

Farewell From The Oval Office

THE RESIGNATION of President Nixon is a tragedy for him, but it was undoubtedly the fastest-healing agent he could have applied to the body politic of America. Seen in that light, the solemn moment last evening which came with the words "... I shall resign the presidency at noon tomorrow" was a moment of departure on a new and hopeful course of the national life.

Gerald Ford, in a few hours to be the 38th President of the United States, will surely have, as he deserves at the outset, the "help and support of all of us" for which Mr. Nixon pleaded. The weight of responsibility that he shoulders is formidable. May his strength be equal to it.

THERE WAS NO MODEL for Mr. Nixon to pattern his resignation speech upon; no President had ever resigned. His farewell to the American people, which he had once dreamed of delivering in the triumph of the bicentennial year of 1976, was premature and pervaded with underlying sadness, yet it was magnanimous, calm and emotionally contained. And it was free of the self-serving note such as a younger Nixon sounded in the Checkers speech of 1952.

Those who were awaiting a confession of complicity in and contrition for the crimes of Watergate were of course disappointed; but there is no rule requiring that all the reasons for a presidential resignation must be set forth.

MR. NIXON SAID he had concluded to resign because he no longer had a strong enough political base in Congress — a fact made clear to everyone over the past few tumultuous days. It has left him incapable of governing, as well as hopeless of avoiding removal from office at the end of an agonizing impeachment and trial. So resignation, we feel, was the right way to resolve a leadership situation which had so far deteriorated as to leave the government of the nation floundering dangerously.

His achievements for the peace of the world were left as his "legacy to you," and indeed looking back on them, they are inestimable. They should sustain him in dark hours to come and they will be remembered in history.

As he said, he "failed while daring greatly." That is a consolation of which no one would deprive Richard Nixon.