

A Vigorous, Nationwide Campaign

Rabbi's Drive to Defend

By Keith Power

Rabbi Baruch Korff, gesturing vividly and pausing for emphasis like a man with an historic anecdote to tell, described yesterday his first meeting with President Richard Nixon in the White House on December 19, 1973.

The conversation between them turned, not unnaturally, to the Watergate tapes. If Baruch Korff had been President the rabbi recalled telling Mr. Nixon, he would have made a large bonfire and destroyed the tapes.

The action, the rabbi told the President, was morally and ethically justifiable on the grounds the tapes carried the conversation of people whose voices were being recorded without their knowledge.

"Where were you eight months ago?" the rabbi quoted President Nixon as saying.

Baruch Korff is fond of referring to himself as a small-town rabbi. The tweed jacket he was wearing in his room in the San Francisco Hilton and the cold cigar in his fingers seemed countrified. Certainly, his hometown of Rehoboth, Mass., where he lives in official retirement, is small enough.

But Rehoboth couldn't contain this unusual man when his wrath was ignited by the Senate hearings on the Wa-



RABBI BARUCH KORFF, CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE
His advice to the President was to make a large bonfire and destroy the tapes

tergate break-in.

"Each of the senators was vying for the tube," Rabbi Korff said, his voice heavily accented and harsh with scorn. "They were all participating in a holier-than-thou attitude. Having an intimate knowledge of the legislative process, it deeply offended me."

The rabbi said he was further outraged by the vilifica-

tion of President Nixon through unproved accusations and innuendo in the press and electronic media.

"The presidency is considerably more important to the nation than all the wrong that purportedly has been unveiled," Rabbi Korff said.

In essence, Rabbi Korff conceived of Richard Nixon as a victim of persecution. For a man with the rabbi's turbulent background, this

was enough to engage his fierce sympathies and considerable enegries.

Less than a year after he made his lonely commitment, Rabbi Korff is chairman of the National Citizens' Committee for Fairness to the Presidency, an organization that lists 250,000 members and a campaign chest of half a million dollars.

Baruch Korff, 59, whose

Nixon

health and personal finances should dictate a sedentary life as a retired rabbi, is engaged in a hectic campaign around the country, spreading his defense of President Nixon. He paused in his hotel room yesterday to talk about his life.

He was one of four children of the Grand Rabbi of the Ukraine at the time of the purges after the Bolshevik revolution. His father was arrested but escaped. The family was not so fortunate.

The rabbi has a dreadful memory from age 5 when his mother and the children were led before a firing squad in the town square. The woman protected her children with her own body when the bullets flew. The little ones survived and he eventually reached the United States.

Rabbi Korff became known in Washington during the World War II years when he was the official adviser to the War Refugee Board, concocting daring plans to pluck doomed inmates from Nazi concentration camps.

After the war he threw himself into the campaign for an independent state of Israel. In 1947, he was arrested by the French authorities in Paris for scheming to airdrop pro-Israel leaflets on London. He gained international attention by announcing a plan to parachute into Palestine.

With the establishment of Israel, Rabbi Korff settled down to the uneventful life of an orthodox rabbi in Taunton, Mass. But he retained the political friendships in Washington.

He said he was an independent voter until he registered as a Republican to vote in a primary for "my friend" Senator Edward Brooke, the only black in the Senate.

"All our contributions come in \$1, \$5, \$10, but no large single amounts. In fact, some money at first came from people I know who didn't approve of the committee, but contributed because my name was associated with it."

The rabbi said the committee has 1.1 million signatures of registered voters on petitions expressing "our faith in and support for the President of the United States and the presidency as a coordinate branch of government...."

He said the committee has been established as a permanent private agency to see the man in the White House gets fair play regardless of who he is.
