

A New Account of How Nixon Was Determined to Hang On

New York

As the world around him was caving in during his last week as president, Richard Nixon was still convinced he had not committed an impeachable offense and was determined to "fight it out," Newsweek magazine reported yesterday.

But some of Mr. Nixon's top staff members, including White House Chief of Staff Alexander Haig, sought ways to show Mr. Nixon that resignation was the only way out.

"If I knew there was an impeachable offense, I would not make the Senate go through the agony of trying to prove it," the Newsweek article quotes Mr. Nixon as telling a meeting of his Cabinet on August 6, 1974, three days before he resigned. "I will go through this with my head high — right up to the end, if it comes."

The Newsweek article is the second installment of excerpts from the new book, "The Final Days," by Washington Post reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein.

The authors' disclosures of high-level complicity in the Watergate scandal won a Pulitzer prize for the newspaper.

Newsweek's first installment painted a picture of a broken Richard Nixon in his last days, drinking too much, crying and threatening suicide. The assertions were disputed by Mr. Nixon's son-in-law, Edward Cox and David Eisenhower, who said they saw nothing to indicate Mr. Nixon was mentally unstable in his final days in office.

In the final excerpts, Mr. Nixon

is shown as steadfastly against resigning, outraged at suggestions that he quit and angry with the press for "haunting" him.

The article also tells of futile attempts by Nixon aides H. R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman to obtain pardons from Mr. Nixon for their part in the Watergate affair. The article says Haldeman's request to Haig for a pardon from Mr. Nixon "sounded as if Haldeman was warning that he would send Nixon to jail if he didn't get a pardon."

Mr. Nixon's wife, Pat, is portrayed as depressed and her strength sapped by the Watergate scandal. His daughters, Julie and Tricia, are described as close-minded to their father resigning. Their husbands, however, agreed with Haig that their father-in-law should resign.

The article says that during Mr. Nixon's last days, then Vice President Ford "seemed matter-of-fact and somewhat removed," expecting Mr. Nixon to resign and himself to become president.

On Haldeman's request for a pardon, the article says that Mr. Nixon told Haig he wanted more time to think about it and asked Haig to consult his lawyers.

It gives the following account of meetings Haig had on August 7 with White House counsel Leonard Garment, aide Fred Buzhardt and Mr. Nixon's chief Watergate counsel James St. Clair:

Haig first met with Garment and told him of Haldeman's request.

"Totally out of the question," Garment is reported as having said.

"It would be grotesque. It would be saying to hell with the system, with justice. It would bring the roof down."

Haig told Garment that Mr. Nixon felt pardons for everyone connected with Watergate would allow him to assume the full burden of Watergate.

"He (Nixon) felt responsible for the plight of his old friends," Haig reportedly said.

Haig and Garment then met with Buzhardt and St. Clair.

Haig told them that he was "negative" on the subject of pardons with Mr. Nixon, but that Haldeman had tried to get directly through to Nixon and that he (Haig) had intercepted the call.

Haig was afraid Haldeman would find a way to get through to Mr. Nixon, the article says.

"That criminal has asked for a pardon," Haig is quoted as telling

Garment, Buzhardt and St. Clair.

"Well," St. Clair reportedly responded, "maybe pardons should be considered."

"St. Clair was soon persuaded that they should urge the President to reject the request," the article says.

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