

San Jose Nixon Attack Raises Questions On How It Happened

New York Times news service

SAN CLEMENTE — A reconstruction today of the stone- and egg-hurling incident Thursday night in San Jose in which President Nixon was attacked has raised a number of questions.

The episode may have important political implications and it has already pointed up concern about the security precautions taken to protect the President.

Some newsmen had advance warning that there would be trouble, so presumably the Secret Service, which was said to have plainclothes operatives circulating in the crowd, had similar information.

The White House was unable to explain why the demonstrators had been allowed to mass so close to the motorcade.

Usually, they are kept behind barricades erected in advance some distance away from the motorcade route.

Politically, some Republican strategists here believe the incident has given a lift to the campaigns of Sen. George Murphy and Gov. Ronald Reagan.

Both men were in the presidential limousine when it was struck. They have been running on tough law-and-order platforms aimed at youthful "permissiveness," and both issued

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tough statements deploring the violence shortly after the episode.

The stage was set for the incident when demonstrators — estimated by the Secret Service to number 900 in all and by some reporters at twice that figure — massed in two lines on either side of the roadway leading to the entrance of the San Jose Municipal Auditorium about an hour before the President's arrival.

Uniformly Obscene

They did not throw any objects when he arrived but waved their peace signs and taunted him with chants that, at least to the ears of those in the press buses following behind, were uniformly obscene.

Nixon entered the hall, where there were no demonstrators, and made his standard campaign speech on behalf of the candidacies of Murphy and Reagan, who shared the platform with him.

When the ceremonies in the auditorium finished about 30 minutes later, Nixon emerged and started to walk toward his limousine. Four eggs were hurled in his direction but did not touch him.

White House press secretary Ziegler later said that a small stone had been thrown and had narrowly missed the President.

At this point, Nixon climbed on top of the hood of his limousine and gave his familiar campaign gesture, a "V" sign with both hands.

Nixon Comment

According to a later account by Marty Schramm, White House correspondent for Newsday, who was standing below the President, Nixon smiled and said to no one in particular:

"That's what they hate to see."

Ziegler said last night, however, that the President had not intended to taunt or defy the demonstrators but thought he had seen a "friendly face" and simply wanted to wave to them.

Nixon got off the car and held a brief interview with local newsmen. By then the road ahead was jammed with angry youths.

Local policemen had tried to clear a path by wading through the crowd be-

fore the President emerged from the auditorium, but his decision to climb aboard the car and then talk with newsmen apparently gave the demonstrators time to regroup.

Hurl Barrage

Then the order was given for the limousine to move. The demonstrators moved aside but unleashed a volley of eggs, ornamental glass balls, stones and peace placards.

The incident has raised the question of why the President did not take an alternative route away from the auditorium — although it is not clear now whether there was one — or why, if there was not an alternative route, he was allowed to emerge from the auditorium to confront such an obviously restless crowd until a path had been secured.

In the last few weeks, Nixon has confronted demonstrators at many rallies, and, indeed, has seemed to welcome them as foils for his attacks on permissiveness and violence.

Perhaps, some observers here think, he or his aides sensed the same opportunity, even though the demonstrators were obviously tougher and more numerous than the small groups he has faced before.

Ziegler would say only that the White House had some hints that there might be trouble but had no real idea of what the hecklers would do, and no good way of predicting their behavior.