

# A Sense of Relief in Washington

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 8—The capital took the news with remarkable serenity, almost as if it had lost a President but found itself. And President Nixon, in his noble farewell, contributed to this sense of national reconciliation.

News

Analysis

In the last 11 years, it has seen one President murdered, another choose, under attack, not to run again, and a third driven from office, so it was vaguely sad, but at the same time it was almost unanimously relieved that the dark riddle of the Nixon Administration had finally passed.

The relief was tangible in the private comments even of the President's Cabinet and most loyal supporters in Congress, and in the faces of the people who gathered quietly outside their palings around the White House.

The fears of an uncertain result, of division, bitterness and recrimination, and of a long trial of a paralyzed President, so menacing only a few short days ago, had been avoided. And the nation's political institutions, so long under skeptical attack, had held together and come out with a clear decision and a fairly united people.

In the end, Mr. Nixon did, as he had done so many times before, what he said he would not do. As he had switched on China, the Soviet Union, on economic policy, executive privilege, and many others things, he abandoned his threat to fight both impeachment and conviction.

"Leaders should guide as far as they can, and then vanish," H. G. Wells once wrote. "Their ashes should not choke the fires they have lit." Almost all Mr. Nixon's friends gave him this advice, and finally he took it.

What has been the effect of all this on the nation, its people, its political parties and other institutions, and its relations with the rest of the world? These were the questions that were being asked here even before Mr. Nixon resigned.

The practical and personal questions of leadership are unprecedented in the history of the Republic. There are 896 days to go before the end of the term Mr. Nixon was elected to fulfill by the largest popular majority in the history of American Presidential elections—two years and five and a half months.

The nation will be led in this period, including the 200th anniversary of the Declaration of

## Decision by Nixon to Resign Is Greeted With Calmness

Independence on July 4, 1976, by President Gerald Ford, and a Vice President yet to be chosen, neither of whom will have been elected by the people of the United States—a situation that was not foreseen, and probably would have startled the Founding Fathers.

Nevertheless, the outlook is that Mr. Ford will have the greatest support and sympathy, even if not elected by popular ballot, of any President since Lyndon Johnson took over the White House after the assassination of President Kennedy.

In Washington, there is already a marked change. Mr. Nixon was a secretive, furtive and fundamentally intricate man, who regarded Congress and the press as his enemies. Mr. Ford is just the opposite: open, uncomplicated and modest. He is conservative and partisan, but he has spent most of his mature life in the give-and-take of the House; and regards the majority Democratic leaders not only as powers that have to be dealt with, but also as his personal friends.

His tastes are simple, his ambitions limited, his method open and trustful. He regards this whole drama as an accident, in which he now has to play a role far beyond his ambitions or desires, and in the life of his family, this astonishing turn of events has come at the wrong time.

### Had Planned to Retire

At 61 years old, he has got beyond all ambition, in fact has achieved far beyond his dreams. He was planning to retire to private life, on a promise to his wife, even before Mr. Nixon picked him as Vice President.

There are even reasons for believing now, though he would never admit them, that he will regard himself as an interim President, who would try to bring about the reconciliation of the country in the next two years, and then retire.

In the nation, the spirit of the people may very well be going with Mr. Ford—at least for the time being. It has gone through a long period of division over Vietnam and Watergate, and is tired of contention, and is longing for a little peace and quiet.

There is a strong feeling here that Mr. Ford could be an ideal President in such a time. Just as Calvin Coolidge took over after the scandals of the Harding Administration, and quietly

calmed things down and created an atmosphere that kept the Republicans in power for another nine years, Mr. Ford has a chance to revive the fortunes of the Republicans in 1974 and 1976.

Meanwhile, Watergate has had its effects on the country as a whole, and Mr. Ford, with his simple moral approach to the Presidency, may be very much in touch with the mood of the country.

### Possible Stands

Though he is a party man, he is likely to support reform in campaign financing, preservation of personal privacy, and strict control over the integrity of the Internal Revenue Service, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Central Intelligence Agency.

He will be cautious about change, and will probably keep most of the Nixon Cabinet for a while, particularly at the Department of State, Defense and the Treasury, but he is not overly enthusiastic about Attorney General William B. Saxbe so there will be no political control of Justice soon, and like President Truman, he is likely to change most of his Cabinet before the end of the year.

One of the interesting things about Mr. Ford, though he is no intellectual, is that, unlike Presidents Johnson and Nixon, he does not feel uncomfortable or threatened by exceptional talent. In this, he is more like President Truman, who could trust the sophisticated minds of Dean Acheson and Robert A. Lovett and bring into the Cabinet strong men such as Gen. George C. Marshall.

This is really the main question Washington now: How will Mr. Ford approach his new responsibilities? It is clear that he will keep Secretary Kissinger at state, but who will be his Vice President, and his chief of staff in the White House? These are the questions now being asked in the capital.

### Rockefeller Appears in Lead

The front-runner for Vice President, with the backing of Melvin Laird, is former New York Governor, Nelson Rockefeller, but there is a lot of support for George Bush, the chairman of the Republican National Committee, who is young and attractive and could be a candidate for the Presidency in 1976, if given a chance at the Vice-Presidency now.

All this, however, is speculative. The main thing is that even the thought of a Ford Presidency has changed the mod here, and increased the hope for a more open, candid and cooperative Presidency.