal to the President in his foreign policy. . . . There is no disagreement between General MacArthur and myself. . . .

MacArthur's status in and out of government was never higher than when Truman spoke those words. The words, once spoken, added to the General's credibility thereafter when he sought to use the press in his campaign against the President. And what had happened between August and October? Near-victory had happened together with that premature conference on *post-war* plans, the meeting at Wal Island.

If the bargaining advantages of a MacArthur fluctuate with changing circumstances, this is bound to be so with subordinates who have at their disposal fewer "powers," lesser status, to fall back on. And when officials have no "powers" in their own right, or depend upon the President for status, their counter pressure may be limited indeed. White House aides, who fit both categories, are among the most responsive men of all, and for good reason. As a Director of the Budget once remarked to me, "Thank God I'm here and not across the street. If the President doesn't call me, I've got plenty I can do right here and plenty coming up to me, by rights, to justify my calling him. But those poor fellows over there, if the boss doesn't call them, doesn't ask them to do something, what *can* they do but sit?" Authority and status so conditional are frail reliances in resisting a President's own wants. Within the White House precincts, lifted eyebrows may suffice to set an aide in motion; command, coercion, even charm aside. But even in the White House a President does not monopolize effective power. Even there persuasion is akin to bargaining. A former Roosevelt aide once wrote of Cabinet officers:

Half of a President's suggestions, which theoretically carry the weight of orders, can be safely forgotten by a Cabinet member. And if the President asks about a suggestion a second time, he can be told that it is being investigated. If he asks a third time, a wise Cabinet officer will give him at least part of what he suggests. But only occasionally, except about the most important matters, do Presidents ever get around to asking three times.¹⁰

The rule applies to staff as well as to the Cabinet, and certainly has been applied by staff in Truman's time and Eisenhower's.

Some aides will have more vantage points than a selective memory. Sherman Adams, for example, as The Assistant to the President under Eisenhower, scarcely deserved the appellation "White House aide" in the meaning of the term before his time or as applied to other members of the Eisenhower entourage. Although Adams was by no means "chief of staff" in any sense so sweeping—or so simple—as press commentaries often took for granted, he apparently became no more dependent on the President than Eisenhower on him. "I need him," said the President when Adams turned out to have been remarkably imprudent in the Goldfine case, and delegated to him even the decision on his own departure.¹¹ This instance is extreme, but the tendency it illustrates is common enough. Any aide who demonstrates to others that he has the President's consistent confidence and a consistent part in presidential business will acquire so much business on his own account that he becomes in some sense independent of his chief. Nothing in the Constitution keeps a well-placed aide from converting status into power of his own, usable in some degree even against the President—an outcome not unknown in Truman's regime or, by all accounts, in Eisenhower's.

The more an officeholder's status and his "powers" stem from sources independent of the President, the stronger will be his potential pressure on the President.

Department heads in general have more bargaining power than do most members of the White House staff; but bureau chiefs may have still more, and specialists at upper levels of established career services may have almost unlimited reserves of the enormous power which consists of sitting still. As Franklin Roosevelt once remarked:

The Treasury is so large and far-flung and ingrained in its practices that I find it almost impossible to get the action and results I want—even with Henry [Morgenthau] there. But the Treasury is not to be compared with the State Department. You should go through the experience of trying to get any changes in the thinking, policy, and action of the career diplomats and then you'd know what a real problem was. But the Treasury and the State Department put together are nothing compared with the Na-a-vy. The admirals are really something to cope with—and I should know. To change anything in the Na-a-vy is like punching a feather bed. You punch it with your right and you punch it with your left until you are finally exhausted, and then you find the damn bed just as it was before you started punching.¹²

In the right circumstances, of course, a President can have his way with any of these people. Chapter 2 includes three instances where circumstances were "right" and a presidential order was promptly carried out. But one need only note the favorable factors giving those three orders their self-executing quality to recognize that as between a President and his "subordinates," no less than others on whom he depends, real power is reciprocal and varies markedly with organization, subject matter, personality, and situation. The mere fact that persuasion is directed at executive officials signifies no necessary easing of his way. Any new congressman of the Administration's party, especially if narrowly elected, may turn out more amenable (though less useful) to the President than any seasoned bureau chief "downtown." *The probabilities of power do not derive from the literary theory of the Constitution.*

III

There is a widely held belief in the United States that were it not for folly or for knavery, a reasonable President would need no power other than the logic of his argument. No less a personage than Eisenhower has subscribed to that belief in many a campaign speech and press-conference remark. But faulty reasoning and bad intentions do not cause all quarrels with Presidents. The best of reasoning and of intent cannot compose them all. For in the first place, what the President wants will rarely seem a trifle to the men he wants it from. And in the second place, they will be bound to judge it by the standard of their own responsibilities, not his. However logical his argument according to his lights, their judgment may not bring them to his view.

The men who share in governing this country frequently appear to act as though they were in business for themselves. So, in a real though not entire sense, they are and have to be. When Truman and MacArthur fell to quarreling, for example, the stakes were no less than the substance of American foreign policy, the risks of greater war or military stalemate, the prerogatives of Presidents and field commanders, the pride of a pro-consul and his place in history. Intertwined, inevitably, were other stakes, as well: political stakes for men and factions of both parties; power stakes for interest groups with which they were or wished to be affiliated. And every stake was raised by the apparent discontent in the American public mood. There is no reason to suppose that in such circumstances men of large but differing responsibilities will see all things through the same glasses. On the contrary, it is to be expected that their views of what ought to be done and what they then should do will vary with the differing perspectives their particular responsibilities evoke. Since their duties are not vested in a "team" or a "collegium" but in themselves, as individuals, one must expect that they will see things *for* themselves. Moreover, when they are responsible to many masters and when an event or policy turns loyalty against loyalty—a day by day occurrence in the nature of the case—one must assume that those who have the duties to perform will choose the terms of reconciliation. This is the essence of their personal responsibility. When their own duties pull in opposite directions, who else but they can choose what they will do?

When Truman dismissed MacArthur, the latter lost three posts: the American command in the Far East, the Allied command for the occupation of Japan, and the United Nations command in Korea. He also lost his status as the senior officer on active duty in the United States armed forces. So long as he held those positions and that status, though, he had a duty to his troops, to his profession, to himself (the last is hard for any man to disentangle from the rest). As a public figure and a focus for men's hopes he had a duty to constituents at home, and in Korea and Japan. He owed a duty also to those other constituents, the UN governments contributing to his field forces. As a patriot he had a duty to his country. As an accountable official and an expert guide he stood at the call of Congress. As a military officer he had, besides, a duty to the President, his constitutional commander. Some of these duties may have manifested themselves in terms more tangible or more direct than others. But it would be nonsense to argue that the last *negated* all the rest, however much it might be claimed to override them. And it makes no more sense to think that anybody but MacArthur was effectively empowered to decide how he, himself, would reconcile the competing demands his duties made upon him.

Similar observations could be made about the rest of the executive officials encountered in Chapter 2. Price Director Arnall, it will be recalled, refused in advance to sign a major price increase for steel if Mobilization Director Wilson or the White House should concede one before management had settled with the union.

When Arnall did this, he took his stand, in substance, on his oath of office. He would do what he had sworn to do in *his* best judgment, so long as he was there to do it. This posture may have been assumed for purposes of bargaining and might have been abandoned had his challenge been accepted by the President. But no one could be sure and no one, certainly, could question Arnall's right to make the judgment for himself. As head of an agency and as a politician, with a program to defend and a future to advance, *he* had to decide what he had to do on matters that, from his perspective, were exceedingly important. Neither in policy nor in personal terms, nor in terms of agency survival, were the issues of a sort to be considered secondary by an Arnall, however much they might have seemed so to a Wilson (or a Truman). Nor were the merits likely to appear the same to a price stabilizer and to men with broader duties. Reasonable men, it is so often said, *ought* to be able to agree on the requirements of given situations. But when the outlook varies with the placement of each man, and the response required in his place is for each to decide, their reasoning may lead to disagreement quite as well—and quite as reasonably. Vanity, or vice, may weaken reason, to be sure, but it is idle to assign these as the cause of Arnall's threat or MacArthur's defiance. Secretary Sawyer's hesitations, cited earlier, are in the same category. One need not denigrate such men to explain their conduct. For the responsibilities they felt, the "facts" they saw, simply were not the same as those of their superiors; yet they, not the superiors, had to decide what they would do.

Outside the Executive Branch the situation is the same, except that loyalty to the President may often matter *less*. There is no need to spell out the comparison with Governors of Arkansas, steel company executives, trade union leaders, and the like. And when one comes to congressmen who can do nothing for themselves (or their constituents) save as they are elected, term by term, in districts and through party structures *differing* from those on which a President depends, the case is very clear. An able Eisenhower aide with long congressional experience remarked to me in 1958: "The people on the Hill don't do what they might *like* to do, they do what they think they *have* to do in their own interest as *they* see it. . . ." This states the case precisely.

The essence of a President's persuasive task with congressmen and everybody else, *is to induce them to believe that what he wants of them is what their own appraisal of their own responsibilities requires them to do in their interest, not his*. Because men may differ in their views on public policy, because differences in outlook stem from differences in duty—duty to one's office, one's constituents, oneself—that task is bound to be more like collective bargaining than like a reasoned argument among philosopher kings. Overtly or implicitly, hard bargaining has characterized all illustrations offered up to now. This is the reason why: persuasion deals in the coin of self-interest with men who have some freedom to reject what they find counterfeit.

IV

A President draws influence from bargaining advantages. But does he always need them? The episodes described in Chapter 2 were instances where views on public policy diverged with special sharpness. Suppose such sharp divergences are lacking, suppose most players of the governmental game see policy objectives much alike, then can he not rely on logic (or on charm) to get him what he wants? The answer is that even then most outcomes turn on bargaining. The reason for this answer is a simple one: most men who share in governing have interests of their own beyond the realm of policy *objectives*. The sponsorship of policy, the form it takes, the conduct of it, and the credit for it separate their interest from the President's despite agreement on the end in view. In political government, the means can matter quite as much as ends; they often matter more. And there are always differences of interest in the means.

Let me introduce a case externally the opposite of my previous examples: the European Recovery Program of 1948, the so-called Marshall Plan. This is perhaps the greatest exercise in policy *agreement* since the cold war began. When the then Secretary of State, George Catlett Marshall, spoke at the Harvard commencement in June of 1947, he launched one of the most creative, most imaginative ventures in the history of American foreign relations. What makes this policy most notable for present purposes, however, is that it became effective upon action by the 80th Congress, at the behest of Harry Truman, in the election year of 1948.¹³

Eight months before Marshall spoke at Harvard, the Democrats had lost control of both Houses of Congress for the first time in fourteen years. Truman, whom the Secretary represented, had just finished his second troubled year as President-by-succession. Truman was regarded with so little warmth in his own party that in 1946 he had been urged *not* to participate in the congressional campaign. At the opening of Congress in January 1947, Senator Robert A. Taft, "Mr. Republican," had somewhat the attitude of a President-elect. This was a vision widely shared in Washington, with Truman relegated, thereby, to the role of caretaker-on-term. Moreover, within just two weeks of Marshall's commencement address, Truman was to veto two prized accomplishments of Taft's congressional majority: the Taft-Hartley Act and tax reduction.¹⁴ Yet scarcely ten months later the Marshall Plan was under way on terms to satisfy its sponsors, its authorization completed, its first-year funds in sight, its administering agency in being: all managed by as thorough a display of executive-congressional cooperation as any we have seen since the Second World War. For any President at any time this would have been a great accomplishment. In years before mid-century it would have been enough to make the future reputation of his term. And for a Truman, at this time, enactment of the Marshall Plan appears almost miraculous.

How was the miracle accomplished? How did a President so situated bring it off? In answer, the first thing to note is that he did not do it by himself. Truman had

help of a sort no less extraordinary than the outcome. Although each stands for something more complex, the names of Marshall, Vandenberg, Patterson, Bevin, Stalin, tell the story of that help.

In 1947, two years after V-J Day, General Marshall was something more than Secretary of State. He was a man venerated by the President as "the greatest living American," literally an embodiment of Truman's ideals. He was honored at the Pentagon as an architect of victory. He was thoroughly respected by the Secretary of the Navy, James V. Forrestal, who that year became the first Secretary of Defense. On Capitol Hill Marshall had an enormous fund of respect stemming from his war record as Army Chief of Staff, and in the country generally no officer had come out of the war with a higher reputation for judgment, intellect, and probity. Besides, as Secretary of State, he had behind him the first generation of matured foreign service officers produced by the reforms of the 1920's, and mingled with them, in the departmental service, were some of the ablest of the men drawn by the war from private life to Washington. In terms both of staff talent and staff's use, Marshall's years began a State Department "golden age" which lasted until the era of McCarthy. Moreover, as his Under Secretary, Marshall had, successively, Dean Acheson and Robert Lovett, men who commanded the respect of the professionals and the regard of congressmen. (Acheson had been brilliantly successful at congressional relations as Assistant Secretary in the war and postwar years.) Finally, as a special undersecretary Marshall had Will Clayton, a man highly regarded, for good reason, at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue.

Taken together, these are exceptional resources for a Secretary of State. In the circumstances, they were quite as necessary as they obviously are relevant. The Marshall Plan was launched by a "lame duck" Administration "scheduled" to leave office in eighteen months. Marshall's program faced a congressional leadership traditionally isolationist and currently intent upon economy. European aid was viewed with envy by a Pentagon distressed and virtually disarmed through budget cuts, and by domestic agencies intent on enlarged welfare programs. It was not viewed with liking by a Treasury intent on budget surpluses. The plan had need of every asset that could be extracted from the personal position of its nominal author and from the skills of his assistants.

Without the equally remarkable position of the senior Senator from Michigan, Arthur H. Vandenberg, it is hard to see how Marshall's assets could have been enough. Vandenberg was chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Actually, he was much more than that. Twenty years a senator, he was the senior member of his party in the Chamber. Assiduously cultivated by F.D.R. and Truman, he was a chief Republican proponent of "bipartisanship" in foreign policy, and consciously conceived himself its living symbol to his party, to the country, and abroad. Moreover, by informal but entirely operative agreement with his colleague Taft, Vandenberg held the acknowledged lead among Senate Republicans in the whole field of international affairs. This acknowledgement meant more in 1947 than

it might have meant at any other time. With confidence in the advent of a Republican administration two years hence, most of the gentlemen were in a mood to be responsive and responsible. The war was over, Roosevelt dead, Truman a caretaker, theirs the trust. That the Senator from Michigan saw matters in this light, his diaries make clear.¹⁵ And this was not the outlook from the Senate side alone; the attitudes of House Republicans associated with the Herter Committee and its tours abroad suggest the same mood of responsibility. Vandenberg was not the only source of help on Capitol Hill. But relatively speaking, his position there was as exceptional as Marshall's was downtown.

Help of another sort was furnished by a group of dedicated private citizens who organized one of the most effective instruments for public information seen since the Second World War: the Committee for the Marshall Plan, headed by the eminent Republicans whom F.D.R., in 1940, had brought to the Department of War: Henry L. Stimson as honorary chairman and Robert P. Patterson as active spokesman. The remarkable array of bankers, lawyers, trade unionists, and editors, who had drawn together in defense of "internationalism" before Pearl Harbor and had joined their talents in the war itself, combined again to spark the work of this committee. Their efforts generated a great deal of vocal public support to buttress Marshall's arguments, and Vandenberg's, in Congress.

But before public support could be rallied, there had to be a purpose tangible enough, concrete enough, to provide a rallying ground. At Harvard, Marshall had voiced an idea in general terms. That this was turned into a hard program susceptible of presentation and support is due, in major part, to Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary. He well deserves the credit he has sometimes been assigned as, in effect, co-author of the Marshall Plan. For Bevin seized on Marshall's Harvard speech and organized a European response with promptness and concreteness beyond the State Department's expectations. What had been virtually a trial balloon to test reactions on both sides of the Atlantic was hailed in London as an invitation to the Europeans to send Washington a bill of particulars. This they promptly organized to do, and the American Administration then organized in turn for its reception without further argument internally about the pros and cons of issuing the "invitation" in the first place. But for Bevin there might have been trouble from the Secretary of the Treasury and others besides.¹⁶

If Bevin's help was useful at that early stage, Stalin's was vital from first to last. In a mood of self-deprecation Truman once remarked that without Moscow's "crazy" moves "we would never have had our foreign policy . . . we never could have got a thing from Congress."¹⁷ George Kennan, among others, had deplored the anti-Soviet overtone of the case made for the Marshall Plan in Congress and the country, but there is no doubt that this clinched the argument for many segments of American opinion. There also is no doubt that Moscow made the crucial contributions to the case.

By 1947 events, far more than governmental prescience or open action, had

given a variety of publics an impression of inimical Soviet intentions (and of Europe's weakness), and a growing urge to "do something about it." Three months before Marshall spoke at Harvard, Greek-Turkish aid and promulgation of the Truman Doctrine had seemed rather to crystallize than to create a public mood and a congressional response. The Marshall planners, be it said, were poorly placed to capitalize on that mood, nor had the Secretary wished to do so. Their object, indeed, was to cut across it, striking at the cause of European weakness rather than at Soviet aggressiveness, *per se*. A strong economy in Western Europe called, ideally, for restorative measures of continental scope. American assistance proffered in an anti-Soviet context would have been contradictory in theory and unacceptable in fact to several of the governments that Washington was anxious to assist. As Marshall, himself, saw it, the logic of his purpose forbade him to play his strongest congressional card. The Russians then proceeded to play it for him. When the Europeans met in Paris, Molotov walked out. After the Czechs had shown continued interest in American aid, a communist coup overthrew their government while Soviet forces stood along their borders within easy reach of Prague. Molotov transformed the Marshall Plan's initial presentation; Czechoslovakia assured its final passage, which followed by a month the take-over in Prague.

Such was the help accorded Truman in obtaining action on the Marshall Plan. Considering his politically straightened circumstances he scarcely could have done with less. Conceivably, some part of Moscow's contribution might have been dispensable, but not Marshall's, or Vandenberg's, or Bevin's, or Patterson's, or that of the great many other men whose work is represented by their names in my account. Their aid was not extended to the President for his own sake. He was not favored in this fashion just because they liked him personally, or were spellbound by his intellect or charm. They might have been as helpful had all held him in disdain, which some of them certainly did. The Londoners who seized the ball, Vandenberg and Taft and the congressional majority, Marshall and his planners, the officials of other agencies who actively supported them or "went along," the host of influential private citizens who rallied to the cause—all these played the parts they did because they thought they had to, in their interest, given their responsibilities, not Truman's. Yet they hardly would have found it in their interest to collaborate with one another, or with him, had he not furnished them precisely what they needed from the White House. Truman could not do without their help, but he could not have had it without unremitting effort on his part.

The crucial thing to note about this case is that despite compatibility of views on public policy, Truman got no help he did not pay for (except Stalin's). Bevin scarcely could have seized on Marshall's words had Marshall not been plainly backed by Truman. Marshall's interest would not have comported with the exploitation of his prestige by a President who undercut him openly, or subtly, or even inadvertently, at any point. Vandenberg, presumably, could not have backed proposals by a White House which begrudged him deference and access gratifying to

his fellow-partisans (and satisfying to himself). Prominent Republicans in private life would not have found it easy to promote a cause identified with Truman's claims on 1948—and neither would the prominent New Dealers then engaged in searching for a substitute.

Truman paid the price required for their services. So far as the record shows, the White House did not falter once in firm support for Marshall and the Marshall Plan. Truman backed his Secretary's gamble on an invitation to all Europe. He made the plan his own in a well-timed address to the Canadians. He lost no opportunity to widen the involvements of his own official family in the cause. Averell Harriman the Secretary of Commerce, Julius Krug the Secretary of the Interior, Edwin Nourse the Economic Council Chairman, James Webb the Director of the Budget—all were made responsible for studies and reports contributing directly to the legislative presentation. Thus these men were committed in advance. Besides, the President continually emphasized to everyone in reach that he did not have doubts, did not desire complications and would foreclose all he could. Reportedly, his emphasis was felt at the Treasury, with good effect. And Truman was at special pains to smooth the way for Vandenberg. The Senator insisted on "no politics" from the Administration side; there was none. He thought a survey of American resources and capacity essential; he got it in the Krug and Harriman reports. Vandenberg expected advance consultation; he received it, step by step, in frequent meetings with the President and weekly conferences with Marshall. He asked for an effective liaison between Congress and agencies concerned; Lovett and others gave him what he wanted. When the Senator decided on the need to change financing and administrative features of the legislation, Truman disregarded Budget Bureau grumbling and acquiesced with grace. When, finally, Vandenberg desired a Republican to head the new administering agency, his candidate, Paul Hoffman, was appointed despite the President's own preference for another. In all of these ways Truman employed the sparse advantages his "powers" and his status then accorded him to gain the sort of help he had to have.

Truman helped himself in still another way. Traditionally and practically no one was placed as well as he to call public attention to the task of *Congress* (and its Republican leadership). Throughout the fall and winter of 1947 and on into the spring of 1948, he made repeated use of presidential "powers" to remind the country that congressional action was required. Messages, speeches, and an extra session were employed to make the point. Here, too, he drew advantage from his place. However, in his circumstances, Truman's public advocacy might have hurt, not helped, had his words seemed directed toward the forthcoming election. Truman gained advantage for his program only as his own endorsement of it stayed on the right side of that fine line between the "caretaker" in office and the would-be candidate. In public statements dealing with the Marshall Plan he seems to have risked blurring this distinction only once, when he called Congress into session in November 1947 asking both for interim aid to Europe and for peacetime price

controls. The second request linked the then inflation with the current Congress (and with Taft), becoming a first step toward one of Truman's major themes in 1948. By calling for both measures at the extra session he could have been accused—and was—of mixing home-front politics with foreign aid. In the event no harm was done the European program (or his politics). But in advance a number of his own advisers feared that such a double call would jeopardize the Marshall Plan. Their fears are testimony to the narrowness of his advantage in employing his own "powers" for its benefit.¹⁸

It is symptomatic of Truman's situation that "bipartisan" accommodation by the White House then was thought to mean congressional consultation and conciliation on a scale unmatched in Eisenhower's time. Yet Eisenhower did about as well with opposition Congresses as Truman did, in terms of requests granted for defense and foreign aid. It may be said that Truman asked for more extraordinary measures. But it also may be said that Eisenhower never lacked for the prestige his predecessor had to borrow. It often was remarked, in Truman's time, that he seemed a "split-personality," so sharply did his conduct differentiate domestic politics from national security. But personality aside, how else could *he*, in his first term, gain ground for an evolving foreign policy? The plain fact is that Truman had to play bipartisanship as he did or lose the game.

V

Had Truman lacked the personal advantages his "powers" and his status gave him, or if he had been maladroit in using them, there probably would not have been a massive European aid program in 1948. Something of the sort, perhaps quite different in its emphasis, would almost certainly have come to pass before the end of 1949. *Some* American response to European weakness and to Soviet expansion was as certain as such things can be. But in 1948 temptations to await a Taft Plan or a Dewey Plan might well have caused at least a year's postponement of response had the "outgoing" Administration bungled its congressional, or public, or allied, or executive relations. Quite aside from the specific virtues of their plan, Truman and his helpers gained that year, at least, in timing the American response. As European time was measured then, this was a precious gain. The President's own share in this accomplishment was vital. He made his contribution by exploiting his advantages. Truman, in effect, lent Marshall and the rest the perquisites and status of his office. In return they lent him their prestige and their own influence. The transfer multiplied *his* influence despite his limited authority in form and lack of strength politically. Without the wherewithal to make this bargain, Truman could not have contributed to European aid.

Bargaining advantages convey no guarantees. Influence remains a two-way street. In the fortunate instance of the Marshall Plan, what Truman needed was actually in the hands of men who were prepared to "trade" with him. He personally

could deliver what they wanted in return. Marshall, Vandenberg, Harriman, *et al.*, possessed the prestige, energy, associations, staffs, essential to the legislative effort. Truman himself had a sufficient hold on presidential messages and speeches, on budget policy, on high-level appointments, and on his own time and temper to carry through all aspects of his necessary part. But it takes two to make a bargain. It takes those who have prestige to lend it on whatever terms. Suppose that Marshall had declined the Secretaryship of State in January 1947; Truman might not have found a substitute so well-equipped to furnish what he needed in the months ahead. Or suppose that Vandenberg had fallen victim to a cancer two years before he actually did; Senator Wiley of Wisconsin would not have seemed to Taft a man with whom the world need be divided. Or suppose that the Secretary of the Treasury had been possessed of stature, force, and charm commensurate with that of his successor in Eisenhower's time, the redoubtable George M. Humphrey. And what if Truman then had seemed to the Republicans what he turned out to be in 1948, a formidable candidate for President? It is unlikely that a single one of these "supposes" would have changed the final outcome; two or three, however, might have altered it entirely. Truman was not guaranteed more power than his "powers" just because he had continuing relationships with Cabinet secretaries and with senior senators.

Here, as everywhere, the outcome was conditional on who they were and what he was and how each viewed events, and on their actual performance in response.

Granting that persuasion has no guarantee attached, how can a President reduce the risks of failing to persuade? How can he maximize his prospects for effectiveness by minimizing chances that his power will elude him? The Marshall Plan suggests an answer: he guards his power prospects in the course of making choices. Marshall himself, and Forrestal, and Harriman, and others of the sort held office on the President's appointment. Vandenberg had vast symbolic value partly because F.D.R. and Truman had done everything they could, since 1944, to build him up. The Treasury Department and the Budget Bureau—which together might have jeopardized the plans these others made—were headed by officials whose prestige depended wholly on their jobs. What Truman needed from those "givers" he received, in part, because of his past choice of men and measures. What they received in turn were actions taken or withheld by him, himself. The things they needed from him mostly involved his own conduct where his current choices ruled. The President's own actions in the past had cleared the way for current bargaining. His actions in the present were his trading stock. Behind each action lay a personal choice, and these together comprised *his* control over the give-and-take that gained him what he wanted. In the degree that Truman, personally, affected the advantages he drew from his relationships with other men in government, his power was protected by his choices.

By "choice" I mean no more than what is commonly referred to as "decision": a President's own act of doing or not doing. Decision is so often indecisive and indecision is so frequently conclusive, that choice becomes the preferable term.

"Choice" has its share of undesired connotations. In common usage it implies a black-and-white alternative. Presidential choices are rarely of that character. It also may imply that the alternatives are set before the choice-maker by someone else. A President is often left to figure out his options for himself. Neither implication holds in any of the references to "choice" throughout this book.

If Presidents could count upon past choices to enhance their current influence, as Truman's choice of men had done for him, persuasion would pose fewer difficulties than it does. But Presidents can count on no such thing. Depending on the circumstances, prior choices can be as embarrassing as they were helpful in the instance of the Marshall Plan. The incidents described in Chapter 2 include some sharp examples of embarrassment. Among others: Eisenhower's influence with Faubus was diminished by his earlier statements to the press and by his unconditional agreement to converse in friendly style at Newport. Truman's hold upon MacArthur was weakened by his deference toward him in the past.

Assuming that past choices have protected influence, not harmed it, present choices still may be inadequate. If Presidents could count on their own conduct to provide them *enough* bargaining advantages, as Truman's conduct did where Vandenberg and Marshall were concerned, effective bargaining might be much easier to manage than it often is. In the steel crisis, for instance, Truman's own persuasiveness with companies and union, both, was burdened by the conduct of an independent Wage Board and of government attorneys in the courts, to say nothing of Wilson, Arnall, Sawyer, and the like. Yet in practice, if not theory, many of *their* crucial choices never were the President's to make. Decisions that are legally in other's hands, or delegated past recall, have an unhappy way of proving just the trading stock most needed when the White House wants to trade. One reason why Truman was consistently more influential in the instance of the Marshall Plan than in the steel case, or the MacArthur case, is that the Marshall Plan directly involved Congress. In congressional relations there are some things that no one but the President can do. His chance to choose is higher when a message must be sent, or a nomination submitted, or a bill signed into law, than when the sphere of action is confined to the Executive, where all decisive tasks may have been delegated past recall.

But adequate or not, a President's own choices are the only means *in his own hands* of guarding his own prospects for effective influence. He can draw power from continuing relationships in the degree that he can capitalize upon the needs of others for the Presidency's status and authority. He helps himself to do so, though, by nothing save ability to recognize the pre-conditions and the chance advantages and to proceed accordingly in the course of the choice-making that comes his way. To ask how he can guard prospective influence is thus to raise a further question: what helps him guard his power stakes in his own acts of choice?

Professional Reputation

A President's persuasiveness with other men in government depends on something more than his advantages for bargaining. The men he would persuade must be convinced in their own minds that he has skill and will enough to *use* his advantages. Their judgment of him is a factor in his influence with them. The final question posed in Chapter 3 was how a President protects his power stakes in his own acts of choice. This question can be set aside until we have examined what he has at stake in judgments made by others.

The men who share in governing this country are inveterate observers of a President. They have the doing of whatever he wants done. They are the objects of his personal persuasion. They also are the most attentive members of his audience. These doers comprise what in spirit, not geography, might well be termed the "Washington community." This community cuts across the President's constituencies. Members of Congress and of his Administration, governors of states, military commanders in the field, leading politicians in both parties, representatives of private organizations, newsmen of assorted types and sizes, foreign diplomats (and principals abroad)—all these are "Washingtonians" no matter what their physical location. In most respects the Washington community is far from homogeneous. In one respect it is tightly knit indeed: by definition, all its members are compelled to watch the President for reasons not of pleasure but vocation. They need him in their business just as he needs them. Their own work thus requires that they keep an eye on him. Because they watch him closely his persuasiveness with them turns quite as much on their informed appraisals as on his presumed advantages.

In influencing Washingtonians, the most important law at a President's disposal is the "law" of "anticipated reactions," propounded years ago by Carl J. Friedrich.¹ The men who share in governing do what they think they must. A President's effect on them is heightened or diminished by their thoughts about his probable reaction to their doing. They base their expectations on what they can see of him. And they are watching all the time. Looking at themselves, at him, at the immediate event, and toward the future, they may think that what he might do in theory, he would not dare to do in fact. So MacArthur evidently thought before he was dismissed. They may think that the President has tied his hands behind his back, as Faubus thought, apparently, before and after Newport. They may conclude with Arnall that the President has more to lose than they do, should he not support them. Or they may conclude, as Sawyer evidently did, that they risk more than he does if they do not support him. A Marshall and a Vandenberg may decide that the president can be relied upon to put his "powers" and his status at their service. A Charles E. Wilson, after Key West, may decide the opposite.

What these men think may or may not be "true" but it is the reality on which they act, at least until their calculations turn out wrong. As the steel crisis loomed in 1952 many Washingtonians took it for granted that should matters reach the strike stage, Truman had too many other troubles to risk anything so controversial as seizure. By April that year he and his party faced a wide-open contest for the presidential nomination; the Governor of Illinois whom he had wanted to proclaim as heir apparent would not serve. In Congress fights impended on half a dozen fronts. Downtown he was entangled in abortive efforts, highly publicized, to oversee a "cleanup" of "corruption." That at this point he could "afford" to seize the whole steel industry was heavily discounted in the industry itself, at the Capitol, and even by some members of his Cabinet. It was their thought that he would have "no choice" but resort to Taft-Hartley. This thought may have reduced management's incentive for a settlement; it almost certainly reduced the Pentagon's concern about the outcome.

Expectations often are much closer to the mark than were those views of Truman in the steel case. Ten months before the steel crisis, in June of 1951, he made an impassioned television plea to rally popular support for tighter price controls than Congress seemed about to grant as it renewed the authorizing legislation. Neither before his plea nor after were the anticontrol forces visibly impressed. A President's ability to "appeal to the people" may be chief among his vantage points, as all the textbooks say, but no one feared vast popular response to Truman's call for stiffer wartime regulation two months after his dismissal of MacArthur. In this instance, the expectation proved correct. "I never asked anybody to write to his congressman," Truman later told the press.² Hardly anybody did.

What other men expect of him becomes a cardinal factor in the President's own power to persuade. When men in government consider their relationships with him it does them little good to scan the Constitution or remind themselves that Presidents

possess potential vantage points in excess of enumerated powers. Their problem never is what abstract Presidents might do in theory but what an actual incumbent will try in fact. They must anticipate, as best they can, his ability and will to make use of the bargaining advantages he has. Out of what others think of him emerge his opportunities for influence with them. If he would maximize his prospects for effectiveness, he must concern himself with what they think. To formulate his power problem in these terms is to illuminate the job of being President.

II

In a world of perfect rationality and unclouded perception it might turn out that Washingtonians could take the past performance of a President as an exact, precise, definitive determinant of future conduct, case by case. The known and open record, wholly understood, could be ransacked for counterparts to all details of each new situation. His skill, or lack of it, in using comparable vantage points for comparable purposes in like conditions, could be gauged with such precision that forecasting his every move would become a science practiced with the aid of mathematics.

In the real world, however, nobody is altogether sure what aspects of the past fit which piece of the present or the future. As the illustrations in this book suggest, particulars of time, of substance, organization, personalities, may make so great a difference, case by case, that forecasting remains a tricky game and expectations rest upon perceptions of a most imperfect sort. This can both help a President and hurt him. It can help in the sense that almost everyone in government discounts, to some degree, the flaws in his performance at a given moment. But it can hurt in the sense that over time these may lead to discounting, in advance, of his ability at any future moment.

In every move a President may make there are bound to be numerous aspects beyond his immediate control. So many things can go wrong that almost always some things do. Accordingly, the men who watch a President professionally, so to speak, cannot afford to ground their expectations on the slippages and errors in his every effort. But these accumulate, and as they do men seek for the appearance of a *pattern*. Lacking a better base, they tend to rest their forecasts of the future on such patterns as they find. The greatest danger to a President's potential influence with them is not the show of incapacity he makes today, but its apparent kinship to what happened yesterday, last month, last year. For if his failures seem to form a pattern, the consequence is bound to be a loss of faith in his effectiveness "next time." The boy who cried "wolf" came to a sad end because nobody paid attention to his final cry.

The fine points of a President's "technique" in dealing with a given situation are not the only things men watch for signs of pattern. Whether he made the right phone call on the right day, or said the right words at the right time, or read the right report and drew the right conclusion may make all the difference at a given moment.

If the same thing seems to happen at successive moments it will make a mark on expectations of his future conduct. But in the present, looking toward the future, most men have more to think about than his apparent mastery of such techniques. So long as they must keep in mind continuing relationships while they consider what he wants from them, they also have to think about how hard, persistently, determinedly, he seems to *try*. With will enough, even the clumsiest technician might manage to hurt enemies somehow, sometime, and to provide some sort of cover for his friends. Signs of tenacity count quite as much as signs of skill in shaping expectations of a President's behavior.

Were Washington observers confined to the evidence of personal experience, a President would shape their expectations as he dealt with each in turn. But those who watch a President because their work requires it do not see only what he chooses to disclose to them. They see some part of almost everything he does with almost everyone, and what they cannot see they try to hear. Everything reported in the press adds to their field of vision. Whatever happens to their neighbors amplifies their view. They ask each other questions. They tell each other stories. They read with care the news reports, and newsletters, and syndicated columns circulating "inside dope" drawn from men like themselves. Theirs is a most incestuous community. In consequence, their outlook on a President at any given moment will be affected by impressions of his will and skill then currently in vogue among observers like themselves. If he wants influence, therefore, he must concern himself with more than *tête-à-têtes* in person or by proxy; his problem is no less than what all Washington may think of him. He has to be concerned with his professional reputation as a governor among the men who share in governing.

The general reputation of a President in Washington will not reflect the views of every Washingtonian. There usually is a dominant tone, a central tendency, in Washington appraisals of a President. If one wants echoes of that tone at any time one reads Krock, Lippmann, Reston, and Rovere, and half a dozen others. (One gains forewarnings also; these columnists are read with care by those from whom they draw their information.) However, no matter what the fashionable impression of the moment, some of the men on whom a President depends will always be discounting it in favor of what they perceive themselves, by light of their own loyalties, jobs, and first-hand observations. White House aides, Cabinet officers, legislative leaders, and the like will know more about some things than most commentators do (or know them differently) and will appraise the President in light of what they know. This may move their impressions far from those held by their less advantaged neighbors.

Nevertheless, differences in view between the better and the less informed tend to be self-adjusting. For one thing, the "insiders," or their aides, are looked to for the tips and "steers" and "dope" stories that help their neighbors read the public record. For another thing, their own appraisals are not always proof against appearances outside the range of personal observation. Besides, the men best placed to

gain an independent view are duty-bound to take into account what others think, no matter how mistaken. Department heads or congressional leaders may see the President as pure in heart, but if their followers are sullenly convinced that he is not, this is a datum to be weighed in their own calculations. His general reputation may not be conclusive for the best informed, but it is almost sure to be a factor in their thinking.

A President who values power need not be concerned with every flaw in his performance day by day, but he has every reason for concern with the residual impressions of tenacity and skill accumulating in the minds of Washingtonians-at-large. His bargaining advantages in seeking what he wants are heightened or diminished by what others think of him. Their thoughts are shaped by what they see. They do not see alone, they see together. What they think of him is likely to be much affected by the things they see alike. His look in "everybody's" eyes becomes strategically important for his influence. Reputation, of itself, does not persuade, but it can make persuasion easier, or harder, or impossible.

Ideally, any President who valued personal power would start his term with vivid demonstrations of tenacity and skill in every sphere, thereby establishing a reputation sure to stand the shocks of daily disarray until he was prepared to demonstrate again. This is no more than Franklin Roosevelt did in his first term. It is the ideal formula for others. Unfortunately, F.D.R.'s successors have not held the combination of advantages that helped him make his first-term demonstration: the public memory of his predecessor, the crisis of the Great Depression, the easy escape from foreign affairs, the eagerness of intellectuals, the patronage for partisans, the breadth of his experience in government (unmatched in this century save by the other Roosevelt). Nor is there anything to indicate that while mid-century conditions last, a future President is likely to hold comparable advantages. Emergencies in policy with politics as usual can hardly favor an effective use of Roosevelt's formula.

A contemporary President may have to settle for a reputation short of the ideal. If so, what then should be his object? It should be to induce as much uncertainty as possible about the consequences of ignoring what he wants. If he cannot make men think him bound to win, his need is to keep them from thinking they can cross him without risk, or that they can be sure what risks they run. At the same time (no mean feat) he needs to keep them from fearing lest he leave them in the lurch if they support him. To maximize uncertainties in future opposition, to minimize the insecurities of possible support, and to avoid the opposite effect in either case—these together form the goal for any mid-century President who seeks a reputation that will serve his personal power.

How can a President accomplish this result? How does he build his reputation? How does he protect it? Let me begin consideration of these questions with a classic instance of the ways in which a reputation ought *not* to be guarded. This illustration deals with the first year of Eisenhower's second term.

III

Early in 1958 a technician from the Bureau of the Budget testified before a subcommittee of the House on the provisions of a pending bill within his field of expertise. As he concluded, he remarked for emphasis that what he recommended was essential "to the program of the President." Whereupon everybody laughed. The hilarity was general and leaped party lines; to a man, committee members found the reference very funny.³ This incident occurred only fifteen months after Eisenhower's smashing re-election victory. Yet it is perfectly indicative, so far as can be judged from the outside, of an impression pervading all corners of the Capitol (and most places downtown), as a result of what had seemed to happen at the White House in the months between. This impression was to change somewhat with subsequent events. In 1959 a "new" Eisenhower emerged. Still, early in the second legislative session of his second term that laughter well expressed what most men thought. And why they thought it is an object lesson in how not to guard professional reputation.⁴

On election night in 1956, knowing the dimensions of his personal triumph, but perhaps not yet aware that he had carried neither House of Congress, Eisenhower told a national television audience:

... And now let me say something that looks to the future. I think that modern republicanism has now proved itself. And America has approved of modern republicanism.

And so, as we look ahead—as we look ahead to the problems in front, let us remember that a political party deserves the approbation of America only as it represents the ideals, the aspirations and the hopes of Americans. If it is anything less, it is merely a conspiracy to seize power and the Republican party is not that!

Modern republicanism looks to the future. . . .⁵

For a few weeks thereafter old Washington hands of both political persuasions engaged in speculation about what, if anything, that comment might portend. They did not have to wonder very long. On January 16, 1957, the President sent to Congress his budget for Fiscal 1958, a document marked very generally by "modern" Republican touches reminiscent of the past campaign. These were evident, particularly, in the budget's relatively generous handling of resource development and welfare programs (among them general aid for school construction), in its moderate increases for defense and foreign aid, and in its bland acceptance of a spending total close to 72 billion dollars. The total was 12 billion dollars higher than the oratorical objective of the first Eisenhower campaign, four years gone but not forgotten; spending at this level heralded no further tax relief for at least two years more. Momentarily the budget seemed a clue to Eisenhower's views about the future of his party.

Then, the same day, Secretary of the Treasury George M. Humphrey held a press conference. His prepared statement struck a regretful note about the budget and its total but was mild compared to his response on being questioned. The *New York Times* account of that response is both accurate and concise:

... if the government cannot reduce the "terrific" tax burden of the country, "I will predict that you will have a depression that will curl your hair, because we are just taking too much money out of this economy that we need to make jobs that you have to have as time goes on." ... [Humphrey] said, "there are a lot of places in this budget that can be cut," and that he would be glad to see cuts "if Congress can find ways to cut and still do a proper job. . . ."⁶

"I may have gone overboard a bit this afternoon," Humphrey reportedly remarked, shortly thereafter, to the bemused Budget Director, Percival Brundage. To much of Washington that would have seemed an extraordinary understatement. Never in the history of executive budgeting since 1921 had there been anything to match the spectacle of a first-rank Cabinet officer publicly assailing the presidential budget on the very day it was sent down. Budget Bureau officials were furious; some of the aides within the White House were appalled. "Modern" Republicans in the Cabinet and their departmental staffs—and many a sharp-minded Pentagon official—took umbrage, as well they might, for obviously they were in the line of Humphrey's fire. At the Capitol and in the press corps, and among spokesmen for the private groups most vitally concerned, reactions were as unsure as the situation was unusual; everybody looked to see what Eisenhower would do.

Three days after his second inaugural, the President went before a packed press conference and, replying to the inevitable question, commented as follows:

Well, in my own instructions to the Cabinet and heads of all offices, I have told them that every place that there is a chance to save a dollar out of the money that we have budgeted . . . everybody that is examining the many details . . . ought to find some place where they might save another dollar.

If they can, I think if Congress can, its committees, it is their duty to do it.

So with the thought behind the Secretary's statements I am in complete agreement, even though he made statements that I don't believe have a present and immediate application because, indeed, the outlook for the next few months in the economic field is very good indeed.⁷

When these words came across the news tickers there were few laughs in Congress, or downtown, but many stricken faces, some delight, a great deal of suspicion, and considerable scorn. "Old Guard" Republicans and like-minded associates across the aisle sensed prospects brighter than they had thought possible so soon after the Eisenhower re-election. "Modern" Republicans felt the ground

opening beneath their feet just when they had thought themselves secure. Democrats, both "liberal" and "moderate," sensed a deliberate squeeze-play with the middle place reserved for them. On the one hand (as they saw it) the President proposed a budget big with borrowings from their traditional stock-in-trade; on the other hand he joined in dramatizing the traditional Republican attack on Federal spending; with both hands he pointed at Congress where their party held a nominal majority. That "modern" Republicans might be caught in a comparable squeeze was insufficient recompense for many Democrats.

Right or wrong, all of these first impressions seemed to be borne out by happenings in the weeks after Eisenhower's press conference. For one, congressional in-boxes promptly became crammed with protests against spending (and demands for tax relief). "But two weeks later," wrote a Senator in retrospect, "the protesting tide swelled into an organized torrent . . . [which] gave the impression of being largely stimulated by corporations."⁸ Behind these "corporations" numbers of Washingtonians thought they perceived a prompter in the Secretary of the Treasury. On March 6 he was reported by the *New York Times* (a paper read with care in Washington) to have informed Detroit Republicans that "specific and substantial [budget] reductions were possible if the people of the country continued their 'insistence' . . . [This] 'would not only take . . . pressure off prices . . . but would also lead the way toward another tax cut.' . . . high spending for security would be required for some time, but that is all the more reason why expenditures in other areas must be curtailed and postponed. . . ."⁹ Those last words were read with particular attention by proponents of school aid, the largest new domestic item in the budget.

Executive officials publicly identified with major spending programs did not go unnoticed as the mail campaign progressed. The Budget Director, for one, got more than letters. "Brundage wants the shirt off your back" became the slogan of some businessmen—and laundry, clean or dirty, flooded in to him by parcel post.

At the same time the Executive Branch was in the throes of one of the most hectic episodes in the whole history of central budgeting, the out-of-season "budget season" of 1957. To prove the President's sincerity the Budget Bureau spent the months of February and March extracting from the agencies reductions in his January budget. Contemporary accounts vary: budget aides counted "about" two "overall" revisions of the budget; some weary officials thought they counted five. On March 1, half in fun and half in anger, a House majority resolved that Eisenhower should inform the Congress where to cut.¹⁰ A week later, the Budget Director told a subcommittee of the House that at the President's behest he was already doing all he could to get an answer for them (a response so astonishing to practical politicians that some of them swore off political readings of Administration behavior). "You would have thought," remarked a legislative aide in private conversation, "that they had just come into office and were trying to clean up the outgoing crowd's budget. It was 1953 all over again, only odder."

So numbers of observers thought when, in mid-April, Eisenhower formally submitted the results of Brundage's endeavor. In a letter to the Speaker of the House, the President then proposed or accepted reductions of 1.3 billion dollars in his January request for new appropriations. He warned, however, that these would not have much effect on 1958 *expenditures* and that a "multi-billion" saving in expenditures could be obtained "only at the expense of the national safety and interest." Taken alone, that warning spelled out a defense of the budget's central structure and the proffered cuts became no more than reasonable tidying by conscientious budgeteers. But in the light of what had gone before, the impact of this defense was diluted by the President's own opening remarks:

I am sure many members of the Congress are as gratified as I am to note the growing awareness of private citizens that . . . Federal benefits are not free but must be paid for out of taxes collected from the people. It is good to see . . . widespread insistence that Federal activity be held to the minimum consistent with the national needs. . . .

The evident responsiveness of the Congress to this attitude I find equally encouraging. I assure you . . . that the Executive Branch will continue to cooperate. . . .¹¹

If his purpose was a defense of his budget—and a cover for the Congressmen who rallied to its cause—those remarks, as the saying goes, put Eisenhower's emphasis on the wrong syllable.

This letter of mid-April marked a late stage in White House equivocation after Humphrey's outbreak. When Eisenhower thus addressed the Speaker there were signs that he was concerned lest the assault on his budget go too far. Concern was certainly justified. By April, the Administration faced a real crisis of confidence in its own ranks and, simultaneously, a prospect of deep, indiscriminate appropriation cuts which would spare neither foreign aid nor national defense. Downtown the departmental staffs responsible for programs thought to be on Humphrey's "list," felt themselves victims of a backstairs *coup*. Under cover of the decorous behavior usual in Eisenhower's neighborhood their resentments ran deep, with the White House an object no less than Humphrey or Brundage. For Brundage's economy drive seemed to be strongly seconded at every turn by Sherman Adams and the President. At the Capitol, meanwhile, the sense of public pressure coupled to suspicions of Administration "strategy" left even friends of Pentagon programs—to say nothing of welfare or of aid abroad—increasingly inclined to show themselves more holy than the pope. Among the Democratic members of the House, especially, temptation grew to make a record out-economizing the economizers downtown. On April 11, no less a personage than Speaker Rayburn voiced the hope that by June revenue prospects and spending cuts, combined, would clear the way for tax relief. And on the Senate side Senator Byrd of Virginia, dean of the professional economizers, gained an unusually attentive audience for his retrenchment pleas which he embodied, late in March, in a 5-billion-dollar list of "feasible" appropriation cuts.

From the end of March until mid-April Eisenhower shifted back and forth between defense of his budget and good words for the economizers. On March 27, at his regular press conference, the President used stronger language on the budget's behalf than any since his January budget message. Stung, apparently, by Byrd's proposals and by talk of tax reduction, Eisenhower characterized as "futile" and as "fatuous" both sorts of claims. Without eliminating programs there could be no major savings, he asserted, and he entered a defense of programs such as foreign aid. In consequence, the claims for "piecemeal" cuts were fraudulent. ". . . to say you are going to save a few millions here and a few millions there, I think is the poorest kind of economy we can find."¹² As an acute observer noted at the time:

The Congressional reaction to the President's strong attitude was unusually mixed. The "Eisenhower Republicans" were pleased and relieved . . . orthodox Republicans were glum and grumpy. The Democrats were not unhappy at the division . . . Sam Rayburn of Texas, Speaker of the House, pointed out that yesterday [March 26] House Republicans had passed a resolution unanimously calling for heavy budget cuts. The President's attack . . . "looks like a pretty good answer to what his own folks did up here yesterday."¹³

To concern over budget prospects, the White House had to add concern for the apparent disarray in Republican ranks. On two occasions in the week that followed, Eisenhower tried to formulate a budget stand that would both calm the "orthodox" and satisfy his "modern" followers.¹⁴ The net effect was to reduce, somewhat, the force of his March 27 press statement. Then his letter in mid-April to the Speaker of the House blurred his position further. Shortly thereafter Congress recessed for Easter and the White House gained a chance to collect its thoughts.

In early May the White House announced that Eisenhower would deliver two nationally televised addresses rallying the country to his budget. Visits home in recess had convinced many Congressmen that calls to cut the budget, reduce taxes, were beginning to bite deep into the consciousness of usually inattentive publics. Though these are tricky things to gauge, there is considerable evidence that consonant with Humphrey's invitation "public opinion," organized and not, grew more aroused about those issues during 1957 than at any time in Eisenhower's first term (a matter no doubt bearing some relation to the climb in living costs that had begun in 1956). And whatever the facts, it is apparent that by May a wide variety of bureaucrats and politicians *thought* this was the case, which is what counts in Washington. The President's decision to address the country is a tribute to that thought.

The first of Eisenhower's "fireside chats," a general roundup on the budget, came on May 14. It was judged fairly ineffectual in Washington, a view held on the Hill and by the press corps, and quite evidently at the White House. Some notion of its public impact can be gleaned from the fact that the President's press secretary would not comment upon rumors of an adverse mail response. And its impact upon

politicians was reduced materially by Eisenhower's own appearance of ambivalence at a press conference the next day:

I don't think it is the function of a President of the United States to punish anybody for voting what he believes. . . . I don't see how it is possible for any President to work with the Republican group in Congress, the whole Republican group, except through their elected leadership. . . . When these large sums are involved, there comes a chance for both the Executive and the Congress to do a squeezing process . . . there is some squeezing possible and I have never kicked about that.¹⁵

As Senators Knowland and Bridges, Republican leaders both, were just then in the van of the congressional economizers, those words were noted throughout Washington and appropriate conclusions drawn.

A week later all conclusions were shaken. The President's second televised address on May 21, dealt with defense and foreign aid. It was generally thought "effective" and the White House happily announced a strongly favorable mail response. Moreover at his next press conference, again the following day, his tone was confident, his fielding fast and his words relatively tough:

Well, as long as I am in a fight, I never rest until [I get] . . . what . . . I believe to be necessary for the operation of this Government. . . . I shall never stop until a decision is reached. . . . I do believe this: when a political party gets together and agrees upon a platform . . . they should remain true to it. I believe they should stick with it through thick and thin. . . . I have no right and no desire to punish anybody. I just say this: I am committed to the support of people who believe, as I do, that the Republican platform of 1956 must be our political doctrine.¹⁶

"In what have probably been the two most effective days of his second administration," James Reston wrote of Eisenhower's performance, "he has regained the initiative over the opposition in his own and the Democratic party."¹⁷ Most members of the Washington community seem to have shared that view, and it grew stronger as the initiative, once taken, was sustained. On May 22 a presidential message went to Congress outlining the plans for foreign aid which were to be supported by the dollars in the budget. The Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, followed with an elaborate personal presentation to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Both the message and his testimony emphasized Administration sponsorship of program innovations previously advanced by congressional study groups. Chief among them was a Development Loan Fund as a source of capital assistance for the less developed countries, with the implication that eventually loans would replace most outright grants abroad. The upshot of the Dulles presentation was a heartening reception for the foreign-aid program in Senate offices and a more general cordiality than had seemed possible a week before.

Two days later Eisenhower spoke by telephone to a Republican Party confer-

ence in New Jersey and strongly urged the item veto as a way to "real" economies. His aim, apparently, was to turn the gaze of the economizers from his budget toward congressional initiatives on public works. At the same conference, his assistant Sherman Adams, made a speech demanding party unity behind the President. Since Adams, twelve days earlier, reportedly had remarked on a television program that the budget could be cut 2 billion dollars without harm, his address in New Jersey seemed another sign in Washington of new determination at the White House.

Between the first and second presidential television talks, the Secretary of Defense, Charles E. (General Motors) Wilson, had held a press conference defending in detail the military budget which the House was threatening to cut by 1.1 billion dollars. Eisenhower in his second televised address had pressed the Secretary's case. A few days later, Minority Leader Martin was enabled to announce that as a party matter, House Republicans would now seek restoration of a fourth of the projected cut. When this was then attempted on the floor it was defeated by the Democrats. In the crucial roll-call all but eleven of them voted against the restoration, which three-quarters of the House Republicans supported.¹⁸ Although this outcome seemed at first glance to repudiate the President's newly asserted leadership, the White House could take comfort from it nonetheless, and close observers gained from it a new respect for Eisenhower's potency. Congressional Republicans had closed ranks in a gesture to his cause, however short of his avowed objective. House Democrats had made a party record most embarrassing to defense-minded Senate colleagues. A base seemed surely laid for better fortune in the Senate and in conference.

Washingtonians quite generally responded with considerable respect to the "new" Eisenhower who had emerged in the month of May. Belatedly but definitely, he seemed to have accepted, now, the role reserved for Presidents in the time-honored play of legislative action on the budget. Downtown, men trying to rouse public support for their programs were encouraged. On Capitol Hill men trying to resist public pressure against spending were relieved. The President could now be praised or blamed for what they sought to do. Political interpretations of his conduct flourished once again, but these assigned him motives quite like those assigned in other years to other Presidents and the familiarity was reassuring to the politically minded. "Modern" Republicans were gratified. Democrats began to reassess. "Old Guard" Republicans prepared to give some ground. So far as I can ascertain, nobody laughed.

So matters stood by June of 1957. The President's own actions for the past five months, along with those of his associates, now seemed to show contrasting patterns, and the latest signs seemed to belie the relevance of what had gone before. Momentarily, a host of expectations throughout Washington were tempered or revised to suit.

In the month of June, however, there came some harbingers of new developments. For one thing, the Comptroller of the Pentagon testified on June 4 to a House

subcommittee that military expenditures were running at an annual rate of 4 billion dollars above January estimates—the result of rising costs and (paradoxically) of improved paperwork—and that, in consequence, directives had come down from Wilson and from Brundage, late in May, to slow current spending to the rates originally projected. On the same day as this testimony, at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, the chairman of the Republican National Committee told the press that Eisenhower had been briefed on the adverse reaction of Republican contributors to current White House views about the budget. Three weeks later a Young Republican convention voted almost two-to-one, in Washington, against support for the Administration's proposed aid to schools. A week after that, the President in a letter to one of his most ardent House supporters said he could not "pass judgment on all the details" of the pending school aid bill, a response described by its recipient as "disappointing."¹⁹

Such miscellaneous occurrences as these gained pattern retrospectively for many Washingtonians when the Administration found itself embarrassed on three notable occasions in July. Early that month the Senate passed a military appropriation bill restoring most of the funds cut by the House, as Wilson and the President had urged. With confidence, the Senate conferees prepared to battle for their version. Then on July 18, while the conference committee was in session, a letter from the Secretary of Defense announced that to hold spending at the rate of January's estimate (under his May directive from Brundage) 100,000 men would be dropped by the army and a portion of the Senate increase would be saved. That announcement not only made senators look silly—and forced the Senate conferees to drop their base for bargaining—it also seriously hampered Senate advocates of foreign aid on which debate had just begun. Nine months later, Wilson's letter still caused scathing comment on the Senate floor, and there were no defenders in the chamber.²⁰

On July 25 general aid for school construction came to a vote in the House. The measure as reported from committee compromised Administration plans for grants to states on grounds of need alone with plans by the bill's sponsors for grants proportional to school-age population. Eisenhower had not blessed the compromise, exactly. Although he had called repeatedly for action on the measure, he had evaded opportunities to put his own stamp of approval on its grant provisions. Even so, the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, Marion Folsom, had never ceased to represent the White House as firmly behind the bill. On the House floor, however, the Republican leadership failed to support it, even at the crucial moment when its Democratic sponsors offered to accept Administration terms for grants-in-aid. Thereupon the bill was killed in parliamentary circumstances so complex that this offer was scarcely mentioned by most press reports, while members made a record for each entry on which blame could be heaped from across the aisle.²¹ But the interested lobbyists, officials, and reporters were aware, of course, that there had come a point in the debate when the Administration *might* have gained its grant

provisions and secured the bill. In consequence the President was asked at his next press conference to comment on the lack of response from Republican leaders. He replied: "I never heard. . . . If that is true, why you are telling me something I never heard."²²

The impact of that comment in the Washington community was heightened by the fact that just three weeks before the President had responded somewhat similarly on a matter even closer to the heart of his program. In the first week of July, Senator Russell of Georgia had charged the Administration with a tricky, hidden intent in provisions of the civil rights bill that it had sponsored and that the House had passed. The bill was in the front rank of Administration measures; its drafting had been done by the Department of Justice; those provisions were included from the first. Yet the President, on being asked about them in press conference had said:

Well, I would not want to answer . . . in detail because I was reading part of that bill this morning, and I—there were certain phrases I didn't completely understand. So, before I made any more remarks on that, I would want to talk to the Attorney General and see exactly what they do mean. . . . Naturally I'm not a lawyer and I don't participate in drawing up the exact language of proposals. . . .²³

These three occurrences in July furnished considerable food for thought to those who watch a President professionally, but it cannot be said that there was a consensus, all at once, on their interpretation. For during August Eisenhower led a renewed White House effort on behalf of foreign aid. Reportedly, he also intervened to assure enactment of a useful compromise on civil rights. By late August when Congress adjourned, its record, although mixed, seemed no disaster for the Administration, not even on the budget (when one sets aside the cuts that Eisenhower had endorsed). In light of that outcome there were numbers of Washingtonians, especially downtown, who thought they saw the likelihood of more consistency and more determination from the White House in the year ahead. For one thing, Humphrey had left office in July. For another, as one high official told me hopefully: "I think the President knows some things now he didn't have to learn in his first term." Again, as in late May, although less markedly, there was a tendency to read two patterns into Eisenhower's past behavior and to hedge, somewhat, the expectations based on either one of them.

Then, in September, came the Little Rock affair. Immediately afterward, the first Soviet sputniks went aloft. American egos were badly bruised, as all the world found out, and defense-minded citizens of every sort were jarred by contemplation of the thrust required to put Sputnik II in orbit. Moreover, as the sputniks rose there came the first sharp signs of a decline in the American economy, heralding the 1958 recession and rendered the more disturbing by continued increases in living costs. By December 1957 needs, lags, and lacks of national "preparedness" to meet the Russian "challenge" had become *the* Washington preoccupation, in terms ranging

all the way from military hardware to science in our schools. As for the question posed by lessening production, many Washingtonians assumed that a response to sputnik held the answer.

The President's forthcoming budget and his legislative program thus became the focus of a new concern, at odds with—and in many quarters overriding, for a time—the “swollen” budget and high tax preoccupations of the spring. The congressmen who six months earlier had championed economy, the Pentagon officials who had worked throughout September to cut active forces to a level consonant with programmed spending rates; a whole array of experts, editorial writers, commentators, spokesmen for assorted interest groups—all these now called for governmental action, “leadership,” “a sense of urgency,” to meet the threats of Russian technological superiority and of American economic instability. And lest the presidential program fail to satisfy the urgent activists, the Senate leader, Johnson of Texas, made it plain that Democrats would do their utmost to make up the lack. As early as November he had convened a bipartisan Preparedness Subcommittee which gave the activists a forum in the weeks before Congress returned to Washington.

The President, himself, had spent much of November incapacitated by a cerebral spasm. Pushing his recovery, he had spent part of December in Paris at a post-sputnik rally of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The concern and curiosity about his coming program were heightened by his illness, by his absence, and by a long suspension of press conferences. He was, therefore, the center of attention in a transformed situation when his annual messages for 1958 went to the new session of Congress. The situation seemed so different that the patterns of the past appeared no guide; expectations, momentarily, were in suspense.

Eisenhower's State of the Union address in 1958 was strong in tone and vigorously delivered. It was also rather unspecific. But it won him a good deal of praise as Washington awaited the specifics of the budget. Speaker Rayburn, for one, called it the “strongest” speech the President had ever made to Congress.²⁴ This rendered all the more astonishing the Eisenhower budget (fiscal 1959) that Congress received on January 13. For congressmen and interest groups soon found, as department staffs already knew, that save for minimal response to sputnik, it was just the sort of budget Humphrey had desired but had failed to gain before his public outburst a year earlier.

On the domestic side, the new budget requested *program* changes to reduce the spending base in future years. Technically this was a realistic route toward major savings. Politically, it was a way of irritating interest groups of every sort and all at once. The President proposed a ban on all new starts for power, flood control, and reclamation. He urged a sharp downward revision of farm subsidies. He asked a narrowing of legal limits upon grants to states for hospital construction, urban redevelopment, and public welfare programs, among others. He hinted at reduction of the base for veterans' benefits and urged an increase in the interest rate on G.I. mortgages. He abandoned aid for school construction on the plea that funds were limited and aid for science training now deserved priority.

As Truman once used budgets to project his Fair Deal aims beyond his current prospects, Eisenhower presented an ideal projection for conservative Republicans. “Politically,” as William S. White put it, “his domestic program involves an effort to return to the spirit of a traditional Republicanism never before seen in the current White House and not in years manifested in Congress itself, save by a comparative handful of beleaguered orthodox Republicans.”²⁵

The reaction among Democrats was sharp and scornful. “What does he want,” one Senator is said to have asked an executive official, “every lobby in the country ganging up on foreign aid?” As for Republicans, to quote White once again, “They see the impact of the Eisenhower domestic policy as heavy all over the country for Republican members of Congress—damaging in urban areas . . . and simultaneously very bad news indeed in the farm belt. . . . Thus as not before in his Presidency has Eisenhower challenged the vital political interests of both wings of his congressional party at the same time.”²⁶ As no one in Congress could forget, there would be an election in November.

Had the domestic policy been coupled to a massive build-up on the military side, it might have had a kindlier reception from the politically minded. Certainly they would have understood it better. But Eisenhower's budget for defense did little more than return Pentagon expenditures to rates achieved six months before (allowing for price changes in the interim), while increased emphasis on missiles and research was compensated, to a large degree, by reduced emphasis on active forces. The most striking of Eisenhower's own proposals in the defense sphere was not a budget increase but a Pentagon reorganization to “end” interservice rivalries. “America,” he said in his initial address, “wants them stopped.” Thereupon he pledged himself to find a way to do it: “Soon my conclusions will be finalized. I shall promptly take such executive action as is necessary and . . . present appropriate recommendations to the Congress.”²⁷

This pledge, at least, emerged unscathed from critical reactions to his budget. But in mid-January, when asked by the press how hard he meant to fight for Pentagon reform, his response struck a rather different note:

. . . my personal convictions, no matter how strong, cannot be the final answer. There must be a consensus reached with the cab—with the Congress, with the people that have the job of operating the services . . . I am certainly hopeful that it goes in the direction of what I believe. But . . . organization has got to be effective after . . . [I have] passed from the scene. . . .²⁸

A few days later, obviously mindful of reactions to this statement, Eisenhower announced that he “would participate personally” in the reorganization “until the job was done,” and he journeyed to the Pentagon to emphasize the point.²⁹ But many Washingtonians were left unsure which Eisenhower to believe. Their puzzlement was not confined to this one issue.

Late in January 1958 there came the episode with which this story started: a

Budget Bureau aide evoked "the program of the President" in testimony on the Hill and all his hearers laughed. It is scarcely to be wondered why they did

IV

The professional reputation of a President in Washington is made or altered by the man himself. No one can guard it for him; no one saves him from himself. His office has been institutionalized to a degree unknown before the Second World War, but as a reputation-builder he is no mere "office manager." On the contrary, everything he personally says and does (or fails to say, omits to do), becomes significant in everyone's appraisals regardless of the claims of his officialdom. For his words, his own actions, provide clues not only to his personal proclivities but to the forecasts and asserted influence of those around him. What Humphrey says gains weight as Eisenhower seems not to oppose him. What Folsom says becomes a joke as Eisenhower seems not to support him. Press secretariats and "chiefs of staff" and other aides aside, in fashioning his Washington reputation a President's own doings are decisive.

As these Eisenhower episodes make plain, a President runs risks by being personally responsible for his own reputation. In the fifteen months after his re-election Eisenhower managed to reverse the reputation-builder's goal: he increased the insecurities attendant on supporting him and lessened the apparent risks of openly opposing him. He managed this by seeming both unsure of his objectives and unwilling to persist, for long, in any given course. His words and actions cast increasing doubt not only on his skill but on his will. Both came to be discounted in the Washington community. The impact on his influence was marked.

Not all of Eisenhower's troubles were avoidable; some of them are native to the presidential job. In concrete cases any President may feel he must support, or rationalize, what his associates have done, as Eisenhower felt when Humphrey spoke out to the press. If he disavows their doings he may cast more doubt on his own will and capability than on theirs. And any President is judged in part by standards of behavior very different from his own. The impression that he makes by what he does depends not only on the content of his action but on the events surrounding it, as these events are understood by men who watch him work. Their notions of what they would do if they were in his place may count as much as what he does in shaping their impressions. When Eisenhower urged his program cuts in January 1958, politically minded members of the Washington community found his stand incredible in their terms of reference. Since they could not imagine themselves acting so, they would not take him seriously; what he meant to be decisive seemed instead to be equivocal or perverse. Yet there are so many different terms of reference in the Washington community that White House action rarely will be taken at face value by every part of Washington at once. Eisenhower suffered from a general lack of credit. This condition might have been avoidable. But nothing that he could have said or done would have made sense to every Washingtonian.

A President's decisive role in reputation-building is a source of opportunity as well as risk. In a government where Secretaries of the Treasury may go astray at press conference, where Secretaries of Defense may choose the poorest time to make announcements, where Presidents may not be briefed on legislative drafts—and ours is such a government no matter who is President—the fact that his own conduct will decide what others think of him is precious for the man inside the White House. He can steal scenes from his subordinates. He can switch roles or even open a new play. In May of 1957 when Eisenhower made and pressed a vigorous appeal for portions of his budget, he very nearly managed to switch roles himself. He also turned attention from what Humphrey, Brundage, Adams, and the like had seemed to say or do up to that time. A President can *change* his reputation. This is the essence of his opportunity. "I always must remind myself," a very senior bureaucrat once told me, looking at the White House from his office window, "that the power of that fellow over there is never the same two weeks in a row; it fluctuates almost from day to day." Had "everybody's" laughter in the early days of 1958 expressed a fixed, immutable impression, Eisenhower's own prospects for influence would have been less than actually became the case in the years after.

Few single actions on a President's part will either set or totally transform what Washington perceives of him. Eisenhower's program did not become laughable the moment he first seemed to sanction Humphrey's attack on his budget. The laughter followed a year later when that incident appeared the key to a whole pattern of equivocation. Nothing short of a contrasting pattern, equally substantial and sustained, could have transformed the view induced by the occurrences of 1957. In 1958 amidst recession difficulties, defense dilemmas, vicuna coats, hard desegregation problems, and a host of troubles overseas, Eisenhower managed no such transformation. But in 1959 he did achieve it; a "New Eisenhower" emerged that year. The newness was sustained for months on end. Impressions of equivocation were replaced by visions of tenacity and not a little skill. In his seventh year this President apparently won more respect from Washington on both these scores than he had been accorded since the time of his belated honeymoon in 1955, after the eclipse of Senator McCarthy and before the Denver heart attack. That Eisenhower could look "new" in 1959 despite his look in 1957 is a tribute to the opportunity presented by a President's own role in reputation.

How did Eisenhower manage to transform his reputation? He did it by defending a restrictive budget, of the sort he had proposed in 1958, against congressional attempts to add new programs of the sort he had endorsed in 1957. This oversimplifies to a degree: the Eisenhower budget for 1959 was rather more restrictive than had been the case before, and some of the congressional additions he disputed went beyond his own proposals two years earlier. But in education, housing, public works, and foreign aid, the parallels are close.³⁰ He changed his reputation by *consistently* opposing what he once had urged equivocally. He made his opposition manifest by threatening the veto and by using it. He made his purpose plain by his demeanor at press conference and he used the conference freely to expound his case

in public. From the start of 1959 up to the time of writing (in July), Eisenhower's words and actions were consistent—and his vetoes were sustained. The public record in those months presents a striking contrast with the comparable period of 1957. His success was largely negative but it was still success. His reputation fed on his consistency and on accomplishment. The "new" Eisenhower was not universally approved by any means. Interpretations of his conduct were not always flattering. Both at the Capitol and near the White House some men saw him as the victim of an *idée fixe*. But those who held this view were all the more respectful of his will, at least within the range of his presumed fixation.

A President's opportunity to change his reputation is not unlimited. The circumstances of this Eisenhower transformation will suggest the limits. For one thing his display of will and skill was managed from the strongest ground a President can occupy late in his final term: the ground of opposition to congressional initiatives when Congress does not bear his party's label. Upon this ground his vantage points of "powers" and of status suffered nothing from the Twenty-second Amendment. For another thing, when Eisenhower occupied that ground his setting lent his actions weight in Washington. From early 1959 production and employment indices rose rapidly; his popularity appeared to move in train. By May he spoke and acted in a setting reminiscent of 1957. Psychologically, and in most economic terms, the recession was over. Sputniks had long since become routine. Popular concern about inflation and taxation reappeared as fears of a depression vanished. Eisenhower's legislative program had seemed laughable to congressmen in 1958; it was no laughing matter in 1959. The congressional elections of 1958 had produced heavy Democratic majorities, but with the economic upturn these majorities were as susceptible to pressures for economy as Democrats had been in 1957. Besides, throughout the spring of 1959 a threat of Soviet action in Berlin warned Washingtonians that they might have to rally around the White House on short notice. Eisenhower's critics grew relatively quiet as the year advanced. His new look was the product, partly, of the quietude around him. It left him free to stand on the offensive and it limited awareness of the flaws in his performance. A President can change the way he looks, but first he has to find some actions suited to the purpose, and then he has to hope that other men respect the change. His action does not dictate their reaction. His situation and their own, as they interpret both, decide what they will think of his new look. These are the limits on his opportunity.

Granting the limits, acknowledging the risks, how does a President exploit his opportunity? How does he make the most he can of his own reputation? The answer returns us to his choices. His general reputation will be shaped by signs of pattern in the things he says and does. These are the words and actions he has chosen, day by day. His choices are the means by which he does what he can do to build his reputation as he wants it. Decisions are his building-blocks. He has no others in his hands. The point we reached in Chapter 3 we reach again.

The President of the United States can rarely make a choice with nothing more

in mind than his professional reputation. Franklin Roosevelt sometimes asked his aides for "something I can veto" as a lesson and a reminder to congressmen.³¹ But chances for decision in these terms alone will not come often to a President. Most choices will involve him also in the institutional imperatives of being President, in the extensive duties of his clerkship. Through the first half of 1957 Eisenhower's troubles turned upon the fact that whatever he might want to be or seem, he could not escape authorship and advocacy of a budget. Both were required of the President-as-clerk in order that congressional and agency officials could carry on their jobs. Moreover, many choices will involve the President's own sense of right and wrong. Eisenhower, as we have seen, argued for economy amidst the outcry over sputniks and recession; Truman stuck to advocacy of his Fair Deal measures in the hardest months of the Korean War. Besides, each choice involves not only general reputation but particular relationships. The two considerations often clash. Although a President lacks other means to guard the way he looks, his choice-making involves him in *competing* considerations. The choice that started Eisenhower's reputation toward its downward slide in 1957 was his personal approval of a Treasury press conference on Budget Day. The grounds for that approval illustrate the competitions in a presidential choice. The story of that choice is told in Chapter 6.

At the start of this discussion of professional reputation I postponed consideration of choice-making. Now let me postpone it once again. The men who judge a President in Washington watch more than his performance and their neighbor's reaction. They also keep an eye upon reactions from his audience outside their own community; they watch the way he looks to that residual cross-section of constituents, his public at large. His power stakes are not confined to his relationships and reputation inside Washington; his influence depends, as well, on his apparent popular prestige. This factor in his influence remains to be explored.

CHAPTER 5

Public Prestige

The Washingtonians who watch a President have more to think about than his professional reputation. They also have to think about his standing with the public outside Washington. They have to gauge his popular prestige. Because they think about it, public standing is a source of influence for him, another factor bearing on their willingness to give him what he wants.

Prestige, like reputation is a subjective factor, a matter of judgment. It works on power just as reputation does through the mechanism of anticipated reactions. The same men, Washingtonians, do the judging. In the case of reputation they anticipate reactions from the President. In the instance of prestige they anticipate reactions from the public. Most members of the Washington community depend upon outsiders to support them or their interests. The dependence may be as direct as votes, or it may be as indirect as passive toleration. Dependent men must take account of popular reaction to *their* actions. What their publics may think of them becomes a factor, therefore, in deciding how to deal with the desires of a President. His prestige enters into that decision; their publics are part of his. Their view from inside Washington of how outsiders view him thus affects his influence with them.

A President's prestige is not a very precise thing to keep in view. "The" presidential public is actually an aggregate of publics as diverse and overlapping as the claims Americans and allied peoples press on Washington. Members of "the" public are divided not alone by differently felt needs and wants but by degrees of difference in attention paid a President. Some of them may make an avocation of the

PUBLIC PRESTIGE

watchfulness vocationally imposed on Washingtonians. But the responses of the great majority shade all the way to general inattention broken only as a private shadow in public trouble makes men lift their eyes. Presidential standing outside Washington is actually a jumble of imprecise impressions held by relatively inattentive men.

This is a factor operating mostly in the background as a conditioner, not the determinant, of what Washingtonians will do about a President's request. Rarely there any one-to-one relationship between appraisals of his popularity in general and responses to his wishes in particular. The Hundred Days of 1933 remain as exceptional as they were memorable. Even then, as careful commentators have made plain, both skill and energy were needed to maintain the link.¹ After Roosevelt's second inauguration came the legislative storms of 1937. After Eisenhower's re-election came the House revolt against his military budget. Yet the prevalent impression of a President's public standing tends to set a tone and to define the limits of what Washingtonians do for him, or do to him. In the background of MacArthur's insubordination and the cheering that accompanied it on Capitol Hill was the prevailing view of Truman as decidedly unpopular. One finds this also in the background of the steel case, a year later. In 1958 the laughter heard in Washington became the louder as impressions spread that Eisenhower's popularity was falling. In 1959 the first signs of respect for the "new" Eisenhower coincided with reports that his prestige was on the rise again.

In conditioning responses to a President, the quality of his prestige can matter quite as much as any quantitative notion of his popularity. When men make judgments in the Washington community they are no less concerned with what he is liked for, than with how many like him. In 1949, to take a sharp example, Air Force and Navy "brass" fought openly, in turn, against the Truman budget for defense. In 1954, armed with a technically better case, the Army swallowed hard and did not battle publicly against the "New Look" Eisenhower was presenting as his own. Even in 1958, the year of Lebanon, when the Army's plight was worse but its case as good as ever, there came no "revolt of the generals."⁴ Truman had been challenged within months of his surprise election. Eisenhower seemed less popular in 1958 than ever before. Truman, of course, had not gone to Annapolis. Eisenhower was a certified West Pointer. This may account for some part of the difference between Navy "revolt" and Army quiescence. But also Truman was not popularly thought to be among the country's greatest experts in military affairs; his successor was accorded that distinction. No doubt a factor in the Army's conduct was the difficulty of conceiving how to win a shouting match with General Eisenhower.⁵

The public standing of a President in the United States may be quite different from his standing with constituents abroad. Apparently, the President's position overseas was higher than at home in most of Truman's years and lower than at home in most of Eisenhower's. Those Washingtonians who are themselves dependent on

foreign public have to think about the quality of his prestige in both these spheres at once. But even Washingtonians whose publics are American will think, from time to time, of how he stands abroad. Members of Congress, for example, are increasingly aware that his position overseas can be a national asset and that their behavior toward him can enlarge it or diminish it. Their publics sometimes seem to be aware of this as well. Most men at the Capitol are anxious not to jeopardize American advantages, and no one wants the accusation flung at him from his own state or district. Except in Truman's final years, consideration for the President's prestige abroad has tended to inhibit congressional behavior ever since the Second World War. In 1959 the presence of Berlin, as an *impending* crisis through the whole length of the session, contributed to the respectfulness shown Eisenhower by a Congress that was advertised as certain to oppose him. However, even though a President's position overseas affects all sorts of judgments made in Washington, his standing with home publics is a matter of more moment to most Washingtonians most of the time. Accordingly, this chapter deals with the domestic side alone.

How do members of the Washington community assess a President's prestige with the American public? They talk to one another and to taxi drivers. They read the columnists and polls and news reports. They sample the opinions of their visitors and friends. They travel in the country and they listen as they go. Above all, they watch Congress. Generally speaking, only national party politicians, legislative leaders, congressmen in unsafe seats, and lobbyists in trouble wet their fingers every day to gauge winds blowing toward the White House from the public. Most others, and especially most bureaucrats, concentrate on the winds blowing from the Capitol. If an agency's careerists fail to challenge an Eisenhower, as in the Army case, their usual calculation is not that the public supports him but that Congress, fearing so, will not support them. Congressional sentiment tends to be officialdom's pragmatic substitute for "public opinion" because it is on Congress, not the general public, that officials must depend, day after day, for legislation and for funds to keep programs and personnel alive. And bureaucrats are not the only ones who make that substitution. For comparable reasons it is made, much of the time, by diplomats of many countries, officers of every state, representatives of private interests, local party leaders, and even congressmen themselves.

Congress is a distorting mirror for a President's prestige. Congressional constituencies differ from his own. What happens at the Capitol rarely will reflect the full extent of his apparent popularity. Eisenhower found this out in his first term. Neither is it likely to reflect the full extent of his unpopularity. Congressmen must live with presidential "powers." Truman's last Congress was often in an ugly mood; the mood of the country sometimes seemed uglier. Distortions are as likely to assist a man as hurt him.

Since the general public does not govern, presidential influence is shielded from the vagaries of shifting sentiment. Truman could not keep his Admirals from revolting in 1949, but as Commander-in-Chief he could retaliate and did: the Chief

of Naval Operations was retired; other officers were transferred overseas. That year he could not keep the Air Force from demanding and obtaining an appropriation bigger than its budget but he could and did keep extra funds unspent, "impounding" them (by the device of not apportioning them) as statutes on the books allowed. When he seized the steel mills, press denunciations could not make him give them up, unless it can be said that the Supreme Court followed the newspapers. When he dismissed MacArthur, public outcries could not put the General back. With "powers" and with status—and sufficient show of will—a President of the United States can wield effective influence in many situations even though he has a balky Congress and seems short on popular appeal. Obviously, though, the less his demonstrated power at the Capitol, the more he is confined, downtown, to realms where sheer command proves workable. The weaker his apparent popular support, the more his cause in Congress may depend on negatives at his disposal like the veto, or "impounding." He may not be left helpless, but his options are reduced, his opportunities diminished, his freedom for maneuver checked in the degree that Washington conceives him unimpressive to the public.

Leeway is the term that best describes the presidential stake in Washington appraisals of prestige—leeway as opportunity, leeway in the sense of chances to be taken. This is what Truman gained from the prestige he borrowed during 1947 for the early, crucial stages of the Marshall Plan. This is what Eisenhower gained in 1959 when, contrary to expectations, Washington discovered that his popularity was rising. Leeway is no guarantee of governmental action. Popularity may not produce a Washington response. But public disapproval heartens Washington's resistance. Leeway guarantees one thing: avoidance of the trouble that can follow from its absence. Prestige counts in power by establishing some checks upon resistance from the men engaged in governing.

Not only does prestige check Washingtonians, it also often checks those members of the public who are called upon to act as agents for a President. Some chores of governing are not done in the Washington community. Some things are done directly by a portion of the public. Presidential influence on government becomes, in part, a matter of direct relationships with special-purpose publics. And the members of a special public, quite like Washingtonians, are often swayed by what they think the general public thinks of him.

What may a President desire from some portion of his public? One thing he may desire is an alteration of the Washington community to aid him in attaining policy objectives. In short, he may want votes. To be sure, votes are not a guarantee of any policy objective. But election outcomes obviously bear upon his chances to obtain his policy ends by other means. Since 1938 a consequence of each mid-term congressional election (with the possible exception of 1954) has been elimination, practically speaking, of prospects for some policy departures wanted by the White House. In 1952 the presidential election had the same effect on numbers of objectives urged by the retiring Administration.

Aside from votes, a President's objectives are affected by the willingness of special publics to use *private* means as substitutes for an official action. There are all sorts of concrete situations where a presidential policy or preference seems beyond accomplishment by acts of formal government, or would be better served by private action. Remember Truman's efforts to achieve a settlement in steel without a seizure. Recall that Eisenhower sent no troops to Little Rock until the mob had failed to heed his proclamation urging citizens to cease the obstruction of justice. On both occasions, failing private action, these Presidents were able to find official stop-gaps. But private action was what they required if their policy objectives were to be achieved. Moreover, in steel seizure, there was Sawyer's silent partner, the trade union. Even as a stop-gap, official action was contingent on collaboration from its members in the mills.

When a President appeals for votes or private action, the men whom he addresses will have more in mind than notions of his national prestige. As in the case of Washington, one rarely finds a one-to-one relationship between appraisals of his general popularity and responses from some public in particular. In 1954 and 1956 when Eisenhower was conceded to be high in public favor, he appealed in vain for a Republican Congress. In 1957 when he still seemed very popular, his unsupported word did not disperse the mob in Little Rock. Truman, on the other hand, was widely thought unpopular in 1952 when the men honored his call to stay at work in the steel mills. Yet the closer one looks at instances like these, the clearer are the signs that prestige was a factor in the background of behavior. Eisenhower did not get the Congresses he wanted, but the Democrats he got instead were pledged to treat him well, and Democratic leaders in both Houses had worked hard to lend those pledges substance in advance. At Little Rock he had to call upon the Army; bayonets dispersed the mob. It is notable, however, that mobs did not assemble elsewhere in the South and did not reassemble around Central High School. One cannot know to what extent the men who might have led such mobs were influenced by thoughts about the President's prestige. But had Eisenhower worn the look of Truman in the South, local leaders might have hastened to defy him. In the steel case the workers supported Truman when his course suited their purposes; they did not hesitate to overthrow his object, steel production, the moment that he ceased to be of concrete use to them.

With special publics as with Washingtonians, the President's supposed prestige can set a tone and may prescribe the limits of response to his appeals. Prestige can have great impact on behavior when the special public is self-consciously endeavoring to court "public opinion." On the other side of steel seizure were those most unhappy presidential "agents," the company executives. As an adjunct of their appeal to the courts they mounted an extraordinary attack on Truman personally. No doubt they were spurred on by a presumption of his lack of popularity. Had Truman worn the look of Eisenhower, one cannot conceive that they would have denounced him in such personal terms. Larger, looser publics than an industry's executives,

and publics farther removed from the Washington community, may be much less concerned about the general public. For voters in a congressional district, or for workers in a steel mill, or for men on the streets of Little Rock, a sense of how the President is viewed outside their neighborhood may be a minor factor in deciding their behavior. But it rarely will be absent altogether from the thoughts of those who lead within the neighborhood.

A President's prestige is thus a factor in his influence of roughly the same sort as his professional reputation: a factor that may not decide the outcome in a given case but can affect the likelihoods in every case and therefore is strategically important to his power. If he cares about his prospects for effectiveness in government, he need be no less mindful of the one than of the other. Granting the importance of his popular prestige, how is a President to keep it under guard?

This question parallels my inquiry in the last chapter, but the two are not the same. Professional reputation is not popularity. Guarding the one, therefore, is not equivalent to guarding the other. Prestige will have a bearing upon reputation, certainly, and professional appraisals by attentive Washingtonians unquestionably trickle down to those outside. The interaction is continuous, but it is interaction between very different things. In Eisenhower's instance, for example, polls and press reports agree that his sharpest loss of popularity occurred in the recession year of 1958. But this loss corresponded neither in severity nor timing to the damage done his Washington reputation during 1957. Truman, on the other hand, undoubtedly got higher marks in Washington for capability and will than he obtained in public through his last two years of office, after Chinese intervention lengthened the Korean War. Like reputation, prestige is a matter to be judged, not "known." The judging, for the most part, will be done by Washingtonians. Judgments of prestige may be distorted inside Washington, but what is being judged remains outside. To question how a President can guard prestige is not to deal in disguise with his Washington reputation. Prestige must be guarded at its source.

II

If it were clear that publics outside Washington perceived a President in terms of personality alone, the guarding of prestige might be—as sometimes it is thought to be—a matter for Madison Avenue. But there have been sharp changes in the popularity of men whose public manners were substantially unaltered. The Truman of 1951 looked and sounded very much like Truman on Election Day in 1948. Allowing for age and illness (which millions of Americans were happy to do in 1956), Eisenhower seems to have projected the same human qualities throughout his time in office. To guard one's look in human terms is not enough.

Personality is a factor in prestige but not a very dynamic factor. Recent experience suggests that an impression of the presidential personality, a "public image" as the term is commonly, nontechnically employed, takes shape for most con-

stituents no later than the time they first perceive him being President (a different thing from seeing him as candidate). And save within the Washington community where White House personalities are reassessed each day, such images, once formed, appear to change but slowly, if at all. Louis Harris, among others, has suggested that public perceptions of the Eisenhower personality shifted between 1952 and 1956 from "father" to "grandfather."⁶ But this is to compare perceptions of the man as a *prospective* President with those of him in office. The "grandfather" image Harris traces as of 1956 seems in no way inconsistent with prevailing views reported by the press as early as 1954 and as late as 1959. In Truman's instance, an impression of the "little man" in Roosevelt's shoes, courageous and hard-working but not "big enough" was probably pervasive within days of his succession. Perhaps, for a time, he shared it himself; he certainly helped to spread it. "Boys, if you ever pray, pray for me now," he told the press with national attention focused on his takeover, "... when they told me ... what had happened I felt like the moon, the stars, and all the planets had fallen on me."⁷ Three years later, his campaign for election and his victory highlighted very different human qualities. The "little man" may not have disappeared, but now, in Jonathan Daniels's allusive phrase, he had become "The Man of Independence." Although we lack evidence on which to base conclusions about just whose views were changed by just how much, there seems no doubt that 1948 did have a marked effect on widely shared ideas about the Truman personality.⁸ This is testimony rather to the impact of exceptional events than to the instability of public images. To judge from what occurred in his last years, the older image was not driven far below the surface.

An image of the office, not an image of the man, is the dynamic factor in a President's prestige. Impressions of the person will form early and last long, but the values men assign to what they see can alter rather quickly. "Decisiveness" may turn into irascibility; "cleverness" may come to seem deceitfulness; "openmindedness" to seem soft-headedness; "courage" to seem rashness. Truman, the "master-politician" of 1948 was the "mere" politician of 1951. The very sharpness of impressions driven home by his election made him suspect at the height of the Korean War. Two years after Eisenhower's smashing re-election, every poll behaved as though considerably fewer citizens welcomed what he represented at the White House. In his case, as in Truman's, the sense of what he *was* does not seem to have changed. Rather, the sense of what he *ought* to be had changed. Not personality perceptions but these "oughts" of office underlie most short-run shifts in popular prestige.

Why do the "oughts" of office vary as they do? Why are perceptions of the *job* so changeable? The answer, evidently, is that what a President should be is something most men see by light of what is happening to *them*. Their notions of the part a President should play, their satisfaction with the way he plays it, are affected by their private hopes and fears. Behind their judgments of performance lie the consequences in their lives. What threatens his prestige is their frustration.

For more than two decades the Gallup Poll has sampled nationally, at monthly intervals or thereabouts, "approval" of the President's performance on the job. The question asked has been almost unvarying: "Do you approve or disapprove of the way [the incumbent] is handling his job as President?" Unlike a pre-election poll, this inquiry does not relate to any concrete action by respondents. Unlike a query on specific issues, it does not relate to any concrete information. The question is unfocused; so is the response, which tells us anything or nothing about what respondents meant by what they said. The timing, however, provides a clue to what they saw around them when they said it. Approval figures in the poll results change almost every month. Minor variations and wild swings in narrow time-spans need be treated with reserve. But large and relatively lasting changes come at the same times as great events with widespread consequences. These major changes illustrate what threatens popularity.

Two of the largest changes ever traced by Gallup Polls came at the start of 1951 and in the spring of 1958. All through 1950 Truman's conduct was approved by a sample of his countrymen in proportions varying from 46 to 37 percent.⁹ (His first-term "low" had been 32 percent in 1946.) After 1950 through the balance of his term, approval fluctuated in a range of 32 to 23 percent.¹⁰ For almost a year following the 1956 election, approval of Eisenhower's conduct ranged above 62 percent; at the time of his inauguration it touched 79 percent. (His first-term "low" had been 57 percent in 1954.) In 1958, however, approval fell to 49 percent in one month, April, and only once, in August, rose as high as 58 percent; most of the year it moved within the narrow range of 52 to 56 percent.¹¹ In 1959 a rise began that brought approval up one point a month to 62 percent in June, the last figure available at this writing.¹² Assuming a continuation of the trend, Eisenhower's instance, unlike Truman's, will end with a recovery of range.

In looking at these figures, one can and probably should ignore the variations month by month; what cannot be ignored is the sharp shift of range. Such shifts do not disclose whose views were changed, in what direction, when. These figures may hide crosscurrents; they certainly hide regional differentials. But assuming an adequate sample, or at least a constant error, when Truman shifted from the "forties" to the "twenties," when Eisenhower shifted from the "sixties" to the "fifties," and when the figures stabilized for many months thereafter, public standing certainly had changed. And what must have contributed to changing it is not hard to discover.

In both these cases popular approval tumbled at a time when governmental action (or inaction) was associated with extraordinary disturbance in the private lives of millions of Americans. What happened between 1957 and 1958? "Prosperity" gave way to recession and inflation; "peace" gave way to an intensified cold war, with troops in Lebanon and fighting on the China Coast. A sense of social calm gave way before the struggles over school desegregation. "Complacency" in science, education, and defense was shaken, at the least, by outcries after sputnik. What happened between 1950 and 1951? Above all else, inflation and taxation and

lost lives in "Truman's War," which had become interminable war with the Chinese.¹³

It scarcely is an accident that Truman's popularity, according to the polls, was never lower than in 1951. It scarcely is an accident that polls show Eisenhower more unpopular in 1958 than ever before or since. Such happenings as these are bound to threaten or upset the private prospects of great numbers of Americans. As these prospects are seen to change, the outlook on the Presidency cannot help but change. That marvelous rummage bag sometimes called our "belief system" is crammed with alternate and contradictory images of office ready for instant use. Eisenhower, once so satisfying as a "man above the struggle," apparently collided during 1958 with yearnings for a President who made his presence *felt*.¹⁴ Truman, on the other hand, while very much in evidence some seven years before, seems to have run afoul of the twin notions that a wartime Chief Executive ought to be "above politics" and that he ought to help the generals "win." As private prospects are upset, men change their expectations of the President. As images of office change, appraisals of performance change to suit. It is no wonder that "approval" dropped in 1951 and 1958. Nor is it any wonder that there seemed to be recovery in 1959 but not in 1952.

This is not to suggest that members of the public act like Washingtonians, attending and reacting to a President at every stage of all proceedings. One never should underestimate the public's power to ignore, to acquiesce, and to forget, especially when the proceedings seem incalculable or remote from private life. Unless the shooting starts a Lebanon may be remote, a Berlin seems incalculable, sputniks overhead become routine. But paychecks, grocery bills, children's schooling, sons at war are quite distinctly matters of real life. No happenings in Eisenhower's whole first term brought him more public credit, it appears, than the truce in Korea and the "spirit of Geneva." Apparently, no happening in 1958 bit deeper than the juncture of recession with inflation.¹⁵ One doubts, for instance, that the indiscretion of a Sherman Adams would have mattered much to voters (as the White House clearly thought it did) save for its symbolism at a time when "life" was not as advertised.¹⁶ In 1951 there is no reason to suppose that lacking the hard, unexpected stretch-out in Korea either "communism" or "corruption" could have caused such deep frustrations as were evident when MacArthur came home.¹⁷

Personality is not without effect upon prestige. Impressions of the *man* can be a cushion and a prop. Judged by percentage points in Gallup polls, Eisenhower's lost approval during 1958 was not much less than Truman's after 1950. Still, one was left with better than majority approval and the other with approval half as large. Judged not in terms of figures but in terms of trend, these polls trace somewhat comparable patterns for both Presidents throughout their earlier years. But Truman's variations are much larger and much sharper, with much lower "lows" than Eisenhower's.¹⁸ Such differences display the cushioning and bolstering effects of personality on expectations. Eisenhower was a hero *independent* of his office.

Truman was almost unknown apart from it. Personality alone cannot account for variations in each man's prestige, but as between them it left Truman far more vulnerable to the shock of private hopes belied by public happenings. Yet even Eisenhower, hero though he was, turned out to lack immunity. *His* lack, if anyone's, should serve to make the point. The moving factor in prestige is what men outside Washington see happening to *themselves*.

A President concerned to guard prestige must keep his eye on hopes and on what happens to those hopes in "life" as lived outside the Washington community. He need beware lest the outsiders look to him for pleasures he cannot provide, or lack preparedness for the pains he cannot stop. Either way, what threatens his prestige is popular frustration. "We will merchandise the hell out of the Eisenhower program," C. D. Jackson is supposed to have remarked in 1953. But "merchandising" only has its uses while events remain incalculable. Salesmanship cannot compete with "life." Merchandising is no match for history. A President who values power naturally will want his history productive of "good" response to him; he naturally will want to minimize the "bad" reactions. But wanting these results, what can *he* do about them? How, if at all, can *he* affect the hopes and happenings that generate frustration?

III

If a President were free to control happenings, to turn them on or off at his discretion, this would be the ideal way to safeguard his prestige. But he has no such freedom. The illustrations in preceding chapters make that plain. Outside the Federal government, events in which he plays no part set off what his constituents will see and feel as happenings. Inside the government courts, congressmen, executive officials act in ways that will contribute to or symbolize such happenings. They often act without recourse to him. The President is no mere spectator. His action also will contribute to and may become the highlight of what happens. What happened in Korea? Truman intervened. What happened when the war dragged on? He sent MacArthur home. But action of this sort is a far cry from control. No President can make most of what happens in his time occur or stop to suit his popularity. Had Truman held the option, Korea never would have been a happening at all.

Because he cannot control happenings, a President must do his best with hopes. His prestige is secure while men outside of Washington accept the hard conditions in their lives, or anyway do not blame him. If he can make them think the hardship necessary, and can make them want to bear it with good grace, his prestige may not suffer when they feel it. Had Truman's public thought interminable warfare-within-limits a necessity his prestige would have risen, not declined, in 1951. A President concerned for leeway inside government must try to shape the thoughts of men outside. If he would be effective as a guardian of public standing,

he must be effective as a teacher to the public. Truman was an unsuccessful teacher in the midst of the Korean war. Some of his troubles will be traced in Chapter 6.

What kind of teaching job is this? It is no classroom exercise. Presidential teaching is instruction of a very different sort. It has at least four special features. First, it is instruction aimed at students who, by definition, are habitually inattentive to the teacher: his constituents *outside* the Washington community. These students only grow attentive when they notice public trouble pressing on their lives. Second, as a consequence, he can expect attention from them only when the things he need interpret to his benefit are on their minds for reasons independent of his telling. Third, again in consequence, he teaches less by telling than by doing (or not doing) in the context that his students have established in their minds. And fourth, what he has previously said and done will figure in that context. When the man inside the White House gains attention outside Washington, he finds two other teachers at his podium. Events themselves are there; so are the memories of his past performance. Under these conditions, presidential teaching is a formidable job. It is not to be confused with advertising.

The correspondence between popularity and happenings, as illustrated in "approval" polls, is matched by correspondence between popular attention and events. Let me illustrate this second correspondence with some radio program ratings in pretelevision years, when virtually all presidential broadcasts were rated by a single commercial source.¹⁹

From October 1945 (with the war over) through March 1948 (with electioneering not begun) there were eight occasions when Truman pre-empted *all* radio networks at an evening hour to take policy issues "to the country"; his subjects ranged from price inflation, welfare programs, strikes, to the Marshall Plan, and the Czech *coup d'état*. For those performances his Hooper ratings—estimating actual against potential auditors in homes—were successively 43.8, 49.4, 34.4, 31.8, 57.6, 30.7, 34.3, and 31.0 percent.²⁰ Whether accurate or not, the basis for these estimates remained the same in every case; this sequence is internally consistent. The shifts in size of audience on these occasions are due, in part, to time of year and choice of date or hour; listening habits, like more recent viewing habits, change with seasons, days, and times.²¹ But factors of this sort are insufficient to explain the sharp peak in the middle of the sequence, the 57.6 percent that breaks the trend. And what was the occasion for that peak in Truman's audience? His subject was surrender on the price control of meat. He was announcing decontrol in the beef-hungry autumn of 1946, amidst the political campaign that terminated three weeks later in election of the 80th Congress.²² Only once in his first term did Truman have a higher Hooper rating: 64.1 percent when he proclaimed V-E Day, shortly after his accession. Only six times during F.D.R.'s third term was *his* rating higher for a comparable evening address; all six came in a seventeen-month period, from May of 1941 to November 1942.²³ As an audience attraction, meat in 1946 ranks next to the Second World War.

When a President goes on the air the number of his listeners is obviously influenced by what Americans have on *their* minds. It also may be influenced by their sense of his relevance. When Truman vetoed the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947, his explanatory radio address received a rating of only 30.7 percent. It may be that the issue—union "power," labor "slavery"—mattered to fewer people than had "meat" the year before. Or, possibly, as many people cared, but fewer thought *his* explanation mattered. Decontrolling prices had been taken as a pledge of more supplies and he had the authority to decontrol. But vetoing Taft-Hartley offered no relief from strikes and Congress had the votes to override. At any rate the context of his address and its relevance to their concerns, as understood by radio-owning publics, presumably accounts for a great part of his lost listeners on that occasion—and of those gained on others.

In the early 1950's, the shift from radio to television "listening" casts doubt upon the meaning, in these terms, of ratings for both media. Not until 1956 did "television homes" start to compare in number and in distribution with their radio equivalents a decade earlier. As yet one cannot draw from Eisenhower's television ratings an internally consistent series on the order of those furnished by the older radio ratings.²⁴ But there is nothing in the scattered data now obtainable to controvert the Truman illustration just presented.

If a President's ability to gain a hearing voice-to-ear is so conditioned by "what happens," these same conditioners no doubt affect the prospect that his words will penetrate through news reports, opinion leaders, neighbors, and the like, to those who have not seen or heard (or anyway, not listened) for themselves. Without a real-life happening to hoist it into view, a piece of presidential news, much like the man's own voice, is likely to be lost amidst the noises and distractions of the day. Local news aside, most daily news reports in print or on the air are geared to wire service coverage and tempo; White House stories, classed with foreign news, are lumped together into factual and unaccented highlights of the day's events from everywhere, *that* day. The weekly magazines of "news" tend to blend commentary with reporting and summation in a mix so well homogenized that everything is equally accented and its impact uniformly predigested. As for word-of-mouth reports at third hand, or at fourth, the principle appears to be the same: events provide the emphasis required for attention.

A President is not in firm control of most events, but there are some that he can manufacture. He must depend on happenings for popular attention; with skill and luck he sometimes makes a happening. He then can ride it to a widened audience. Toward the close of 1953, six weeks of press build-up fed by meticulously staged White House and Cabinet actions, heralded the Eisenhower legislative program for 1954, his first since taking office.²⁵ By these means, apparently, his making of a program was established as momentous in the nation's life; his address to the country just before its presentation brought him an enormous television audience.²⁶ This surely was an instance of a self-made happening, and only one of several

during Eisenhower's first term. Unfortunately, Presidents can rarely count for long on press cooperation of the sort available to Eisenhower in his early years. And often they will find what they contrive cast into shadow by outside events. Had the first bout of tension over Quemoy and Matsu come in the fall of 1953, instead of a year later, one doubts that the White House could have focused wide attention on its preparation of a *legislative* program. No matter how cooperative the press, a President needs quiet from competitive events if what he does is to be noticed as a happening.

Not only do outside events compete with self-made happenings, a President is frequently in competition with himself. That master of the art of mass communication, Franklin Roosevelt, once wrote an old associate:

I know . . . you will be sympathetic to the point of view that the public psychology and, for that matter, individual psychology, cannot, because of human weakness, be attuned for long periods of time to a constant repetition of the highest note in the scale. . . . Whereas in this country there is a free and sensational press, people tire of seeing the same name, day after day, in the important headlines of the papers, and the same voice, night after night, over the radio. . . . if I had tried [in 1935] to keep up the pace of 1933 and 1934, the inevitable histrionics of the new actors, Long and Coughlin and Johnson, would have turned the eyes of the audience away from the main drama itself. . . .²⁷

However, in most years since the Second World War, there has been no "main" drama like recovery-with-Roosevelt. Instead there have been half a dozen shows on stage at once, all running simultaneously and interminably and repetitively, act after act, with Presidents assigned a leading role in each, and everything relentlessly translated into headlines. Under mid-century conditions, prospects for the self-made happening secure from competition are not good.

Events determine audience attention for a President; they also make his actions more important than his words. When constituents grow conscious of his relevance to them they are already learning—from events. By then his telling will convey no lessons independent of the things he seems to do within the context of events. When Truman told of decontrolling meat, the act conveyed a meaning that the words, the look, the tone of voice could but embroider, not obliterate. Of course, the very telling is an action, and the words that linger in men's minds can have enormous educative influence. "We have nothing to fear but fear itself," said F.D.R. on March 4, 1933; the teaching he began with those eight words was as extraordinary as his chance, that day, to dwarf all other actors on the nation's stage. Still, what he said then conjured up a prospect not a meaning. It became a lesson learned when what he did thereafter and what happened in men's lives appeared to vindicate the confidence he had expressed. Had there not been the Hundred Days, and work relief, and a degree of real recovery, the lesson of those words would have been bitter for the country and his phrase would be remembered now with mockery not cheers.

What Roosevelt taught in 1933 was governed only by the future. He had no presidential past, nor had the nation a remembered precedent for the dark time when he took office. But for Presidents in other circumstances, talk and action may take meaning from "last time" as well as next, and teaching thus is placed in double jeopardy.

Let me illustrate the jeopardy of Presidents as teachers with an instance drawn from the domestic side of the Korean War. At the start of the Second World War civilian shortages had appeared just as buying power rose, but price inflation was suppressed for the duration by direct controls. When sharp price rises came after the war one antidote proposed by the White House was authority to reimpose controls. In 1947 and in 1948 Truman lost no opportunity to urge that course on an unwilling Congress. Yet when Korea came, and when he went to Congress for the funds and taxes to finance rearmament, he asked for war controls over production but *not* for price controls. By that act of omission Truman tried to stress what made the present different from the past. Economists had told him that rearmament need not cut deeply into civilian output. The Speaker of the House informed him (wrongly) that without the old, divisive price issue his other control measures would pass Congress in a week. And Truman was concerned, as well, lest friends or enemies abroad take a request for powers over prices as his forecast of an all-out war. He tried, therefore, by what he did, and by his statements as he did it, to convey the lesson that he was *not* playing politics; that this was *not* the start of the Third World War, that fighting did *not* promise short supplies and price controls.²⁸

What followed? Through July and August 1950, prices rose precipitously in response to panic buying spurred by memories of 1942 and by the wide belief that government had no real remedy but price controls. Truman had not asked for them, but Congress gave him the discretion (and the onus) to impose them anyway. Only with September's great successes in the war did there come signs that buying publics might believe what Truman meant to teach. MacArthur's triumph, not surprisingly, was much the better teacher. But when the Chinese intervened—initially in late October, then with crushing force in late November—buying spurted once again and prices rose alarmingly. The Administration, caught unprepared, promised a general price freeze. The freeze, however, was not actually ordered until late January 1951. Thereafter, that year and the next, when Truman tried to rally public sentiment for strong controls he failed of much response.

A President's instruction is affected by his own performance both before and after. What Truman tried to teach in July 1950 was overborne by recollections of things past. What happened next taught an entirely different lesson than the one he had intended to convey. His own words and actions played a part in both these outcomes. His own doings contributed to public education of the sort he did not want. His past and future did not make him any less a teacher; they made him teach the opposite of what he meant to teach. That is the jeopardy of presidential teaching.

The President-as-teacher has a hard and risky job. If he wants to guard his

popular approval he must give real-life experience a meaning that will foster tolerance for him. But happenings create his opportunities to teach. He has to ride events to gain attention. Most members of his public grow attentive only as they grow concerned with what may happen in their lives. When they become attentive they will learn from what he does. And whether his own doings teach the lesson he intends depends on what he did before and on what happens next *as understood by them*. These are the terms and conditions of employment for the President who seeks to be a teacher in our time. It is not a scholar's job—or Madison Avenue's.

IV

Half a century ago, with Theodore Roosevelt still in office, Woodrow Wilson wrote that "more and more" the White House would be occupied by "men . . . of the sort of action that makes for enlightenment."²⁹ His prediction as to men can be debated; his description of their task cannot. At least, if his successors are concerned for their own power and would guard its every source, his formula describes what they must do. The enemy of their prestige is unreality: the groundless hopes, the unexpected happenings, the unaccepted outcomes that members of their public feel in daily life and relate, somehow, anyhow, to That Man in the White House. From such an enemy there can be no defense save better understanding on the public's part. And for the reasons I have now set forth, such light as Presidents can shed consists of meanings they convey by what they do. "Action making for enlightenment" is but effective teaching. Only as they teach effectively will they ward off the threats to their prestige. I have asked how men in office can protect that valuable commodity from lasting harm. The answer will be found in Wilson's formula.

The formula is sound enough; it ought to be engraved over the White House door. Yet there is no enlightenment in meanings given to the day's events that arouse hopes tomorrow cannot meet, or yesterday belies. And Presidents, no more than other men, can gauge the future with exactitude; far less than most can they expunge their past. Illuminating action is their only sure escape from the backlash of public inability to grasp or to accept what happens next. In the circumstances of mid-century, however, few things can be harder to accomplish. Truman's difficulties over price control were but one aspect of his greater difficulty in imparting a "good" meaning, from his point of view, to the Korean War. This was as hard a task as ever faced a President and one to which we will return in the next chapter. Nine years earlier Roosevelt's urgent educative problem was resolved to his entire satisfaction by the Japanese attack upon Pearl Harbor. His own sense of relief, that Sunday afternoon, is testimony both to the dimensions of the problem and to limits on what he himself could do.³⁰ In 1941 and 1950 there was no sustained crisis consensus in this country. There has been none since 1945. Without consensus everything conspires to complicate action and to dim illumination. So Wilson himself found in that year foreshadowing mid-century, 1919.

Although the outlook for enlightenment is cloudy, the means are clear. Our question has been how a President, himself, protects prospective leeway inside government by guarding his own prospects for approval outside Washington. The answer brings us to his choices once again. His prestige turns on what the members of his public think they want and think they get. He affects their thoughts by what he does. His choices of what he will do and when and how—his choices, also, of whom he will tell and in what way and words—are *his* means to protect this source of influence, just as they are his means to guard those other power sources: bargaining relationships and professional reputation. No more than in the instance of those others is a President at liberty to make prestige his sole criterion for choice. No more than in the case of the Washington community is what *he* does the sole determinant of public sentiment. But whether his choice-making actually is usable and whether it proves useful or does not, the fact remains that for the human being in the White House choices are the only means in his own hands by which to shield his sources of real power, prestige no less than the rest.

Beyond the reach of his self-executing orders, then, a President's own prospects for effective influence are regulated (in so far as he controls them) by his choices of objectives, and of timing, and of instruments, and by his choice of choices to avoid. Thus we now reach the question: what helps him guard his power stakes in his own acts of choice? Granting that his choices are his means to protect power, granting that these are imperfect means, how can he make the most of them? For the length of two chapters this question has been dangling in mid-air. Now we can deal with it.