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Nixon Says Acts Against Dissidents Were Needed to End Vietnam War

Asserts U.S. Role Was Prolonged by Doves

By JAMES M. NAUGHTON

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 19—Former President Richard M. Nixon, likening himself to a latter-day Lincoln engaged in an ideological civil war, said in a television interview broadcast tonight that he had been obliged to act forcefully against dissident Americans in order to extricate the nation from the Vietnam War.

"Call it paranoia," he said, his chin jutting defiantly, "but paranoia for peace isn't that bad."

In the third installment of his conversations with David Frost, the former President chronicled, without apology, his decisions to use wiretaps, burglary and har-

Excerpts from the interview page A16.

assment of political "enemies" as complements to his secret Southeast Asian diplomacy.

Using phrases that were by turns sullen, bitter and self-defensive, he accused the antiwar movement of having prolonged American involvement in the war, said that Democrats who became Vietnam doves after leaving prior Democratic Administrations were "hypocritical" and "sanctimonious," labeled Dr. Daniel Ellsberg a "punk" and said that his major regret about his conduct of the war was that he had not moved "stronger sooner" militarily in Cambodia and Laos.

The case that Mr. Nixon made, under tenacious and sometimes openly skeptical questioning by the English interviewer, amounted to the defense Mr. Nixon might have offered against a formal charge of abuse of power had his resignation in 1974 not halted impeachment proceedings against him.

Among the central elements of the ra-

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Ends Call for 73 Pledge of Aid to Hanoi Invalid

By GRAHAM HOVEY

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 19—Richard M. Nixon told Prime Minister Pham Van Dong on Feb. 1, 1973, that the United States would furnish North Vietnam with up to \$4.75 billion in postwar reconstruction and other kinds of aid "without any political conditions."

In a statement made public today along with the letter, the former President said, however, that in light of North Vietnam's "flagrant violations" of the Paris peace agreements of 1973, "there is no commitment of any kind, moral or legal, to provide aid to the Hanoi Government."

"On the contrary," Mr. Nixon said in

Texts of the Nixon letters, page A17.

a letter to Representative Lester L. Wolff, Democrat of Nassau County, "I can think of no action which would be less justified or more immoral than to provide any aid whatever to the Hanoi Government."

The Nixon letter, often cited by Vietnamese officials as an American commitment but never previously made public, was declassified today and released with Mr. Nixon's concurrence by the State Department and by Mr. Wolff, chairman of the House International Relations subcommittee on Asian and Pacific affairs.

In a related development, The New York Times learned that Mr. Nixon had told David Frost in their interviews for television of a stern warning he gave Hanoi on Feb. 12, 1973, that American aid was contingent on strict compliance with the peace agreements. Mr. Nixon said he had ordered Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, then in Hanoi, to "take the strongest and firmest possible line," reminding the Vietnamese that Congress

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Nixon Says He Acted Against Critics to End War

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tionale Mr. Nixon offered for a series of attempts to use covert espionage techniques against American citizens and the powers of Government agencies against political opponents were the following:

¶Having inherited a Southeast Asian conflict and disdained "that easy political path of bugging out," he sought to combine military pressure with diplomacy through Moscow to prod North Vietnam toward peace negotiations.

¶Although the suprise American invasion of Communist sanctuaries in neutral Cambodia in May 1970 was the seminal event that ignited mass opposition to his approach, it was among the "most effective operations of the war" and the carnage caused by American bombing had enabled Cambodians to avoid for five years the savagery of the Communist takeover.

¶Faced with leaks of sensitive Government information, Soviet unwillingness to impose restraints on Hanoi and a resurgent domestic peace movement, he had been compelled to "gamble" that he could mobilize support from the "great silent majority" through what Mr. Frost called the politics of polarization.

¶His underlying motive in setting Government agencies against dissidents had been to convince Hanoi that he would not yield to the protesters and thereby lose the war in Washington "as the French lost in 1954 in Paris rather than in Dien Bien Phu." He quoted Le Duc Tho, North Vietnam's chief peace negotiator, as having consented to bargain in earnest in early 1973 because, "We've decided that President Nixon is not going to be affected by the protests."

¶He had been forced to try to plug continuing leaks of sensitive secrets by taking such extralegal steps as creation of the White House "plumbers" investigative unit, development of a master plan to eavesdrop on dissidents and sanction after the fact of the burglary by the "plumbers" at the Los Angeles office of Dr. Ellsberg's one-time psychiatrist.

Self-Revealing Action

The defense Mr. Nixon described for his conduct seemed, in some respects, more revealing than his dramatic apology in the first of the Frost telecasts two weeks ago for having "let the American people down" by lying, disregarding his Constitutional oath and abetting the Watergate cover-up.

As The New York Times reported this morning in a preview of a portion of tonight's telecast, Mr. Nixon theorized that he had inherent power as President to violate criminal laws in pursuit of domestic tranquility and diplomatic objectives.

"When the President does it, that means that it is not illegal," he said.

As one illustration of the point, Mr. Nixon said that he had "no recollection" of having authorized the firebombing of the Brookings Institution in Washington—a plan that was aborted in 1971 by John W. Dean 3d, the former White House legal counsel. But Mr. Nixon said that he "would have taken very strong methods" had he been convinced that the private organization was preparing to make public sensitive national security documents.

Moreover, while he minimized the scope of the covert actions his Administration took against American citizens and professed to be unable to recall what he knew of some misdeeds, Mr. Nixon readily conceded that he tended to be "paranoiac"—a description he was first to inject in the conversation about his political opponents.

"Am I paranoiac about hating people and trying to do them in?" he said to Mr. Frost. "And the answer is, at times, yes. I get angry at people."

Among the targets of his wrath, he made clear, were President Kennedy, who

Mr. Nixon complained had never invited the Nixons to dine at the White House; officials of the Kennedy and Johnson Administration who "got us into the war" and, having left Government, "turned totally around and they stirred up the demonstrators," and the protesters circling the White House whose epithets he could hear "even if I had plugs in my ears."

Mr. Nixon said he had tried to check his personal venom and that it had to be understood "in the context of the times." Suggesting that there was "a love-hate complex in all of us," he cited a vindictive reaction by Henry A. Kissinger, the former Secretary of State, to the 1969 disclosure of the secret bombing campaign over Cambodia.

"Now, Henry's not a mean man," Mr. Nixon said. But he said that Mr. Kissinger had exploded when it was suggested that the source of the disclosure might have been one of his own aides. Mimicking Mr. Kissinger's lingering German accent, the former President quoted him as having said, "I will destroy them."

Mr. Kissinger has always contended that he was a reluctant participant in the wiretapping, in some cases for up to two years, of 13 Government officials and four journalists that the White House started soon after the 1969 episode Mr. Nixon recounted.

'Hypocritical' Opposition

"We felt this way," Mr. Nixon said, "because the people on the other side were hypocritical, they were sanctimonious and they were not serving the best interests of the country. This is why, I must say, Henry and I felt so strongly about it. And call it paranoia, but paranoia for peace isn't that bad."

In its 1973 report recommending Mr. Nixon's impeachment, the House Judiciary Committee said it had found "clear and convincing evidence that Richard M. Nixon has not faithfully executed the executive trust but has repeatedly used his authority as President to violate the Constitution and the law of the land."

As he and his defenders did at that time, Mr. Nixon said in partial defense tonight that his conduct had been comparable to that of his predecessors.

He said the late Robert F. Kennedy had, as Attorney General, ordered politically motivated tax investigations of 17 right-wing organizations, that the Kennedy Administration had bugged the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and spread the results "all over the Capitol Hill" and that the Kennedys had eavesdropped on the so-called Sugar Lobby.

"Maybe they were paranoiac about those things," Mr. Nixon said.

Some Acts Legal but 'Wrong'

He contended that it was not illegal for a President to use the Internal Revenue Service and other agencies to punish opponents, "even if the motivation is political," but said that such tactics were "wrong."

He said it was "hypocrisy" to hold him to a different standard because "two wrongs do not make a right . . . two wrongs make two wrongs."

Moments later, in an approach that appeared to stun his questioner, Mr. Nixon likened his unilateral suspension of criminal liability to Lincoln's conduct during the Civil War a century earlier.

"But there was no comparison, was there, between the situation you faced and the situation Lincoln faced?" Mr. Frost asked.

"This nation was torn apart in an ideological way by the, the war in Vietnam," Mr. Nixon replied, "as much as the Civil War tore apart the nation when Lincoln was President."

Mr. Frost continued to demur, while Mr. Nixon, whose spokesmen had always insisted he was impervious to the demonstrators massed outside the White House

grounds, acknowledged that he had felt besieged inside.

"Nobody can know," he said, "what it means for a President to be sitting in that White House working late at night, as I often did, and to have hundreds of thousands of demonstrators around charging through the streets. No one can know how a President feels when he realizes that his efforts to bring peace, to bring our men home, to bring our P.O.W.'s home, to stop the killing, to build the peace—not just for our time but for time to come—is being jeopardized by individuals who have a different point of view as to how things are to be done."

He conceded that there was "nothing specific" in the Constitution entitling a President to act above the law and said that while it had "certainly occurred to me" that it would have been better to deal with the situation through the system and the law, "the temper of those times" militated against such legal niceties.

Mr. Nixon's defense tonight was in sharp contrast to his denunciation in 1973, when he was trying to cling to the Presidency, of the abuses of power for which Mr. Frost was seeking an explanation.

NIXON CALLS PLEDGE OF HANOI AID INVALID

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had to approve aid and saying that he would not ask for any if it might go to Vietnamese military actions in Laos, Cambodia or any other country.

It was understood that Mr. Nixon's remarks on this matter would not be used in Mr. Frost's television series.

Mr. Wolff, who had threatened to subpoena the former President to testify on the matter, said the two Nixon letters—the one to Prime Minister Dong and the one to Mr. Wolff—confirmed that “the Congress and the American people have been consistently misled as to the very existence of any secret negotiations,” as well as to the actual content of the agreements.

Representative Wolff was particularly critical of former Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, who negotiated the Paris accords, and his predecessor, William P. Rogers. He accused both of having denied “what in fact was the truth” when they denied the existence of any secret agreements with Vietnam in 1973 Congressional testimony.

Secretary Rogers told the House International Relations Committee on Feb. 8, 1973, one week after the date on Mr. Nixon's letter to Mr. Dong, that “we have not made any commitment for any reconstruction or rehabilitation effort” in North Vietnam. Mr. Rogers said that the Administration, while ready to help with reconstruction in all of Indochina, had made clear to Hanoi that any commitment required Congressional approval and “we were not in position to say how much we would expect to ask for or in what form.”

Mr. Kissinger, who was then the adviser to President Nixon on national security affairs, testified before the same committee in closed session March 29, 1973, but committee records contain no notes on his remarks.

Mr. Wolff said that in an effort “not to dig up the ashes but to set the record straight,” he intended to call Mr. Kissinger and Mr. Rogers before his subcommittee by subpoena if necessary.

Another Member Dissents

But another subcommittee member, Representative L. H. Fountain, Democrat of North Carolina, said he was “not in position to say that Mr. Rogers or Mr. Kissinger deliberately misled the committee or told falsehoods to the committee.”

Mr. Fountain suggested that Mr. Nixon might at the time have informed some Congressional leaders about the letter to Mr. Dong while keeping its existence and contents secret from Congress as a whole and from the public.

Mr. Wolff said, however, that “the events of 1973 must be clarified, then put behind us.” He said that speculation about the Nixon letter had been an obstacle to negotiations between Washington and Hanoi, which were resumed in Paris early this month.

It was obvious from exchanges among subcommittee members that publication of the two letters written by Mr. Nixon had left unanswered a great many questions about what conditions had been attached or implied in the American offer of aid to North Vietnam and what its relationship with the Paris peace agreements was intended to be.

The text of the letter to Prime Minister Dong issued today by the State Department contained two paragraphs evidently added subsequently to the original body of the document.

The second addendum merely said in effect that in addition to \$3.25 billion in grants for postwar reconstruction over five years, referred to in the body of the letter, the United States would provide North Vietnam with \$1 billion to \$1.5

billion in other forms of aid, including food and commodities.

But the first addendum bore the title, “Understanding Regarding Economic Construction Program,” and said in effect that the aid pledge and other recommendations of a joint economic commission would be carried out by each Government “in accordance with its own constitutional provisions.”

In his letter to Mr. Wolff, Mr. Nixon said that “constitutional provisions” in the case of the United States clearly meant that the aid program would have to be approved by Congress.

Moreover, Mr. Nixon said, the inclusion of a general American offer of reconstruction aid in the peace agreement itself meant that fulfillment of the aid program “obviously depended on adherence to the agreement's provisions.”

Congressional sources said, however, that they found a conflict between Mr. Nixon's insistence that the aid offer was linked to North Vietnam's compliance with the peace agreement and the first of seven “principles” laid down by Mr. Nixon in the letter to Prime Minister Dong.

‘Without Political Conditions’

That first “principle” was a flat statement that the United States would contribute to postwar reconstruction in North Vietnam “without any political conditions.”

In connection with the question whether Hanoi understood that any aid offer was contingent on action by Congress, Mr. Wolff said he wanted to find out how and when the two additional paragraphs had been appended to Mr. Nixon's letter.

“We don't know whether they were part of the original letter or were delivered later or were never sent at all,” Mr. Wolff said. The State Department, which had insisted until recently that it had no copy of the Nixon letter, shed no light on the circumstances of the addenda.

Asked about the Nixon letter while testifying last July 21 before the House Select Committee on Missing Persons in Southeast Asia, Philip C. Habib, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, declared: “We have researched it and there is no agreement with respect to the question of aid involved in that letter.”

The letter, he said, was written primarily to further the establishment of a United States-North Vietnam Joint Economic Commission provided for in the Paris peace agreement. “The truth of the matter is that there was no agreement” on aid, Mr. Habib said.

Whatever the various interpretations about the content of Mr. Nixon's letter, Mr. Wolff and four members of his subcommittee were in complete agreement with the former President that the United States currently was under no obligation to provide any aid for Vietnam. “President Carter has indicated and the Congress in its recent vote has underlined the fact that the United States cannot give economic assistance at this time,” Mr. Wolff said. “The question of any future U.S. economic assistance to Vietnam will be dependent on future negotiations and the will of Congress.”