

NIXON TELLS CABINET HE'LL

15

STAY AND LET LEGAL PROCESS DECIDE; SUPPORT IN CONGRESS VANISHING

TOP AIDES RALLY

AUG 7 1974
President Is Viewed as
Fighting to the End
Despite Losses
NYTimes

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 6—
Despite a massive loss of support within his own Republican party in Congress, President Nixon told his Cabinet today that he would not resign but would remain in office while the constitutional process of impeachment ran its course.

In a 90-minute meeting with Vice President Ford, department heads and his top aides, Mr. Nixon was reported to have described with feeling the trouble he is in—and with a realization of its gravity.

"But he's not a quitter," said one official who was there. "He feels he's got to fight it and he's going to go to the full constitutional process."

Yet, in a rash of statements flowing from the meeting, no one suggested that Mr. Nixon thought that he would win, simply that he would stick it out through the Senate trial in the belief he had not committed an impeachment offense.

The Feeling in Congress

As he spoke, a growing number of his political friends, both Representatives and Senators, were openly advocating impeachment.

The meeting of a scare of participants including the Republican National Chairman, George Bush, was called by the President to shore up support within his own Administration after he issued a statement yesterday admitting he has ordered a halt to the investigation of the Watergate break-in and that he had kept the evidence from his lawyers and the House Judiciary Committee's impeachment inquiry.

No one at the Cabinet meeting suggested that he resign or took issue with his analysis of the situation, it was reported. Instead, they reportedly rallied behind him in his request that Administration leaders work harder than ever to operate the Government during the impeachment process.

Kissinger Statement

Secretary of State Kissinger, underscoring the seriousness of the matter, told reporters later that everyone should understand that the nation's foreign policy continued on a bipartisan basis "in the national interest and the interest of world peace."

"When questions of peace and war are involved," he said, "no foreign government should have any doubts about the way in which our foreign policy will be conducted."

Treasury Secretary William E. Simon, who emerged first from the meeting and was besieged by reporters on the White House driveway, said that Mr. Nixon was totally

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dedicated to the task of running the country, especially with controlling inflation, which Mr. Nixon told his subordinates he continued to regard as the nation's No. 1 issue.

"We've got a country to run," Mr. Simon said, with a tone of irritation about the questions on impeachment. "Let's not have this tragedy obscure the fact that we have a lot of determined people at work."

Talk of Foreign-Affairs

The impeachment proceedings and Mr. Nixon's unsettling admissions made yesterday took up only a few minutes at the beginning of the meeting, participants said. After that, the meeting settled into a discussion of foreign and domestic matters, as have previous Cabinet meetings when the Nixon Presidency was not in the process of being shattered, as it seemed to many in Washington to be today.

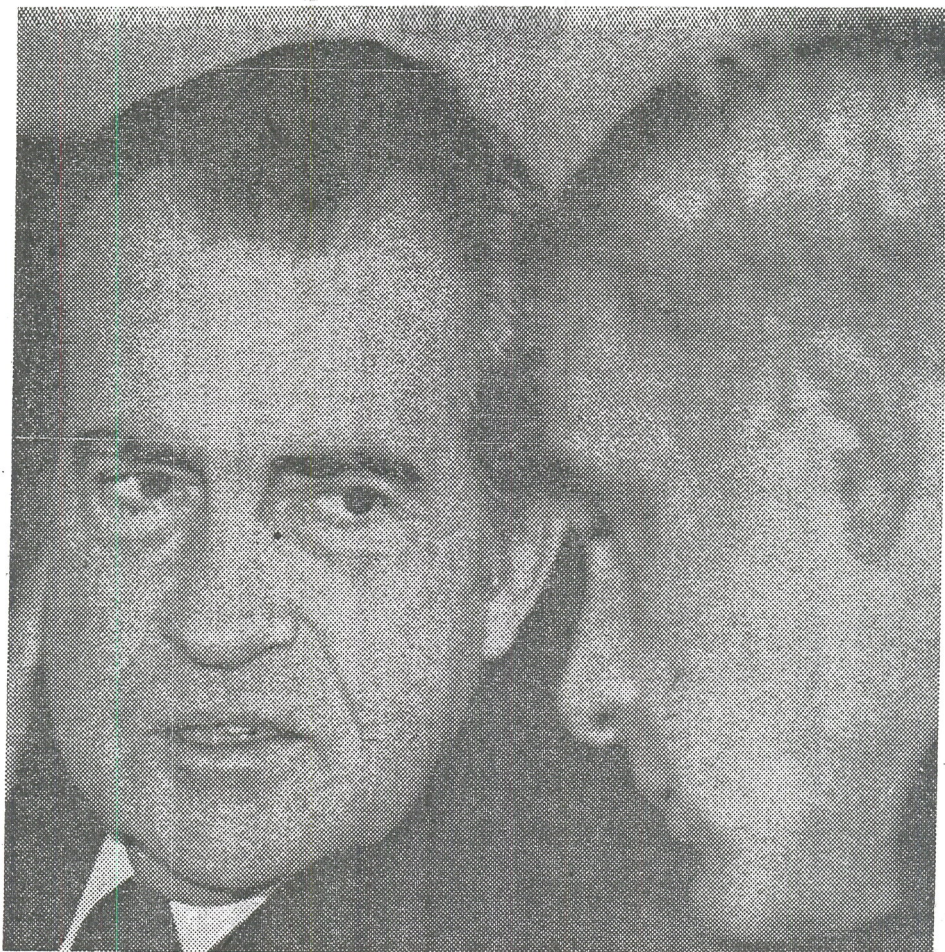
Throughout the day, the Nixon officials seemed to be making an extraordinary effort to show that they were conducting business as usual. When photographers crowded into the Cabinet Room before the session began, Mr. Kissinger was making jokes and chatting with the President and others. The appearance of those assembled as that of just any Cabinet meeting.

Mr. Nixon was described by one aide as "very calm, strong" and never looked better and he as very low-keyed." Another participant, not a Presidential aide said that Mr. Nixon had appeared "concerned, shaken," but he added that at no time as there a tremble in the President's hands or voice.

Described as Determined

The unanimous opinion of those attending the meeting was that Mr. Nixon was set in his resolve to stay in office until removed.

"If he didn't go the full constitutional process it would be



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President Nixon and James R. Schlesinger, Secretary of Defense, during the meeting Mr. Nixon held with Vice President Ford, Cabinet members and other top associates.

admission of guilt," one official said in characterizing the president's resolve.

In his statement yesterday, Mr. Nixon said that, despite his admission and his release of transcripts of tape recordings showing his role in the Watergate cover-up, he did not believe that all the evidence, considered in "perspective," would justify the extreme step of impeachment and removal of the President.

This statement and his explanation to Cabinet members yesterday indicated that Mr. Nixon would base his defense in the impeachment trial not on the facts of the case but on the argument that his conviction and removal would do irreparable damage to the office of the Presidency.

Resignation Rejected

The possibility that Mr. Nixon might act under a section of the 25th Amendment and step aside temporarily while Vice President Ford would be Acting President was not discussed at the Cabinet meeting, according to several participants.

Gerald L. Warren, the President's spokesman, said at a news briefing that Mr. Nixon considered either resigning or invoking the 25th Amendment

after he decided to release the new evidence incriminating him in the Watergate cover-up. But he indicated that such considerations had been discarded rather hurriedly in favor of sticking by his resolve of many months to continue in office.

The decision was made Sunday at the Presidential retreat at Camp David, Md. After Mr. Nixon talked only to two top aides, Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., the White House chief of staff, and Ronald L. Ziegler, the press secretary. Mr. Nixon's attorney, James D. St. Clair, and two speech-writers, Patrick J. Buchanan and Raymond K. Price, went to Camp David but did not see the President. Mr. Buchanan, in a gathering of aides, reportedly said he thought Mr. Nixon should resign, but there was no indication that this recommendation was even conveyed to the President.

Thus, Mr. Nixon, as he has in the past, appeared to have made his own decision with only minimal advice from his staff. His explanation of his situation to the Cabinet today was made as an accomplished fact, not as a decision subject to change or an inviting of the opinions of his associates.

Feeling Is Unchanged

It was last May 11 that his daughter, Mrs. David Eisenhower, said in a news conference on the White House lawn that Mr. Nixon had told his family he would not resign so long as one Senator supported him.

"He said he would take this constitutionally down the wire," she said. "He said he would go to the Senate and he said if there is one Senator that believes in him, that is the way it would be. He believes in the Presidency. He believes this is the best way to handle the situation."

Apparently, in the opinion of those attending the meeting today, Mr. Nixon continues to feel that way despite the enormous erosion of support since May 11.

While this was the official line and while his aides outwardly backed him up in it, privately there was acknowledgement at the White House that the situation was subject to change.

Mr. Warren was not so positive today in his denials that Mr. Nixon would resign as he has been in the past. In response to repeated questions, Mr. Warren would no longer say flatly that Mr. Nixon would not resign but only that "he does not intend to resign."

Attorneys Held Upset

Aside from his troubles with Congress, there were persistent reports that his own attorneys were upset that he had withheld evidence from them. Several lawyers in Washington close to the case said Mr. St. Clair had threatened to resign over the issue. Mr. St. Clair would not discuss the reports with newsmen.

Mr. Warren denied that Mr. Nixon's decision to release the three tape recordings yesterday had been based on "any sort of ultimatum or anything like that" from Mr. St. Clair. He said they had been led to believe by Mr. St. Clair that he had insisted Mr. Nixon put in his statement the admission that he had withheld evidence.

Further, The Raleigh News and Observer quoted J. Malcolm Howard, a member of Mr. St. Clair's staff, as expressing reservations about the legal defense of Mr. Nixon.

"I'll be very candid," he was quoted as saying. "I don't know how we can defend the case on its merits."

A good deal of attention in the Cabinet meeting today was focused on Vice President Ford, who may soon be President. While Mr. Ford would not comment on what had occurred, he was reported by others as having explained his statement of yesterday, in which he said he would have no further comment on the impeachment case.

Mr. Warren and others said that Mr. Ford had backed the President's admonition to Cabinet members to work harder on Government performance and that he had reaffirmed his intention to continue his speaking tour to give leadership to the Republican party.

But there was no suggestion in the meeting, Mr. Warren said, that Mr. Ford would now assume more authority in the Government, but rather that the lines of authority would continue as they have.