

Partial transcript, from tape

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Helen Thomas: General, didn't the President really precipitate the kind of thing, the reaction and so forth, of last Saturday night a week ago when he fired Cox ?

Gen. Haig: Let me say a word about your reference to our miscalculation of the events of Saturday night. I think it's quite important that all of us understand just what these events were The weekend preceding this situation, the President concluded - and quite painfully - that the time had come for him to abandon, in this particular instance, his long-held conviction that he had a responsibility as the President of the United States, to protect the prerogatives of this office, not only for himself but for future Presidents. But two events, two circumstances, led him to conclude that the time had come to put an end to what was now being described as an impending Constitutional confrontation. Recognizing ... that the stage was being set for an increasing confrontation environment, the President felt that the time had come to make a Herculean effort to provide to both the courts, and the Senate committee, precisely what they had been asking for and, in other words, to remove the point of confrontation on this issue.

.... And I must say that the collective judgments of Senator Stennis, of Senator Ervin, of Senator Baker, and of the Attorney General, the then Attorney General of the United States, was that this was a very fair and very just solution to this agonizing problem. Now what was not anticipated, what was not anticipated, by any of the participants in this negotiated settlement, was the position taken by Professor Cox, in which he himself - for his own reasons - decided that he could not participate in this kind of a compromise. And rather than resigning, or perhaps accepting it for the moment and waiting for the next issue to arise to have his view prevail, he chose instead, before the entire Washington press corps, at one o'clock last Saturday, to challenge the President's order to him to cease and desist, not from obtaining the information which he had thus far claimed he needed, which was to be provided to him in this compromise, but rather to insist on a carte blanche ability in the future to demand further personal Presidential tapes and memoranda covering Presidential conversations.

Dan Rather: General Haig, if Special Prosecutor Cox or any other special prosecutor is to get to the bottom of Watergate and related crimes, doesn't he have to have the carte blanche to call for such things as White House logs and the kind of memoranda that Special Prosecutor Cox said that was an absolute necessity?

Gen. Haig: Dan, I'm glad you asked that question because I think there was some bad misunderstanding coming out of Professor Cox's press conference. First, I want to make it very clear, as the Attorney General has and as we have, repeatedly: we've made a great deal of information and material available to Professor Cox and his investigating team from the outset. Where the President has taken issue with Professor Cox has been on the subject of those limited documents involving personal discussions by the President himself, and memoranda covering the substance of those discussions. All of the other data has been provided. Now Professor Cox raised the question that he had never been able to get the logs of meetings between the President and Mr. Chapin and Mr. Hunt and Mr. Liddy and Mr. Strachan.* Here again, Professor Cox knew very well there had been no such meetings, and he had been told that repeatedly by the President's counsel. And yet the American people were led to believe on Saturday that for some reason these logs were not being made available. There were no logs.

Dan Rather:

* See transcript, Cox, National Press Club, 20 Oct 73