

August 5, 1974 - a calamitous day. Burch called me right after noon and asked me if I could come down to the White House, that he had some news, that he was going to go out and brief Johnny Rhodes and was taking Buzhardt with him. Wondered if I could come down there and ride out and get clued in. I went down. The news was, of course, the tapes. All we had was the statement. We didn't have a copy of the tapes. We went out to Rhodes' house. Presented it to Rhodes who had been clued in on it by Wiggins.

It became clear we were all upset. I even suggested that in order to move things forward I would consider resigning, saying the President was entitled to some kind of defense but I could no longer defend him. Therefore I would resign. I would call a meeting of the national committee and let them select a chairman who could. (That buzzer ringing on the tape at 10 minutes of 10 was Al Haig calling me at home) My feeling being not to run away but simply to highlight the dilemma. Burch and Buzhardt said that somebody needs to be around to pick up the pieces and clearly this wouldn't be a good thing to do.

I felt at the time I should have made clear to them that it was not my intention to run away from a tough situation but rather to lead, because I feel so strongly about what happened. We talked at length to Rhodes who indicated that the President didn't know what was right and do it. A reiteration of his resignation call perhaps. John was sick - had laryngitis and had cancelled a press conference to state his position on impeachment. I then went with Buzhardt up to the Hill. He went in to talk to the Judiciary Committee people and I ducked into the cloak-room. There the President's statement was passed around and there was a kind of general wondering what it all meant.

Jim Collins, Bill Harsha, Clarence Miller - a whole bunch of them - I told them I thought it was going to be serious, a real bombshell. A little later the announcement started coming on TV in the cloakroom and then Charles Sandman came in and told us that he thought all Republican members would vote for impeachment. It was a real tough blow for him.

From that moment on the thing unraveled mercilessly. We called the National Committee at night. Jean Sullivan felt betrayed. Gordon Luce and Banowsky called for resignation, and for the first time we saw enormous cracks in the Republican National Committee structure in terms of support. Many hoping he would quietly get out. I had several talks with Dean Burch who hadn't been truly 'clued in'. The President was isolated, calling on no one outside for decisions. Al Haig, strong and helping, but with not really the political feel on the Hill he should have. I talked to Haig at 9:50 in my office. He indicated that he didn't think it was a surprise, he didn't feel the President ought to speak out like Agnew, but of course he was giving a lot of consideration to resignation. I told him about the erosion on the National Committee, that I thought it was serious. He asked me to be sure of my judgment etc. I told him I was, and he said if we get that kind of erosion then we can be sure the President will do the right thing. He simply is waiting for the right time. He thinks he can survive in the Senate. He realizes there is a tremendous deterioration in the House. But he says "Not so in the Senate. Guys are hanging tough in the Senate." He mentioned Eastland and Stennis. He mentioned Norris Cotton and Bennett. I told him I wondered who he was talking to - though I hadn't talked to them I wasn't too sure about it. Haig said we must think big, think big about the country first. Let's worry about the country first. I tried to indicate to him that that was what we were doing. He did not think the President's survival

is the answer, but he does think that we should be moderate and reasonable and be sure of the weight of the thing. They had just called about a Cabinet meeting. I asked him what that was for. He said he was going to tell why he did and what he did. He told me I was in a very difficult position, getting whip-sawed and kind of complimented me on the way it was going. Although I told him I felt in a half-assed position -- neither fish nor fowl. He told me he had spent an unbelievable week with this guy -- meaning the President. Bitter - very tough week. He didn't know how the President keeps going. I asked him if he predicted what would happen in the Senate Judiciary Committee. He said he hoped that three or four would stay with him. They realized that Article 1 was a tough problem, and sure enough they are staying with him on article 2 and 3. He cautioned me to do what was reasonable and fair. I told him I felt I really owed them my judgment and that I hated to always be reporting bad news but that I had to do it factually. He told me it was the worst week of his life. He said, "Why the President still talks to me I don't know. I am surprised."

He predicted the President would not survive but that we would look back when we were both 80 and say he had been one of the great presidents of our time. He mentioned that he wished Wiggins had waited 24 hours and not gone for a tearful TV job. I, of course, strongly defended Wiggins and Charlie Sandman, to Haig -- telling him they were speaking from deep convictions and I hope they, above all, would not get damaged. He said it is always hard on the heroes etc. He indicated that as long as the President wants to test the water a little more we ought to stay with him. He made a strong pitch for loyalty, those who stand by come out alright. I asked how the family was. He said the

family is sustaining the President very well. He said, "Not me I'm sure," in terms of sustaining. I get the feeling that Haig has discussed resignation with him in depth and all around. Al ended up saying, "G d bless you." All in all he was very decent. He sounded fairly relaxed and I'd say somewhat resigned to the future. I have enormous respect for Haig. I again am not sure he understands the great depth of feeling in this congress. I am sure he is misreading the Senate at this point if he thinks they are hanging in there for the President. It is a very difficult and trying week for sure. I pointed out again that the Party although not important was --- that we had called fifty people and asked them to call the other 100 and though not important --- for the first time we are seeing serious erosion.

As I dictate this memo at 10:10 p.m. on August 5 I do not feel the President can survive. We have our television program coming up. It's almost impossible. I have decided not to issue a statement, to simply sit and let the storms whirl around, although give some leadership to the committee by telling them not to get too far out front. I am torn between wanting to express my own agony and my own emotion, and get out front and cry resignation and this is too much. And at the same time recognizing that this system must work, should be permitted to work fairly, and as Burch says somebody has got to pick up the pieces. I got torn between how to lead and what is leadership at a point like this. Oddly enough at this moment leadership may mean doing nothing. There's an awful lot of noise out there. I have just read the tape. The reactions, of course, will be lost, but most congressmen and senators feel they must take some position or say something. Maybe by

sitting quietly there, accurately reporting, trying to hold the party together, one can do the most service. But it means the risk that people won't know how strongly and deeply I feel about this whole grubby Watergate mess. It is beneath the dignity of that oval office, and yes the President's accomplishments are magnificent, but Watergate is a shabby, tawdry business that demeans the Presidency. Am I failing to lead by not stating that? That's the \$64,000 question.