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# The Long Shadow of Scandal

The more we learn about Watergate the more we understand that it is not primarily a political scandal growing out of campaign practices. It is primarily a governmental scandal growing out of a corrupt system.

Some of the best men in Washington, including Henry Kissinger, Gen. Alexander Haig and Richard Helms have been compromised. Their passive acceptance of dirty tricks had nothing to do with politics or the 1972 campaign.

Consider the case of Dr. Kissinger. Apart from his brilliance as a diplomatic theorist and negotiator, he has shown not a little moral courage at the National Security Council. He has consorted freely with journalists and others known to be critical of the President. He has conveyed his own reservations about aspects of official policy.

But back in May 1969, the FBI began bugging the home telephone of one of Dr. Kissinger's senior associates at the NSC, Morton Halperin. The existence of the Halperin tap became known in connection with disclosures the administration was obliged to make in the Pentagon Papers trial after it emerged that parties to the Watergate break-in had earlier attempted, under White House orders, a burglary in the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

Over last weekend, Dr. Kissinger was asked at a press briefing this question about the Halperin bugging: "Were you aware at the time it was taking place that the home of one of your staff members was being wiretapped? Did you get any information from those wiretaps?"

We now know that Dr. Kissinger, in fact, helped arrange for the bugging

of Halperin at a meeting in the FBI office of the late J. Edgar Hoover. But in response to the question, Dr. Kissinger offered a 306-word reply which started with the crazy observation that "every time I meet with the press some variation of this question is being asked." He dragged up the Central Intelligence Agency and the FBI. He gave assurance about Dr. Halperin's loyalty and discretion—as though Halperin, not Kissinger, were on trial.

Gen. Haig, who served for four years as Dr. Kissinger's deputy before moving to be number two man in the Army, has been nearly as impressive in his performance as Dr. Kissinger. He frequently compared the staff system around President Nixon to the system which he felt had so ill-served Gen. MacArthur. He was clearly the right man to take over on an interim basis when H. R. Haldeman was forced to resign as White House chief of staff last month.

As Kissinger's deputy, Gen. Haig knew about the Halperin bugging. He has not been asked about it, but he did something a lot worse than the imitation of Pravda rendered by Dr. Kissinger by way of comment. Gen. Haig went out to the Pentagon Papers trial in Los Angeles and testified for the prosecution regarding the exact nature of Dr. Halperin's relation to the NSC staff. In order to win brownie points with Mr. Nixon, in other words, Gen. Haig went into court with dirty hands.

Finally, there is the case of Mr. Helms. As director of the Central Intelligence Agency from 1966 through 1972, he gained a reputation as a thoroughly honest professional. He let the

facts speak on Vietnam and Soviet missile intentions even when they spoke messages the administration did not like. He was perhaps the one man in town to warn the Nixon administration in the month before the 1972 election that it couldn't sell the deal made with Hanoi to Saigon—an act of true courage.

But the CIA was dragged into what has become known as Watergate in two ways. First, the agency, at the request of the White House, gave help to the men who attempted burglary on the office of Dan Ellsberg's psychiatrist back in 1971. Next, after the actual Watergate break-in of June, 1972, the CIA participated with the FBI in the first stages of an investigation now known to have been manipulated by the White House.

Mr. Helms was not ignorant of those abuses of the agency by the White House. Early this year, he was asked a kind of catch-all question about Watergate and the CIA during his Senate hearings for confirmation to be ambassador to Iran. He volunteered an answer which gave the CIA a clean bill of health in Watergate.

The point of all this is not that Kissinger, Haig and Helms are bad men. They are not. They are the best the country has to offer. I like them as men, and admire them as public servants.

But the fact that officials of their caliber can be compromised by Watergate is a gauge of how much reform is necessary. It is not a matter of changing half a dozen men or even impeaching the President. What needs to be changed is the whole spirit of government.