

Nixon's Mood Stirs Anxiety: Some Find Him Distraught, Others Say His Spirits Are High

By JOHN HERBERS

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 14—A White House official who recently saw President Nixon expressed concern the other day that Mr. Nixon seemed to be committed to a hard-line defense of his Administration in the Watergate scandals.

At a rigid stance, the aide said, could foreclose the reconstruction he believes necessary for the President to accept responsibility for the worst of his actions. The Government, he said, is a great wealth and power deriving from the diversified economy of New York to the Bay State. Carsons in Washington, who form a kind of mid-level government, and the population are bewildered. Have been on the telephone asking one another one unanswered question: "What is the state of mind of Richard M. Nixon?"

Two-Fronted Defense

These two instances point up the extent of the anxiety in Washington as Mr. Nixon after a long period of silence and hours of lonely contemplation at the mountaintop at Camp David, prepares to make his defense in the Watergate case. He will appeal for public support in a nationally broadcast address at 8 o'clock tomorrow night and will issue a document by his lawyers seeking to lay to rest the allegations made before the Senate Watergate committee.

The attitude of Mr. Nixon's mood, obtained chiefly from people who have seen him and talked with him, is ambiguous. To some, he has appeared worried and distraught. To others he seemed in remarkably good spirits, considering the circumstances. Mr. Nixon remains a very private man who rarely conveys his feelings even to close associates.

However, after five months of public disclosures of White House involvement in Watergate and related matters, the following clear tendencies have emerged.

The President has gone through several periods of anxiety and frustration, expressed in occasional outbursts to members of his staff about charges that he considers irresponsible. His associates insist he has come out of the worst of it and is now in a philosophical mood as he prepares his defense.

He has not shown any of the kind of physical and mental deterioration displayed by previous Presidents, such as Wilson and Harding, when under great stress. A Democratic Senator who saw the President in mid-July and again a few days ago said, "On both occasions he looked all right.

He did seem rather nervous and tense, but he did not look fatigued. He looked rested."

His tendencies toward seclusion, his restless search for retreats away from Washington and his preference for making his own decisions without advice from independent minds have increased in the Watergate period.

The belief that political enemies of the Administration, Democrats and some Republicans, are using the Watergate charges to thwart the President's efforts to carry out the policies he was elected to achieve has increased among White House aides, presumably with Presidential encouragement.

Some long-time White House servants and associates said his refusal to compromise on the release of tape recordings of his conversations with

former White House counsel John W. Dean Jr. and his participation in a desegregation effort.

Watergate charges, a "small, unimportant" and "little things" cloud the President's mood as one of the temptations to flee to the hills had for his position. A disposition he had frequently expressed.

"I think we could pull one or two from a long-time Nixon friend and campaign worker who asked that his name not be used. But I wonder if this is the way to go. It could be a mistake."

A lack of hard information about what has been going on since Mr. Nixon's mind has identified the search for clues. Some who have talked to the President described him as worried and distraught. To others he has seemed in remarkably good spirits, considering the circumstances. He has been seen to change from day to day.

However, one Nixon associate said that the stress Mr. Nixon had undergone over the five-month period was much greater than his aides would admit. There are the following bits of evidence to bear this out:

An associate dining with the President, and his family one evening noted that the dinner was marked by the most awkward kind of silence.

At rare public appearances in the last few weeks—with the Soviet leader, Leonid I. Brezhnev, in San Clemente and in greeting crowds in Illinois and Florida—the President's countenance bore expressions of intense pain in unguarded moments, according to several observers.

In San Clemente in July, in the presence of staff members, the President angrily de-

nounced newspaper attacks about what he considered the fair charges of the expending of public funds on his vacation homes, and on another occasion the failure of his May 27 statement on the Watergate case to quell criticism of his role in the matter.

Visitors to the President's office have reported, on occasion, a mood of irritation and brooding that they had previously noted in the President.

Seems More Withdrawn

Over the five-month period, the President has appeared to become more withdrawn. He has been seen in a more isolated position in the White House, and thought after the departure of his aide, John D. Ehrlichman, and Mr. Haldeman, that the Watergate disclosure he was still in contact with John B. Corbin, who is thought to be a senior adviser in May in Washington. But the Nixon family closings were reported, and Mr. Corbin left the White House.

Draining in Melvin R. Laird

as domestic adviser and Paul Barlow as counsel in an effort to widen the Administration's political base did not change Mr. Nixon's habit of conferring chiefly with his closest subordinates—Gen. Alexander M. Haig, Ronald D. Reagan, who still carries the title of press secretary although he has given up daily meetings with the press, and Rose Marie Woods, his long-time personal secretary.

"The President isn't at ease with people like Laird and Barlow," said a Nixon associate.

His frequent meetings with Henry A. Kissinger, his chief foreign policy adviser, are businesslike and unrevealing as to Mr. Nixon's personal thoughts, according to several sources.

Mr. Nixon still has long meetings with his close friend, Charles G. Rebozo, the Florida businessman, who was a recent guest at Camp David, but no

one pretends that Mr. Rebozo advises Mr. Nixon on Government policy.

The President's trips away from the Washington White House have increased. In the five-month period the President has spent five long weekends at Key Biscayne, 25 days at San Clemente and most weekends at Camp David. He has recently made several trips to Camp David at midweek and has gone on a number of even-

ing excursions of several days to the States.

Offers Disclosures

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Watergate has been a major issue in the President's mind. Mr. Nixon's Oval Office has been seen as a symbol of the President's willingness to accept responsibility for the Watergate disclosures.

In an interview, the President now is reported to be more private about his efforts in overcoming Watergate and regaining control of the Government, and this would indicate his more busy mood of late.