

MAGRUDER AGREES TO ADMIT GUILT AND BE WITNESS FOR PROSECUTION; NIXON ASSAILS THEFTS OF SECRETS

EX-P.O.W.'S CHEER

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President Says It Is Time to Stop Making Heroes of Thieves

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WASHINGTON, May 24—President Nixon, in a spirited address to nearly 600 cheering former prisoners of war, lashed out today at those who threaten the secrecy of national security matters.

"It is time to stop making heroes out of those who steal

Excerpts from Nixon speech will be found on Page 16.

secrets and publish them in the newspapers," Mr. Nixon said at the climax of his extended remarks.

The former prisoners stood and applauded and cheered for a full minute.

Mr. Nixon's address apparently marked the beginning of what some White House officials have said would be a counteroffensive to shift the focus from the Watergate case, which has rocked the Presidency in recent weeks, to the broad issue of national security.

Two days ago, Mr. Nixon issued a statement saying that he had advised his assistants not to let the Watergate investigation interfere with or expose national security matters. And yesterday, Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, the Senate minority leader, rallied other Republicans to the President's defense on ground of national security.

Cheering Intensified

The President's address began what has been described as the largest and most spectacular White House gala in history. The event, in honor of the former American prisoners, included a banquet and entertainment tonight for 1,300 under an enormous tent pitched on the White House lawn.

For Mr. Nixon, the warm gathering with the former prisoners was one of pleasure and relief in a time of intense personal pressure.

When he arrived at the State Department Auditorium at 2:30 P.M., the men stood and cheered. A broad smile spread over Mr. Nixon's face as he walked on the stage. He responded by raising his right thumb high into the air, and this brought more cheers from the men, who filled the auditorium.

At this moment, their wives were having tea on the sixth floor of the building with Mrs. Nixon, and the atmosphere in the auditorium quickly settled into one of camaraderie between the servicemen and the President who had negotiated their release.

Speaking from notes for about 40 minutes, Mr. Nixon reviewed his record on foreign and domestic policies in much

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Stresses Responsibility

"Let me be quite blunt," he said. Had there not been secrecy and security in negotiations, "You men would still be in Hanoi today rather than in Washington. And let me say it is time to stop making heroes out of those who steal secrets and publish them in newspapers."

After the cheering stopped, Mr. Nixon continued:

"We must have confidentiality, we must have secret communication. It isn't that we are keeping something from the American people that they should know, or that we are trying to keep something from the press that the press should know."

"I can assure you that in my terms of office as President I am going to meet my responsibility to protect the national security of the United States insofar as secrecy is concerned."

Mr. Nixon said he was not concerned about "every little dribble here and there" but rather "the highest classified documents in our national security files."

In that context, he mentioned the release of details on arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union that would "let them know our position before we ever got to the table." Mr. Nixon and others in the White House were upset in 1971 when The New York Times and other papers disclosed, through official sources, some details on arms limitations talks. A treaty with the Soviet Union was

later negotiated despite the disclosure.

"I say it is time for a new sense of responsibility in this country and a new sense of dedication of everybody in the bureaucracy that if a document is classified, keep it classified."

'I Feel Better'

Mr. Nixon concluded his speech by saying:

"Those first four years in the office were not easy ones for me in the international front, fighting for an adequate defense budget, fighting for a responsible foreign policy."

"But looking toward the balance of the second four years, let me say I feel better, because out in this room, I think I have some allies, and I will appreciate your help."

After another long standing ovation, Mr. Nixon stood on the stage for more than an hour and shook hands with each man. He held to the hands of many, engaging them in conversation. Then he went to his limousine and returned in the rain to the White House.

Mr. Nixon's speech today and his statement of Tuesday constituted his strongest public comment to date on disclosures of national security matters. Previously, he had initiated a review of classified documents intended to reduce the number kept out of the public domain.

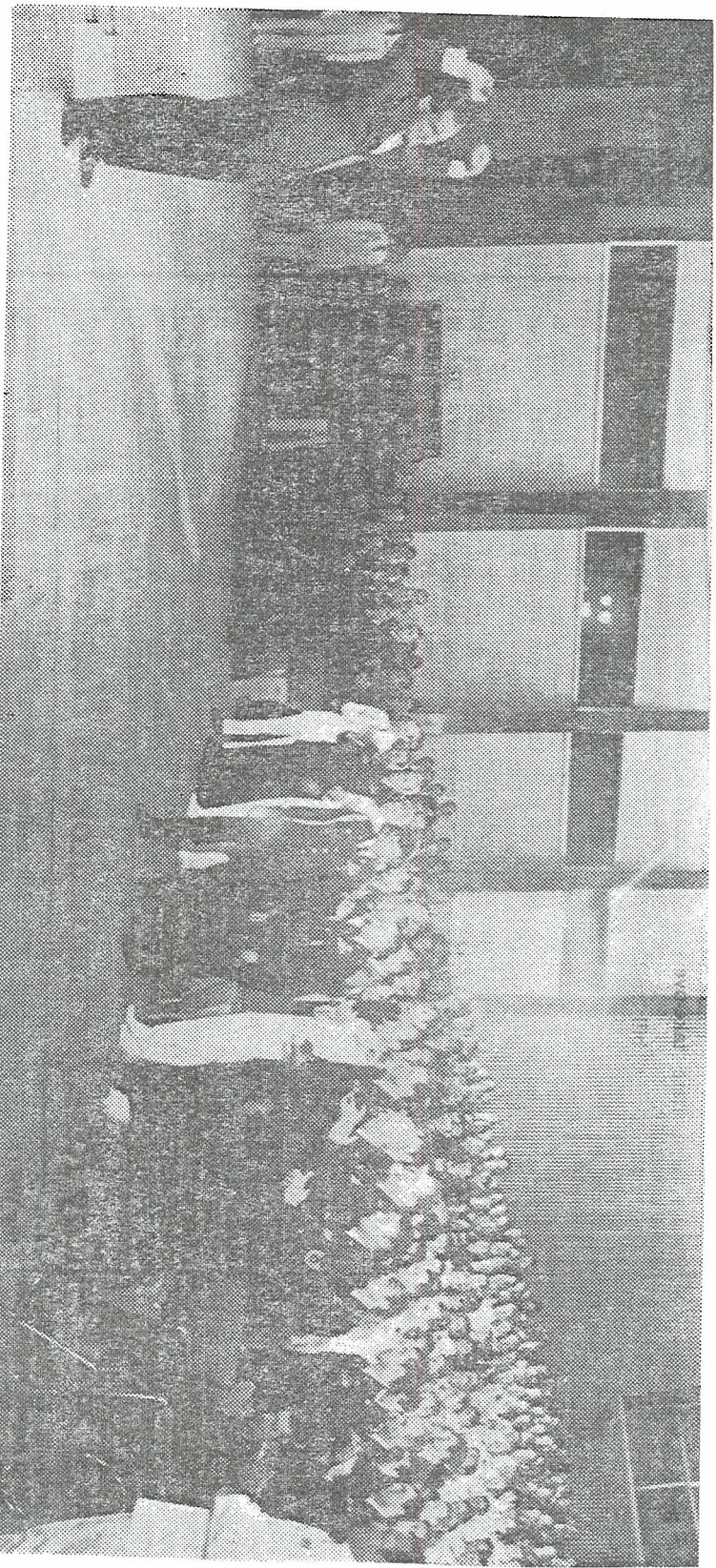
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the same way as he had in campaign speeches last year. He spoke of the need to keep America strong and the danger of Congress taking "unilateral action" on foreign policy.

Then, with rising voice and lively gestures, Mr. Nixon came to national security and the need for secrecy.

Former prisoners of war applauding President Nixon after he addressed them at the State Department. Later they were his dinner guests.

The New York Times/George James



United Press International

President Nixon responding to cheers of former prisoners of war whom he addressed at the State Department yesterday. He denounced thefts of Government secrets.