

Good evening, my fellow Americans.

More than two years have passed since the Watergate break-in.

For some sixteen months -- for more than a year -- Watergate has dominated the headlines, ~~and~~ distracted ~~the~~ the nation and divided our people.

Now, together, we confront the prospect of an even more intensive concentration on Watergate lasting until the end of the year -- if the House votes impeachment, and if the case goes to a trial in the Senate.

Each of us must weigh carefully the toll this has taken already <sup>its</sup> on our nation, and the further toll ~~it will take~~ in the months ahead.

This is a consideration that I am sure must weigh heavily on the minds of those members of the House considering their votes. It is a consideration that ~~he~~ weighs heavily on my own mind, as I consider what ~~the~~ course best will serve the interests of the nation, now and in the future.

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Realistically, given the outcome of the Judiciary Committee proceedings and the present temper of the House, we must assume that the outcome of the House debate would be impeachment on one or more of the three articles voted by the Committee. This would automatically lead to a trial ~~and~~ in the Senate -- a trial which would probably last until the end of the year, and ~~be~~ the outcome of which could not ~~be~~ be predicted.

*Inevitably, such a trial would consume an inordinate share of my own time and attention, as well as that of the Senate and the Nation -- at a time when neither the*

Even if ~~that~~ <sup>the</sup> trial were to end in acquittal, the result would ~~be~~ <sup>not the</sup> be a weakened and damaged Presidency for the remainder of my term in office. There would be a lingering ~~be~~ <sup>would be</sup> bitterness and division ~~in~~ <sup>and</sup> in the country. The government would go on, but with severely reduced effectiveness -- at a critical time for America and for the world.

*Throughout my Presidency -- indeed, throughout my political life -- I have always tried to do what I believed was in the best interests of the country.*

Therefore, I shall resign the Presidency tomorrow, effective at \_\_\_\_\_ a.m. Vice President Ford will be inaugurated ~~as~~ as President at that hour, at a ceremony in \_\_\_\_\_.

*In these circumstances, I believe the country would best be served by my resigning this afternoon.*

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One of the great strengths of our constitutional system is that it provides for an orderly succession, even in periods of extraordinary stress.

When I chose Mr. Ford as my nominee to fill the Vice-Presidential vacancy last \_\_\_\_\_, I did so because in the quarter century that I have known him and worked with him, ~~and~~ I have found him to be a man of exceptional character, integrity and ability -- one who understands America, who understands its needs, and who is fully ~~and~~ capable of ~~governing~~ leading the country and of bringing distinction to this office.

As President, ~~he~~ he will have my full support, and I ask that you give him yours.

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(4)

~~You have a right to know why I have made this decision.~~

I continue to believe firmly and completely that the mistakes

that were made do not constitute sufficient grounds for the impeachment

*I have faith in the ultimate judgment*  
of a President. ~~Indeed, I believe tonight that if I were to pursue~~  
*of history on this administration, and on my conduct*  
~~the Constitutional process through to its conclusion, I would be~~  
*of this Act.*

~~sustained by the Senate.~~

has also become

However, it ~~is~~ clear that the margin by which I could expect

to win in the Senate would ~~be~~ probably be sufficiently narrow ~~to~~

~~insure this outcome~~ that it would leave this office unacceptably

weakened for the critical two years that would remain in my term.

As a result, my ability to govern effectively would be undercut,

and the country ~~would~~ would suffer because of that.

However, I do want to discuss with you,  
~~Let me say~~ very frankly and very directly, ~~is~~ a matter

~~which has~~ which I know would have

affected the deliberations in both the House and the Senate, ~~which~~

~~was~~ and which was also a factor in my own

~~decision~~ decision.

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Last week, in my review of the tapes to be turned over to the Special Prosecutor, I discovered one that indicated my own knowledge of the Watergate cover-up was greater than I have previously indicated, and that it came sooner -- in fact, that I did learn shortly after the break-in that it was a potential source of severe ~~embarrassment~~, at that time, embarrassment to the Administration and to my campaign committee, and that I did approve actions which I hoped would have the effect of covering up the connection.

Rather than withhold ~~it~~ that tape, I have turned it over to Judge Sirica. I have also made it available tonight to the House Judiciary Committee, so that its records will be complete.

In the light of this, I owe to you, the American people, an explanation of why until now I have continued to maintain that I had no knowledge of the cover-up until I was told about it by John Dean on March 21, 1973.

With hindsight, it is very easy to say that I should have simply opened up everything at once to the prosecutors, and let the chips fall where they might. Certainly the events that have followed have demonstrated that this would have been the wiser as well as the proper course.

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At the time, however -- whether rightly or wrongly -- I was deeply concerned, ~~about the possibility of~~ in human terms, about the possible impact on valued friends and associates, as well as on ~~others~~ others ~~involved~~ who had done wrong in a cause they believed to be right. Because some of the same people were involved, I was concerned that an unlimited investigation might compromise the genuinely sensitive national security matters that the so-called "plumbers" had been dealing with. In the midst of a political campaign, I knew that the break-in had the potential for massive exploitation as a political issue -- if a sufficient connection could be established, ~~that it conceivably could~~ <sup>be</sup> ~~decisive~~ <sup>even</sup> in terms of the outcome, and therefore in terms of all that ~~was at stake~~ was at stake both here and abroad, including the foundation I was trying to build for a structure of peace that could last into the next century.

I thought the break-in itself was stupid, as well as ~~was~~ wrong. But once it had taken place, I knew that I had inherited the consequences -- and that with the Presidency at issue, those potential consequences reached out also to the nation and the world.

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In retrospect, it would have been better to have explained this fully and frankly when ~~Watergate~~ Watergate and the cover-up again became a national issue early last ~~year~~ year -- at a time when the cover-up had reached dimensions that ~~even then I did not~~ I still did not fully comprehend. Instead, I felt trapped by events, and chose a different way of attempting to defend what I believed to be the interests of the Presidency, and to preserve ~~what I believed to be~~ my capacity to function in what I believed to be the interests of the Nation.

I say this not in ~~my~~ defense, but in ~~my~~ explanation.

To those who have stood ~~by~~ steadfastly with me through these Vice President Ford, including months, ~~including~~ the members of my Cabinet, ~~and~~ including ~~particularly~~ those members of the House Judiciary Committee who argued and voted against impeachment, ~~and~~ including the many others who organized or ~~and~~ spoke out in my behalf, I would say a particular word. Whether you would have done so if you had known the full story, I cannot know -- perhaps you cannot know. I deeply regret any embarrassment you may feel now, on learning that what you believed to be entirely true was only partially true. In my own conscience, I know that each judgment

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I made, including those judgments to withhold part of the truth,  
was made because I believed at the time that it was ~~best~~  
in the national interest -- that in a situation in which there  
were no good answers, it was the least bad answer, not simply  
from my own standpoint but from the standpoint of the nation whose  
stability I was trying to preserve.

for another five months the agony and uncertainty of the Watergate  
obsession.

In the course of the recent House Judiciary Committee hearings,  
my associates and I were  
~~I was~~ accused of much wrong-doing. ~~Without debating the merits of~~

~~these representations~~ I accept full responsibility for whatever  
mistakes were made. ~~The only defense, the only justification~~ I do

would only emphasize that  
~~emphasize, however, that~~ in my own case, and I believe also on

the part of those members of my Administration who were involved,  
we were attempting to serve the best interests of the country. There  
was no personal gain involved. The mistakes were mistakes of judg-  
ment.

~~Much has been said about abuse of power.~~

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was  
what is called

We have heard much about/the abuse of power -- <sup>and in particular</sup> about the measures

I took in 1969, 1970, 1971, to deal with what I considered serious threats to the nation's security and well-being. From the relative calm of today's conditions, it is easy to look back, and to condemn the remedy without regard for the ill that it was meant to cure.

It is easy to forget the ~~the~~ burning cities, the ravaged ~~colleges~~ campuses, the college deans barricaded in their offices, ~~the~~ the orgy of riots and mass, violent demonstrations ~~that~~ that were designed to and did strike terror across the nation. ~~It is easy to forget that~~

These were not democracy in action. These were brutal and dangerous assaults against the democratic system.

It is easy to forget that the hemorrhaging leaks of ~~the~~ the most sensitive defense and diplomatic secrets came at a time when those leaks seriously jeopardized our efforts to negotiate and end to the war in Vietnam, ~~and to negotiate a limitation~~ to negotiate a limitation on nuclear arms, and to negotiate a new relationship with the People's Republic of China. These leaks were hailed in the name of peace; those responsible were treated as heroes in the cause of peace. But in fact

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they threatened to destroy our efforts to achieve peace.

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When I assumed this office, I had one overriding aim. That was to build a structure of peace in the world that would last beyond this administration, and into the next century -- so that instead of three wars in a generation, <sup>(the</sup> young Americans <sup>)</sup> of today could look forward to the ~~prospect~~ prospect of now wars in their lifetimes.

As I leave this office, the one thing of which I am most proud is the progress we have made toward that goal. Not only by ending the war in Vietnam, but even more importantly by helping build a new ~~structure~~ <sup>pattern</sup> of ~~relationships~~ relationships among the world's powers, ~~based~~ one that will contribute to stability rather than instability and therefore to ~~pe~~ peace rather than war.

One reason I am leaving is ~~that~~ to ensure that the bitterness and uncertainty of an impeachment trial will not jeopardize that structure. I would have preferred to continue building it, but I would rather leave than endanger it.

(14)

This is not a farewell. Although resigning the Presidency, I shall do all that I can to help my successor, and to advance the causes of peace abroad and progress at home that I did my best to serve while I held that office. I shall do all that I can to help bind up whatever wounds may remain from the divisions and difficulties the nation has gone through in these past two years.

In turning over this office to Vice President Ford, I do so with a profound sense of the weight of responsibility that will fall tomorrow morning on his shoulders -- and therefore of the understanding, the cooperation, the patience, he will need from all of us.

This is not a time for grudges; not a time for recrimination; but rather a time for dedication -- to America's future, to its institutions, to its traditions -- and to those shared values that are at the heart of its continuity.

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~~There is a time to fight, and a time to leave.~~

Whoever occupies this office must be President of all the people -- and whoever occupies this office must have the help and cooperation of all the people. We should, and must, have vigorous debates over the genuine policy differences that will always exist among a wide variety of persons with a wide variety of perspectives. But it also is important that we conduct those debates with civility, and with respect for our differences. We must do better in the future than we have done in the recent past -- when of the last three presidents, one, President Kennedy, was assassinated, and the next two -- one Democrat, one Republican -- in effect were driven from office.

There must be a measure of tolerance, a margin for imperfection, an acceptance of the fact that mistakes will occur -- and a recognition that the work of government must go on. We must learn to live better with our political differences, and to recognize that the ~~ins~~ institutions of government are human institutions --

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-- with all the faults and ~~frailties~~ ~~inherent~~ frailties ~~inherent~~ that are part of the human condition. Only if we do so can we restore the stability, the continuity, that are essential if America is to begin its third century ~~strong~~ with the strength and resilience that the decades ahead will require.

In saying this, I am not offering excuses for wrongs that have taken place. I am not attempting to minimize those wrongs. But I am urging, for the future, that our judgments be leavened with a sense of proportion, and that future Presidents be judged while in ~~the~~ office more nearly ~~to~~ by the standards that history brings to Presidents ~~when they are removed from office~~ *has a way of bringing* after they have left office.

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Also, I believe that the ~~time has elapsed~~ wounds of Watergate must be healed, and they must be healed soon. As long

as the power of the Presidency remains at stake, as long as the question of who will be President remains unsettled, that process will not begin. By this act, I trust that it will begin.

I thank you for the opportunity to serve as your President during these past five and a half years. They have been a momentous time in the history of our nation and the world. They have been a time of achievement of which I believe we can all be proud. -- achievements that represent the shared efforts of the Administration, of the Congress and of the people.

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To those who have fought beside me in these past difficult months, those who have <sup>given</sup> offered their support, their encouragement and their aid, / I offer ~~not only my thanks but~~ but also this thought: my thanks, and also this thought: You may be tempted to feel that because the effort ended this way, it was not worth making. That would be a mistake. It is never wrong ~~to~~ to do what we believe is right.

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There is a time to fight, and a time to leave.

At each step of the way, I have tried to serve what I believed to be the best interests of the country. When I believed that those interests would best be served ~~by~~ by fighting to retain office, I fought to retain it. Now I believe they would best ~~be~~ be served by my leaving it <sup>office</sup> -- and so I shall leave.

Thank you, and good evening.



"Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to take rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in the gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat."