

Capitol Punishment

Beria Would Roll Over in His Grave

By Art Buchwald

Communist Party Chief Leonid Brezhnev met with Henry Kissinger last week at the Soviet leader's home outside of Moscow. The conversation naturally got around to the Watergate and this, in essence, is what was said.

"Gospodin Kissenger, I do not understand all this business about Watergate that is taking place in your country."

"Well, Mr. Brezhnev, it's rather difficult to explain. It appears that members of the President's political party bugged the headquarters of the opposition party."

"What's wrong with that, Gospodin Kissinger? We do it all the time."

"But you have no opposition party."

"That's true. So we bug our *own* party. You never can tell when our members are up to no good."

"In any case, Mr. Brezhnev, seven men were caught and tried for the crime. One of them confessed that higher members of the President's political party were involved."

"What is wrong with higher members of the President's party finding out what the revisionist counter-revolutionaries are up to?"

"That's the way our people felt about it, too. But unfortunately some newspapermen got wind of the story and started to write about it."

"Why didn't the President put the newspapermen in insane asylums?"

"We cannot do that in the United States, Mr. Brezhnev."

"That's too bad. You cannot have order and discipline in a country if you are unable to put writers in mental institutions."

"That's true. The real problem though was that after the Watergate trial, it was revealed that members of the White House staff tried to obstruct justice and keep

any higher-ups from being implicated."

"Naturally, Gospodin Kissinger. What other choice would they have?"

"In our country the people want to get to the bottom of things. They want to know who is responsible for a crime."

"Even if the President is involved?"

"Yessir, even if the President is involved."

"Why didn't President Nixon shoot everyone who had anything to do with Watergate, so that nobody would talk?"

"Some of the people involved were his best friends."

"In the Soviet Union, a leader has *no* friends. He must do what's right for the people even if it means losing a few bureaucrats."

"We're aware you do have a different system, Mr. Brezhnev, but we must deal with the Constitution. The President has to take responsibility for what his subordinates do, no matter how serious the crime."

"What kind of system of justice is that? The President should torture his subordinates until they confess he had nothing to do with it."

"We've thought of that, but it just wouldn't work in the United States because Congress would get wind of it and raise a storm."

"Why doesn't the President get the Army to arrest Congress?"

"We can't do it, Mr. Brezhnev. The people would never stand for it."

"In our country *we're* the people. And we arrest anybody we want to."

"I know, Mr. Brezhnev, I know. Now to get back to your meeting with President Nixon in June . . ."

"I'm not sure I want to meet with a world leader who doesn't know how to bug his enemies without getting caught."