

5/23/73, mornings: re Nixon's statement, yesterday

I've not yet seen the full text of the statement and the summary, but from what I've picked up from TV and papers, it is vintage Nixon, and entirely deceptive. It seems to employ what is by now a standard deceptive tactic, issuing a summary which does not jibe with the appended lengthier statement, anticipating that the summary will get attention over the longer work. Most coverage I've seen has given more attention to the summary, which constitutes a more complete and firmer denial of any involvement than the actual statement which, in fact, does the opposite.

In the statement, Nixon says that "None of these (illegal activities) took place with my specific approval or knowledge." This seems to me to be the clearest admission of guilt from him yet. I can believe that he did not approve "specific" illegal acts. Of course, that does not say he did not know of or approve "general" or "overall" acts in line with a cover-up, which was illegal. He also admits his culpability with the pathetic admission that "I should have given more heed to the warning signals I received along the way about a Watergate cover-up." My impression has been that was he calls "warning signals" were in fact more specific. Likewise, his terse account of the 7/6/72 Gray phonecall differs from what is known of Gray's account, in an effort to make Nixon look less culpable.

It is hard to stomach the gall of the man as he says that "There was no way to carry forward these diplomatic initiatives (of mid-1969) unless further leaks could be prevented." That "dip. initiative" was the secret bombing of Cambodia--I should say secret only to Americans, for everyone else knew.

Likewise, his account of his orders to Haldeman and Erlichman re what should not be investigated does not conform with what H&E did subsequently.

There are also some disclaimers in his statement, about his recollection and the "fragmentary" and "contradictory" nature of the info available to him. He also volunteered, generous man that he is, to answer any new question that come up. That's great, as long as he's asking the questions as he did in this statement.

He even begins with a standard Nixon tactic: utterly distort the issue to make yourself a hero. He asserts that "hearsay charges are headlined as fact and repeated as fact." I've seen no case where this has been done, in fact, only extensive efforts at the opposite.

Finally, he has introduced a new formulation of the law and justice: Guilt in a crime may be absolved by apologizing.

HR