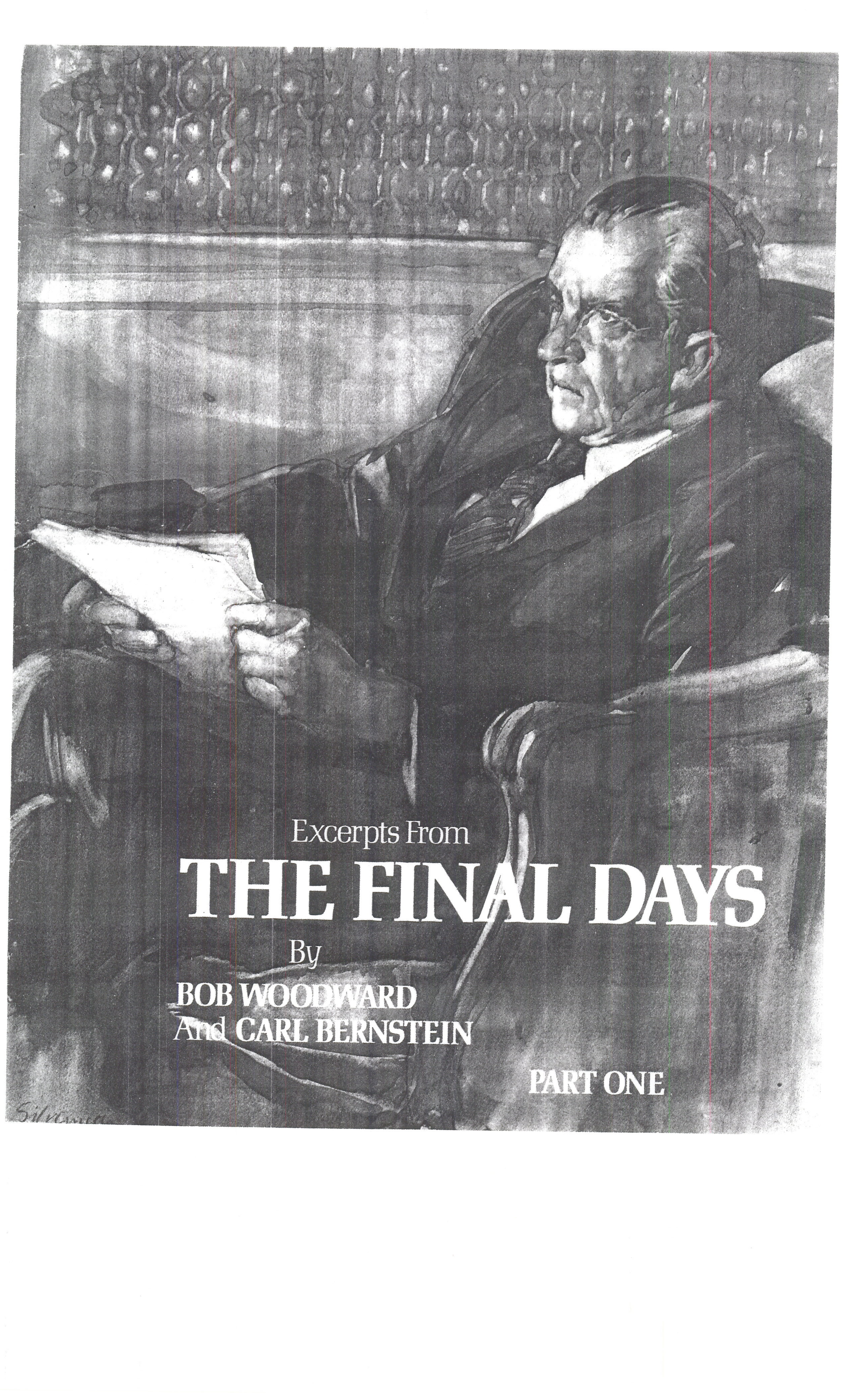

Excerpts From

THE FINAL DAYS

By

BOB WOODWARD
And CARL BERNSTEIN

PART ONE

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THE FINAL DAYS

By **BOB WOODWARD** and **CARL BERNSTEIN**

At The Brink

Alexander Haig felt the burden of government acutely. It was Wednesday, Aug. 7, and Richard Nixon was at the brink of resigning. General Haig's job as Nixon's chief of staff was to prevent a rout. He wanted to smooth the way—for the country, for the President and for himself. He could see, hear and feel the erosion. Everything was crumbling at once. This was the last, dismal stage of the battle, a defeat of dimensions such as he had never experienced. He had read about defeat; this was what it was—noise, irrationality, collapse on all

Excerpted from "The Final Days" by Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, to be published by Simon & Schuster, Inc., in May 1976.
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sides. He was not sure he could deal with Nixon. He was afraid the President might kill himself.

Over the past months, there had been certain references to death and suicide. At first they were oblique and often expressed in Nixon's impatient manner; he was thinking out loud, probably. This week, Nixon had finally approached the subject head-on. The two men had been alone.

"You fellows, in your business," the President began, meaning the Army, which he always seemed to consider Haig's real business, "you have a way of handling problems like this. Somebody leaves a pistol in the drawer." Haig waited.

"I don't have a pistol," the President said sadly, as if it were one more deprivation in a long history of underprivilege. As if he were half asking to be given one. It was the same tone he used when he talked about his parents not having had any money.

Afterward, Haig had called the President's doctors. He ordered that all pills be denied the President, and that the sleeping pills and tranquilizers he already had be taken away.

Haig also discussed the matter with Fred Buzhardt, one of Nixon's lawyers. At first Haig was vague. He mentioned pills. It was not necessarily a question of suicide; pills might interfere with decisions the President had to make and follow through on. Pills must not be available to act as a shield against reality.

Then Haig told Buzhardt he was taking every possible precaution to make sure that Watergate did not end in a Presidential suicide. The President might see it as the only way to spare himself and the country the pain of more recrimination. So Haig had taken steps to make sure the President did not have the means to kill himself.

The President wasn't the type, Buzhardt responded. Nixon had weathered adversities. The tougher things got, the tougher he seemed to get. And Buzhardt was convinced that Nixon was a very religious man deep down. Religious men don't kill themselves.

Haig said the President was a battered man, strained to his limit. He compared Nixon's sometimes distraught behavior to that of Captain Queeg, the erratic Naval officer in "The Caine Mutiny." Queeg had been relieved of duty by his second in command because he was unable to function as his ship swirled out of control in a typhoon. Buzhardt thought the analogy argued against a suicide. Queeg was a fighter. He had fought to the end.

Haig was concerned that he didn't really know the President and had never felt close to him. Nixon was so private. Haig wondered sometimes what Nixon did when he was alone, because he spent so many hours that way. Buzhardt said he felt the same overwhelming distance, but he thought he had been given a glimpse of the man that no other person had.

Haig knew what Buzhardt was referring to. After the secret taping system had been revealed, Nixon had delivered some Dictabelts to Buzhardt—recordings of his personal daily reflections. When he'd heard them, Buzhardt recognized that they were clearly not meant for anyone else's ears. Nixon hadn't even let his own secretary, Rose Mary Woods, transcribe them. Some of them were under subpoena, but Buzhardt had argued to Judge John J. Sirica that they were too personal to be released. Sirica had listened to one and had agreed that they were not relevant to any investigation.

From those recordings, Buzhardt believed he had seen Nixon with his defenses peeled away. The tapes provided a dark, almost Dostoevskian journey into Nixon's fears, obsessions, hostilities, passions and inadequacies.

Buzhardt would not reveal any details, even to Haig. He would say only that Nixon had talked out of his real feelings and, oddly, he would discourse on everyday occurrences—the weather, the flowers in the White House garden, birds.

One thing was clear, Buzhardt said: the President thought he had to submerge his true feelings at any cost. At a young age, he had decided that he would have to keep his real emotions suppressed and expose only calculated emotions. He was convinced that was what others wanted.

The President was an introvert by nature. He had talked into his machine about his reactions to meeting people and campaigning: he hated it all, but he did it anyway and thrust forward an outer shell. No one could get through. Close relationships were impossible. His relationship with his wife was totally formalized. Even with his daughter Julie he had rarely revealed his emotions. He played the strong, consoling father when what he really wanted was to reach out and be consoled. But Buzhardt was certain that the exterior was still solid, and that it would hold.

The President left the Oval Office at about 8 o'clock that night and went upstairs to the Lincoln Sitting Room. It was his favorite room, the smallest in the White House, only about 16 by 13 feet, designed and arranged for one person. All the furniture was uncomfortable except for Nixon's overstuffed brown leather chair and ottoman in the corner. The room was his retreat.

Now Nixon summoned Henry Kissinger.

Kissinger was expecting resignation. He was, in fact, supremely relieved that Nixon was finally going. For months, the Secretary of State had been worrying that the world might blow up. But as he walked over and took the elevator to the second floor, he was also angry. Watergate had wrecked his foreign-affairs strategy. The domestic impact was tiny compared to what it had done abroad.

He walked into the alcove. There was the President in his chair, as he had seen him so often. Kissinger didn't really like the President. Nixon had made him the most admired man in the country, yet the Secretary couldn't bring himself to feel affection for his patron. They sat for a time and reminisced about events, travels, shared decisions. The President was drinking. He said he was resigning. It would be better for everyone. They talked quietly—history, the resignation decision, foreign affairs.

Then Nixon said that he wasn't sure he would be able to resign. Could he be the first President to quit office?

Kissinger responded by listing the President's contributions, especially in diplomacy.

"Will history treat me more kindly than my contemporaries?" Nixon asked, tears flooding to his eyes.

Certainly, definitely, Kissinger said. When this was all over, the President would be remembered for the peace he had achieved.

The President broke down and sobbed.

Kissinger didn't know what to do. He felt cast in a fatherly role. He talked on, he picked up on the themes he had heard so many times from the President. He remembered lines about enemies, the need to stand up to adversity, to face criticism forthrightly.

Between sobs, Nixon was plaintive. What had he done to the country and its people? How had it come to this? How had a simple burglary, a break-

About The Excerpts

"The Final Days," to be published by Simon and Schuster, is a work of 456 pages. The narrative spans the period from April 30, 1973, to Aug. 9, 1974, when Richard Nixon resigned the Presidency. The book is based upon previously unreported material. The first portion describes the efforts of Nixon, his family, lawyers and key aides to keep the President in office at almost any cost, from April 30, 1973, to July 24, 1974—the day that the Supreme Court ordered Nixon to surrender his secret White House tapes. The last 200 pages are the detailed, day-by-day account of the final two weeks inside the Nixon White House. NEWSWEEK has selected 30,000 words of excerpts from the full 175,000-word book text. In so doing, the sequence in which certain events are described in the book has been altered for purposes of magazine serialization.

Illustrations for Newsweek by Burt Silverman

'Henry,' the President said, 'we need to pray'

ing and entering, done all this?

Kissinger kept talking, trying to turn the conversation back to all the good things, all the accomplishments. Nixon wouldn't hear of it. He was hysterical. "Henry," he said, "you are not a very orthodox Jew, and I am not an orthodox Quaker, but we need to pray."

Nixon got down on his knees. Kissinger felt he had no alternative but to kneel down, too. The President prayed out loud, asking for help, rest, peace and love. How could a President and a country be torn apart by such small things?

Kissinger thought he had finished. But the President did not rise. He was weeping. And then, still sobbing, Nixon leaned over, striking his fist on the carpet, crying, "What have I done? What has happened?"

Kissinger touched the President, and then held him, tried to console him, to bring rest and peace to the man who was curled on the carpet like a child. The President of the United States. Kissinger tried again to reassure him, reciting Nixon's accomplishments.

Finally the President struggled to his feet. He sat back down in his chair. The storm had passed. He had another drink.

Kissinger lingered. He talked on, building a case, pouring his academic talents into a lecture on why Richard Nixon would go down in history as one of the great peacemakers of all time. "You made the tough decisions," he said.

The two men had another drink. Their conversation drifted around to personalities and to the role Nixon might be able to play once he was out of office. He might be an adviser, or a special ambassador. Nixon wondered if he would be exonerated by history. Kissinger was encouraging; he was willing to say anything. But he was certain that Nixon would never escape the verdict of Watergate.

Weak in the knees, his clothes damp from perspiration, Kissinger escaped. His senior aides, Lawrence Eagleburger and Brent Scowcroft, were waiting in his office. It was almost 11. Kissinger looked somber and drained. "It was the most wrenching thing I have ever gone through in my life—handholding," he said. The President was a broken man.

The phone rang. It was the President.

Eagleburger picked up an extension to listen. That was the custom—Kissinger rarely took a call alone. Eagleburger was shocked. The President was slurring his words. He was drunk. He was out of control.

"It was good of you to come up and talk, Henry," the President said. "I've made the decision, but you must stay. You must stay on for the good of the country."

Eagleburger could barely make out what the President was saying. He was almost incoherent. It was pathetic. Eagleburger felt ill and hung up.

The President had one last request: "Henry, please don't ever tell anyone that I cried and that I was not strong."

[For more than a year, Nixon's situation had been unraveling. He had had to fire his two chief aides, H.R. (Bob) Haldeman and John Ehrlichman. His former counsel, John Dean, had turned on him before the Senate's Ervin committee and had accused him of complicity in the Watergate cover-up. His White House taping system had come to light, and threatened his undoing. He had provoked and barely survived two major fire storms of public outrage—one when he purged Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox and Attorney General Elliot Richardson in the Saturday Night Massacre, a second when he published his hand-expurgated transcripts of some of his secret recordings. By midsummer 1974, events were closing in on him. As NEWSWEEK'S *excerpts pick up the Woodward-Bernstein narrative, the House Judiciary Committee was preparing to take its impeachment inquiry on live television—and the Supreme Court was ready to render its judgment in a lawsuit by Cox's successor, Leon Jaworski, for the Nixon tapes.]*

July 24, 1974: 'A Problem'

Jaworski and his counsel, Philip Lacovara, were confident that the Supreme Court had decided in their favor. Sometime earlier, they had agreed they would probably get a five-to-three decision and that William O. Douglas, the most liberal of the Justices, would be likely to draft the majority opinion. Lacovara was recalculating when the Court marshal interrupted: "The Honorable, the Chief Justice, and the Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States."

The packed room was quiet as the black-robed Justices filed in. Lacovara fingered the thread hanging from the "lucky suit" he had worn in all his appearances before the Court.

Chief Justice Warren Burger took his seat in the center of the elevated bench and slowly and deliberately began to read. Jaworski and Lacovara knew instantly that the decision must be unanimous—the Chief Justice was delivering it.

Only the Justices and their clerks knew how total the agreement was. On July 9, just a day after the oral arguments, the Justices had unanimously decided against the President. Burger had assigned himself to draft the opinion. He shared some of the President's sentiments about Executive privilege and wanted to establish a constitutional standard for the doctrine. The other Justices, however, found his opinion inadequate and suggested major revisions. Burger worked hard to stitch the suggestions into a consistent whole, but he still did not produce a satisfactory opinion. Finally Justice Potter Stewart undertook to co-author it. Gradually, the other Justices returned the working drafts with fewer changes. The day before the decision was to be announced, the Justices accepted a final version which acknowledged a constitutional basis for Executive privilege but rejected the President's particular claim. In careful but clear language, the Court ordered the President to turn over the tapes of 64 subpoenaed conversations to Judge Sirica.

Buzhardt was not surprised at the news. He and Haig had long been reconciled to an adverse decision. When he had first heard that the Chief Justice was drafting the majority opinion, he called Haig in San Clemente to tell him that the decision not only would be adverse but would possibly be unanimous. That would make things difficult. If there was no minority opinion, there was little room to maneuver for partial compliance. And the President would have lost the support of his own appointees—men who supposedly shared his judicial philosophy.

Haig hadn't wanted to talk strategy then; he would wait and see. Now Buzhardt was calling to say they couldn't wait any longer. He required instructions. How were they to react?

First, Haig said, he would have to inform the President. He would check and get back soon.

Haig's aide Charles Wardell brought him the wire-service copy, and the general took it over to the residence. It was early in San Clemente, only a little past 8:30. The President was not yet in his office.

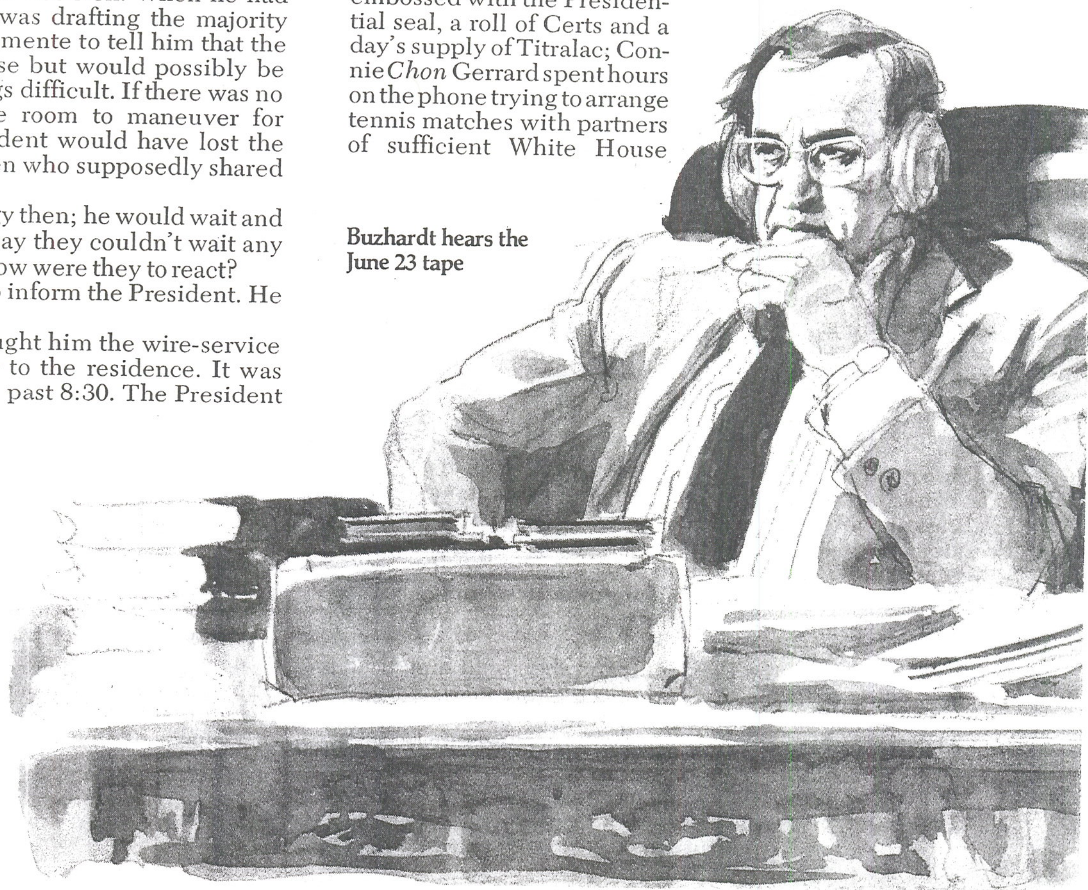
When Haig called back, Buzhardt was finishing another cup of the black coffee that he drank almost addictively. Now he would get his instructions. But the President himself came on the line. Buzhardt was surprised; he hadn't talked to the President for a long time.

"There might be a problem with the June 23 tape, Fred," Nixon said. "Get right on it and get back to Al."

Ronald Ziegler, the President's press secretary, watched the televised announcement of the Supreme Court decision from his suite at the Surf and Sand overlooking the Pacific. As the morning breakers crashed a hundred yards below his window, he scratched some notes on a yellow legal pad. He knew he would be spending the morning with the President, fashioning some response. Nixon would drown him with requests for more and more information, for alternatives.

He rode a borrowed Honda to the Nixon compound, arriving just after 9 a.m. Despite a California tan, Ziegler looked white and tired to Connie Gerrard, his secretary. Accustomed to his imperious manner, Gerrard carried a suit coat, shirt, tie and dress shoes into his office. She shared with the other secretaries the chore of transporting her boss's dry cleaning and dirty laundry, and shopping for his clothes. Sometimes she selected several pairs of new shoes, waited as he tried them on, advised him on the color and style, and then took back the rejects to the store. Ziegler had recently lost 30 pounds. That meant he had needed a lot of new clothes. His staff accepted these menial chores with varying degrees of tolerance, recognizing that the demands he made on them were extensions of the pressures the President put on him. His temper tantrums were excused on similar grounds. Nixon raged at Ziegler, they knew, and Ziegler raged back at whoever was handy.

The press-office staff was less tolerant of Ziegler's insistence that his coffee be served in a cup and saucer identical to the President's—cream-colored Lenox china with a silver Presidential seal—and that his Scotch be poured only into a cocktail glass embossed with the Presidential emblem. Combining resentment and jest at the way Ziegler treated them, his staff took to adding the Filipino suffix *Chon* to their names, after the Filipino stewards who served the President and his family. Thus, the regular duties of Anne *Chon* Grier included pickup and delivery of Ziegler's laundry at the Golden Star Valet, four blocks from the White House; Karin *Chon* Nordstrom was assigned to scout Ziegler's littered hotel rooms for underwear and other items he left behind at checkout time; Judy *Chon* Johnson set up his desk each morning with a pack of Marlboros, a matchbook embossed with the Presidential seal, a roll of Certs and a day's supply of Titralac; Connie *Chon* Gerrard spent hours on the phone trying to arrange tennis matches with partners of sufficient White House



Buzhardt hears the June 23 tape

'We've found the smoking pistol,' Buzhardt told Haig, his voice calm and emotionless. 'It's the ball game.'

rank not to offend Ziegler's sense of protocol, but with skill enough to challenge his on-court abilities; summer intern Tim *Chon* Smith took Ziegler's shoes to the Carlton barbershop for their regular shine.

When he arrived, Gerrard gave him the morning newspapers, already marked in yellow to spot important material, and waited to be sure he hadn't lost the motorcycle key again. Ziegler didn't even glance at the papers. He shouted for his coffee, made a couple of notes on a legal pad and charged out the door, heading for Haig's office in Building A.

Haig had just come back from briefing the President, his mouth set in a tight line. Nixon had exploded when Haig told him of the Court's unanimous decision. How could the men he had appointed—Warren Burger, Harry Blackmun, Lewis Powell—not follow their conscience, fail to support him? For Nixon, the question of compliance was still an open matter; he was not prepared to make a snap decision. He wanted to weigh the alternatives carefully. Maybe he'd finally follow through on his often-repeated threat—he would burn the tapes and resign.

As Ziegler listened to Haig, he knew what he was in for. The President needed to let off steam, and the assignment of taking the heat was going to fall to him. Often Ziegler would sit for hours alternately listening to the President's intemperate and garbled tirades and then to endless questions and requests for information. At times it was almost overwhelming.

The President had always despised small talk, but lately he would interrupt the conversation and ramble, usually about his past triumphs. Then suddenly he would seem to be jolted to the present and would offer preposterous alternatives, make ridiculous suggestions. They were not to be taken literally, and Ziegler did not take them so. Like Haig, Ziegler had learned to simply ignore Nixon's more outrageous orders. Haldeman had once said that it was a staff officer's duty to ignore any clearly inappropriate demand, even if the President insisted on it.

Ziegler's rapid rise, after Haldeman and Ehrlichman had departed, at first found him poorly equipped to accomplish such sidesteps, and he had passed along some of the President's more ill-considered notions. Gradually he had learned to deflect most of them, however. As he became more confident, he said that he had never realized what yes-men Haldeman and Ehrlichman had been. Often the President only needed time—sometimes just a few minutes—to cool off.

The President seemed to trust Ziegler more each day and found relief in sitting and rummaging through his thoughts with him. Over the last year, Ziegler had become a counselor to the President in the most fundamental sense—his confidant and alter ego. Each tiny move the President made was run through Ziegler again and again. Ziegler watched the painful deterioration of the President's popularity and political strength and, with it, the deterioration of his spirit. Still, at times Nixon could be extraordinarily thorough and alert. He hungered after facts, information, approaches, alternatives.

The President's demands on him took all of Ziegler's days. He had no time but to sit and listen, go out and try to implement, and—before he was halfway through his tasks—answer a call from the President to come back and listen some more. He had learned to dodge some of the calls; he instructed his secretaries to develop alibis for him.

Ziegler had begun to see himself as the crucible through which the President's decisions were forged. He had become sophisticated in anticipating demands. He would have his staff prepare lists of positive suggestions on every conceivable aspect of the situation. Then, at the appropriate moment, he would slip them into the conversation as if they had been the President's ideas. He offered his advice cautiously, fearful that it might be interpreted as too bold or too harsh. A number of aides had fallen into disfavor for offering painful advice.

The details of running the country had been left to Haig as the President withdrew more and more into himself to reflect on his Watergate options. Nixon had lost interest in domestic affairs, and gave only occasional bursts of attention to foreign policy. Haig might remind the chief that it was time to make a decision. But it fell to Ziegler to sit and listen to the convolutions of the President's laborious debates with himself.

Today, a decision would have to be made.

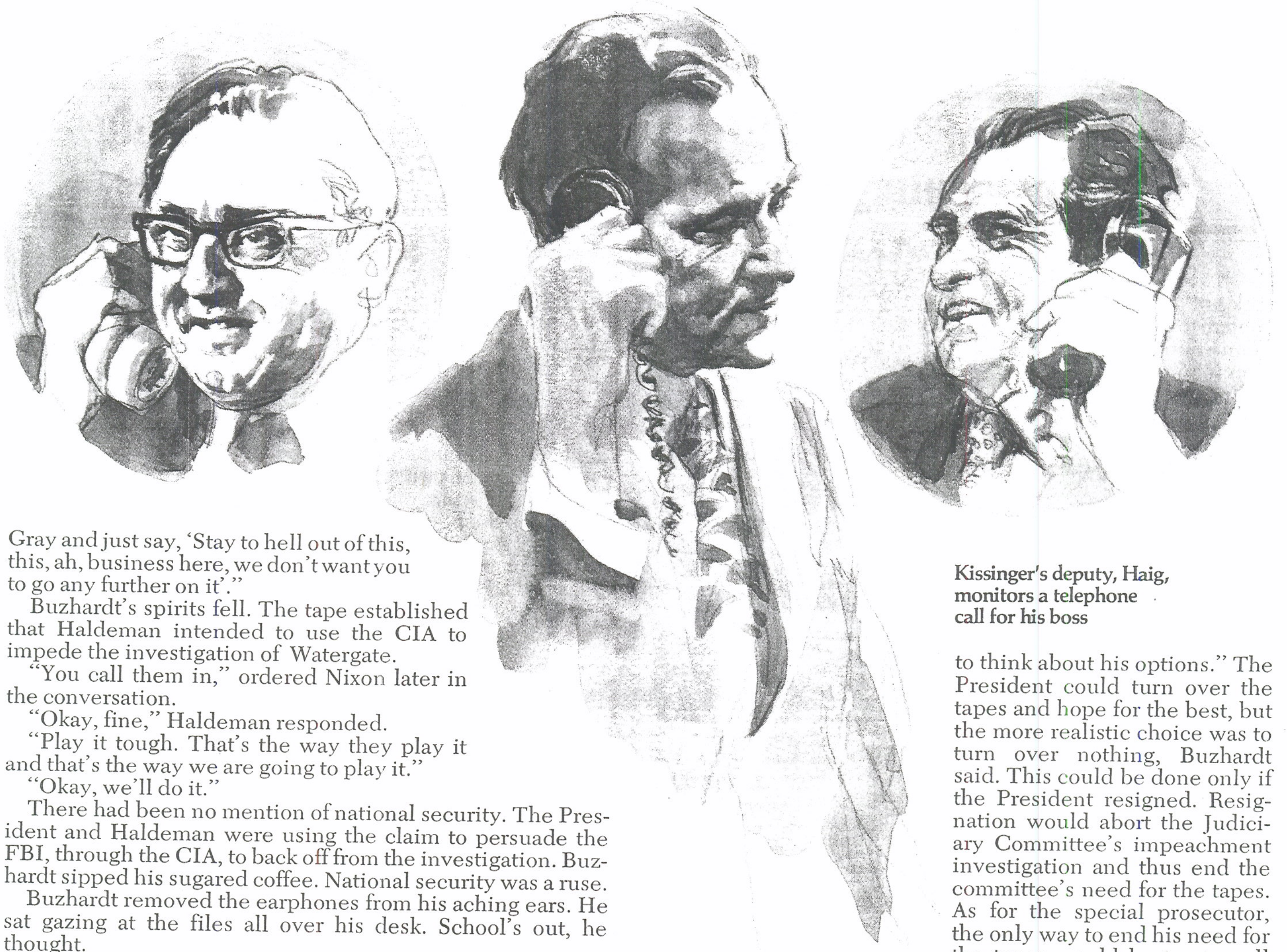
Buzhardt called a Secret Service agent and requested the reel of tape including the conversation of June 23, 1972, six days after the Watergate break-in. As he waited for the tape to be brought from the storage vault, he prepared his listening equipment. The erase button on his Sony 800-B recorder was already electrically disconnected, but he took the extra precaution of jamming the mechanism by placing a plastic block under the button, making it impossible to depress. He felt that his precautions were well taken. This was the original of a tape that the President himself had described as a "problem."

The word "problem" was frequently a Presidential euphemism for disaster, but it could also be a signal of overreaction. Buzhardt thought the President was oddly lacking in judgment about certain matters. He did either too little or too much. His colleague Len Garment was right, Buzhardt thought. Watergate was a series of discrete, unrelated transactions. There had been no grand strategy, just consistently bad judgment. For some time, Buzhardt had been half waiting for something that would totally undermine the President's defense. He had brought himself around to the notion that maybe it wasn't in the tapes of Nixon's Watergate discussions. He still thought that, technically at least, the President had not broken the law in the cover-up.

It was 40 minutes before the reel arrived. Buzhardt removed it from its cardboard box and threaded it into the machine. He put on the large headphones.

There was a period of silence and then he heard Haldeman's voice. It was a routine chat between Haldeman and the President. Then Haldeman said, "Now, on the investigation, you know, the Democratic break-in thing, we're back in the problem area, because the FBI is not under control, because [acting director L. Patrick] Gray doesn't exactly know how to control them, and they have—their investigation is now leading into some productive areas."

Haldeman went on: "[ex-Attorney General John] Mitchell came up with yesterday, and John Dean analyzed very carefully last night and concludes, concurs now with Mitchell's recommendation, that the only way to solve this—and we're set up beautifully to do it—ah—that the way to handle this now is for us to have [deputy CIA director Vernon] Walters call Pat



Kissinger's deputy, Haig, monitors a telephone call for his boss

Gray and just say, 'Stay to hell out of this, this, ah, business here, we don't want you to go any further on it'."

Buzhardt's spirits fell. The tape established that Haldeman intended to use the CIA to impede the investigation of Watergate.

"You call them in," ordered Nixon later in the conversation.

"Okay, fine," Haldeman responded.

"Play it tough. That's the way they play it and that's the way we are going to play it."

"Okay, we'll do it."

There had been no mention of national security. The President and Haldeman were using the claim to persuade the FBI, through the CIA, to back off from the investigation. Buzhardt sipped his sugared coffee. National security was a ruse.

Buzhardt removed the earphones from his aching ears. He sat gazing at the files all over his desk. School's out, he thought.

Only one week before, Nixon's chief Watergate counsel, James St. Clair, in his brief for the House Judiciary Committee, had claimed that "the President had no prior knowledge of an alleged plot to obstruct justice by such means as the attempted use of the CIA to thwart the FBI's Watergate investigation." He had argued on the basis of the President's own statement of May 22, 1973.

They had misled the House committee.

Buzhardt picked up the phone. "Give me San Clemente," he said. A few minutes passed as he waited on the line for Haig.

"Well, we've found the smoking pistol," he began. His voice was calm and emotionless.

"Are you sure?" Haig asked.

"Yes, it's the ball game."

Haig accepted the information coolly. He registered no surprise as Buzhardt outlined how the President had authorized Haldeman to contact the CIA. Buzhardt told him Haldeman had opened the conversation by telling the President ". . . we're *back* in the problem area, because the FBI is not under control." An obvious reference to an earlier conversation, Buzhardt said, perhaps to June 20, to something said in the 18½ minutes that had been obliterated from the tape.

That could mean only one thing, Haig said. The President himself had erased the 18½ minutes. Unfortunately, it all added up.

Buzhardt underlined the gravity of the new problem. As head of the executive branch, the President was of course in charge of the FBI and the CIA. So the instruction to Haldeman was probably not, in the most technical sense, an obstruction of justice. But it was certainly an abuse of power or an abuse of agency. By almost any definition, it was an impeachable offense.

"Well," said Haig, "what do you think we ought to do?"

Buzhardt had given it some thought. "Well, we've got the Court decision to think about also. I think the President ought to think about his options." The President could turn over the tapes and hope for the best, but the more realistic choice was to turn over nothing, Buzhardt said. This could be done only if the President resigned. Resignation would abort the Judiciary Committee's impeachment investigation and thus end the committee's need for the tapes. As for the special prosecutor, the only way to end his need for the tapes would be to stop all prosecutions—by pardoning everyone. Buzhardt was inclined to favor the idea.

Haig told Buzhardt that he and St. Clair would go over to see the President soon. "We'll get back to you."

Haig walked across the San Clemente compound to the President's office in the den of the residence. He could predict the effect that Buzhardt's conclusions would have on Nixon.

Nixon looked up at him from his reclining chair. Calmly, Haig outlined Buzhardt's interpretation of the June 23 tape and his analysis of the available options.

The President seethed. Buzhardt was completely off base, he said. Everything that was on the tape had been disclosed before. *He* knew what *he* meant, the President protested, and what *he* had meant was that Haldeman should insure only that the FBI not jeopardize long-buried CIA secrets left over from the Bay of Pigs operation. Then, as he had so often done, the President stared penetratingly at Haig and insisted that he was innocent—he had been concerned about national security.

The President attacked his lawyer's judgment—Buzhardt was probably tired, he was still ill from a recent heart attack; besides, he was given to panic. He had panicked last November, when he and Garment had flown to Key Biscayne and recommended resignation. He had been wrong then, and he was wrong now. No, the President concluded, Buzhardt could not render a reasoned judgment. What about St. Clair?

Haig called St. Clair and asked him to come over.

St. Clair had already talked with Buzhardt and knew his assessment. As a precaution, he had called the Secret Service in Washington to make sure the tapes were secure. But St. Clair had been more immediately concerned about the Supreme Court decision and didn't want to jump to any conclusions about the contents of the tapes. Was there any way to avoid

turning them over? He had fidgeted as he waited for the text of the decision to come over the White House wires. *United States v. Nixon* was the biggest court case of St. Clair's career, and he had thought he'd won it. He was shattered that he had lost. When he read the decision, it became clear to him that the tapes would have to go to Judge Sirica.

When St. Clair arrived at the residence, he told the President and Haig that he advised full compliance. The President was not convinced. He wondered if, in fact, to preserve the power of his office, he didn't have a constitutional duty to reject the court order.

Both Haig and St. Clair observed that defiance would mean certain impeachment and conviction.

Even so, Nixon said, he might have an obligation to carry this battle into the impeachment forum. The conversation continued for two hours before the President appeared to accept the notion of some form of compliance. Characteristically, he had arrived at a decision without actually having made it.

The President wanted time to review all the tapes himself. There was to be no wholesale turnover. He instructed St. Clair to inform Sirica that they would need time—weeks, perhaps longer—to do a thorough job.

"I can't get that," St. Clair said. Caught in the middle, he sensed that he was being used in a frivolous attempt at one more stall. His professional reputation would be damaged further.

Nixon's anger flared again. He had difficulty enough with the Court telling him *what* to do, he said. They were not going to tell him *when* to do it. And St. Clair was his lawyer, he had better secure the necessary delay. He, Nixon, wanted it. That was that.

[Nixon's men were accustomed to his spasms of anger. For months, they had watched his mood darken as his defenses crumbled, and as he cast about for ways to fight back against—or escape from—the miseries of Watergate.]

Flashback: The Democratic Taps

In the spring of 1973, the President had given Buzhardt little peace, often summoning him to his office on the "Bellboy" the lawyer wore everywhere except in church. The two men were spending a good deal of time together. John Dean was about to tell his story to the Ervin committee, and refuting him on the specifics was not enough, Nixon said; there was a more general problem. The Administration's legitimate national-security operations were being deliberately entangled by his enemies in Watergate. Those activities had to be separated from the scandal. Nixon said he knew that surreptitious entries and wiretaps—after all, that was what Watergate was all about, wasn't it?—were a way a of life in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations. "I know this has been going on for twenty years. It is the worst kind of hypocrisy for the Democrats to make so much of it."

Buzhardt agreed with the President. But the problem was to document the abuses.

Nixon pointed out that he had asked John Dean, "of all people," to come up with the list of his predecessors' abuses. But Dean, usually so thorough, hadn't really come up with much.

There had to be a way to make the other side pay the price, Nixon said. This was a partisan battle. Dean was going to tell the world about *his* White House; what he said should be measured against the record of prior Administrations. Get a comprehensive list of all the national-security wiretaps conducted by the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, Nixon ordered. Call the Attorney General and get the Justice Department started on it now.

Buzhardt found that Elliot Richardson was reluctant to cooperate. Buzhardt therefore took the heat from the President, for a while, but eventually he passed it back to Richardson. After the fourth call to the Attorney General, a list came back. It was impressive, as Nixon had predicted. Not as extensive as the seventeen Nixon wiretaps of 1969-71, but political dynamite all the same. The same kind of taps that had caused Nixon grief.

Nixon was elated. Fascinated by the fact that many of the taps had been authorized by former Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, the President read the list with delight:

- Lloyd Norman, Pentagon and military-affairs corresondent for NEWSWEEK. (Supposedly ordered by President Kennedy himself because Norman had obtained classified information.)
- Hanson W. Baldwin, military-affairs specialist for The New York Times.
- Robert Amory Jr., the former No. 3 man in the CIA and a close personal friend of President Kennedy. He had reportedly been a close friend of a Yugoslavian embassy official who was an undercover intelligence officer.
- The law firm of Surrey and Karasik, which had lobbied for Dominican Republic sugar interests and was under investigation for trying to raise the United States sugar quotas.
- Bernard Fall, the late French historian and author of seven books on Vietnam, who had interviewed and maintained contact with North Vietnam's President Ho Chi Minh over a period of years.
- The chief clerk to the House Agriculture Committee, who had worked for Rep. Harold D. Cooley of North Carolina, after the committee had handled sugar-quota legislation.

Buzhardt was sure there were more taps on the Hill, but they could at least document these.

Nixon continued his reading.

- The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. That had been extensively reported.
- Frank A. Capell, the right-wing author of "The Secret Story of Marilyn Monroe," a book published in 1964 which alleged a relationship between Robert Kennedy and the late movie actress.

The President chortled. The Capell tap surely didn't sound like a national-security matter to him. It confirmed everything he had suspected about the Kennedys.

He could stand on his record. He had taken the extreme action of wiretapping staff and reporters only in cases where secret negotiations were in jeopardy. He was not the sort of man who would tap a writer who had written about his private life. Kennedys, not Nixons, did that sort of thing.

All right, Nixon said. Leak the Kennedy wiretaps.

Buzhardt went to Haig. They both thought that leaking the information was too obvious a strategy. Instead, they released without any names a statistical summary of national-security wiretaps that had been conducted under the Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon Administrations. It indicated that there had been fewer under Nixon than under either of his Democratic predecessors.

The President was not satisfied. He pushed Buzhardt again and again to leak the names. It was not a very good idea, Buzhardt insisted. It could backfire; it might well appear to be one more use of the FBI files for political advantage.

Nixon said he wanted it done. He would not tolerate defiance. He had not asked for Buzhardt's opinion.

Buzhardt and Haig stalled. The President called from California. Dean was going before the Senate Watergate committee in a few days. Nixon was screaming, "I

The taps confirmed everything Nixon had suspected about the Kennedys

want that out. I haven't read it in the newspaper. I don't want excuses. Do it."

There was also pressure from other senior White House staff members. "Anything that happened in this Administration happened in spades in others," Haig told selected reporters. But he couldn't figure out how to get the message out more specifically. If they leaked the details, they would be pulled ever deeper into a partisan cross fire.

When the President got back from California, it was Buzhardt who reopened the subject. He laid out his reasoning patiently. It wouldn't do any good. They would be doing exactly what they had accused the Watergate committee and others of doing. It just wouldn't fly.

At last the President capitulated. But he knew, the staff knew and the other side knew that what *his* people had done was nothing—literally nothing—compared to what had gone on before. They were all innocent.

Flashback: A Cold Christmas

By Christmas 1973, the President could see he faced grave difficulties on two fronts. His legal strategy had collapsed with the Saturday Night Massacre, the tapes that never existed, and the 18½-minute gap. In the process, his public-relations strategy, dubbed Operation Candor by the press, had been made a mockery. Each time that the President announced that Watergate was behind him once and for all, another disaster had hit. Nixon cursed the times, the unfairness of it all.

The impeachment investigation was beginning. There was speculation about resignation. His staff was restless. Bryce Harlow, his political counselor, had written a letter saying he wanted to leave. Garment had signed off the legal team. Ray Price, the speechwriter, had been prevailed upon to stay beyond his planned departure date in December, but he was not happy. The Republicans on the Hill were unhappy. Barry Goldwater, a key to his support in the Senate, had given an interview to the Christian Science Monitor. His words stung: "He [Nixon] chose to dibble and dabble . . . when all the American people wanted to know was the truth . . . I hate to think of the adage, 'Would you buy a used car from Dick Nixon?' But that's what people are asking around the country . . ."

Worried and miserably unhappy, the President asked a small group to join him and his family for dinner on Dec. 21: political adviser Harlow and his wife; Goldwater and Mary Brooks, the director of the Mint; speechwriter Pat Buchanan and his wife; Ray Price and Nixon's secretary, Rose Mary Woods. None of the lawyers were asked, nor was Haig or Ziegler.

The President, waiting for all the guests to arrive, downed a quick Scotch in the Yellow Oval Room, the formal livingroom in the family quarters. At the dinner table, he sniffed the cork from the wine and pronounced the choice inadequate.* A bottle more to his satisfaction arrived. During dinner he was jovial at first, bantering with those seated closest to him, but by the end of the main course he had begun to ramble.

The group left the table for after-dinner drinks and more conversation. Nixon seemed to be trying to reach out to each person—as if to convince himself that this was his team, Harlow thought. But the President was having trouble getting his words out. "Bryce, explain what I'm saying to Barry," he said several times, after having given up himself.

Harlow would start to explain, but then the President would interrupt him. Watergate was mentioned. The President, observing that he was beset from all sides, offered a rapid-fire catalogue of the ways he might recoup his fortunes. But Republican support on the Hill was limp, he said. Impeachment was a partisan issue, but his side didn't seem willing to do what was necessary to defend him. He was a victim of circumstance, of uncontrollable forces. It was the timing, the particular point in history, the Democrats and the press were now working together to get him. He had inherited a much abused office, flagrantly misused by Kennedy and Johnson. But the liberals and the press hated him, and so the rules were being changed and he was going to be made to pay.

Buchanan thought, the Old Man is tired and can't hold his liquor well, especially when he's exhausted.

The next day Goldwater called Harlow. "Is the President off his rocker?"

"No. He was drunk."

Goldwater was half convinced.

The President felt trusting enough about those at the table to let down his guard, Harlow told him. "Barry, it's the highest compliment that can be conveyed by the President of the United States." It was very healthy that Nixon had been able to do it, he added.

Haig disagreed. The President was drinking more than usual and phoning Haig, and others, late in the night. The President was overexcited, filled with anxieties, carrying on.

Nixon's inability to handle more than one drink was well known to his intimates. During campaigns he had wisely chosen not to touch alcohol. But now, on too many afternoons, he started sipping in his office with [his friend Bebe] Rebozo. On the mornings after, the President arrived in his office late, sometimes not until noon. Haig was worried that the press would learn about it, and he ordered that the time the President left his residence to go to work no longer be recorded.

Undersecretary of the Treasury William E. Simon, who met frequently with Nixon in December, often found the President dazed. Simon was reminded of a wind-up doll, mechanically making gestures with no thought as to their meaning.

Nixon was increasingly moody, exuberant at one moment, depressed the next, alternately optimistic and pessimistic, especially in his nocturnal phone calls. He wondered aloud to Haig whether it was worth it to stick things out and fight and then vowed he would never be driven from office. Back and forth, up and down. His motives were suspect, the President said; his words went unbelieved by all sorts of people. Maybe he should resign. What did Haig *really* think? Should he resign?

No, Haig recommended each time.

Nixon raised the possibility with his family as well. If it came down to surrendering any more tapes, he said, he would burn the remaining recordings and quit. It was the only protest left him. The powers of the Presidency were being stripped away, at his expense and also his successors'.

Daughter Julie's husband, David Eisenhower, wasn't sure whether the President was serious or whether he was simply letting off steam, provoking his family to urge him to fight.

* The President had become something of a wine buff during his New York City days, and the yacht Sequoia was stocked with his favorite, a 1966 Chateau Margaux which sold for about $30 a bottle. He issued orders to the stewards about what to do when large groups of congressmen were aboard: his guests were to be served a rather good $6 wine; his glass was to be filled from a bottle of Chateau Margaux wrapped in a towel.

'Is the President off his rocker?' Barry Goldwater asked Bryce Harlow. 'No,' said Harlow, 'he was drunk.'

one of loathing and contempt. Both Eagleburger and Scowcroft knew that the secret was perhaps more significant than those that were stored in Kissinger's safes. Its disclosure could destroy Kissinger, they felt, and the country's foreign policy as well.

The three of them—Kissinger, Scowcroft and Eagleburger—doubted that Nixon could handle foreign affairs without Kissinger. They believed that the key to America's foreign policy was not only Kissinger's experience and intellect, but also his stature. It was a balancing force against Nixon. If Nixon were to run foreign affairs without Kissinger, they reasoned, the sloppiness that marked his handling of Watergate would leave its mark on foreign policy.

Neither Eagleburger nor Scowcroft thought that all of Kissinger's negative feelings toward the President were justified. His frequent descriptions of Nixon as irrational, insecure and maniacal could at times just as easily apply to Kissinger as to the President. But at least Kissinger was not sloppy. Even at his worst, Kissinger was less *dangerous*.

In the beginning, the summer of 1968, when Nixon received the Republican Presidential nomination, Kissinger had been bitterly disappointed. His mentor, Gov. Nelson Rockefeller of New York, had failed to win the nomination. Kissinger had told friends that Nixon was "unfit" for the Presidency, "dangerous," capable of unleashing nuclear war. Then, three weeks after his election in 1968, Nixon had asked Kissinger to serve as his national-security adviser. Meeting with the President-elect, Kissinger shifted his assessment. The man whose approach to foreign policy he had regarded as hopelessly shallow and unsophisticated appeared to him now far more subtle and complex. Kissinger detected in Nixon a pragmatism which might conquer the ideological rigidities that had marked the politics of this coldest of cold warriors. He had discussed the matter with Rockefeller. Rockefeller didn't like Nixon personally, but he urged Kissinger to accept. That way, both men could keep their feet in the door. The 45-year-old Harvard professor took the job.

Installed in the West Wing basement, Kissinger aspired to a personal relationship with Nixon similar to the one he had with Rockefeller. Instead, he found himself screened off from the President by the bureaucratic stops that Haldeman had created at Nixon's direction. Both Haldeman and Ehrlichman, he complained, were determined to keep him at a distance from Nixon. The President's two principal aides were "idiots" and "Nazis," he said. What kind of man would surround himself with such "imbeciles"? For their part, Haldeman and Ehrlichman openly ridiculed Kissinger; he could not be trusted because of his liberal friends. Ehrlichman half jokingly insinuated that Kissinger was "queer," and wondered aloud to Kissinger assistants whether Henry, a divorced bachelor, would know what to do with a girl at a Georgetown cocktail party. "Were there any boys at the party for Henry?" Ehrlichman once asked, pleased with his own joke.

In his meetings with the President, Kissinger was almost never able to get a decision on the spot. Instead, the President listened to his presentations impatiently and told Kissinger that he would inform him in due course of whatever actions he wished to take. Often, Kissinger returned to his office shaken, chewing his nails, worrying and waiting. It was a dangerous system, Kissinger believed. The President's mind wasn't sophisticated enough to reach these kinds of decisions alone.

And without Kissinger, who would help Nixon? Haldeman? Ehrlichman? They would go along with any crazy thing that came into Nixon's head, Kissinger complained. There was no coherent policy developing; Nixon was apt to conduct foreign affairs by whim. Only his own superhuman efforts, Kissinger implied, were preventing catastrophe. "If the President had his way, we'd have a nuclear war every week," he said on several occasions. On other occasions Kissinger railed that the President was not tough enough, especially in conducting the war in Southeast Asia. "If Nelson were President, we'd crack 'em," he said.

The national-security adviser regularly ridiculed his chief's intellect and ability. "You tell our meatball President I'll be there in a few minutes," he once snapped to a secretary

Dr. Tkach could see that Nixon's leg was inflamed

Almost from the beginning, Kissinger had secretly had all his phone calls monitored and transcribed

who had summoned him to a meeting with Nixon. "Wasn't our leader magnificent on that," Kissinger said sarcastically of Nixon's early public statements on the war in Vietnam. The President deserved a B-plus or a C or even a C-minus, he would say. But to the President's face Kissinger offered only high praise.

He instructed one of his National Security Council aides, John Cort, to prepare a briefing book on NATO for the President. When he received it, Kissinger said that it was brilliant, but that it must be simplified because Nixon wouldn't understand it. "Don't ever write anything more complicated than a Reader's Digest article for Nixon," he directed.

Meeting with his closest associates, he would imply at times that the President was a wild man, almost uncontrollable. Part of the problem, Kissinger maintained, was that Nixon too often reacted to foreign-policy questions out of personal anger, or for domestic political considerations.

At first, very little direct information got back to the staff to corroborate Kissinger's unflattering and alarming portrait of the President. But there was some supporting evidence. Early in 1970, the President returned a National Security Council briefing paper on the visit to China of Laotian Premier Souvanna Phouma and other Southeast Asian leaders. The President's margin notation was clearly written. "Bomb them," he said. On another occasion, Nixon was presented a serious NSC option paper on Korea that contained a series of mutually exclusive alternatives, and he had checked all of them.

Meeting with India's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Nixon made it evident that he did not know where one of India's principal states, Bengal, was. Kissinger cited the incident as one more example of Nixon's "second-rate mind."

Almost from the beginning, Kissinger had secretly had all his telephone calls, including those with the President, monitored and transcribed. The conversations gave Kissinger's assistants enough information about the President to alarm them. Nixon rambled, he made thoughtless remarks and suggestions about people and policy, he sometimes slurred his words as if he had been drinking heavily. His ignorance of important subjects suggested he was lazy and unprepared for the kinds of decisions which require thoughtful consideration. His nasty references about the inferior intelligence of blacks revealed a deep prejudice.

Like Kissinger's personal view of Nixon, the existence of Kissinger's clandestine monitoring system was a zealously guarded secret. The practice had begun simply enough in 1969, with a secretary listening to each of Kissinger's phone calls and transcribing in shorthand. Early in 1970, the system became more elaborate and Kissinger began tape-recording his telephone calls. An IBM Dictabelt machine, housed in the credenza behind his secretary's desk and hooked into his telephone, was automatically activated when the telephone receiver was picked up. Eventually, several Dictabelt machines were plugged into the phone system, insuring that there were always standby recorders if one failed or ran out of tape.

Kissinger's appointments secretary or Haig, then his deputy, also listened regularly to important calls and took notes, especially if the conversation were with the President. In his basement office in the White House, eight other phones were connected to Kissinger's direct line with Nixon, to facilitate monitoring and transcribing. Only Kissinger's most personal calls with Nancy Maginnes, whom he later married, escaped transcription.*

Nixon was often on the phone with Kissinger for fifteen minutes or longer. The President was repetitive, sometimes taking minutes to come to a point, or he might suddenly shift to another topic without finishing whatever he had been discussing. Kissinger occasionally came out of the office after such calls. "Who was taking that?" he would ask.

One of the four women stationed in the small outer office would raise her hand.

"Wasn't that the worst thing you ever heard in your life?" he would ask. Before the secretary nodded assent, Kissinger would turn, shake his head and grumble to himself.

During one call, the President drunkenly relayed to Dr. Kissinger the Vietnam military policy of his friend Bebe Rebozo. Kissinger told his aides about the call, and for a while thereafter Haig referred to Nixon as "our drunken friend."

During another call, Kissinger mentioned the number of American casualties in a major battle in Vietnam. "Oh, screw 'em," said Nixon.

Kissinger took care to see that complete transcripts of his calls with the President were preserved in the personal records being accumulated for his memoirs.

Eventually, he became so concerned about the security of his papers and files that he moved some of the most sensitive to Rockefeller's Pocantico Hills estate. He intimated to associates that he feared Haldeman and Ehrlichman might try to steal them. When a legal adviser reminded him that it was against the law to store classified documents outside government facilities, Kissinger had the files returned to the White House.

Despite his personal assessment of the President, the forces both of Kissinger's personality and of circumstance combined to establish gradually the relationship he desired with Nixon. He had genuine respect for the President's tough view of what American foreign policy should be, and he appealed to it directly, providing the intellectual framework and negotiating skill to make it operational.

As the President's popularity, his power and his grasp on his office declined, Kissinger's was rising. It was no longer he who needed Nixon, Kissinger told his aides; now it was Nixon who needed him. Kissinger wanted to be Secretary of State. Nixon promised him he would have the appointment.

Kissinger explained to his aides why he wanted the job. As both Secretary of State and national-security adviser to the President, he could protect diplomacy from the decadence of Watergate. It had not escaped Kissinger that Nixon might destroy American foreign policy by trying to use it as a means of his own survival. It might fall to Kissinger to protect that policy from a President who was growing increasingly irrational and unpredictable, he said.

In the late spring of 1973, the incumbent, William Rogers, did not want to relinquish the Secretaryship, especially to Kissinger. Kissinger used his leverage. He threatened to resign from the Administration unless Rogers was banished and his own appointment as Secretary announced. Nixon capitulated, though unhappily. He was unable to bring himself to tell his old friend Rogers personally. He sent Haig to convey the message to Rogers and get his resignation.

Rogers, his pride already sorely wounded, was deeply

*The secretaries listened to her calls, however, and sometimes took notes, in case mention was made of a social engagement; Kissinger often forgot such things. The staff's duties included handling his personal finances and his social schedule.

En route to Alexandria with Sadat, Nixon tried to disguise his great pain

offended. "Tell the President to f--- himself," he said. He refused either to resign or be fired by Haig. If he was to be dismissed, he wanted the request to come from the President personally. "I am sorry," he told Haig; there was no other way. Nixon stalled and fretted until Rogers finally reconsidered and left. In August, he nominated Kissinger as Secretary of State.

By late October, after Cox had been fired, Kissinger's anxieties about the President had become more acute. "Sometimes I get worried," he said. "The President is like a madman." Kissinger was deeply pessimistic. He had looked to the second Nixon Administration as a once-in-a-century opportunity to build a new American foreign policy, to achieve new international structures based on unquestioned American strength, détente with the Soviets and China, a closer bond with Europe.

It no longer seemed possible. Watergate was shattering the illusion of American strength, he said, and with it American foreign policy. He decried "the brutal puritanism of the age." Whatever Nixon's transgressions, those who were attacking him, especially the press, had no idea of the damage they were inflicting on international order. America's ability to make good its commitments was in serious doubt throughout the world. Indochina would be the first great Watergate casualty, Kissinger said bitterly. The Congress, the press and the people would never permit the Administration to demonstrate the resolve needed to save it. When Vietnam fell, American foreign policy would be reduced to a myth.

Scowcroft and Eagleburger reinforced Kissinger's belief that world leaders were relying on him more than the President: it was Kissinger who was the symbol of American legitimacy and continuity, not Nixon. Kissinger relished such stature. Yet ultimately, he said, his position was not very much more stable than the President's. "That s.o.b. has got to go," he exploded frequently in the early months of 1974. "He's going to have to resign. It's inevitable." Then, after reflection, he would tell his aides, "No, he shouldn't do it."

The month-long Middle East negotiations and the release of the edited transcripts pushed Kissinger still further from the President. Nixon was so desperate to obtain a Golan Heights agreement for domestic political purposes, Kissinger maintained, that he was undermining Kissinger's strategy. During one impasse in the talks, Kissinger told the Syrian President that unless immediate progress was forthcoming he would break off the negotiations. "If this isn't settled by Monday, I'm going home." It was a risky tactic. Kissinger's sense of timing told him it would work.

In Key Biscayne, Ziegler told reporters that Kissinger was under orders from Nixon not to leave the Middle East until there was a settlement. Fortunately, news of Ziegler's statement did not reach Damascus until after President Assad had made the desired concession. The negotiations moved quickly toward a settlement. Kissinger was infuriated. Nixon, he said, was determined to foster the illusion that he was in charge of

the negotiations, to save his neck. "I'm the one who knows the placement of every goddam soldier on the Golan Heights—not him," he complained.

Nixon viewed the situation differently. The Middle East settlement was a result of his own work, he told his family. "Henry wanted to come home, and I kept him on the job."

[On June 10, Nixon had taken off for Salzburg, Austria, the first stop on his journey to the Middle East.]

Flashback: Now, Phlebitis

While most members of the Presidential party concerned themselves with Richard Nixon's political life, Maj. Gen. Walter Tkach, his personal physician, was worried about the President's life, period. Nixon was a healthy man generally, not given to complaining about minor discomforts. It was unusual for the President to summon him on the spur of the moment, as he did this day in Salzburg. Tkach hurried to Nixon's sitting room.

The President greeted him perfunctorily and pulled up his left pant leg. Tkach could see that the leg was inflamed and swollen. He examined it more closely, then went through a series of checks which confirmed his fears. A blood clot had formed in a vein in the leg, he explained. Phlebitis. The clot could break loose and go to his heart or lungs. That could be fatal.

Continuing the trip was a senseless risk, Tkach told him. Strain from extended standing, climbing stairs, long walks, even crossing his legs might free the clot. He recommended that the President be hospitalized immediately and, after enough rest to insure that the clot had stabilized, that he fly back to Washington for further treatment.

The President rejected the advice. "The purpose of this trip is more important than my life. I know it is a calculated risk." But he was obligated to finish what he had started.

Tkach gave him a support hose. Nixon tried it on. It was too uncomfortable, he said.

Tkach hurried to Haig's room. He shook as he told him the diagnosis. "I am going to order him to go home," Tkach said, and he bolted for the adjacent conference room where Steve Bull, the President's personal aide, and William Henkel, his chief of advance, had established a temporary office.

The schedule, they told Tkach, called for Nixon to be on his feet extensively. The next day's schedule—Cairo, Henkel said—was particularly rough. There was a lot of standing, walking, climbing.

"Is there any way we can change this?" Tkach sounded scared.

"No, it's too late," Henkel said.

They paced back and forth, to avoid being overheard by others in the room. Tkach said that Nixon belonged in a hospital; he should never have made the trip. "The President has a death wish," he said. "He won't take my advice. He won't listen to me."

Usually Henkel and Bull made light of Tkach's concern about the President's health. He was easily alarmed. They preferred the advice of Nixon's other physician, Lt. Comdr. William Lukash. One White House joke held that Tkach carried two cures in his medical bag—a bottle of aspirin and Bill Lukash's phone number. But the President, meanwhile, had quietly summoned Lukash. Nixon had more confidence in the younger man. Lukash seemed more precise and more sure of himself.

His diagnosis was the same, and his warning equally dire. He too tried to convince the President to terminate the trip. Nixon was just as adamant with him. He issued his own order: no one was to mention his condition; it had to be kept absolutely secret. Its disclosure would further harm the objectives of his Presidency.

On the morning of June 12, the President and his entourage made the three-hour and 45-minute flight from Salzburg to Cairo. Their motorcade entrance into the capital was jubilant. Several hundred thousand people lined the curbs, rooftops and balconies. For three-quarters of an hour Nixon stood in an open limousine with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. Cheering workers, soldiers, schoolchildren—trucked to their stations by the thousands—waved placards which hailed the President as "a man of honor" and proclaimed both leaders great statesmen dedicated to peace and progress.

Nixon thanked Sadat privately for the huge crowds.

"Wait until we get to Alexandria," Sadat said.

As promised, the crowds were spectacular, even before they reached the port city. Every mile of the route was lined with peasants, soldiers, workers. Women crowded close to the passing train, expressing their approval in the Arab high-pitched warble of prayer. A magnificent white stallion, mounted by a soldier carrying the flags of both countries, raced beside the tracks. The horse reared and threw its rider, then kept the pace alone. Ziegler estimated that 2 million people had turned out.

The President's party rode in a luxurious rail coach that had been built in the nineteenth century. Many drank strong dark beer from quart bottles. Dr. Lukash read the best seller "Jaws."

A Secret Service agent interrupted him. "You are wanted up front."

Lukash was horrified when he reached the President. Nixon, in total disregard of his physicians' advice, was standing in the open-sided Victorian observation car waving to the crowd. The President and Sadat shifted places from one side of the open car to the other, acknowledging the cheers, each holding on to the overhead brass railing to keep his balance.

Lukash could see that the President was doing his best to disguise great pain. The physician took a seat on the red leather banquette in the rear of the car. The full-length green curtains dividing the coach kept him out of sight of the camera crews up front. He reached into his medical bag.

A few minutes later, Nixon limped into a private compartment in the front of the train, where Lukash joined him. The physician gave him a pain killer and pleaded with him to keep off his feet. Nixon went back to stand with Sadat.

Secret Service agents scanned the crowds almost desperately. Despite the massive presence of heavily armed Egyptian security forces, the President's exposure to the huge crowds seemed a senseless risk.

Dr. Tkach sought out Dick Keiser, head of the Presidential-protection unit of the Secret Service, and expressed his alarm at Nixon's behavior.

"You can't protect a President who wants to kill himself," Keiser responded.

Shortly before reaching Alexandria, Nixon and Sadat spoke informally with several of the 126 reporters aboard the train. Nixon moved again to the open side of the railroad car, calling their attention to the size and enthusiasm of the crowds.

Sadat pointed to one of the many banners: "We Trust Nixon." "He has fulfilled every word he gave," Sadat said.

'You can't protect a President who wants to kill himself'

Encouraged by the White House advance office, Egyptian officials in Alexandria had mobilized a campaign-style greeting. By the time the Presidential party arrived, more than a million people stood on the sea walls and in the streets. Some had climbed lampposts.

The official party traveled by motorcade to the Ras El Tin Palace, where the President hosted a banquet for Sadat. It was as luxurious a residence as Nixon had ever seen, magnificently opulent. It had taken King Farouk 30 years to build. As he

toasted Sadat, the President again remarked on the crowds. "There is an old saying that you can turn people out but you can't turn them on," he said. "They have touched our hearts, and I'm sure the hearts of millions of Americans who saw that welcoming on television."

Kissinger turned to Eagleburger and Scowcroft. "It's too bad that such crowds can't be turned out in the United States," he said. The three men laughed.

[*But now, in July 1974, Egypt was already a fading memory—a last moment of glory in the long, downward slide of the Nixon Presidency. St. Clair, just as he had predicted, was unable to delay a first delivery of tapes to Judge Sirica. And a bipartisan majority in the House Judiciary Committee was agonizing toward its own moment of decision. On Saturday, July 27, with Nixon still in San Clemente, the committee voted a first article of impeachment charging him with complicity in the Watergate cover-up.*]

July 29: 'He's Guilty As Hell'

David Gergen, a White House speechwriter, had just settled behind the desk in the EOB when the phone rang.

"The general wants to see you," Haig's secretary said crisply.

As he entered the general's green office, Gergen saw that Haig was angry. The chief of staff was standing alone by his big table, drumming his fingers on a copy of Sunday's Washington Post, and he did not look up. Finally Haig shoved the paper aside. He ordered Gergen to sit down and directed his attention to two stories on the Post's front page. One, datelined San Clemente, stated without qualification that the President's closest aides (presumably including Haig) were telling each other that Nixon could not survive in office. The other story, from Washington, pictured a Presidential staff in disarray and a President who was removed from reality.

Haig was furious. The stories contradicted the theme he and Ziegler had been carefully emphasizing since the Judiciary vote: yes, there had been certain reverses, but they were confident that the President would prevail.

The general wanted to know where the stories were coming from. He didn't accuse Gergen directly, though he knew Ziegler thought Gergen was a chronic leaker. He wanted to know if there were any "weak sisters" on Gergen's speechwriting staff who should be gotten rid of. Who were the ones who couldn't stick it out? They should leave now.

"I'm probably the weakest of all," Gergen replied. Yes, he had talked to reporters. Gergen picked up the paper and pointed to two paragraphs in the Washington story quoting an unnamed aide as saying Watergate had been handled poorly for two years and might not be recoverable now. "Here I am," he said. "This is me."

The general reminded him that The Washington Post was not the proper forum in which to voice his frustrations. Haig doubted the ability of the liberal press to handle such information fairly, to refrain from sensationalizing it. There was a question of loyalty, even of patriotism, he said sternly, and that applied to each member of the staff.

Gergen said that he felt foolish trying to keep up an optimistic façade. He had been doing it for months; he had told acquaintances in the press over and over that the President had turned the corner on Watergate. He had compromised himself.

"What do you think about me?" Haig shot back. He was the one out on the front line, sticking his neck out. His own doubts ran deep, very deep. "He's guilty as hell," Haig said.

Gergen was startled. Haig was the ultimate loyalist.

The chief of staff drew a deep breath. He still had to keep the ship together, he said. Again, it was a question of loyalty and patriotism. He had made his decision and he would see it through. Everyone on the White House staff should do the same or they should get out.

As Gergen walked out of the office, he saw Ken Clawson, the White House communications director, waiting—the next in line to be questioned on the subject of leaking.

[*That night, the Judiciary Committee voted a second article of impeachment, this one charging that Nixon had abused his power and violated the constitutional rights of American citizens. On Tuesday, July 30, the committee approved Article III, alleging that Nixon had unlawfully defied its subpoenas for the tapes and other evidence.*]

August 2: A Family Council

At 1 p.m., Senate Minority Leader Hugh Scott, Majority Leader Mike Mansfield and Vice President Gerald Ford met to discuss procedure for a Senate trial. Though the Vice President was there in his capacity as the Senate's presiding officer, he was clearly uncomfortable. Scott spoke as if conviction were a foregone conclusion, and turned to the question of the Vice President's actions on the day of the verdict. He reminded Ford that he should be in town that day, in order to assume the oath of office. "You should be easily available but not in the Senate wing of the Capitol," Scott advised. That kind of proximity would be bad form. It might indicate the sort of overanxiousness that Ford would surely want to avoid.

After a few other procedural matters, Mansfield left. Now Scott and Ford were alone. The President had 36 votes in the Senate, Scott said, "but eleven are soft." He was including his own.

Ford made no comment.

Scott understood. The Vice President had to support the President. "But continued support will make it hard later to unite the country," Scott warned. His eyes were glistening. "You're all we've got now, and I mean the country, not the party." He began sobbing.

Ford's eyes reddened. Haig had warned him the day before about the June 23 tape and had asked if he was prepared to assume the Presidency within a very short time. He had been stunned.

"Now, now," he told Scott, trying to be comforting, but he too nearly broke down.

[*Through the day, Haig and the lawyers began quietly spreading word of the devastating June 23 tape to Nixon's partisans in the White House and out—to Rep. Charles Wiggins, the California Republican who had led the President's defense in the Judiciary Com-*

Buchanan's response to the tape was quick and strong. 'I think the President's gotta resign.'

mittee; to Sen. Robert Griffin, the minority whip; to their own senior staff colleagues, Ronald Ziegler and Pat Buchanan. But they left to Nixon himself the most painful duty of all: breaking the news to his family.]

When a meeting of the White House strategy group broke up, shortly after 6:30 p.m., Haig asked Buchanan to stay behind. Buchanan had felt encouraged by the meeting. It looked as if a serious, coordinated defense was finally under way. He was ready for combat. "My guys will be in all weekend."

Now, St. Clair and Ray Price remained in their seats at the big table. Maj. George Joulwan, Haig's aide, sat on the couch as usual. Ziegler arrived a few minutes later.

Haig took his usual place at the end of the table and turned to Buchanan. "We've all been living with this agony for a while," he said. "Now we want you to share it with us." The "problem tape" was deadly.

Buchanan wasn't surprised. "An early tape, or late?" he asked.

"Early."

"The 23rd of June?"

"Right." Haig seemed startled.

"That was our concern all the way back," Buchanan said. His face flushed with anger and he glanced meaningfully at Price. They had worked together on the President's May 22, 1973, defense statement, in which he denied having used the CIA to contain the FBI inquiry for political reasons. The recollection was painful. They had double-checked and triple-checked. They had sent Buzhardt back to see the President to make sure there was no political purpose.

"CIA?" Buchanan asked knowingly.

"Yeah."

Haig told him what was on the tape. "What do you think he should do?" he asked.

Buchanan's response was quick and strong. "I think he's gotta resign."

"Basically you've come to the same conclusion everybody else has," said Haig. "The President is thinking of doing it Monday. Twice this week he came down on the side of resignation and then backed off again. Ray has been working on a resignation speech."

Buchanan asked to see a transcript of the tape. As they waited for it, they talked about what a resignation speech might say. "The President cannot state, 'I'm doing this to spare the country the agony of impeachment'," Buchanan argued. "We have to let our own people and everybody else know why it had to be done—because of what's on the tape, because he lied."

The transcript arrived. As Buchanan read the actual words Haldeman and the President had spoken, he gave vent to his anger by banging his fist on the table and exclaiming, "Jesus Christ!"

Haig's buzzer sounded. It was the President. He wanted the transcript sent up to him immediately.

Joulwan grabbed the sheaf of papers from Buchanan and went out. He came back a few minutes later with a single Xerox copy and gave it to Buchanan to finish reading.

Buchanan looked up finally and said, "He has to resign."

When the 45-minute meeting ended, Buchanan returned to his office. His wife, Shelley, was waiting for him. "It's all over," he told her. He suggested that they head for a bar and mark the occasion with a "good old Irish reaction."

Since late spring, David and Julie Eisenhower had lived nearly half the time in the White House. They had virtually moved in after the President's return from San Clemente on July 28. Their lives were built around Nixon and his defense. Though Watergate was not often discussed, it dominated life in the residence. Nixon had conveyed to them his fear that he would, in the end, lose.

Early Friday afternoon, David had had a long lunch with Bebe Rebozo in the third-floor solarium, a large informal room with huge picture windows and a broad view of the Washington Monument, the Jefferson Memorial and the Potomac River. Rebozo was forlorn. He raised the question of resignation, the pros and cons for the President if he quit voluntarily.

Rebozo rarely discussed the situation so openly. To David, that indicated a shifting in Nixon's attitude.

Was it worth it for Nixon to fight this thing through the Senate? Rebozo asked, and he struggled for the answer. He didn't know. He was trying to think through the sequence of events that had permitted Watergate to swell to such dimen-

Scott told Ford, 'You're all we've got now'

sions. There was very little bitterness in his voice—just bewilderment, and disgust at the lawyers. For Rebozo, they were the source of much of the difficulty. What was truly amazing, he concluded, was the President's strength, the fact that he was still around after all that had happened.

It was a thought that had worried David. The President was passive, despondent. For months, David had been "waiting for Mr. Nixon to go bananas," as he sometimes phrased it. He and Julie had discussed it. David thought the President might commit suicide. Nixon's political life *was* his life—totally. And now it was going, even Mr. Nixon could see that in his clearer moments. David seemed convinced he would never leave the White House alive.

'It's over,' Nixon told his son-in-law. He continued to gaze into the fire.

That evening, at about 6:30, David was in his comparative-law class at George Washington University when a message came to call his wife at once. David went to a phone.

"I want you home," Julie said.

David said he would be right there. "Home" meant the White House, and his wife's tenseness revealed a great deal. David rushed back to class, stuffed his books and papers into his briefcase, and walked five blocks to the White House.

When he got there, he went upstairs to see Julie. She had talked with her father. "Daddy says it's all over."

David went down the hall to the Lincoln Sitting Room, where he found the President and Rebozo. The President still had his dark-blue suit and tie on. The air conditioner was on high, and, as usual, a fire was burning in the fireplace. The President sat staring into it, his feet up on an ottoman. It was a moment before he realized that David was in the room.

"It's over," Nixon told his son-in-law. "We've got to decide by Monday night whether to get out of here." Then his voice trailed off. He continued to gaze into the fire.

"Why is it over?" David asked.

There was a new tape, the President replied. The question of flight or fight had to be decided by Monday because the transcript would be released then.

Nixon picked up the phone and called Haig. He wanted the transcript sent up. The President turned to David. The transcript would explain the situation, he said quietly.

When it arrived, David and Julie took it to another room. Rebozo, Tricia Cox and Mrs. Nixon moved in and out of the Lincoln Sitting Room, almost in shifts.

As he read the transcript now, David was convinced it was over, either by impeachment or by resignation. Julie did not express disagreement, though she was not ready to agree either. They went back to the Lincoln Sitting Room, and David went to the President's side.

"It's been my feeling that we're not as innocent as we said, or as guilty as they said," David said.

Nixon did not react; he kept looking into the fire.

The President had shared his office with the family. They were there when decisions were made. Now they were trying as a family to come to grips with impeachment or resignation. They searched for a frame of reference. Was it like being on the losing side on election eve? Or like Charles I, were they being beheaded? "Or are we the Romanovs?" David wondered aloud.

It was the President himself who pointed out the hard realities. Impeachment was now a certainty, he said, and removal by the Senate a probability. The family had to be prepared for that. Then he lapsed into silence.

David, sitting with his back to the fireplace, could see the flames reflected in Nixon's glazed eyes. The President looked sad and broken. David had never seen him look so bad.

The phone rang and Nixon picked it up. The conversation was brief. "I wish he hadn't said that," the President said, and turned around to report that Haig had just told him Buchanan's reaction to the June 23 tape. "Pat thinks it's fatal," the President reported. "He reacted the way I expected he would." And he stared once again into the fire.

About 9 o'clock, Ed Cox arrived and was given the transcript to read. The tape, he said, "is not that conclusive." Cox's approach was calm and lawyerly. "Don't hurry," he advised. He sounded almost optimistic at times as the talk moved back and forth from one family member to another.

Julie stressed again and again her fear that her father would wake up some morning regretting it if he didn't see it through. There was no need to resign yet. Besides, the transcript hadn't even been released. Even if it meant conviction, she added, the right course might be to fight through a Senate trial.

David thought this fireside conversation was the death knell. Yet, largely out of consideration for Julie and her father, he softened his judgment, painted a brighter picture than he saw. Mr. Nixon should not be swayed by the probable effect of the transcript, only by what he thought was the right thing to do. And whatever he chose to do, David added, they would all support him. He had come up with brilliant strokes before. There was always a chance he could do it again, even now.

Rebozo offered no opinions; he simply repeated what others said. He looked stricken and tired.

Mrs. Nixon said very little. The others were extremely solicitous of her feelings, sensitive to the fact that she had never been very happy, certainly not during her time in Washington.

Whenever anyone raised the possibility that he could survive the tape, Nixon tensed. It was over, he insisted. He seemed fearful that the others were bending over backward to be considerate because they thought the tape was so damning. Their reactions seemed only to intensify his pain. No, he repeated, they all had to see that it was the end.

Yet part of Nixon wanted to fight. Quitting would be interpreted as a blanket admission of guilt, he said, an acknowledgment of all that his enemies had accused him of—"*all they said about us*." He wouldn't have that. The immediate question was what "they"—the Congress and the press—would do with the transcript. Perhaps there was still a way to prevail, to make "the best speech of my life." But he seemed to reject the prospect even as he mentioned it.

Normally, Nixon followed a conversation carefully with his eyes, back and forth, boring in on whoever was talking or being addressed. Not this night. David thought Mr. Nixon seemed almost tranquilized. He talked quietly, leaving thoughts unfinished, avoiding all eyes. As it grew late, his manner became more disjointed. He seemed on the verge of coming apart.

The President started reminiscing. It was the most difficult moment of all, a signal that he was capitulating. He talked about their early days in the White House—the foreign-policy initiatives, Tricia's wedding, the White House itself, its history, its comforts, the friends, the staff, the parties. One memory unlocked the next. But there was no mention of anything since June 17, 1972, not even the triumph of the reelection victory.

It was nearly midnight when the conversation finally stopped dead of its own weight. The question was unresolved, at least in any explicit way.

"I am deferring my decision for now," Nixon finally said. "We'll get together in the morning and decide this."

He picked up the phone by his side and called Haig. Nothing had been decided, he said. The others left and Richard Nixon was alone by the fire again.

Continued Next Week