

End of Era in Nixon Presidency

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By **ROBERT B. SEMPLE Jr.**
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WASHINGTON, April 30 — The resignations of H. R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman from President Nixon's senior staff clearly mark the end of one era of the Nixon Presidency and the beginning of another. Things simply will not be the same. The question is how much different they will be. The few men who remain in the President's suddenly shrunken entourage do not believe that the scandals of the moment will have much impact on Mr. Nixon's own personality. His habits are well entrenched, and any future White House operation will reflect the style of its master.

But there are some here

now, in the White House and on Capitol Hill, who hope that Mr. Nixon will seize what they sense to be a rare opening to redesign his relationships with Congress, the bureaucracy, and even the press. They hope to increase his access to others and theirs to him, to replace the closed corporation that the White House had become with the "open Presidency" to which he once aspired, and to return to his own first principles by decentralizing some of the power that has steadily flowed from the Government agencies to a few key decision-makers in the White House.

Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman helped design that system, ran the system and, in time, came to symbolize the system. Their Teutonic names and mutual zeal for efficient

execution gave rise to many jokes. Their enemies called them Hans and Fritz; their friends simply teased them.

In Mr. Ehrlichman's office on the second floor of the White House is a copy of Daniel P. Moynihan's "Understanding Poverty," which carries this inscription: "For John Ehrlichman. Achtung! D.P.M."

But their power was no joke. They were men with long ties and easy access to the President, men of loyalty, men who transmitted Mr. Nixon's orders to the bureaucracy and to whom, with few exceptions, Mr. Nixon's Cabinet members were forced to report before winning humble access to the Oval Office.

In all areas other than foreign policy, where Henry A.

Continued on Page 32, Column 6

Continued From Page 1, Col. 8

Kissinger retains primary influence, they dominated the White House, and in giving them their release Mr. Nixon has released part of his own political history.

What remains is only a shadow of the old superstructure. The members of Mr. Ehrlichman's staff at the Domestic Council, which he directed in his role as the President's chief domestic adviser, departed earlier this year for other jobs in the Federal Government. Perhaps ironically, it was one of Mr. Ehrlichman's intentions in thus dispersing his staff to create an informal network of "old boys" who could help him bend an often cantankerous bureaucracy more nearly to Mr. Nixon's will.

Many of Mr. Haldeman's staffers left the White House last year to assume key posts at the re-election campaign committee, where some of them, including Jeb S. Magruder, found themselves floundering in the Watergate mess. Other important members of the staff resigned; still others took posts overseas.

Few Are Survivors

The list of important survivors is not long. There is Ronald L. Ziegler, the press secretary. There is Leonard Garment, the new counsel. There is Peter M. Flanigan, who advises on foreign economic policy. There is Dr. Kissinger. Most of the rest occupy relatively trivial jobs.

Mr. Haldeman built the Nixon staff and, when he fell, it seemed to fall with him. Conversely, those who were denied access to Mr. Nixon's inner circle or to whom Mr. Haldeman assigned less important

tasks have so far escaped the widening net of Watergate.

On the whole, Mr. Haldeman preferred men in his own image—tidy in habit and conservative in mind. He began his relationship with Mr. Nixon as an advance man, directed his 1962 campaign for Governor of California, and accompanied him as chief adviser on the road in 1968. He looked upon himself not as an "issues" man but as a technician and organizer, and the young men he hired and promoted met the same qualifications.

Shunted to Lesser Posts

Those who did not, or who were too friendly with the press, or possessed some other deficiency, soon found themselves in lesser posts or no posts at all. Robert F. Ellsworth, now an international banker in New York, was eased out of the White House in 1969 into an ambassadorial post to make way for Mr. Flanigan, a Haldeman intimate. Those with a reputation for being preoccupied with "issues" either left the campaign before the election of 1968 or were shunted to speech writing jobs afterwards.

The net result was a visible shrinkage in the variety of views and voices available to the President. The White House had its share of fierce debates, but they were, on the whole, internalized—Mr. Nixon did not enjoy public discussion of the options available to him. And after 1970, when the conservative Dr. Arthur F. Burns had left the White House to head the Federal Reserve Board, and the liberal Mr. Moynihan returned to Harvard, policy discussions seemed to grow more tactical and less substantive.

The staff system reinforced the homogenizing process. At

its apex stood Mr. Haldeman; below him were a variety of councils, subcommittees and study groups. Ultimately, everything produced at lower levels passed through Mr. Haldeman's hand.

So, too, did requests for a personal audience with the President. It was a Haldeman functionary, for example, who informed Walter J. Hickel, then the Interior Secretary, that he could not see Mr. Nixon. It was a Haldeman functionary who, time and again, gave the same answers to George Romney, then Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Mr. Ehrlichman was a crucial link in this system, for it was he who screened all domestic proposals before delivering them to Mr. Haldeman. The Moynihan-Burns debate of 1969 over welfare policy had offended both Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman as well as the President, and when Roy L. Ash of Litton Industries, Inc., was called to Washington to redesign the Executive Office and bring a sense of order to the policy-making process, Mr. Haldeman, who recruited Mr. Ash, made certain that there was a prominent place in the final design for his old college classmate, Mr. Ehrlichman.

Have Much in Common

Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman have much in common. Both are Christian Scientists and strong family men. Both work hard. Both shared the same goal—the preservation of Mr. Nixon's political future. And both possess a low opinion of the press, the bureaucracy and Congress.

But there were differences that should not be lost sight of in their simultaneous fall from

grace. Mr. Haldeman always insisted that he did not try to shape the President's thinking on substantive issues. Mr. Ehrlichman did try, and, while his views were generally conservative, he also fought against those who urged the President to stop school busing by a constitutional amendment and, vainly, against liberalized abortion laws.

And until the final days, Mr. Ehrlichman always reserved some time on his calendar for reporters who wished to talk about domestic issues. Mr. Haldeman was largely inaccessible from the outset. That was the way he conceived his role, and his conceptions never changed.

Objects of Blame

Yet, together, despite their differences, they came to symbolize the insularity of the White House staff and to be blamed for the isolation of the President himself.

In time, when both men feel confident enough to reminisce about their roles, they may well argue that the way they operated and the structure they created reflected no more than Mr. Nixon's own twin passions for order and solitude—that they were Mr. Nixon's creature's rather than the other way around.

If that is so, then any major changes in the way the White House does business with the outside world will depend less on the new faces Mr. Nixon installs in their place than on Mr. Nixon himself. The reshuffling of men like Leonard Garment, Elliott L. Richardson, and William D. Ruckelshaus is taken here as a hopeful sign, because all of them seem to be at ease with the press and Congress. But more fundamental changes must await Mr. Nixon's decision.