

Frost Says Nixon Went 'Very Far'

Beverly Hills

Richard M. Nixon, in his televised discussion of Watergate and its aftermath, "went further in his admissions and in his contrition" than anyone expected, the man who interviewed the former President said yesterday.

"I think in terms of catharsis it went very far," David Frost, the British television personality, told reporters.

Frost said he felt it was "an emotional and factual concession last night. He may feel, may feel, he has gone far enough, and the American people may feel he has gone far enough."

Asked if he felt Nixon was telling the truth, Frost said, "I shouldn't be the judge. The American people should be the judge."

Frost and Nixon, in discussing his downfall, "didn't try to make anyone the villain. I think the person he was hardest on was himself."

Frost said he decided to make the Watergate program the first of four shows to be broadcast rather than the last as had originally been planned because of a reaction he felt from across the country as he taped the interviews. He and Nixon will receive an estimated \$1 million each for the series.

"The American people wanted him to address the subject of Watergate first," he said. "We were dealing with history, and our re-

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sponsibility to history and to the viewer was greater than our feeling that this would make an exciting climax to the series."

Frost said he thought the three remaining programs will be as interesting and will contain revelations about the war in the Middle East, White House leaks and the so-called plumbers team that conducted covert campaign forays during Nixon's re-election drive.

Frost also said that he might add a fifth program which could include Nixon's discussions of the 18½-minute gap in the White House tapes.

The fifth program could also deal with the question of why Nixon didn't destroy the tapes before they brought down his embattled presidency, Frost said.

James Reston Jr., an instructor at the University of North Carolina who helped Frost prepare for the interview, said in Chapel Hill, N.C., that he felt the session telecast first was successful despite the efforts of members of Nixon's staff to halt pointed questioning.

"His staff people said he had come to the most difficult point in his life, and he wanted to be as

forthcoming as possible," Reston said "Frost gave him an opportunity to be as forthcoming as he could be."

Reston told reporters the break came two hours into the second taping section and was followed by Nixon's statement that he felt he had let the American people down.

"The thrust of things changed after that. But if we had kept on with questioning about John Dean, etc., the interview would not have had the kind of texture and magnificence I believe it had," said Reston, who for seven months researched the 47 volumes of House Judiciary Committee evidence on Watergate.

Reston said Frost's agreement to halt the tough line of questioning did not give the Nixon staff control of the interview or mean that Frost "caved in" to their request.

In New Orleans, meanwhile, the editor of Dwight Eisenhower's official papers said that Nixon's version of his role in the resignation of Sherman Adams is incorrect and inconsistent with Eisenhower's recollections.

Stephen E. Ambrose, author of Eisenhower's official biography, "Supreme Commander," and editor of the official Eisenhower papers, said his research showed Adams was forced to step down in 1958 primarily because of pressure from Nixon and other Republican leaders.

But "Nixon's statement that he had to fire Adams because Eisenhower couldn't do it is not only not new, as Nixon claims, but it is wrong," said Ambrose, a professor at the University of New Orleans.

In the interview with Frost, Nixon compared his firing of chief aides to the resignation of Eisenhower aide Adams.

"Finally Eisenhower decided after months of indecision on it... he decided he had to go," Nixon told Frost. "You know who did it?"

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Eisenhower called me in and asked me to talk to Sherm."

Ambrose said that, in fact, Nixon had been calling for Adams' resignation for several weeks and that Eisenhower had resisted because he didn't feel his top aide had

done anything wrong.

Ambrose said Eisenhower never ordered Nixon to fire Adams but finally allowed the then-vice president and Meade Alcorn, the head of the Republican National Committee, to meet with Adams in an attempt to persuade him to resign.

"Nixon then didn't even go alone to meet with Adams as he claims," Ambrose said. "He went with Alcorn and the two of them got Adams to quit for the good of the party."

Former White House chief of staff H. R. Haldeman said he had no comment at this time.

Domestic affairs adviser John Ehrlichman, who was asked to resign by Nixon with Haldeman in April, 1974, did not watch the interview, or at least would not comment on it.

Former Watergate special prosecutor Leon Jaworski, who is committed to writing about the interview for a news magazine, and former Justice Department prosecutor Richard Ben-Veniste, who pleaded a similar commitment to a newspaper, refused to comment.