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Ford Tells Genesis Of Nixon Pardon

New York

Former President Gerald Ford says that the idea of a blanket pardon for Richard Nixon was first suggested by General Alexander Haig, then White House chief of staff, according to The Nation magazine.

The magazine, in its current issue, said Ford's comment is made in his forthcoming memoirs, "A Time to Heal," due to be published in late May or early June.

In the memoirs, "Ford goes out of his way to assure that 'compassion for Nixon as an individual hadn't prompted my decision at all.' Rather, he did it because he had 'to get the monkey off my back one way or another.'"

"Although I respected the tenet that no man should be above the law," Ford is quoted as writing, "public policy demanded that I put Nixon — and Watergate — behind us as quickly as possible."

Ford is quoted as saying his decision was concurred in by his general counsel, Phil Buchen, by Haig and by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

The Nation said it obtained the 655-page typescript of Ford's book before the scheduled publication of excerpts in Time and Reader's Digest.

The Nation said Ford was advised that Nixon was under investigation in ten separate areas and that the court process could take years.

The magazine said Ford decided "that court proceedings against Nixon might take six years, that Nixon 'would not spend time quietly in San Clemente,' and 'it would be virtually impossible for me to direct public attention on anything else.'"

None of the principals mentioned in the article could be reached for comment yesterday.

Associated Press