

Rabbi Says Nixon Decries Trials Here

By Carroll Kilpatrick
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SAN CLEMENTE, Calif., July 16—President Nixon was quoted today as saying that it would be "extremely difficult" for any Watergate figure to get a fair trial in the District of Columbia and that the conviction of John D. Ehrlichman was "a blot on justice."

The President also was quoted as saying that Watergate was "the thinnest scandal in American history" and that if the charges against him were true, he would have resigned long ago.

"I wouldn't serve for one minute if they were true," he said. "But I know they are not true, and therefore, I will stay here, do the job that I was elected to do as well as I can, and trust to the American constitutional process to make the final verdict."

Rabbi Baruch Korff, chairman of the National Citizens Committee for Fairness to the Presidency, met with Mr. Nixon today to present him with a copy of a book Korff has written called "The Personal Nixon: Staying on the Summit."

The book contains the transcript of a long interview the Rabbi had with the President in the Oval Office on May 13.

Asked after his meeting with the President today to comment on the Ehrlichman conviction last week in federal District Court in Washington, Korff said he told Mr. Nixon it was "a blot on justice" and "he agrees with me."

Korff is a vigorous Nixon supporter and today called him "the greatest President of the 20th century." Korff's group will hold a dinner Thursday at the Shoreham Hotel in Washington in support of the President. Mr. Nixon will speak to the dinner by telephone, the rabbi said.

In a meeting with the President in December, Korff said he told Mr. Nixon, "if I were President I

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would have destroyed all the tapes" when existence of the tapes was first disclosed.

"Where were you eight months ago?" Korff quoted the President as having replied, referring to the time it was disclosed before the Senate Watergate committee that the tapes had been made.

The interview Korff had with the President May 31 quotes Mr. Nixon as saying he will fight the impeachment "through to the finish and fight it through to win."

Resignation or impeachment would have "devastating consequences" on American foreign policy and would have "a very detrimental" effect for years to come on the American political system, Mr. Nixon said in the Korff book.

On May 30, the rabbi also interviewed Vice President Ford, asking him if he would be willing to make a declaration that he would refuse to succeed to the presidency after impeachment on grounds that the evidence does not warrant impeachment.

Ford replied that it was the first time the question had been put to him and he could not give a categorical answer.

When Korff repeated the question, Ford said that if the President is impeached and convicted "I think any and all of us, as citizens, are bound by the Constitution."

"Now whether that gives me any leeway or flexibility not to do what I swore to do when I took the oath of office, I think this does require some careful thought."

Mr. Nixon is quoted in his interview as saying that he respects Watergate special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski "very much" but that "some of the activities of some of his eager-beaver staffers" have been "abusive."

If anyone had used similar tactics of "harassment" in the days of the late Sen. Joseph McCarthy, he would "have been ridden out of town on a rail," Mr. Nixon said.

"I believe that when it is all sorted out in the end, it will be found that there has been harassment on a massive basis of innocent people, that many without guilt have had their reputations badly damaged, and I fear, too, that it will be found that many who have been charged with guilt have been charged on flimsy indictments, as was indicated in the Mitchell-Stans trial," the President said.

If some good comes out of Watergate, he said, "it would be a greater sense of responsibility on the part of the press, on the part of investigators and the rest, for the rights of individuals. Every individual ... has a right ... to be protected against the character assassination which occurs so often in the press or television."

In declaring that it "would be extremely difficult for anyone to get a fair trial, for example, in the District of Columbia now," Mr. Nixon appeared to be

blaming the press rather than the racial makeup of D.C. juries.

He said that "much of the press has been responsible" but that "much of the television press has not been responsible." It is time "we recognize in this country that our system is based on the principle of trial by jury and not trial by the press," he said.

Asked to comment on the White House press corps, the President said that there are some "who hate my guts with a passion. But I don't hate them, none of them."

"Individually, I understand. Their philosophies are different; they don't agree with my positions and after all they want to write and take me on. An individual must not return hatred for hatred, and I am saying this not in moralistic terms. I don't believe in wearing morals on my sleeves."

The only way he is able to work on the various problems before him "is not to be consumed by what consumes my friends in the press room," Mr. Nixon said.

"They are consumed by this issue, and I can see—not all, but I can see in the eyes of them, not only their hatred but their frustration. And as a matter of fact, I really feel sorry for them in a way, because they should feel strongly and they should write strongly, but they should recognize that to the extent that they allow their own hatreds to consume them, they will lose the rationality which is the mark of a civilized man."

Many persons already have had "their chance for a fair trial destroyed," the President said, by press and television reports.

The press uses a "double standard," Mr. Nixon said.

"If I were basically a liberal by their standards, if I had bugged out of Vietnam, which they wanted, Watergate would have been a blip.

They wouldn't have cared. But it is because I have not gone down the line with them that they care.

"I refuse to pander to their views."

In arguing that Watergate was "the thinnest scandal in American history," the President said to compare it with Teapot Dome "is comparing apples with oranges,

and, shall we say, rather poor oranges, too."

If there hadn't been the Watergate issue, the press would have found something else, he said.

Historians 50 years hence will find Watergate "something very difficult to understand," the President said. "Watergate affected the election in 1972 by only reducing the margin we won by. Because it was a negative issue for us. Nothing was obtained there, as we know. No information. It was not only wrong, but the wrong was compounded by its being totally senseless and stupid."

Discussing the tapes, Mr. Nixon said it was "very difficult" for him to make them public.

But he said the "great majority" who analyze them "don't find an impeachable offense, but they don't like their tone."

"Well, I can say that if they were to tape the conversations of Presidents that I have known, they wouldn't like their tone either."

"I mean, there has to be at times very pragmatic talk in this office, and I would say also on that score, I don't have any apologies with regard to having tried to give, say, Mr. Haldeman, Mr. Ehrlichman, the benefit of the doubt during a terribly difficult two-week period from the 15th of April to the 30th of April, when they left ..."

"They protested their innocence, they still do, and I felt that I had to be ... reasonably sure."

"If there was guilt, out they would go, but I had to be reasonably sure that there was enough evidence that their usefulness would be destroyed and that they would have to fight from the outside ... it was like asking me to cut off one arm and then another to have these two men leave."

The President said he would tell those who have charged that he did not move swiftly enough that "maybe I should have acted more swiftly."

But if the critics "had been in this spot, getting one story from one person, another story from another person, not knowing where



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Rabbi Baruch Korff, a strong defender of President Nixon, presents him with a copy of his new book at San Clemente.

...the truth was, and we don't even know what the truth is today, then I wonder how they would have acted."

When Korff asked the

President how he was able to stand the strain, Mr. Nixon said it was part of the Quaker tradition of his parents and that he now had an inner peace.

The President acknowledged that he was "going through some pretty hard times."

When Korff asked the President about reports he had uttered anti-Semitic remarks, Mr. Nixon said he had appointed members of the Jewish faith ambassador to Britain, as chairman of the Federal Reserve, as Secretary of State and to other high posts.

"The actions give lie to the fabricated words," he declared. When he nominated Walter Annenberg to be ambassador to Britain, the President said, "Many of the so called Eastern elite objected to his appointment, they didn't say it was because he was Jewish, but deep down that was the reason some of them objected."

...
"Their has been no stronger supporter of Israel than myself," the President said. "Mrs. Meir will tell you that. Without the airlift and without the alert (during the October war) Israel would probably not have survived."