

# FORD SEEKING TO CUT LINKS TO WATERGATE

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Tells Villanova Students He Led Nation in 'Incredible Comeback' NYTimes

By JAMES M. NAUGHTON  
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VILLANOVA, Pa., Oct. 27—President Ford, who described himself here today as a long-distance runner, has begun trying to sprint vigorously away from the lingering specter of Richard M. Nixon and the Watergate scandals.

At a rally in the Villanova University fieldhouse this afternoon, a brief news conference in Atlantic City this morning and a television appearance last night in Chicago, Mr. Ford sought to distinguish his Administration from that of his predecessor, who resigned on Aug. 9, 1974, rather than face impeachment proceedings for his role in the Watergate affair, and was pardoned by Mr. Ford a month later.

"Personal integrity is not too much to ask from a public official," Mr. Ford told 2,500 students at the Roman Catholic university. "We should expect nothing less."

He reminded his audience that he had described Watergate as a "long national nightmare" when he assumed office 26 months ago and contended that, in terms

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of peace, prosperity and public trust, he had led the nation in "an incredible comeback."

Even more vividly, Mr. Ford arranged for the issue to be raised in Chicago during a 30-minute commercial telecast across Illinois last night by the President's campaign organization.

Joe Garagiola, the sportscaster who is serving as host on the political broadcasts, asked Mr. Ford what distinguished his Administration from that of his predecessor.

## 'No Dictatorial Authority'

"There's one very, very fundamental difference," Mr. Ford replied. "Under President Ford, there is not any imperial White House—which means there is no pomp, no ceremony, there is no dictatorial authority."

The sharp criticism of the secretive and imperial tone of the Nixon Administration was deliberate. White House officials said that Mr. Ford had arranged with Mr. Garagiola to raise the subject in the telecast.

The President's political counselors said that Mr. Ford had concluded—evidently on the basis of fresh opinion-sampling in key states—that it was necessary for him to meet the issue of trust directly. "He wants to get it out of the way," one adviser said.

"If it's on people's minds," Ron Nesen, the White House press spokesman, said, referring to the issue of trust, "he might as well discuss it."

## Scores 'Imperial Presidency'

Mr. Ford did discuss the subject, in one fashion or another, nearly everywhere he went today. At a news conference at a Federal Aviation Administration test-landing field outside Atlantic City, Mr. Ford said he had criticized the tone of the Nixon Presidency because "the imperial Presidency is not in conformity with my own personal ideas and with what our Founding Fathers believed."

The President said he had taken pains to dilute the authority of the White House staff and to endow his Cabinet officers with more responsibility.

At a sparsely attended rally on the Atlantic City boardwalk, Mr. Ford said—after getting two kisses on the cheek from Dorothy Benham, the reigning Miss America—that he had renewed confidence in the White House after what he called the "tragic betrayal of trust" two years earlier.

He had been candid and open, the President said, adding: "I promise you, I pledge to you, we're going to keep it that way in the next four years."

## Appeal for Catholic Votes

After contending that he had earned the public's trust, Mr. Ford proceeded, at Villanova, to make an unabashed appeal for votes from Roman Catholics in

the Philadelphia area, suggesting in the course of the appeal that Jimmy Carter, the Democratic Presidential nominee, was less reliable than the President.

Mr. Ford identified with Villanova's traditionally strong track and crosscountry teams, saying he could think of no more apt spot to be in the home stretch of the campaign than at the alma mater of many outstanding distance runners.

"This one long-distance run is one race im going to win," he told the cheering students.

Mr. Ford then said that he was strongly opposed to Mr. Carter's proposal, as the President put it, to tax all church-owned properties. He said the Constitution carefully separated church and state, and added, "I will not see that separation sacrificed for a few more dollars in Federal tax revenue."

Mr. Carter's position on the issue, however is not dissimilar from Mr. Ford's. The President has criticized his Democratic opponent on the subject since the publication, in a Seventh Day Adventist Church journal, of an interview in which Mr. Carter said he would tax non-church facilities owned by religious groups.