

# Sees Acceptance Of Pardon as Evidence of Guilt

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President Ford, vigorously defending his pardon of former President Nixon as in the best interests of the nation, nevertheless said last night that Mr. Nixon's acceptance of a pardon could be construed as an admission of guilt.

He said also that the fact that 38 members of the House Judiciary Committee agreed that the former President was guilty of an impeachable offense "is very persuasive."

The statements constituted a reversal of arguments Mr. Ford made as Vice President that he did not believe Mr. Nixon was guilty of an impeachable offense.

At the second press conference of his administration, where 14 of 21 questions dealt with the pardon, and related issues Mr. Ford also declared that his predecessor had been "shamed and disgraced" by his resignation.

The President emphatically denied that there was any deal or understanding between him and the former President.

As he did yesterday on his decision on clemency for Vietnam war deserters and draft dodgers, Mr. Ford said he was acting to heal the nation's wounds in his pardon of Mr. Nixon.

He conceded that the pardon "created more antagonism than I anticipated," but said that looking ahead to having a former President "in the dock" for a year or more convinced him he made the right decision.

"I had no secret reason" for issuing the pardon Mr. Ford declared at the outset of his news conference. And he said he had no inside information on the state of the former President's health when he made his decision.

Since that time, Mr. Ford's own physician, Dr. William Lukash, has been reporting on Mr. Nixon's health, but the President said he was not at liberty to disclose information

...ing the pardon, he said, was "to heal the wounds" in the United States. He said he wanted to end the "turmoil and divisiveness in American society" and concentrate on the major problems before the country.

As long as the divisions over Watergate continued, he said, responsible officials could not give their total attention to the nation's business.

He said he was not oblivious to the former President's wealth but his chief concern was to reconcile divisions and heal wounds "that have festered too long."

The President declared that he was still committed to having an open and candid administration. He said he was seeking a successor to his resigned press secretary, J. F. Burchard, who quit in protest against the Nixon pardon, and he said he hoped to have an announcement in a few days.

Earlier, the President announced the appointment of Alexander M. Haig Jr. as a member of the American Council on Europe and commander of NATO forces.

Haig is a three-star Army vice president, Air Col. 3

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chief of staff who retired from military service last year after taking over as White House staff chief at the height of the Watergate controversy. He succeeded President Nixon's staff chief, H. R. (Bob) Halde- man, who resigned under fire.

The general's appointment as European commander has been expected for several weeks, and it was opposed by some American diplomats as well as by some NATO members.

Haig, 49, will succeed Gen. Andrew J. Goodpaster as NATO chief on Dec. 15 but will assume command of American troops Nov. 1. He is expected to leave his White House post at the end of this week for a vacation.

The President's choice of Haig was approved unanimously by NATO's defense planning committee in Brussels yesterday, shortly before the White House announcement.

The planning committee adopted a resolution expressing "lasting gratitude for Gen. Goodpaster's distinguished service," and Mr. Ford extended his appreciation to Goodpaster "for a job well done."

Haig, a four-star general before his retirement last year, will be restored to active duty by presidential order. His appointment does not require Senate confirmation.

Shortly after Mr. Ford became President, he said through a spokesman he had asked Haig to remain in his post "for the duration," but shortly thereafter word leaked out that Haig was under consideration for the European assignment.

that the general had expressed a desire to return to the army.

Although Haig repeatedly denied rumors of a conflict between the old Nixon staff, which he headed, and the Ford staff, reports persisted of friction between the two groups.

There was no announcement of a successor to Haig in the Ford White House. President Ford's group of experts studying White House reorganization recommend that the function be shared by six top advisers.

Haig was a leading figure in

former president Nixon's defense during the Watergate controversy, and he was accused by critics of acting in a political role contrary to that of a professional soldier.

A native of Philadelphia, Haig is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy.