

FORD OFFERS AMNESTY PROGRAM
REQUIRING 2 YEARS PUBLIC WORK;
DEFENDS HIS PARDON OF NIXON
examined.

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ANY 'DEAL' DENIED

President Asserts His
Only Motive Was to
'Heal the Wounds'

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 16—

President Ford declared tonight that his underlying motive in granting an absolute pardon to former President Richard M. Nixon had been to try to "reconcile divisions in our country and heal the wounds that had festered too long."

Mr. Ford, defending the pardon that he had issued eight days earlier, said at the second nationally televised news con-

Excerpts from Ford's news conference on Page 22.

ference of his young administration that there had been "no understanding, no deal" with Mr. Nixon in advance of the historic pardon.

Nor, he said, had the issue of Mr. Nixon's health been a central consideration, although he acknowledged that he had been aware of reports that Mr. Nixon was not well.

"I had no secret reason," Mr. Ford stated in reply to a question.

He said that Mr. Nixon had been "shamed and disgraced" by his resignation from the White House—the first such in the nation's two centuries—and that there were those who would construe the former President's acceptance of a

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pardon as "an admission of guilt."

But Mr. Ford sought, as he had last week in announcing the pardon, to present the grant of pardon to his predecessor in terms of an act of mercy. He noted that the news conference tonight occurred at the outset of the Jewish New Year celebration, Rosh haShanah, and said, in an opening statement, that the holiday was one in which past events and conduct were customarily re-

"The purpose of looking back is to go forward," Mr. Ford said. "The record of the past year does not have to be endlessly relived," he said moments later.

'To Heal Wounds'

He said that in issuing the pardon, "the main concern I had at the time I made the decision was to heal the wounds" left from the two-year ordeal of the Watergate scandal.

The nation, Mr. Ford insisted, "could not afford" a continuation of what he described as "continued turmoil." Although he acknowledged some concern about the health of the man who had chosen him, only last October, to be Vice President, saying that he received reports "on a routine day-to-day basis" on Mr. Nixon's health, Mr. Ford told the reporters gathered in the East Room of the White House and the nationwide audience that he was "more anxious to heal the nation" than to bolster Mr. Nixon's physical or mental well-being.

"I felt then and I feel now

that the action I took will do that," Mr. Ford said.

The announcement of the pardon and tapes plan, however, loosed a storm of criticism. The White House received thousands of telegrams, most of them highly critical of Mr. Ford's action.

Many expressed suspicion of a "deal" between Mr. Ford and Mr. Nixon under which the former President had stepped down in return for the promise of a pardon. There were also complaints that the President's moves were a "cover-up" of the Watergate crimes involving the White House.

Found Separate Standard

Critics also charged that Mr. Ford was using a separate standard of justice for Mr. Nixon and betraying the principle of equality before the law.

Public opinion polls indicated that the President's popularity dropped sharply after the announcement of his pardon decision.

The controversy was further exacerbated last week when a White House spokesman said that a pardon for all persons involved in Watergate-related crimes was under study. The White House later softened its statements on clemency for other Watergate figures and said that no pardons would be granted before trial, except to Mr. Nixon.

Act of Mercy'

On Sept. 8, a quiet Sunday one month after President Nixon resigned his high office, President Ford startled the nation by announcing that he was granting Mr. Nixon "a full and absolute pardon . . . for all offenses against the United

States which he, Richard Nixon, has committed or may have committed or taken part in during the period from Jan. 20, 1969, through Aug. 9, 1974."

The measure was described by the White House as an "act of mercy."

Mr. Ford also said that any long period of litigation involving Mr. Nixon would arouse "ugly passions" and would again cause the country to be polarized.

When the pardon was announced, the White House also disclosed that an agreement had been reached with Mr. Nixon under which he would eventually be permitted to destroy the tape recordings of his private conversations in the White House.

The agreement also provided, however, that his tapes and Presidential papers would have to be preserved for three years should they be required or asked as evidence in Watergate-related cases.

Ownership Given

In essence, however, the agreement gave Mr. Nixon ownership rights over the document and tapes.

Mr. Nixon promised as his part of the agreement to leave all his materials intact until Sept. 1, 1979, after which he can ask the administrator of the General Services Administration to destroy any tapes he specified. All remaining tapes would be destroyed under the agreement upon his death or on Sept. 1, 1984, whichever came first.

Until he granted the pardon, President Ford enjoyed high popularity and almost undiluted goodwill from the public, Congress and the press.

The state of Mr. Nixon's physical and mental health has been an issue in the controversy touched off by the pardon. Questions have arisen about whether or not he is seriously ill or in danger of dying. There have been other questions as to what has been said to President Ford about Mr. Nixon's health and by whom.

Haig View Reported

A report from San Clemente, Calif., today said that Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., who has served both Presidents Ford and Nixon as chief of staff, persuaded Mr. Ford to grant the pardon after being advised of the "alarming state" of Mr. Nixon's health.

In pardoning Mr. Nixon, President Ford said he was hoping to write "the end" to "an American tragedy in which we all have played a part."

So far, that has not been a result of the pardon. On the contrary, the action appears to have revived the anxieties of Watergate, in the view of many observers.

The decision perceptibly jolted the steady course Mr. Ford appeared to be setting in the first month of his presidency. His press secretary, J. F. terHorst, who had won wide respect among White House correspondents, resigned in protest over the action and the manner it was taken.

Mr. Ford announced the pardon only a week after he said at a news conference that he would not act before the Watergate special prosecutor had reached a decision on whether charges would be brought against Mr. Nixon. His abrupt reversal raised still more questions about the reasons for his decision.