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How Fortas Looks at It

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WASHINGTON, May 15— "I feel no ill will or basis of ill will toward anybody," Abe Fortas said today in a brief telephone interview. "The story is very simple and it is set out in detail in the statement—as best as my poor memory could record it."

The jab at his memory was puckish. So was the mock revelation that he had already been offered a job—as second fiddle to a virtuoso friend with whom he has often played string quartets. Another violinist friend might let him try for first fiddle, he added.

No, he had given no thought to what he would do now, Mr. Fortas said. The Court was not his whole life, he implied: "I did a lot of things in my life and I expect to do a lot more."

"I've already had a lot of time to get used to it," he said of his resignation, speaking solemnly now of the rea-

sons that had prompted it.

He was not saying he decided to quit as soon as Life magazine reported his ties to Louis E. Wolfson 10 days ago—only "as the thing went along." The "thing," he indicated, was the talk of further revelations, investigation, confrontation across the lines of executive and judiciary separation.

"As the thing went along, the conclusion came to me that this is not an appropriate thing to be happening to a member of the Court and that it was not a good thing to have a confrontation with a new Administration that has all these terrifying problems."

And the delay thereafter, he said, was only "to do it properly" and "in accordance with the practices and functions of the Court."

He felt a "duty to lay everything" before his colleagues, he said. "Not that they expressed any opinion," he added quickly.

It was his own decision, he seemed to be saying. He wanted his colleagues to understand. He wanted to uphold the principle that each Justice accounted to himself and that the Court accounted only to itself.

"I decided it would be the right thing in terms of the country and the right thing in terms of the Court," Mr. Fortas said. Such patriotic rhetoric was odd from him, he observed, but he yielded to it as an accurate description of his feelings.

"This was a sober and tough conclusion."