

Nixon's New Stance

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Plans for Travel Viewed as an Attempt
To Cast Himself as World's Peacemaker

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MIAMI, May 26 — President Nixon, in his efforts to salvage the rest of his term, has turned once again to what he considers his strongest appeal—that of a world statesman whose leadership is essential to maintaining peace.

News Analysis

Over the last few days, his long-planned summit meeting in Moscow, expected to begin June 24, has been broadened to include extensive foreign travels. He now plans to visit the Middle East, possibly before the trip to the Soviet Union, presumably to play a part in the expected agreement that Secretary of State Kissinger has been negotiating between Syria and Israel. On his way to Russia, Mr. Nixon plans to stop in Brussels and confer with European leaders on various issues.

His travels are likely to occur at the height of the House Judiciary Committee's hearings on impeachment. Whatever happens in the hearings, his aides say, he believes he will be negotiating from a position of strength because his policies have wide bipartisan support even if his hold on his office is in jeopardy.

Planning for his travels abroad has coincided with his hard line against yielding additional White House tape recordings and documents, a line he describes as protection on his office but one that is widely viewed in Washington as a tactic of delay.

He also coincides with the suspension of his campaigning with American audiences to head off impeachment.

Mr. Nixon was depicted yesterday by his press secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler, as holding to his adamant position on the tapes, whatever the public uproar, a stance reminiscent of that when he ordered the bombing of North Vietnam cities at Christmas, 1972.

"The President feels that he has the constitutional and personal responsibility to act on the principles that he, as President, thinks are the lasting ones," Mr. Ziegler said, "and he has to do, even in a very highly pressurized period, what he thinks is right. Defending his office against excessive encroachment is right and will be historically the proper position to take."

Stand on Privilege

A view prevalent in Congress and among lawyers who are seeking the tapes is that Mr. Nixon has already yielded so much on executive privilege by turning over large volumes of materials that his current fight against setting a precedent harmful to the office has little meaning. Rather, according to this point of view, the purpose is the kind of resistance and delay defense that lawyers frequently employ.

This view is based on the belief that Mr. Nixon will eventually have to release at least some of the still outstanding tapes and documents. He lost on the issue last year in the United States District Court and the Court of Appeals, then gave in.

Now, the Watergate special prosecutor, Leon Jaworski, has asked the Supreme Court to rule on the matter. In the likely event of an adverse ruling there, those who hold this view argue, he would have to turn over the material or face sure impeachment and conviction for defying the Supreme Court.

The House Judiciary Committee, which is conducting its fight for tapes outside the courts, is considering the President's refusal as additional ground for impeachment.

In the meantime, the constitutional struggle over the tapes is slowing both the impeachment proceedings and the prosecution of Watergate defendants at a time when the President hopes to improve his standing with the public through his trip abroad and through his assertions that the economy is improving. Opinion polls have shown that inflation and other distortions in the economy, as well as Watergate, have hurt him.

Presidents have often sought to improve their public opinion ratings with dramatic foreign trips and negotiations with foreign leaders.

Thus, the foreign travel, some of Mr. Nixon's supporters believe, may be more helpful than the public campaigning he had been doing for much of this year. For a time he was appearing before friendly audiences and submitting to questions in public.

Apparently he came to the conclusion it was not doing much good. He has no speaking engagements scheduled until June 5, when he will deliver the commencement address at the United States Naval Academy. That is not the kind of barnstorming he was doing before.

Bid for Support Goes On

A reduced anti-impeachment campaign goes on. The President has continued making radio addresses and meeting with various leaders in Washington in an effort to show that he is in command of the office.

Ken W. Clawson, his communications director, brings out Administration officials to defend Mr. Nixon and mails out materials intended to depict a President who is maligned unfairly.

Yet the campaign is no longer extensive and sustained; weariness may be part of the reason. This is the second successive four-day weekend Mr. Nixon has spent at his Key Biscayne home.

For a time because of the fuel shortage and criticism of the trappings of the Presidency, Mr. Nixon's usually ostentatious traveling apparatus was reduced. Now the fleets of helicopters, the back-up jets and the limousines for the Presidential party are again in full force.

Indifference Reported

Mr. Nixon has been described by associates as increasingly indifferent to criticism because nothing he does seems to help him overcome Watergate.

An example of how his problems have come to feed on themselves was seen in the recent efforts of the Rev. John J. McLaughlin, the Jesuit priest who is an adviser to the President, to defend Mr. Nixon's moral conduct as portrayed in the White House transcripts.

Father McLaughlin's superior, the Rev. Richard T. Cleary, provincial of the Jesuit Fathers of New England, called on him to return to Boston for "prayer and reflection." The conflict focused more attention on the issue than the White House wanted.

Gerald L. Warren, the deputy White House press secretary, was asked at a news briefing whether Mr. Nixon agreed with Father McLaughlin that the President is "the moral leader of the nation." His reply was typical of White House defensive statements these days:

"I think in all candor I must point out to you that the 'morality issue' rose to the surface as a sort of replacement, in my view, for other issues which were being discussed by many around the country as possible indictable offenses. When the discussion on those other issues lagged somewhat, the morality issue came to the top."