

Taped Statements by President Both

'Hush Money' and Candor Involved in the Conflicts

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WASHINGTON, May 1—The private statements of President Nixon, emerging from the edited transcripts of the White House tapes, sometimes contradict and sometimes reflect the public record shaped in 20 months of Watergate statements.

The more dramatic conflicts between the two involve the payment of hush money to the Watergate burglars and the President's attitude toward complete disclosure of the Administration's involvement in the break-in and bugging of Democratic National Headquarters in the Watergate complex here on June 17, 1972.

Among the more consistent areas are Mr. Nixon's insistence that he had no prior knowledge of the plot to spy on the Democrats and his assertions of noninvolvement in "dirty tricks" during the 1972 Presidential campaign.

Often, however, the images are neither clearly the same nor clearly opposed. In private, the President was frequently enigmatic, ambiguous and withdrawn.

Nixon Said: 'I Know'

The President has said, for example, that prior to March 21, 1973, he was entirely unaware of payments of any description—legitimate or illegitimate—to the Watergate defendants.

The transcripts of his private conversations do not directly contradict this limited point. But in his March 21 meeting with John W. Dean 3d, then the White House counsel, Mr. Dean described to Mr. Nixon efforts to raise funds for the seven burglars and noted that among the Republican contributors approached was Thomas Pappas, a Boston businessman.

"I know," Mr. Nixon said. Earlier in this conversation, Mr. Dean said that the President's personal lawyer, Herbert W. Kalmbach, had raised some of the money.

"They put that under the cover of a Cuban committee, I suppose?" Mr. Nixon commented. The existence of such a committee, consisting largely of Cuban exiles in Miami, was not widely known at the time.

'Blackmail' Payments

The available transcripts show clearly that Mr. Nixon learned on March 21 not only that payments had been made but also that they were in the nature of "blackmail" payments.

The President at first, in an Aug. 15, 1973 statement, contended that he had been told "only that money had been used for attorneys' fees and family support . . ."

In a statement last March 6, however, Mr. Nixon corrected himself, acknowledging that Mr. Dean had informed him that the "payments had been made to the defendants for the purpose of keeping them quiet."

On another point in the same area, both Mr. Nixon and H. R. Haldeman, the former Chief of Staff at the White House, have said that the President maintained that "it would be wrong" to raise \$1-million for silence payments.

Payments 'Worthwhile'

Not only did Mr. Nixon not suggest during the March 21 session that there would be something wrong with raising the money, he remarked at one point that it would be "worthwhile."

The President has said repeatedly that one of his goals from the beginning was to make certain that the truth of the Watergate scandal was made known. A year ago, for example, he said:

"I was determined that we should get to the bottom of the matter, and that the truth

should be fully brought out—no matter who was involved."

Taken as a whole, the edited transcripts made available by the White House yesterday show that Mr. Nixon was far more anxious to protect his aides and to avoid public inquiry. On March 13, 1973, Mr. Dean said:

" . . . There are dangers, Mr. President, I would be less than candid if I didn't tell you there are. There is a reason for not everyone going up and testifying."

'The True Story'

To which Mr. Nixon replied, "I see. Oh, No, No, No! I didn't mean to have everyone go up and testify . . . I mean put the story out for the people: Here is the story, the true story about Watergate."

At the same March 13 meeting with Mr. Dean, the President was informed that Gordon C. Strachan, an aide to Mr. Haldeman, knew in advance of the Watergate plot. Mr. Nixon said:

"Well, then, he probably told Bob [Haldeman]."

This suggests the President's awareness of White House involvement in Watergate before March 21, and it also raises questions about Mr. Nixon's characterization of Mr. Haldeman, a month later, as one of "the finest public servants it has been my privilege to know."

Mr. Nixon's public and private reactions to the break-in itself appear to coincide.

'Are They Crazy?'

"I was appalled at this senseless, illegal action," he said in an address on April 30, 1973, "and I was shocked to learn that employees of the re-election committee were apparently among those guilty."

" . . . I will never forget when I heard about this—forced entry and bugging," the transcripts show the President as having said privately. "I thought, 'What is this? What is the matter with these people, are they crazy?' I thought they were nuts."

Mr. Nixon's views of the dirty tricks campaign waged by Donald H. Segretti against Democratic Presidential aspirants were similarly consistent.

The President said publicly that he had never "authorized nor encouraged subordinates to engage in illegal or improper campaign tactics." The transcripts show that on Feb. 28, 1973, he characterized Mr. Segretti as follows:

"(expletive deleted) He was such a dumb figure. . . . It was really juvenile."

Contradict and Reflect the Public Record

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