

Pardon Requests Rejected by Nixon

9-12-74
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During the last days of Richard Nixon's presidency, former White House aides H. R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman conveyed to him urgent requests that they be granted presidential pardons, according to informed sources.

Both pardon requests were rejected, and well-placed sources said that Mr. Nixon deeply resented the tone and character of the pleas by his two former deputies.

According to the sources, Mr. Nixon was particularly resentful about the strenuous nature of Haldeman's request which was described by one knowledgeable source as "threatening" and by another as being tantamount to blackmail.

Both Haldeman and Ehrlichman are scheduled to go on trial with four other defendants on Sept. 30 in the Watergate cover-up case. Ehrlichman already faces a jail term of 20 months to five years for his conviction on charges related to the break-in at the Office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist.



H. R. (BOB) HALDEMAN
... telephone call

Haldeman's attorney John J. Wilson, said yesterday that he was unaware of any requests that Haldeman might have made for a pardon. "I don't deny it, however," he said.

Concerning the allegation that Haldeman's pardon request had a threatening tone, Wilson said, "I don't believe this.

"If any man has been kindly disposed to a man who got him in trouble, it is Bob's disposition toward

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Nixon... He has had a generous and kindly attitude" toward the former President, Wilson said.

Neither Ehrlichman nor his attorney could be reached for comment yesterday.

Informed sources said that members of President Ford's legal staff and Special Watergate Prosecutor Leon Jaworski are aware that Haldeman and Ehrlichman requested pardons from former President Nixon.

A White House official said those requests played no part in President Ford's granting of a pardon to Mr. Nixon or the subsequent consideration to granting pardons to others charged with Watergate related offenses.

Haldeman initially made his plea for a pardon in a telephone call to White House chief of staff Alexander Haig within the last 48 hours of the Nixon presidency, according to the sources. Haig, the sources said, became so upset by the call that he refused to continue to talk to Haldeman until a White House lawyer came on the line to listen to the conversation.

According to one source, the implication of Haldeman's message to Haig was that "he'd send Nixon to jail if he d

dn't get a pardon."

A high-level White House source insisted yesterday that Haldeman made no such direct threat and that "everything was strictly ac-

ording to Hoyle." The same source agreed, however, that Haldeman's call was regarded by both Haig and Mr. Nixon as amounting to an implicit blackmail demand.

Haldeman conveyed the impression he was seeking pardons for both himself and Ehrlichman, according to this source, and later made a similar pardon request through another unnamed person.

Ehrlichman, meanwhile, conveyed a separate pardon request on his own behalf through a member of the Nixon family, according to informed sources. That request also came during the last days of the Nixon presidency, they said.

The individual requests seeking pardons for both men reached Mr. Nixon during the period when his own decision to resign had become all but final, according to the sources, and he angrily rejected each of the pleas.

According to several sources, Haig also personally said Haldeman's request was "out of the question" before passing it on to Mr. Nixon. One of the sources said Haig did so because he feared that Mr. Nixon—then on the brink of resignation and contemplating the possibility of his own prosecution after leaving office—would be tempted to accede to Haldeman's request.

Haig and James D. St. Clair, then Mr. Nixon's chief White House counsel, were so distressed by Haldeman's request that Haig decided to inform Special Prosecutor Jaworski of the matter, according to several sources.

"They wanted to make sure there was no misunderstanding," one of the sources said. Haig and St. Clair, he explained, were concerned that a situation could develop similar to the one in 1972-73 when Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt Jr. demanded executive clemency from the White House. Hunt's demands for clemency and the payment of large sums of Nixon campaign money return for his silence were major elements of the Watergate cover-up.

"They felt like it was happening all over again," one well-informed source said yesterday.