

# Framed, Part III

By Richard Raznikov

*Last week, the actions of several key figures involved in the Watergate story — Eugenio Martinez, E. Howard Hunt and James McCord — were examined. From their activities emerges a picture much different from that painted by national leaders and most news media. Hunt, especially, seems to have acted in a manner consistent only with a deeper motive than that depicted to the nation: the sabotage of his own operations, a plan designed from the beginning to result in the undoing of Richard Nixon's presidency.*

**T**wo men sat quietly by the swimming pool at a luxurious suburban Washington home. It was the evening of May 31, 1974. The host was Richard Bast, semi-retired private investigator. His guest was Charles W. Colson, former lieutenant to President Nixon. Unaware that Bast was secretly recording their conversation, Colson spoke urgently of what he believed to be military and CIA spying on the White House:

"He's [Nixon] got the message, and he's thinking about it. He's got a hell of a problem . . . nobody understands this . . ." Colson referred to the stealing of documents from the briefcase of Henry Kissinger by agents of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and to the infiltration of the White House by CIA agents, and he speculated that these powerful groups may have had in mind a kind of "Seven Days in May" coup. He didn't know, he said, if these forces were trying to "knock him [Nixon] off, or whether they were in there just to spy."

Why, Bast wanted to know, didn't Nixon do something about all of this? Why didn't he fire the CIA chief, or have the military men arrested for the thefts of vital documents?

"If he tried to do anything about it they [Pentagon] would have disclosed a lot of his documents that he was worried about . . . that they had been stealing . . ." As to the CIA, Nixon had wanted to fire its director, William Colby, but had been too afraid of retaliation.

"In other words," Bast said, "they practiced extortion on him."

"Subtly," Colson agreed.

"They must certainly know something very heavy on Nixon," Bast commented.

"They must," Colson responded.

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**T**his description of Nixon's White House is not the usual one. After all, weren't Nixon and the CIA and the Pentagon all on the same side? Didn't they prosecute the war together, romp through foreign

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nations together? Didn't they conspire together to, in John Mitchell's immortal words, turn "this country so far to the right you are not even going to recognize it"? Perhaps, but something undeniably went wrong. Somewhere along the way, Richard Nixon incurred the wrath of some very powerful forces and individuals. And when this happened, these forces set out to destroy him.

This conclusion is inevitable in view of Howard Hunt's obvious double-agent role in Watergate. And it is reinforced by Colson, one of the very few men in a position to know. If Hunt still worked for the CIA at the time of the break-ins, and the material in Part One seems to prove this, then it was the CIA that concocted Watergate and designed it to fail. This is exactly Colson's theory. He told Bast of a January 1974 call from Nixon in which "he [the President] was out of his mind over the CIA and Pentagon roles" in Watergate. By January of 1974, at least, Nixon had figured it out.

It is clear from the evidence that Nixon realized he had been set-up at a much earlier date. In early 1973, the President replaced CIA Director Richard Helms.

Helms' removal may signal Nixon's awareness of all or part of the plot against him: in any event, it seems evident that he was suspicious of Helms. The cover-up was already beginning to fall apart, and McCord had written his now famous letter to Judge John Sirica which served to reopen the case. But by autumn of 1973 there can be no doubt that Nixon knew.

By that time the Senate Watergate Committee had taken a great deal of sworn testimony. The CIA's men had denied any knowledge or role in the entire affair. The President knew, however, that Howard Hunt had been in contact with high level Company (CIA) personnel throughout the period during which he was supposedly working for the Nixon Administration and with the "Plumbers." And Nixon also knew that the CIA had quietly fired Howard Osborne, the man who had supplied Hunt with certain Company equipment, in order to sever connections with the burglaries.

But the most substantial clue we have as to Nixon's realization in the fall of 1973 that it was the CIA which was trying to destroy him, lies in the resignation of Vice President Spiro Agnew.

Agnew, it will be recalled, resigned rather than face impeachment when it was learned that a Baltimore grand jury had indicted him on charges that he accepted illegal kickbacks and payoffs related to construction contracts. The U.S. attorney in Baltimore was a close friend of Nixon's, and the grand jury acted against Agnew at his insistence. Agnew, of course, knew who was behind his indictment, and he reacted like a stuck pig; his staff was bitter at the President. Nixon, it turns out, had known about Agnew's indiscretions for a long time. In 1969, another federal grand jury had wanted to prosecute some Maryland contractors for similar offenses, but Attorney General Mitchell had stifled the indictments. The reason was that in those indictments, a "high-level" political figure would have been named. That figure was Agnew. Nixon and his friends had kept that information to themselves for four years. They hadn't wanted to embarrass Spiro because it would have reflected poorly on the President. But by 1973 that situation had changed. Now, though it might reflect on Nixon, Agnew had to be dumped, and so the permission was passed along from the Oval Office to move ahead on the Agnew matter.

Why did Nixon decide to pull the rug out from under his hand-picked Vice President? The answer goes back to 1968, when the President was on the verge of receiving the GOP nomination. He was contacted then by Tom Pappas, head of the Pappas Foundation, an oil conglomerate which operated out of Greece. Would Nixon like some money? Damn right, he would! Well, Pappas, and others, were willing to offer ten million dollars for his campaign on condition that he select Spiro Agnew as his running mate. Nixon is too smart a politician not to have known about Pappas' connection with the Greek junta and, by extension, the Central Intelligence

Agency. Agnew was the CIA's man. But Nixon needed the money and, at that time, was not adverse to a union with CIA. He accepted.

Through the first term, Agnew was a valuable man. Those for whom Agnew's selection had been inexplicable quickly forgot their doubts as the new Veep, alliterations flying, assailed the press and struck fear into the hearts of disobedient party members. Spiro was a real gem.

When Nixon recognized the hidden force behind Watergate, he just as quickly understood that the CIA was on the verge of putting its own man into the presidency. He destroyed Agnew not only for revenge against the CIA but also to buy time. With Agnew out, Nixon could name a new Vice President, and in that act he could still thwart the ultimate designs of the Company.

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Nixon never intended, as had John F. Kennedy, to destroy the CIA. In 1963, Kennedy's threat was to the agency as a whole. He realized that the CIA posed a threat not only to his own security but to the prospects of peace in the world. Their penchant for acting beyond his orders worried him; their power to dominate world events frightened him. He was determined to rid our country of this secret government. Instead, the CIA participated willingly in the plan to eliminate him.

Nixon, on the other hand, was too weak a man to stand up to such power. He conceded its strength, its ability to shape world events. But he had other clients, and these clients, the corporate giants, wanted the CIA used for their purposes. This is what precipitated the struggle which culminated in Watergate and Nixon's resignation.

Since the death of John Kennedy, and more so since the murder of his brother Robert, the Company had begun to war within itself. The careerists of the CIA were content to act in concert with their long-time employers, the multi-national corporations. Their alliance was with Nelson Rockefeller and his brothers. They were satisfied to be the tools, albeit dangerous tools, of their forces. But the other CIA leaders, men like Richard Helms and, later, Colby, were more ambitious. They wanted to make policy themselves. Let the corporations do what they would, the CIA would continue to hold and expand its own international police powers.

The scenario is actually quite common in the world. This history of nations is swollen with the conflicts and uneasy alliances between economic powers and police powers. The money men need agencies like the CIA to enforce their policies in many contexts — Chile is one recent example — but there is always the chance that the police will decide that they, not the wealthy, should control a nation's or a world's destiny. This has been the situation in the United States in recent years. When, for example, the country's largest corporations began to sense that the Vietnam war was no longer profitable, they pushed for withdrawal. But the CIA, in concert with the military, disagreed. They made disengagement as difficult as possible, prolonging the struggle well beyond the point at which the Rockefeller and the DuPonts favored withdrawal.

Henry Kissinger, Rockefeller's close friend and agent, was instrumental in President Nixon's pursuit of detente with the Soviet Union. It was Kissinger who persuaded Nixon to go to China and establish relations with the government of Chairman Mao. This is not because Kissinger is simply a "man of peace," but because such relations among the superpowers are now viewed as economically valuable by the industrial giants.

The Nixon-Kissinger diplomacy, however, made the CIA and the military uneasy. Kissinger, when he joined the administration in 1969, insisted that he have full control over the CIA. This control was so extensive that neither William Colby nor Richard Helms of the CIA ever saw Nixon outside of Kissinger's presence. In 1972, moreover, Nixon set up his own mysterious military intelligence office, the Defense Investigative Service, which reported directly to Kissinger, bypassing, significantly, the CIA and the military's Defense Intelligence Agency.

The DIS, like the "Plumbers," was designed by Nixon and Kissinger as a means of guarding administration policy not from the public so much as from the CIA and the military. This maneuvering came to the surface when it was revealed that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had conspired to steal documents from Kissinger's own briefcase. Why, we might otherwise ask, should the military chiefs ever feel the need to spy on the Secretary of Defense? Apparently, during the sensitive negotiations with Russia (over arms limitations) and China, the military was being kept in the dark by the administration.

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The White House taping system has puzzled politicians, analysts, commentators — and me — for a long time. How could Nixon have been so stupid? Surely, even if the President were driven by uncontrollable vanity and egocentrism to authorize the taping in the first place, he would have removed that system and destroyed the tapes as soon as the Watergate scandal broke; and, if not then, why did he not so act when the focus of the inquiry turned to the Oval Office itself? These are very, very good questions, and important ones. To my knowledge, no one until a week ago was able to offer reasonable answers. Then Charles Colson got out of jail.

Colson told a television audience that the taping system had not been installed by Nixon, that the President had not wanted it in the first place, and that he had actually tried and failed to have it removed on several occasions! This certainly sheds new light on Colson's earlier charge that Nixon had been literally a prisoner in his own office. According to Rudy Maxa of the *Washington Post*:

"Colson portrayed the President as a virtual Oval Office captive of suspected high-ranking conspirators in intelligence circles, against whom he dared not act for fear of international and domestic political repercussions."

Why, then, was the taping system installed? For the same reason that the Joint Chiefs spied on Kissinger: "... The CIA was concerned that it was being bypassed on policy matters and channels of information bearing on national security."

The taping system was installed by the Secret Service. Only four or five men knew about the existence of the system. Colson didn't know (though he may have suspected); Ehrlichman didn't know; Mitchell didn't know. Nixon knew, of course, as did Al Wong of the Secret Service, and Alexander Butterfield. Butterfield, who had worked for the CIA at one time, was the witness who conveyed this little morsel of information to the Senate Watergate Committee.

How very convenient for the committee, which had seemed to have reached a dead-end on its inquiry. Now it knew of the tapes, the existence of reel after reel of juicy and no doubt incriminating evidence.

Butterfield, of course, was suitably mortified. He acted as though his disclosure was just a "slip of the tongue," just "one of those things." He expressed what he surely knew to be the vain hope that he hadn't damaged the President — but he couldn't lie to the Committee. Perhaps Butterfield was not aware that lying to the Senate Committee was precisely what every other witness had been up to, and for which perjury many would go to jail.

But his pretended naivete is hard to swallow when we consider that he was one of only a handful of men trusted enough to know of the tapes in the first place. His disclosure was calculated to pin the President to the wall; without it, Nixon would still be President. Even John Dean's testimony was not sufficient to ruin the President, based as so much of it was on hearsay and rumor. Dean's words were contestable; the tapes were not. It was following Butterfield's little error that Nixon pushed Agnew out of Air Force One. It may be that it was Butterfield's testimony which finally tipped off Nixon to the source of his troubles.

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Perhaps we have now a more realistic, if unusual, view of the true situation in which Nixon went under: a long-term, bitter feud between the Nixon-Kissinger

administration and the CIA-military alliance; wiretappings, the theft of documents, forcible taping of the President's own office; the CIA-inspired Hunt-Liddy-McCord operations to which Mitchell agreed, and which were supposed to fail; the lucky breaks against Nixon embodied in McCord's letter, Hunt's co-operation with the prosecutor, and Butterfield's tale of the tapes. Given the known facts in this bizarre case, there seems no better theory than the one which I have outlined. But there are two remaining questions: what was the information with which the CIA blackmailed Nixon, and what is the latest public investigation of the CIA likely to produce?

That the CIA was "practicing extortion" on the President, as Bast so gently described it, is borne out not only in Colson's words but in many of the other circumstances as well. The germ of that extortion, as Bast knew, was something "very heavy." The Company had something on Nixon so damaging that he has taken it with him rather than speak out in an effort to save his own presidency. What could it be?

The clue lies in the last three tapes, released to the public in fragments just prior to Nixon's resignation. On these tapes, of conversations in the Oval Office just following the Watergate break-in, when it had been learned that E. Howard Hunt was involved, Nixon is heard to exclaim, several times, "Hunt... if they pick that scab a lot of things will come out... the whole Bay of Pigs thing will come out." Nixon returns again and again to the "Bay of Pigs thing." *What thing? What the hell is he talking about?*

The Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961, a CIA-run operation, was organized by Nixon when he was still Eisenhower's Vice President. Its failure led to John Kennedy's promise to "break the CIA into a thousand pieces and scatter it to the winds." It also led to John Kennedy's murder on November 22, 1963. Dozens of articles and books have been written about the Bay of Pigs. Nixon's own role in the planning is well-known. To most people, there could hardly be anything more to know about it. So what could Nixon have meant? What dark secret so tormented him that he would do anything to prevent "that scab" from being picked?

On November 21, 1963, Richard Nixon flew into Dallas. He was there, ostensibly, to meet with Don Kendall, a VIP of the PepsiCo Corporation. He left Dallas the next morning, just before a team of sharpshooters blew off John Kennedy's head.

What is not generally known about that Dallas trip of Nixon's is that the former Vice President attended a party on the evening of November 21, at the home of wealthy oilman Clint Murchison. Also present in the Murchison home that night were some other powerful enemies of John Kennedy: J. Edgar Hoover, who arrived in Dallas not at Love Field but at a smaller, out-of-the-way airport, Redwing; H.L. Hunt, the oil billionaire, who was then being investigated by the Department of Justice; George deMohrenschildt, a White Russian emigre who worked for a number of oil companies as a world-traveling geologist, spoke seven languages fluently, and was Lee Harvey Oswald's closest "friend" in that community. What a remarkable coincidence! Penn Jones, Jr., of Midlothian, Texas, and author of *Forgive My Grief*, contends that this late-night gathering was the final conference of planners of JFK's assassination. Jones says that Nixon was told that night that he would be President.

Was this set of circumstances "that scab," was this what brought Nixon to tongue-slip, after Oswald had been in turn murdered, that "two rights don't make a wrong"?

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There are admittedly many suppositions here, but they are logically drawn from known facts. Perhaps the picture presented by this two-part article is faulty in one or more particulars. But it has one distinct advantage over more commonly accepted theories: it is the only one which can account for all the details of Watergate. Should a better theory be developed, I will not resist it, but until then, we should at least retain serious skepticism about the "official" version of Watergate events. That Nixon was framed is quite evident. That he was framed by the CIA seems exceedingly likely. For what reason, and under what circumstances, we are presently left to wonder.