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NYTimes Mr. Nixon Impeached

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By Richard Nixon's own testimony the dictates of the Constitution, which he had publicly sworn to defend, had no compelling meaning. It was he, Richard Nixon, who derived from the Presidency the inherent power, like the divine right of absolute monarchs, to determine which of the Constitution's commands to obey. Referring to burglaries, illegal wiretaps and other breaches of the law committed with his sanction and in his name, Mr. Nixon said: "When the President does it, that means that it is not illegal."

In his third televised interview with David Frost, the former President showed no contrition. While conceding that he did some "stupid things" in "the pipsqueak Watergate thing," he assured us that he "did the big things rather well." Sheer fantasy is the most polite assessment of "big things" in the nation's history as remembered by Mr. Nixon. He authorized an array of secret and illegal actions against those whom he viewed as his, and therefore the nation's, domestic foes. He did so because he could discern no difference between the protesters against the Vietnam War and the Confederate Army that confronted the Union troops, nor between

himself and Lincoln. In the Nixon view, the nation's security was threatened in equal measure by the Civil War, which he calls the War Between the States, and the war in Vietnam. His policies were, by his recollection, based on the conviction that it was the antiwar forces that were responsible for prolonging the war. To him, the tragedy of Kent State is still that students protested against the invasion of Cambodia not that four students fell dead before Government guns.

Not even a hindsight illuminated by the present disaster in Cambodia can persuade Mr. Nixon that dragging that country into the war was anything but a brilliant tactical maneuver, or that the abortive raid on the Cambodian sanctuaries was anything short of a famous victory. Whatever went wrong was the fault not of Presidential policy but of incompetent intelligence.

Regrets? "I only regret," says Mr. Nixon, "that I didn't act stronger sooner."

In another context in another portion of the Frost interviews Mr. Nixon remarked, "I have impeached myself." He has indeed.