

Some in White House Mised terHorst, Friends Say in Explaining Why He Quit

By MARJORIE HUNTER

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 9—J. F. terHorst's abrupt resignation as Presidential press secretary was described today by close friends as having been prompted, at least in part, by his feeling that he had been misled by certain White House officials.

These friends said that Mr. terHorst felt that his credibility as the chief Presidential spokesman had been damaged when he was assured by these officials some days earlier that there was nothing to reports that President Ford intended to pardon former President Richard M. Nixon.

Mr. terHorst resigned yesterday morning, just an hour or so before President Ford announced that he had granted Mr. Nixon an unconditional pardon for all Federal crimes that he "committed or may have committed or taken part in" while in office.

'Cover Stories'

Just a few days earlier, several reporters had told Mr. terHorst that they had learned that Mr. Ford was preparing to pardon Mr. Nixon. Mr. terHorst questioned several of Mr. Ford's close advisers, it was learned today, and was told by them there was nothing to such reports.

Mr. terHorst relayed this to the reporters, only to discover on Saturday that the President would announce the pardon decision on Sunday.

While refusing today to say that he had been "lied to," Mr. terHorst said that certain White House staff members had used what he called "cover stories" on several occasions when he sought to obtain information for reporters. He did not identify these staff members.

Mr. terHorst resumed work today for The Detroit News as a columnist. He had taken a leave of absence as bureau chief of the newspaper's Washington bureau upon becoming White House press secretary nearly a month ago.

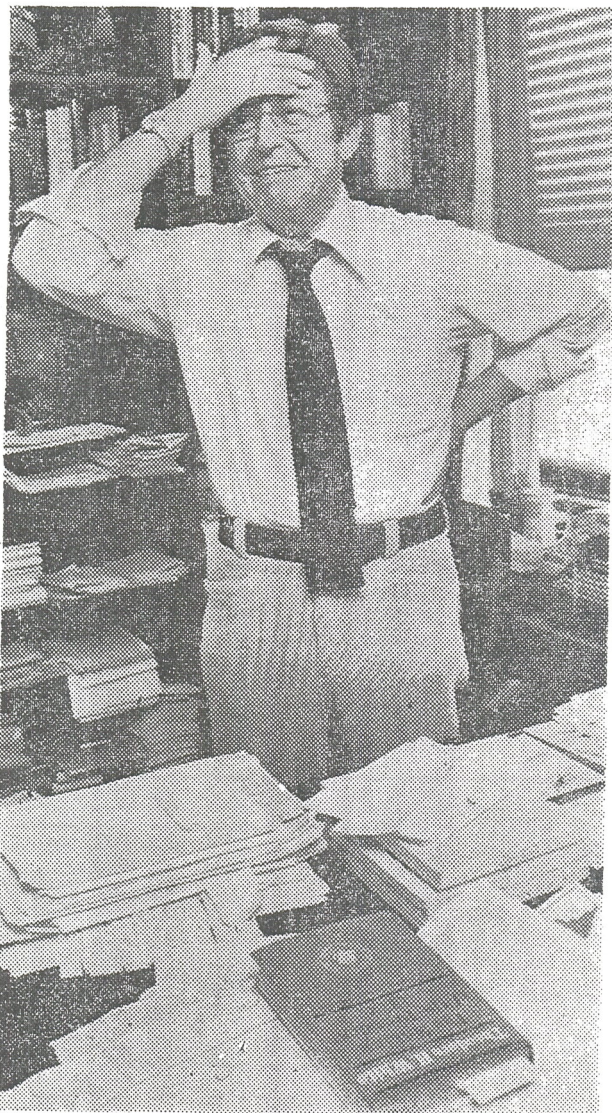
The job of principal press spokesman for the President is being handled, at least temporarily, by John W. Huschen, who served under Mr. terHorst as deputy press secretary.

In becoming press secretary last month, Mr. terHorst assured reporters that he would attempt to restore candor to the White House news operation. His predecessor, Ronald L. Ziegler, chief spokesman for former President Nixon, had been criticized extensively for misleading reporters.

'Completely Open'

Those close to Mr. terHorst said today that several recent incidents convinced him that he was not being told all the facts that he needed to operate what he and President Ford had pledged would be "completely open" White House.

Just a week ago, Mr. terHorst



United Press International

J. F. terHorst back at work in the Washington bureau of The Detroit News yesterday after resigning Sunday as the White House press secretary.

was asked about rumors that Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr. would be leaving his job as White House chief staff. Mr. terHorst denied the rumors, saying that General Haig would not leave "in the foreseeable future."

Just a day later, two high Administration officials disclosed that General Haig was being considered for appointment as supreme commander of NATO and United States forces in Europe.

Mr. terHorst informed reporters last week that a White House meeting attended by George Bush and other top Republican leaders had been a routine gathering to discuss political matters. A day later, it

was announced that Mr. Bush, chairman of the Republican National Committee, had been named United States envoy to China.

Early this morning, outside his Virginia home, Mr. terHorst said he did not think the President was aware that his press secretary was not being kept fully informed.

"He just assumed that as press secretary, I was getting the full briefing on what was about to occur, even if it might not be politically ready to announce or administratively ready to announce," Mr. terHorst said.

Had Sought Frankness

"But it was a situation where people on the White House staff thought that what you don't know won't hurt the press secretary Mr. terHorst continued. "Well, it may not hurt the press secretary, but it might hurt the press reception

to the eventual story that is going to come out."

Mr. terHorst said that he had hoped to persuade other senior White House staff members that "by being frank with me, I could do a better job of talking to the press."

He elaborated on why he could not support Mr. Ford's decision to pardon Mr. Nixon. "Well, as I've said, if justice is to be even-handed and administered to the rich and the poor, the weak and the powerful alike, then mercy, I thought, when administered by a President who sets the tone for the country, also should be an act of similar kind," he said.

He felt it would be "a little awkward" for him as press secretary to defend an absolute pardon for a former President "but only a conditional pardon for young men who had fled to Canada to escape Vietnam as an act of conscience," he said.