

Rabbi Shaken, But Continues Nixon Support

By Bob Kuttner
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Rabbi Baruch Korff, chairman of the National Citizens' Committee for Fairness to the Presidency, left a 35-minute private meeting with President Nixon yesterday afternoon somewhat shaken but determined to continue his campaign.

The 59-year-old rabbi, who says he has organized 2.5 million supporters of the President, inexplicably canceled a promised press briefing at the White House, and left the executive mansion through a side exit.

Looking drawn and speaking softly, the rabbi paused briefly to tell a reporter Mr. Nixon's latest admission of complicity in the Watergate cover-up left him "distressed," but he said he was even more distressed by the media's coverage of the disclosures.

"Yes, the President has weaknesses," Korff said. "He's a human being."

"So he waited three months before disclosing the information. So what?"

Korff would not comment on the discussion, or on President Nixon's mood. In a statement released later by his office, the rabbi said he had "expressed solidarity" with President Nixon and described him as "the greatest President of this century."

"My heart goes out to him and his family, and my personal commitment to him and his family will continue undaunted," Korff declared.

PepsiCo Chairman Donald Kendall, the organizer of another pro-Nixon drive and an old friend of the President, said through a spokesman that the latest taped conversations revealing presidential complicity in the cover-up "should have been turned over before now." Kendall termed Mr. Nixon's failure to do so "a serious omission."

And the sponsor of a third loyalist group, former New York Republican Rep. Hamilton Fish Sr., said in a telephone interview, "Now I feel it's a whole new ball game."

Only a day before President Nixon's new disclosures, Fish made public a letter criticizing his son, Judiciary Committee member

Hamilton Fish Jr. (R-N.Y.), for voting to recommend impeachment.

The three-page handwritten letter said in part, "I shall support you as blood is thicker than water, but you cannot expect me to defend your votes to impeach and destroy Nixon."

The elder Mr. Fish, who is 85, said yesterday his letter had been based on the available evidence at the time, and he now believes President Nixon "has left the Republicans on the committee out on a limb."

Fish said he considers resignation preferable to impeachment, which would be "a victory for Marxism, socialism and communism."

"If they had been my tapes and papers," he declared, "I would have burned every last one of them and invited the House and Senate in to see the bonfire."

As the President's hardcore support continued to erode, the directors of two conservative associations said in separate interviews that they now favor ousting President Nixon.

Ron Docksai, the national chairman of Young Americans for Freedom, said, "Everybody I talk with who was a strong supporter of the President is angry. It's the same feeling of a void that we felt after Agnew's demise." Docksai added that he believes the Senate should convict Mr. Nixon.

For Ronald Dear, executive director of the American Conservative Union, Monday's revelations were "very devastating."

"I think most conservatives now favor impeachment and conviction," said Dear, "I was withholding judgment until all the evidence was in, but yesterday was the final blow for me."

Alan H. Ryskind, an editor of the conservative magazine Human Events, said he was a staunch opponent of impeachment until this week. "The total misleading of everyone was a terrible misuse of government," Ryskind said. "I definitely think he should be removed from office."

Herbert Klein, the former press secretary whose friendship with Mr. Nixon

dates to the 1940s, said the President's unflattering references to him on the June 23, 1972, tape ("He just doesn't have his head screwed on") were the result of the influence of other presidential aides, especially Charles Colson, "who were seeking power at my expense."

Klein said former aide H. R. Haldeman and the President apparently wanted him to take an even harder line against the television networks in 1972.

"The first I ever knew that the President thought something went wrong was when I read it in the paper," Klein said.

Former Health, Education and Welfare Secretary Robert Finch, who used to say Mr. Nixon was like a father or an older brother to him, was described by associates as so upset by the President's disclosures that he was not discussing them with even close friends.

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