

Goldwater's Visit: 'Not Whether But When'

President Nixon's problem with his own party has become downright cruel. The best symbol of the problem is Sen. Barry Goldwater of Arizona, whom the President openly regards as the indispensable conservative leader in his fight against impeachment and conviction.

By a great many other Republicans, Sen. Goldwater is instead regarded as the one man who would have the best chance of persuading the President to leave the White House voluntarily. In consequence, near-mob scenes have occurred recently, when private errands have taken Sen. Goldwater to the House of Representatives.

By now, in fact, an extraordinarily high number of the Republican House members have begged Sen. Goldwater to do his best to secure the President's early resignation. Furthermore, one can be pretty sure of something more. In brief, the big remaining question is probably not whether but when Sen. Goldwater will make the grim visit to the White House that so many Republicans have been insistently nagging him to make.

The fact that the question is not whether but when is both certain and plain from the record. To begin with, Sen. Goldwater has already publicly stated that it will be the President's duty to resign, rather than put the country through the wrenching experience of a long Senate trial, if the House of Representatives votes a bill of impeachment by a solid majority.

Behind the scenes, moreover, Sen. Goldwater and the other congressional leader the President most depends upon, Rep. John Rhodes of Arizona, began arguing on the basis of not whether but when some time ago. This remarkable fact is now an open secret in the Republican Party's Watergate-sickened inner circle.

House Minority Leader Rhodes is almost as important to the President as his friend and fellow Arizonan, Sen. Goldwater, simply because the congressman speaks for the same party group as the senator. Judging from contemptuous presidential remarks in the transcripts of the White House tapes, the President would be strongly disinclined to heed advice from the Senate minority leader, Hugh Scott of



Pennsylvania. But Sen. Goldwater and Rep. Rhodes form a team the President can hardly brush aside any longer.

One must note that "any longer," however, in fact, it is also known that when Sen. Goldwater and Rep. Rhodes began to talk about the need for the President to resign some time ago they both agreed that it was useless to advise resignation at that time. This was precisely because they also agreed that the advice would then be brushed aside.

It is fairly evident that Sen. Goldwater's public statement above-quoted suggests the result of these first Rhodes-Goldwater strategy discussions. The decision evidently was to urge the President to resign, if and when his impeachment had been voted in the House. Now, however, the President's situation has deteriorated much fur-

ther, and the despair in Republican ranks has correspondingly risen to new levels.

Thus it is not at all evident that a deputation urging the President's resignation will be delayed until the House vote on impeachment. If the present trend in the House is not reversed, Rep. Rhodes will have a positive duty to report to the President that the House Judiciary Committee will pretty surely produce a bipartisan majority favoring impeachment, thereby ensuring a large pro-impeachment majority on the House floor.

Already, these are the expected results in the House. As to the second round of the dire process, Sen. Goldwater is known to believe that the Senate will vote to convict the President if the House produces a large pro-impeachment majority. He too will have a positive duty to tell the President this in plain words. For these harsh

purposes, a quiet visit to the White House may perhaps be made as early as mid-June, on present prospects.

In sum, on present prospects there is no longer much doubt that the President will rather soon be advised to resign by those members of his party whose help he needs the most. As on so many other previous occasions in the long Watergate history, the President has sworn that he will never, never, never accept such advice. On all those previous occasions, the President later changed his mind when the going got too rough.

What he will do if and when the expected Republican visitors quietly approach him is still anyone's guess, of course. Yet it seems hard to believe that he will cling to office after being told that the party leaders he most relies upon can do nothing further to help or save him.