

# Nixon's Role in Cover-Up

## Rabbi Korff Says Former President Admitted Complicity

By Jules Witcover

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Rabbi Baruch Korff, just resigned as head of the fund to pay former President Nixon's legal debts, says Nixon admitted to him "his complicity in the cover-up of the Watergate affair.

Even so, Korff says, he does not believe the former President should have been "brought to justice" for that complicity because in his view Presidents are not accountable to the same laws as private citizens.

"Some are more equal than others," Korff said in an interview. He cited recent reports of various clandestine cloak-and-dagger activities of the Central Intelligence Agency and National Security Agency that, he said, "are under the control

of only one man, the President of the United States of America."

Compared to the carrying out of illegal activities by the CIA under presidential direction, Korff said, "Watergate is somewhat inconsequential," and he added: "If you want an angel as President, we would not be the country we are."

The retired clergyman from Rehoboth, Mass., made his statement that Nixon had acknowledged complicity in the Watergate cover-up in the course of a long response when asked whether he still believed the former President to be innocent of wrongdoing, Korff replied:

"I can only say what Richard Nixon has said to me re-

peatedly, that he genuinely believed at one stage that national security was involved in the cover-up, and at another stage he could not throw his subordinates to the wolves, and at another stage he made very clear to me he was fed 'self-serving versions,' was the way he put it, by one of the others. And to this day, he told me, he does not know the full story of Watergate.

"Now, as to his complicity in the cover-up, he made it very clear that it was exactly that, whether it was to shield a subordinate or to protect national security.

"Now, shouldn't a President be brought to justice for complicity in a cover-up? And I would say no. And you would ask how one law can apply to him and another law to you. Aren't we all equal under the Constitution? And again I would say no, startling as it would appear. Some are more equal than others.

"You speak of the CIA and the NASA as far-out, cloak-and-dagger agencies trained to lie, corrupt, assassinate. They are not. They are under the control of only one man, the President of the United States . . . It is precisely what is being revealed now . . .

"So what I have learned (in two years of defending Nixon) is that we are a nation of schizophrenics. We do not want to face reality. We treat Watergate as if it were some kind of aberration from outer space because we don't like Richard Nixon. But we shouldn't go by our likes and dislikes of a particular person. Richard Nixon was one link in the chain of the presidency and you can't extricate one link and judge it independent of the others."

Korff's report that Nixon admitted "his complicity in the cover-up" appeared to go beyond what the former President has said himself. On last Aug. 5, in releasing the June 23, 1972, White House tape transcript indicating he knew of and discussed the cover-up six days after the Watergate break-in, Nixon had said only that he had committed "a serious act of omission" in not reporting what he had learned of the cover-up at that time.

Korff said in the interview in his suite at the Mayflower Hotel that his resignation as head of the President Nixon Justice Fund in-

dicated "not the slightest" flagging in his support of the former President. He said he had talked by phone with Nixon the day after the resignation last Saturday and will probably go to San Clemente to visit him for a few days next month.

Korff said he is stepping aside, while remaining on the board of the Nixon fund, because \$190,000 of the goal of \$400,444 to fight the constitutional issue of ownership of presidential papers and tapes has been raised, and pledges made for the rest. With payment of the pledges, he said, "I will have discharged my commitment."

The retired rabbi said he is also quitting as head of the U.S. Citizens Congress, an organization of nearly 12,000 paid members he formed after the Nixon resignation to counter what he called media bias, because "I do not feel a movement of such dimensions should be identified with one man."

Concerning his own relations with the press, Korff said that with few exceptions he had not been fairly covered. He disclosed that interviews with him in his Washington office by Sally Quinn of The Washington Post, Daniel Schorr of CBS News and others had been taped without their knowledge—and without his. A system had been installed by the Citizens' Congress after it had received threats, he said, but about a week after the Quinn interview, the system and tapes were stolen.

Korff said he now wants "to speak out as an individual. I have quite a few invitations from campuses. I have an obligation to speak out without being tied to one organization. Also, I can't do both. I'm physically tired, I'm mentally exhausted." He said he would continue to turn over the proceeds of speeches to the fund and the Citizens' Congress, which would continue to pay his travel expenses.

He is giving no thought to going back to the life of an active clergyman, he said, because "I feel this would be a form of confinement, a form of claustrophobia. I think the world is my pulpit, without sounding egotistic. In righting a wrong, that's my pulpit. In working toward a strong America, that is a function of the pulpit."



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Rabbi Korff: "Some are more equal than others."