

Buzhardt Decries Report Of Alleged Nixon Epithets

White House Counsel, Saying He Heard No Ethnic Slurs on Tapes, Assails Effort 'to Poison Public Mind'

NYTimes By SEYMOUR M. HERSH MAY 13 1974
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WASHINGTON, May 12—J. Fred Buzhardt Jr., the White House counsel, declared today that the publication of some of President Nixon's privately spoken reportedly ethnic references was part of a "concerted campaign . . . to poison the public mind against the President by any means, fair or foul."

Appearing on the CBS television program "Face the Nation," Mr. Buzhardt said he had listened to nearly 40 White House tapes and added, "I have heard nothing that I would consider an ethnic slur."

Pressed on that point, he said he did not "remember the word Jew" being used by Mr. Nixon on those tapes. "I do remember the word Jewish being used," he added, but not in a slurring manner.

Asked whether there were any other references on the tapes, the White House attorney said, "I don't recall specifically. Somebody may have said somebody was Polish."

The New York Times reported today that President Nixon is supposed to have depicted some members of the Securities and Exchange Commission as "Jew boys" and also referred to Federal Judge John J. Sirica as a "wop" during a March 20, 1973, conversation with John W. Dean 3d, then the White House counsel.

Comment on Jews Reported

Citing sources with direct knowledge of the President's comments, The Times also reported that Mr. Nixon had on two other occasions made disparaging comments about "Jews."

In a statement released yesterday by the White House, Mr. Buzhardt denied that the White House tapes contained "racial slurs" and said The Times's reference to the use of the term "Jew boys" was a fabrication.

The White House counsel went further during the television interview this afternoon.

"It's clear," he said, "that a concerted campaign has been made to cause these to be publicized, and this is one of the problems that bothers many of us."

"Obviously, this type of material is not relevant to the question of whether the President has committed treason or bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors, and I can only assume that these, what I can only characterize as malicious and vicious attempts, are attempts to poison the public mind against the President by any means, fair or foul."

Where On the Tapes

Asked who he thought was behind the campaign he mentioned, Mr. Buzhardt said: "I don't know because reporters do not reveal their sources. Neither do they reveal to us

where the allegations are in the tapes, the specific tapes and the specific passages."

"I don't know who it is," he added. "I don't know the identity, and yet the persistence . . ."

"I've listened carefully," he said. "There are words that can't be heard on the tapes, but I'm satisfied that there is not even a context in which this tape of things could logically appear without being totally out of context."

Although his denial of the published report was absolute, Mr. Buzhardt noted that because the reporters involved were unable to say specifically where the alleged remarks were on the tapes, he had not been able to review the specific recordings before issuing his blanket denial yesterday to The Times.

Before publishing its account today, The Times interviewed a number of Mr. Nixon's former aides and advisers who all acknowledged that, as one former aide said, "he was pretty rough that way"—that is, in terms of racial or religious epithets.

'Could Mean Nothing'

"You could reach one or two conclusions about it," one former high-level official said. "First, all of those remarks could mean nothing. Second,

you could say that his prejudices were evenly matched among every group so that it all balanced out."

As Mr. Buzhardt noted today, rumors about Mr. Nixon's private language have been circulating in Washington since the White House release of the edited transcripts two weeks ago. Those transcripts included hundreds of deleted portions, marked by parentheses enclosing the words "expletive deleted" or "characterization deleted."

In answer to other questions during today's interview, Mr. Buzhardt said that President Nixon had decided not to yield any more Watergate tapes because of his desire "to protect the confidentiality of Presidential discussions."

"He believes it is essential to the function of the office of the Presidency," he added.

He explained the release of the edited transcripts, however, by stating it was done "in order

to achieve a public understanding that the reason for exerting the executive privilege and the protection of the confidentiality was not a matter of hiding something that the President has said."

BROADCAST EXCERPTS

Q. Well, let me ask you this—in all of these tapes that you have listened to, have you never heard the President of the United States use what might be interpreted as an ethnic slur?

MR. BUZHARDT: I have heard nothing that I would consider an ethnic slur . . . and let me say this, for a number of days now we have been literally besieged by rumors that there were ethnic slurs in the tapes; some language that I wouldn't even think of repeating here or in private has been suggested as being on the tapes, and I find it just totally unbelievable. There have been fabrications; there have been attempts to portray remarks that are on the tapes as racial slurs when they are not.

Lou know, it's clear that a concerted campaign has been made to cause these to be publicized, and this is one of the problems that bothers many of us. Obviously, this type of material is not relevant to the question of whether the President has committed treason or bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors, and I can only assume that these, what I can only characterize as malicious and vicious attempts, are attempts to poison the public mind against the President by any means, fair or foul.

Racial Slurs

Q. Since the subject has come up, let me press you on it just a bit. You said there have been attempts to characterize, and I missed a word in here, remarks that are on the tape as racial slurs. Now, are some of these remarks that are on the tape remarks which refer, slurring or otherwise, to ethnic backgrounds—so-and-so is an Italian, so-and-so is a Jew—are they remarks that make ethnic reference?

A. I never remember the word Jew. I do remember the word Jewish being used, but certainly is no slurring—

Q. Italian? A. No, I've never heard the word Italian.

Q. Or wop? A. No.

Q. Any other reference besides Jewish? A. I don't recall specifically. Somebody may have said somebody was Polish.

Behind the Campaign

"Who do you think might be high what you call—I believe you said a concerted or effort to poison the public?"

A. I do not know, but I must say—I don't know because reporters do not reveal their sources. Neither do they reveal to us where the allegations say they are in the tapes, the specific tapes and the specific passages. Obviously I would make an effort to go back and

recheck these things; there are a wide variety of them.

Q. Are you doing that?

A. No, I haven't had any pinpointed so that I can, and I don't know who it is, I don't know the identity, and yet the persistence—and I must say that they are somewhat reducing in level of extremity over the past few days. They began with some of the most outrageous language you have ever heard, and let me say that I've listened carefully. There are words that can't be heard on the tapes, but I'm satisfied that there is not even a context in which this type of thing could logically appear without being totally out of context.