

NYTimes SEP 17 1974
**Haig Pardon Plea to Ford
Linked to Nixon's Health**

By EVERETT R. HOLLES

Special to The New York Times

SAN CLEMENTE, Calif., Sept. 16—The White House chief of staff Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., after being advised of the "alarming state" of Richard M. Nixon's health, was reliably reported today to have persuaded President Ford to reverse his publicly stated position and grant an immediate pardon to the former President.

A longtime friend of Mr. Nixon identified General Haig as the person "primarily responsible" for the surprise pardon announced on Sept. 8 by President Ford. This friend, who is a former member of the Presidential staff, is in daily touch with affairs inside the Nixons' heavily guarded Casa Pacifica estate here.

Ford's Previous Statement

General Haig, he said, warned Mr. Ford on Aug. 29 that unless he moved quickly in announcing a full, unconditional pardon, instead of waiting for legal action to be taken, it might be too late to avert what he called "a possible personal and national tragedy" of Mr. Nixon's complete physical and mental collapse.

Only the day before the President had told newsmen he would not act on a pardon until legal action had been brought against Mr. Nixon for his role in the Watergate case or other Federal offenses related to that scandal.

The four-star general, a hold-over from the Nixon Administration, who was named today commander of NATO forces, was reported to have initiated

the highly secret pardon discussions after receiving accounts of Mr. Nixon's deteriorating physical and emotional health from the Nixon daughters, Julie Eisenhower and Tricia Cox.

He is said to have immediately discussed the reports at length in telephone conversations with Ronald L. Ziegler, the former White House press secretary, who is now Mr. Nixon's closest confidant.

In a press conference tonight, Mr. Ford said that before he decided to pardon Mr. Nixon, he had no "specific information" about his predecessor's health beyond what had been reported in the media, except for the observations of a

member of his staff who had seen Mr. Nixon. That was an apparent reference to Benton L. Becker, a Washington lawyer who represented the White House in contacts with Mr.

Continued on Page 23, Column 1

Continued From Page 1, Col. 6

Nixon and his staff.

The informant said that, in convincing the President of the necessity for an immediate pardon "for the sake of not only Mr. Nixon's health but the country's health as well," General Haig enlisted the support of Secretary of State Kissinger.

General Haig was also said to have received, either directly or indirectly, even more alarming reports of the former President's condition from Mr. Nixon's intimate friends, Charles G. Rebozo and Robert H. Abplanalp.

One former counselor to Mr. Nixon said that Mr. Rebozo and Mr. Abplanalp had been "really lobbying," seeking to build up a basis of sympathy for the former President, who resigned Aug. 9. He implied that it was they who conceived the idea of enlisting General Haig's help.

Mr. Rebozo and Mr. Abplanalp reportedly discussed the matter with the Nixon daughters and their husbands, David Eisenhower and Edward F. Cox, who then began making public statements, first anonymously and later for direct attribution, about the seriousness of Mr. Nixon's health.

The informant, who obtained the account of General Haig's role from members of the Nixon staff, said it was unclear whether the Nixon daughters and their husbands had gone to General Haig or whether he had consulted them after the growing rumors and reports of Mr. Nixon's deteriorating emotional state.

"In any event," the informant said, "the deep concern of the family and their desire for some Presidential action that would contribute to lifting Mr. Nixon's mental depression and worry over his uncertain future convinced Mr. Haig of the need for a prompt pardon, which he knew would come ultimately in any event."

Reports Increase

Meanwhile, the informant said, Mr. Ziegler and other around Mr. Nixon made no attempt to discourage even the most exaggerated reports, including statements that Mr. Nixon had "lost all contact with reality" and that it was feared he might, in a fit of de-

pression, do himself physical harm. The silence at Casa Pacifica led to even more unfounded reports.

According to the informant, General Haig prevailed upon the President not to consult in advance with Republican leaders in Congress, arguing that to do so could involve delays and complications "which the situation may not permit."

"According to the explanation here, General Haig felt strongly that any advance disclosure would lead to controversy and probably Congressional demands for a detailed explanation of the reasons underlying the President's abrupt decision," the informant said.

The White House chief of staff evidently feared that Congress might insist that so sweeping a pardon, affecting as it did future disclosures of Watergate events, should be authorized by a resolution of Congress. He wanted to avoid any such disruptive delay.

Meeting With Jaworski

The informant said that, even before Mr. Ford directed his White House counsel, Philip A. Buchen, on Aug. 30 to learn from the special Watergate prosecutor, Leon Jaworski, how long it might be before Mr. Nixon could be assured of an impartial trial, General Haig had consulted the prosecutor.

The Haig-Jaworski meeting was said to have been for the purpose of "documenting his case" when General Haig presented the proposal for an immediate "humanitarian" pardon to the President on Aug. 29.

Soon after, General Haig was said to have assured Mr. Nixon that a "full, free and complete pardon" would be forthcoming in a matter of days. The assurance was received before the arrival here on Aug. 5 of Benton L. Becker, a Washington Lawyer sent by Mr. Buchen.

Mr. Becker was under instructions to say that a pardon was probable, provided an agreement could be reached with Mr. Nixon, his lawyer, Herbert J. Miller, and Mr. Ziegler as to its details, including the response that Mr. Nixon would make.

The arguments used by General Haig to sway the President reportedly dealt largely with Mr. Nixon's mental state, his periodic moods of depression and withdrawal and his sometimes rambling insistence that he was not guilty of any criminal offense.

At that time, the phlebitis

that now afflicts him was generally quiescent. The recurrence of the phlebitis in painful form did not occur until a week ago, the day after President Ford's pardon announcement and about 24 hours after Mr. Nixon's arrival at the Palm Desert estate of Walter H. Annenberg, Ambassador to Britain.

Efforts by Mrs. Nixon and others, including the family physician, Dr. John Lungren of Long Beach, during the Palm Desert visit to persuade Mr. Nixon to enter Eisenhower Memorial Hospital in Palm Springs for treatment with anticoagulants were stubbornly rejected by Mr. Nixon.

The pain and swelling had increased by the time he returned from Palm Desert to San Clemente on Thursday, and his former White House physician, Dr. Walter R. Tkach, summoned from Washington, found a second blood clot on his left leg above the knee. Dr. Tkach also urged that Mr. Nixon enter a hospital but the former President still refused.

General Haig was said to have stressed several times the risk of any news leaks about the impending pardon, either here or in Washington.

He said he was said to have insisted that only two other White House officials be made privy to the discussions, Mr. Buchen and Robert T. Hartmann, chief Presidential counselor.

It was General Haig, according to the informant here, who directed that any information about the discussions

be kept from the White House Press

Secretary J.F.

terHorst, who

resigned in protest

after learning of

the pardon decision.