

Dear Paul,

7/13/76

Lil's headaches, fortunately, are not permanent. One was bad the day you phoned but passed off. I feel good except that for the past couple of days I've had aches and pains in the feet. It is time for vascular consultation. I phoned for one yesterday. That was his day off. I'll call this morning.

We both react to the air pollution. We do not have to be told when the readings show the air to be bad - we know. The air is worse during what is known as a Bermuda High, when a high-pressure area just sits over the Bermuda area. It means hot, humid weather, with no air stirring to move the pollution away.

John Osborne's piece in NR 8/7-14/76 is interesting in that it raises an old and popularly-unanswered question: ~~how~~ did the CIA do Nixon in. In my view Osborne puts too much dependence in the GOP sources. He does not really understand the Baker operation.

I do not have time for a long explanation. The Dirtyworking Dugan waited until he knew Jim would not be able to respond to files several long sets of papers, on successive days. I received the second one yesterday and have already drafted about 4,000 words of preparation for response. Time was so tight on Jim we had no chance to talk about what he had been able to do during the day while he was preparing to emplane, as he did at 5. He had a moment in New York and phoned from there. He was going to ask the judge's clerk to stay until he returns. I'll have to write a letter, first another to Dugan.

Meanwhile they have played into my hand, as I'd hoped. I can and will join issue with them on the false swearings in their affidavits.

At the time Butterfield let the taping system be known one of the wisest and sharpest of people, a good friend, saw the possibilities since enlarged on - that it was doing Nixon in I suppose would be a simplification. I still am not certain on the Osborne formulation.

Separate from this are questions never raised and never really investigated by the Baker part of the Ervin committee, despite his "report" and Thompson's book. That combo did its own covering up. This included CIA domestic activity, of which it had copies of reports so it knew.

As best I could I have addressed this in The Unimpeachment of Richard Nixon. In it I do expose Baker's operation as a cover-up. His cover-up did include the CIA, but not as doing Nixon in.

There is much new in the book, much that was later in part suggested.

But on the Butterfield thing I suggest these thoughts to you: before he said a word he was offered the chance to talk to the White House, which could have invoked executive privilege and did not. This means that when it was cutting information off in other channels it did not stop Butterfield from talking about the taping and it could have. Also, once the taping system became known there was no real investigation of any kind by any one. As a result there remain many secrets. I do not pretend I expose all or even most. But I think enough. As it happens I have written you along this line in an effort to reach Hefner again.

Both the Nixonians and the CIA had and have much to jide. But I do not think there was mutual blackmail and I do not think the CIA set a bungled operation up. That really was vintage Nixon. Nor do I think Nixon could blackmail the CIA over whatever he had in mind in telling Haldeman how he had saved "elms' ass. He would, with any of it, have been an accessory in a felony or more than one.

I can't go into all, obviously, with so long a book. I do say that there were complications never investigated and that among these are still-unexposed domestic activities. There were more I had that have come out. The most serious, the most deeply subversive, have not. And there is a Ford involvement.

This is one of the reasons I've been hoping to get some kind of appearance that would pay my way there, so there would be plenty of time for talking with those you know who might have an interest. My own opinion is that if Ford is the candidate, as I believe he will, it can defeat him if without its use he might win. I'll simplify it in part: he had pre-Watergate connection with Watergaters...Thanks for the other enclosures which I've not yet read.

Best,

## White House Watch

# Nixon's Devils

A wish to believe in and promote public belief in what may be called the devil theory of Richard Nixon's downfall is surfacing among a number of his former White House assistants. Two of them, H.R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman, fell with him and are appealing convictions and prison sentences for Watergate offenses. The devil theory exists in several forms and degrees. It ranges from the flat assertion in a few instances that Nixon is the innocent victim of conspiratorial plotters or at the least of hostile journalists and politicians who hated him and all he stood for, to the assortment of lesser suspicions summed up in a remark that recurs again and again among his former associates. Most of these people don't deny that Richard Nixon deserved impeachment, escaped it only by resigning August 9 two years ago, and would have been brought to trial in a common court if Gerald Ford had not pardoned him of any crimes that he may have committed while he was President. The remark is, "There are some things that have never been explained," and those who utter it seem to take a curious comfort from it. It has no bearing upon guilt or innocence. But it does suggest—to them anyhow—that the disgrace of their leader would not have been as complete and abject as it was, and that the pressures which drove him from office would not have been so cruelly displayed and applied if unexplained forces and factors had not been at work.

The extent to which Richard Nixon in retirement at San Clemente subscribes to the devil theory is unknown. He has never attributed his downfall to his own and his confederates' misdeeds. In his announcement of his decision to resign on August 8, 1974; in his farewell moan to his staff on August 9; and in his introductions to his collected 1973 and 1974 presidential papers, he admitted nothing more than "mistakes and misjudgments" and blamed the need to resign upon the loss of congressional support. He recently accepted disbarment in New York rather than include in a letter of resignation from the New York bar an admission of Watergate guilt. In *Born Again*, Charles Colson's account of his White House service with Nixon and of his subsequent conversion to Christ—a conversion that I neither doubt nor deride after reading the book—Colson describes a talk with Nixon in the Lincoln Sitting Room in the executive mansion. Colson says he asked, "Mr. President, is our conversation being recorded?" and describes Nixon's reaction: "What do you mean, recorded? Who would do that to us?" He sat upright in his chair, the smile gone, a flash of fear in his face. "Would *they* do that?," he demanded."

The preeminent devil of the theory in most of its forms is the Central Intelligence Agency. An associated

devil is Alexander Butterfield, a former air force colonel and college friend of Bob Haldeman who served as Haldeman's deputy from the start of the Nixon presidency in 1969 until April, 1973. He disclosed the existence of the Nixon taping system to the Senate Watergate committee staff on July 13, 1973 and in public testimony on July 16. The CIA has been suspected, accused and exonerated of everything from planning, staffing and executing the Watergate burglary of the Democratic National Committee headquarters on June 17, 1972, to using its knowledge of that stupidity and of such White House misbehavior as wiretapping officials and journalists to bully and betray President Nixon and his associates in Watergate sin. Some Nixon people have never forgiven Butterfield for disclosing the taping system and then, in subsequent congressional testimony, discussing with obvious avidity and hostility Nixon quirks that suggested mental instability. Haldeman, Butterfield and others in the Nixon White House told me in early 1969 that Haldeman had persuaded Butterfield to interrupt a promising air force career and join the Nixon staff. Last June, months after Butterfield had been accused on extremely flimsy grounds of having been a CIA plant in the White House, and after Chairman Frank Church of the Senate's special intelligence committee had said the committee found no evidence that this was true, Haldeman dealt with the related suspicions of Butterfield and the CIA in a syndicated newspaper series. Haldeman said:

"Alex originally approached the White House on his own initiative—not because I recruited him. He was soon to become an air force general. I have never understood why he insisted, against my advice, in dropping his commission. Or why he suddenly wanted to be part of the Nixon team. Was Butterfield a CIA agent? Maybe. I just don't know. In retrospect, I'm ambivalent as to whether the agency was out to get Nixon. I don't dismiss it as an impossibility. I do believe that there are a number of unanswered questions about the break-in at the Watergate. The agency had the capacity and perhaps, unknown to me, the motivation."

Ken Clawson, a last-ditch loyalist who was Nixon's last director of communications, told *The Washington Star* in the first interview he has given since he suffered a severe stroke: "Why in the world would Butterfield mention something about the internal taping system? I can only conclude that he was a CIA agent." Why being a CIA agent should have made Butterfield want to disclose the system that he had supervised and hidden since 1971 is never explained. Other comments upon the Haldeman-Clawson suggestion and accusation are in order. Butterfield disclosed the taping system only in answer to a direct question under oath, first at a staff interrogation and then in public. It was a matter of truth or perjury. Butterfield did not "approach the White House"; he approached his friend Haldeman in New York, before the 1969 inauguration. Butterfield

says and I believe that Haldeman insisted that he retire from active duty—not “drop his commission”—in order to qualify for the only White House job then open to him. Butterfield’s story that the possibility of being for awhile at the top and center of national power excited and attracted him seems believable to me; it was true of Nixon assistants who have never been accused of being CIA plants.

John Ehrlichman’s recently published novel, *The Company*, deals with the CIA as devil in a restrained fashion. His fictional CIA director, a character whose resemblance to former CIA Director Richard Helms is not even thinly disguised, uses his knowledge of Watergate doings and particularly of the bugging of officials and journalists to blackmail the incumbent President into protecting the director and a former President who died in office. Ehrlichman’s director wanted concealment of his and the deceased President’s part in a CIA murder that in effect sabotaged a Caribbean operation similar to John F. Kennedy’s Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. There is a suggestion that Helms and CIA in his day knew about Watergate and the illegal surveillance associated with it. But *The Company* does not imply, as Haldeman does, that the CIA may have incited and entrapped Nixon and his Watergate companions.

A leading expert on the CIA and its possible involvement in Watergate is Senator Howard Baker of Tennessee, the ranking Republican on the Senate Watergate committee and the second-ranking Republican on Frank Church’s special intelligence investigating committee. The press tended during both investigations to dismiss Baker as a Republican apologist. The fact is that he refused to be the stooge of the Nixon and Ford people. With the help of Fred Thompson, the chief minority counsel on the Watergate committee, and a small minority staff, Baker dug and dug into indications—notably the preponderance of past and present CIA people in the original Watergate burglary operation—that the CIA may somehow have been involved. His unproven suspicions that it was were set forth in an individual supplement to the Senate Watergate report and in *At That Point in Time*, Fred Thompson’s fascinating book about the minority staff’s role, frustrations and unresolved doubts.

As a member of the Church committee Baker dug again, deeper and more thoroughly than has been generally reported. His conclusion, again stated as an individual supplement to the committee report, must stand until further notice as the last and best word on the subject: “I wish to state my belief that the sum total of the evidence does not substantiate a conclusion that the CIA per se was involved in the range of events and circumstances known as Watergate. However, there was considerable evidence that for much of the post-Watergate period the CIA itself was uncertain of the

ramifications of the various involvements, witting or otherwise, between members of the Watergate burglary team and members of components of the Agency. . . . The investigation . . . produced a panoply of puzzlement. . . . An impartial evaluation . . . compels the conclusion that the CIA, as an institution, was not involved in the Watergate break-in.” Devotees of the devil theory will note that this labored statement mostly covers the break-in and does not exclude involvement of CIA individuals in other Watergate chicanery.

Perhaps the most interesting and certainly the least noticed of the Baker minority staff’s investigations during the Watergate inquiry was into evidence of Democratic foreknowledge of the break-in. I remember the hoots with which I and other reporters greeted then Vice President Spiro Agnew’s suggestion at a 1972 campaign press conference that there was such foreknowledge. The story told by Fred Thompson in *At That Point in Time* involves columnist Jack Anderson, former Democratic chairman Larry O’Brien, various officials of the Democratic committee in O’Brien’s time, the Nixon advertising operation in New York known as the November Group, a former Kennedy administration official and Manhattan publisher named William Haddad, and one Arthur James Woolston-Smith, who is described as a New Zealander based in New York with British, Canadian and US intelligence connections. Woolston-Smith is said to have heard about planning for the Watergate break-in and passed the information to Haddad and, through him, to Jack Anderson and Democratic committee officials. Two of Thompson’s minority staff, Howard Liebengood and Michael Madigan, and James McCord, the retired CIA operative who led and botched the Watergate burglary, figure in Thompson’s sad summation: “Our exploration had covered many months and many witnesses. . . . We looked into an aspect of Watergate that had not been explored before—or since. Liebengood, Madigan and I all came to one conclusion: several people, including some at the Democratic headquarters, had advance knowledge of the Watergate break-in. An obvious effort had been made to conceal facts. . . . But did we have proof—proof beyond a reasonable doubt? The answer, reluctantly, was no. Additionally, for our suspicions to amount to anything conclusive, we would have to tie this advance knowledge to McCord, or someone else on the inside of the Watergate team, or at least to the plainclothesmen on duty the night of the break-in [who made the Watergate arrest]. We had no such link.”

Nixon survivors in the Ford White House pay less heed to the devil theory than former associates do. A midlevel survivor says he’s never discussed the subject with his colleagues and adds: “I admire a lot of things Richard Nixon did, but I think he just blew it.”

**John Osborne**