

KEY POSTS OPEN

President Faces Task of Reshaping Staff at White House

NYTimes MAY 1 1973

By JOHN HERBERS

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 30 —

President Nixon, having received the resignations of his two top assistants as a result of the Watergate scandal, was faced today with having to reshape the White House staff and find a way for his Administration to maintain its credibility.

The President was urged by Republican leaders around the country to name a chief of staff who has been in no way implicated in the allegations of political sabotage and who has an impeccable record for public service.

Mr. Nixon's decision to accept the resignations of his two aides was made over the weekend in the isolation of his mountaintop retreat at Camp David, Md., as both his friends and foes waited and wondered what he would do.

It was a characteristic performance for the 60-year-old President, who has prided himself on his handling of many crisis in his long political career. There was evidence that this one was filled with as much personal trauma as any in the past.

Mr. Nixon began his retreat Friday evening after the Watergate disclosures rocked the White House all week, culminating in the resignation of L. Patrick Gray 3d as acting director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the President's hurried appointment of William D. Ruckelshaus as a temporary replacement.

Key Aides Left Behind

The President went by helicopter with his usual security force and his Irish setter, King Timahoe. Among those left behind were his close confidants of his four and a half years in the Presidency—H. R. Haldeman, the White House chief of staff, and John D. Ehrlichman, his chief domestic adviser, men he characterized today as "two of my closest friends and most trusted assistants."

All week there had been indications that Mr. Nixon hoped to ride out the scandals of political espionage with Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman in place. They accompanied him on a trip to Mississippi on Friday, and several White House sources said that the two men had been attempting to hold their jobs.

But the pressures from Republican leaders around the country for dismissal of all major officials who had been mentioned in the Watergate case or were responsible for

Continued on Page 31, Column 1

Continued From Page 1, Col. 7

White House involvement had become great.

For much of the weekend, the President was reported to be in seclusion at the wooded retreat in the Catoctin Mountains, 70 miles from the White House, with only King Timahoe for company.

Then, on Saturday evening, things began to happen. The President called for his personal secretary, Rose Mary Woods, an indication that he might be preparing a statement in the Watergate case.

Yesterday, the helicopter traffic was heavy between the White House and Camp David. First, Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman flew up and conferred with the President. So did Richard G. Kleindienst, the Attorney General, who had not been implicated in the scandals but who had personal and professional relations with some who were. Elliot L. Richardson, the Secretary of Defense, was called off a Washington tennis court and whisked to the mountaintop.

Morning Announcement

Then this morning, shortly before noon, Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, appearing harried and shaken, announced that the President had accepted the resignations of Mr. Haldeman, Mr. Ehrlichman, Mr. Kleindienst and John W. Dean 3d, the White House counsel; that he had appointed Mr. Richardson as Attorney General; and that the President was going on radio and television to discuss the matter.

The White House left the impression that, while Mr. Dean had been dismissed outright,

Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman had agreed in their meeting with the President to resign with Mr. Nixon's good wishes. It was understood, however, that Mr. Ehrlichman was more agreeable to leaving than was Mr. Haldeman, the man who had directed the White House staff with stern efficiency and had wielded more influence there than any other aide.

Agents Are Cautious

White House sources said later that although the decision had been extremely painful to the President, he had had little choice in agreeing to the dismissals. His aides' prestige had been so damaged that the work of the White House staff had been seriously impaired.

One sign of this came from the Secret Service, whose agents guard the President. A few days ago, agents said today, the word spread from superiors that they were to stay aloof from all White House staff members and avoid the friendly social discourse that marked their relations in the past.

'Creativity' in Crises

According to students of Richard Nixon, his handling of this crisis followed the pattern that he described in his book, "Six Crises," published in 1962 and that was observed by others in his years in the Presidency—first his decision to take on the crisis, then a period of isolation in which he makes up his mind and braces for the combat ahead, then the offensive to win over public opinion.

"Meeting crises involves creativity," Mr. Nixon wrote in the introduction of his book.