

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

May 14, 1976

The Honorable William L. Hungate
Chairman
Subcommittee on Criminal Justice
2437 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We have read with concern about Charles Colson's interview with the Boston Herald American, respecting President Ford's pardon of Richard M. Nixon.

Specifically, Mr. Colson was reported as saying that prior to President Nixon's resignation, he was told that pardons were being "worked out". Mr. Colson reportedly added: "I always felt that there was implicit understanding that Mr. Nixon would not step down unless he was assured his successor was going to pardon him." (A copy of the Boston Herald American article of March 23, 1976 is attached.)

If true, the Colson interview suggests that the House Subcommittee on Criminal Justice may not have received from President Ford a candid and full description of the facts surrounding the pardon. In particular, President Ford testified before the Committee that there was "no deal" regarding his pardon of Mr. Nixon.

As you know, we were previously concerned about a suggestion in a Washington Post article of December 18, 1975 that President Ford may not have told the House Subcommittee the full story regarding the Nixon pardon. That article implied that Alexander Haig played a role in the issuance of the Nixon pardon that contradicted the version given our Subcommittee by President Ford.

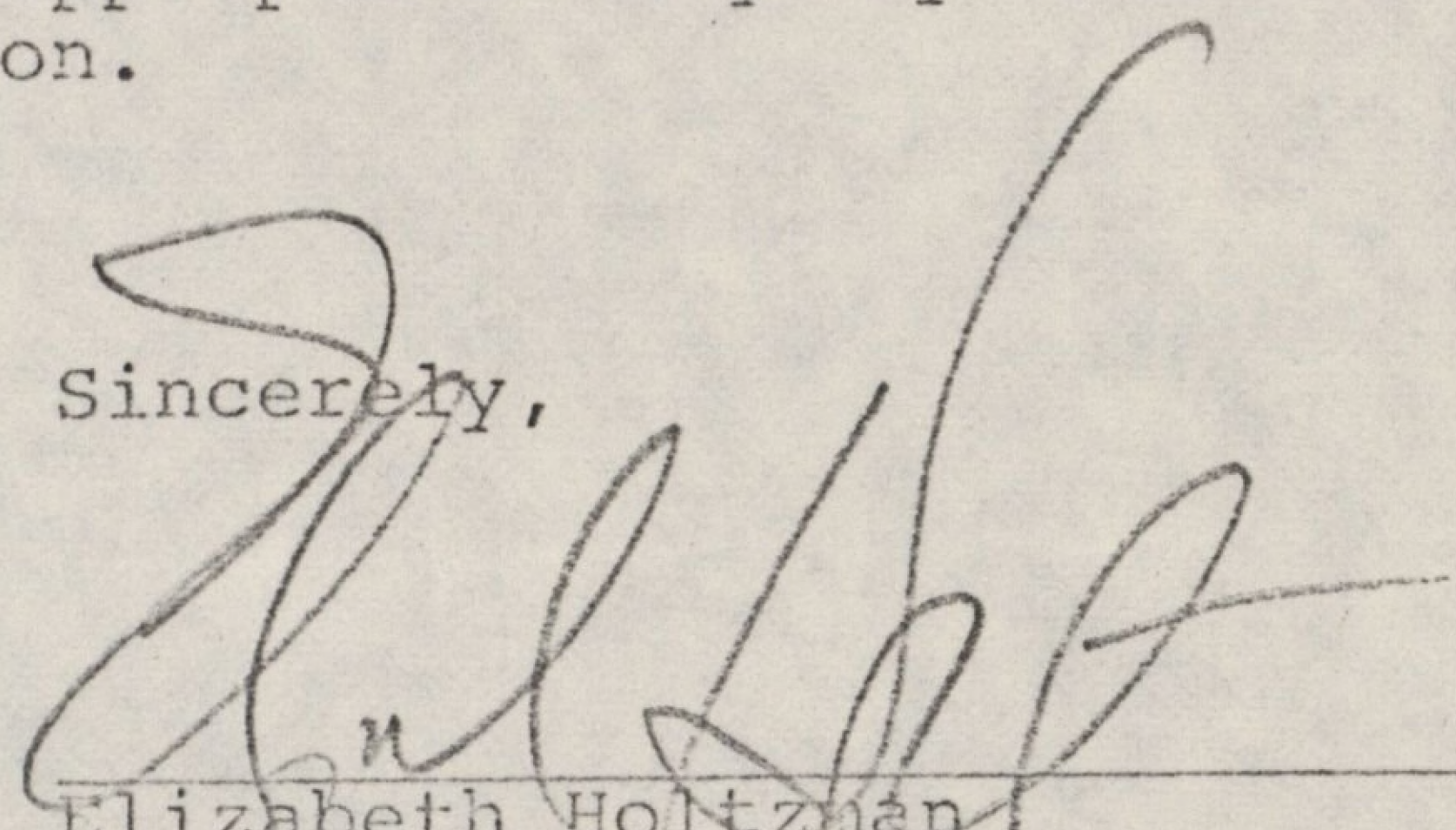
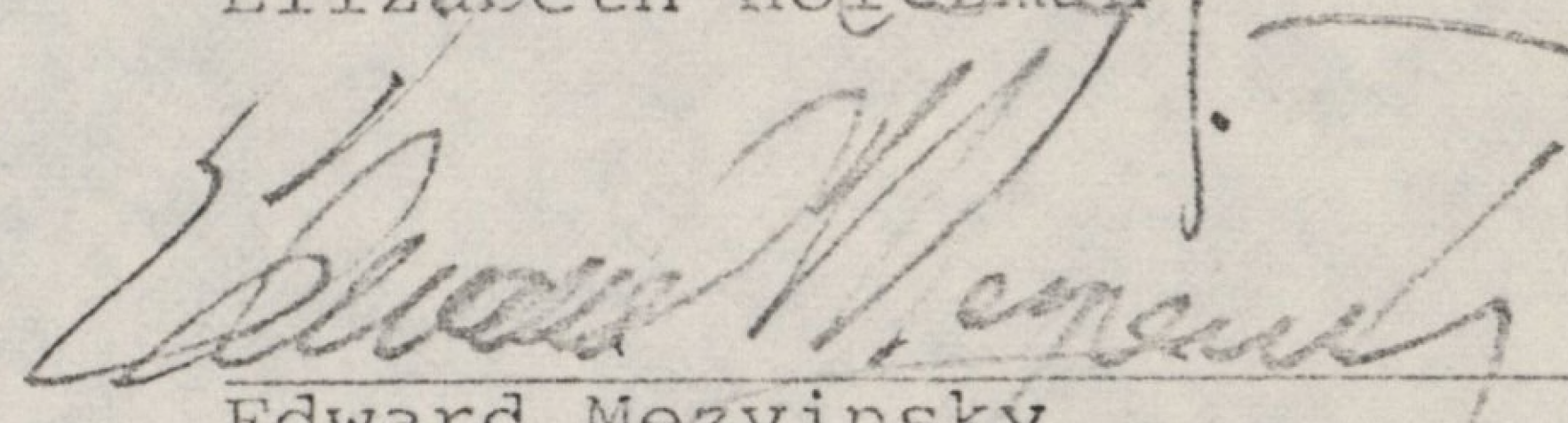
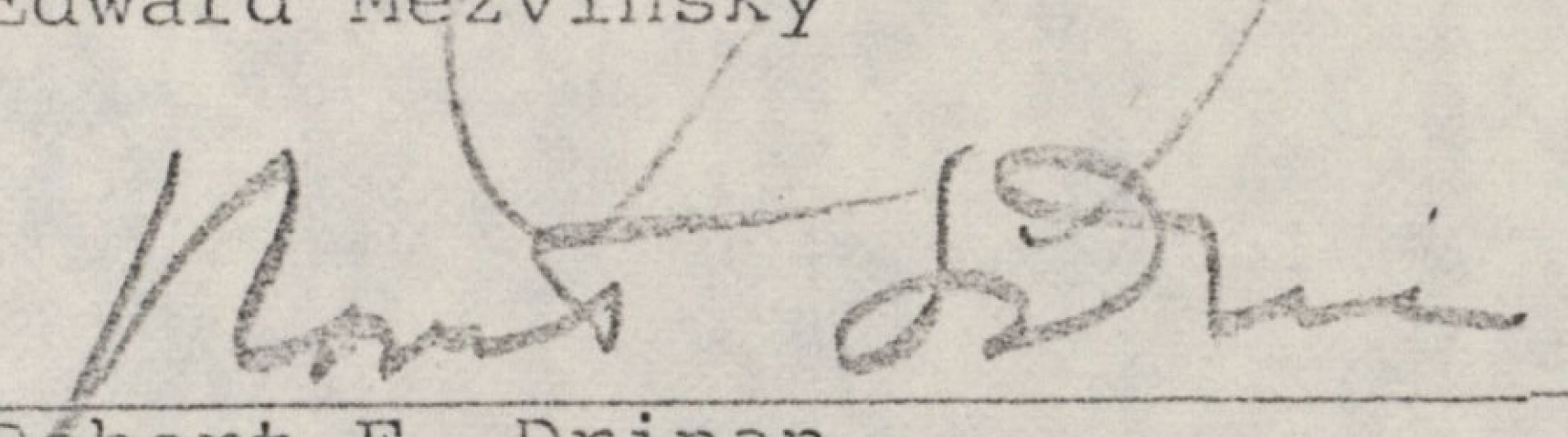
The failure to resolve these apparent contradictions respecting the pardon may, in the long run, have serious adverse consequences. Because the pardon of Richard Nixon was not only unprecedented but profoundly involved the credibility of our system of justice, it is important for the American people to have the full facts.

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We would, therefore, respectfully urge that the Subcommittee undertake an appropriate inquiry into the facts surrounding the pardon.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,


Elizabeth Holtzman
Edward Mezvinsky
Robert F. Drinan

Colson claims Nixon pardon 'understanding'

By DANIEL F. McLAUGHLIN

There was an understanding between President Nixon and Gerald Ford that Nixon would be pardoned when Ford became President, Charles W. "Chuck" Colson, the ex-White House counsel speculated yesterday.

"I always felt there was implicit understanding Mr. Nixon would not step down unless he was assured his successor was going to pardon him," Colson said in an exclusive interview with the Herald American.

"I accept Gerry Ford's word that he did not discuss it, but that doesn't mean it wasn't pretty well understood," he said.

"One of Mr. Nixon's aides told me the day before Mr. Nixon resigned, that the details, including pardons were being worked out. There's no question President Ford intended to pardon everyone, but because of the storm that blew up, he stopped with Nixon."

COLSON SAID HE held no bitterness because he wasn't pardoned, and added.

"Nixon told me in December of 1973 he would never leave office without wiping the slate clear for everybody involved in Watergate. He was referring to pardons."

When asked how he felt about the whole Watergate affair now, Colson said: "I discovered what I believe really is meaningful in life. If it took Watergate to come to the realization, I can be personally glad."

"From the country's standpoint, I don't believe we have really learned the lesson of Watergate. In a sense it's politics as usual in Washington now."

"But more important," he continued, "we're living with the delusion that by simply changing the cast of characters you



CHARLES COLSON

can change the morality and effectiveness of government.

"I THINK I have more faith in our system than any other in the world, but I see weakness and limits on government. A nation which puts its trust in men is going to be betrayed because man is fallible."

Colson said he visited Nixon in California last summer and noticed little change in the man.

"I was surprised he hadn't changed more," he said. "He was very up-beat. He wasn't bitter, or wringing his hands. There was no self pity. He had a good outlook on life."

"He was working on his book. He was up to his eyeballs trying to get the book released. He's under contract, and I think he'll have trouble making the deadline at the end of this year."

COLSON SAID he is working full time now with the Christian Fellowship in Washington, working mainly in prisons.