

The Secrets Of Nixon's 'Final Days'

New York

Richard Nixon, shortly before he resigned as President in 1974 because of the Watergate scandal, was tormented with the idea of suicide, and he once complained, "I don't have a pistol," it was reported yesterday.

In his last days in office, Mr. Nixon drank too much despite his low tolerance of alcohol and was reportedly portrayed by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger as "our meatball President" who acted "like a madman," according to the report.

The report was published in
Back Page Col. 3

From Page 1

Newsweek magazine. In its next two issues Newsweek is carrying excerpts from a soon-to-be published book by Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, the Washington Post reporters credited with breaking the Watergate scandal. The book is titled "The Final Days."

The book said that just prior to Mr. Nixon's resignation, then-White House chief of staff Alexander Haig cut off Mr. Nixon's sleeping pills after the President complained to him, "you fellows, in your business (the Army), you have a way of handling problems like this. Somebody leaves a pistol in the drawer... I don't have a pistol."

Pat Nixon, the former First Lady, also was reported to have sought solace in alcohol and to have slipped down to the servant's quarters at night and returned to her private bedroom with glasses full of bourbon.

Kissinger—who, the book says, privately detested Mr. Nixon—knelt with him in prayer, according to the report, and watched as tears streamed down the President's face and he slammed the floor with his fists while asking, "What have I done? what has happened?"

"The Final Days" is said to be based on six months of research by Woodward and Bernstein with the help of two associates. It emerged from 394 interviews, memos, diaries and unpublished notes, involving all but a few of the principles in the only case of an American President who quit.

Mr. Nixon himself refused to

be interviewed by the authors. Their work on the Watergate scandal won their newspaper a Pulitzer Prize and was generally credited with starting the movement that forced President Nixon from office.

The authors said they stuck to the same rule they used for their coverage of Watergate: at least two sources for every statement of fact.

They say that as the scandal grew and as the House of Representatives moved closer to impeachment, the President started drinking heavily. He frequently arrived late for work, and he was dazed, the book says.

Mr. Nixon's son-in-law, Edward Cox, told a U.S. senator that one night Mr. Nixon stayed up late "walking the halls... talking to pictures of former Presidents," according to the book.

During Mr. Nixon's triumphal tour of Egypt in June, 1974, the authors say that he courted death by disregarding his bout with phlebitis, a blood clot disease, and by riding through crowded streets in an open car with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat.

His Secret Service security chief was said to complain, "You can't protect a president who wants to kill himself."

Kissinger is portrayed in the book as a man who loathed and feared Mr. Nixon but to his face was always flattering. But he talked about him behind his back as irrational, insecure and maniacal, the book says.

Kissinger, the book says, surreptitiously recorded his telephone conversations with the President and grew so worried about them being revealed that he had papers based on the tapes sent out of Washington for safekeeping.

During one call, the book says, the President drunkenly relayed to Kissinger the Vietnam military policy of his friend C.G. (Bebe) Rebozo. Kissinger told his aides about the call, and for a while thereafter Haig referred to Mr. Nixon as "our drunken friend."

During another call, the authors say, Kissinger mentioned the number of American casualties in a major battle in Vietnam. "Oh, screw 'em," the book quotes Mr. Nixon as saying.

Kissinger also regarded Mr. Nixon as a dangerous anti-semitic and was quite upset by one Nixon remark, "The Jewish cabal is out to get me," the authors said.

They reported that Mr. Nixon found this "cabal" working in various parts of his government and tried to stamp it out.

The secretary of state, in the declining days of the Nixon administration, viewed Mr. Nixon as irrational and a threat to U.S.

foreign policy, according to the book.

Yet it fell to Kissinger to offer the President emotional comfort two nights before he resigned from office.

According to Woodward and Bernstein, Kissinger entered the tiny Lincoln sitting room of the White House, where Mr. Nixon spent much of his last days in the White House alone, and there Kissinger found him drinking.

They talked and Mr. Nixon broke into tears. He asked the secretary of state to kneel with him in prayer, the book says.

The President prayed to God for help, rest, love and peace. When Kissinger thought that the prayers had ended, the authors say, Mr. Nixon suddenly started pounding the floor with his fists while sobbing uncontrollably and crying aloud, "What have I done? What has happened?"

The secretary of state found himself holding the President of the United States, offering comfort to him, the way a father might hold a son, the book says.

The book goes on to say that when he returned to his office, Kissinger told his aides, "It was the most wrenching thing I have ever gone through in my life..." He described the President as a broken man.

And as Kissinger finished his account of what happened, he received a phone call from the President, Woodward and Bernstein report. In it Mr. Nixon is reported to have said, "Henry, please don't tell anyone I cried and that I was not strong."

The book says that at one point Mr. Nixon considered counter-attacking his "enemies" by leaking a list of questionable wiretaps during the Kennedy-Johnson presidential years — most of them reported by Woodward and Bernstein for the first time. The list included not only Martin Luther King Jr., as has been widely known, but Lloyd Norman, Pentagon correspondent for Newsweek; Hanson W. Baldwin, military affairs analyst for the New York Times; Bernard Fall, the late French historian and authority on Vietnam; Robert Amory Jr., the former No. 3 man in the CIA and a close friend of John F. Kennedy; the law firm of Surrey and Karasik, which had Dominican sugar clients; the chief clerk of the House Agriculture Committee — and Frank A. Capell, author of a 1964 Marilyn

Monroe biography alleging a relationship between her and Robert F. Kennedy.

Woodward and Bernstein say that Mr. Nixon was not the only member of his family suffering during the final days.

They say that the Watergate scandal produced strains on the marriages of his two daughters.

In a call to Senator Robert Griffin during Mr. Nixon's last week in office, son-in-law Cox said that he and Julie's husband, David Eisenhower, favored resignation but that Tricia and Julie had closed their minds to argument, according to the book. "I can't talk to my wife," Cox said. "She is determined that her father shall not resign."

The authors also say that the Nixon marriage had become what

they term was a formalized, separate-bedroom affair since 1962, when Mrs. Nixon thought of filing for divorce after her husband was defeated for the California governorship.

Mr. Nixon is portrayed as a man constantly changing his mind over whether to resign. Finally, Woodward and Bernstein say, he was forced to resign by his staff,

who saw him as unstable, exhausted and removed from reality.

The staff, under the leadership of Haig, forced Mr. Nixon to release the tape recording that showed that he had tried to use the Central Intelligence Agency to block the investigation of the break-in at the Watergate complex headquarters of the Democratic National Com-

mittee, the book says.

But in the end, Haig was convinced that Mr. Nixon was guilty and had to go — he even thought that Mr. Nixon himself was responsible for a mysterious 18½-minute gap in one of the tapes, the book says.

U.P. & Reuters