

Nixon Keeps Ties to 3 Former Aides

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Dr. Henry A. Kissinger and White House Chief of Staff Alexander M. Haig have tried unsuccessfully for six months to persuade President Nixon to disassociate himself from three former top aides who are targets of the Watergate investigation, according to White House sources and a former presidential speechwriter.

Instead, the President has continued to maintain his close association with former aides H. R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman and Charles W. Colson, and has built his public and legal de-

fense "in concert" with them, the White House sources, adding, "Warren declined to dis-

Secretary of State Kissinger and Haig believe Mr. Nixon's course could result in disastrous legal consequences and public relations problems for the President, but they have failed in all their efforts to reverse it, the sources reported.

Instead of turning to senior members of his White House staff for advice on Watergate and other sensitive issues, the sources said, Mr. Nixon has increasingly sought the counsel of his two close friends, businessmen Charles G. (Bebe) Rebozo and Robert H. Abplan-

alp. In addition, the sources said, Mr. Nixon has continued to meet and stay in regular telephone contact with Ehrlichman, Colson and Haldeman.

One account of unsuccessful efforts by Haig and Kissinger to separate Mr. Nixon from the three former aides was supplied in an interview this week by a former presidential speechwriter, John K. Andrews Jr., who resigned from the White House staff in December.

Reading from notes he made of a July 27 discussion he had with Kissinger in preparation for a then forthcoming speech by Mr. Nixon on Watergate, Andrews

quoted Kissinger as recommending that "the President take responsibility for the climate of excessive warfare" in the White House.

According to Andrews, Kissinger recommended that the President say in his speech: "I've cleaned out the old staff . . . I've gotten rid of these people . . . The paranoia had been nurtured by my aides."

Kissinger's suggestions were rejected, however by another White House aide, presidential press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler, who was quoted by Andrews as telling him that "contrition is bull . . ."

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Mr. Nixon's Watergate speech, delivered last Aug. 15, included none of Kissinger's suggested criticism of the President's former top aides.

Andrews also quoted Gen. Haig as telling him much later, on Nov. 11, that "the President has an excessive desire to protect old friends."

According to another former White House official, Gen. Haig was approached last summer by Haldeman and asked to raise money for the legal defense of Ehrlichman and himself.

The former White House official, who said he was told the story by Ehrlichman, recounted the following version of a conversation between Haldeman and Haig:

Haldeman: "We (Haldeman and Ehrlichman) hear that the President doesn't want us to have a legal defense fund."

Haig: "No, that is not correct," or "No, that is not my understanding."

Haldeman: "Then raise us some money."

"I wonder what emboldened Haldeman to almost order Haig to raise the money?" the former White House official mused after recounting the conversation.

The former official, as well as other White House sources, said they had no knowledge that Haig, any White House aides or anyone else were involved in raising funds for Haldeman, Ehrlichman or Colson.

The question of a continuing association between the President and his three former aides is becoming increasingly important to Mr. Nixon's own legal position in the Watergate affair, the sources said, because major Watergate indictments are expected this month, perhaps as soon as late next week.

A reporter called the White House at 6:20 p.m. yesterday for a comment on the story. At 8:10 p.m., deputy White House press secretary Gerald Warren issued the following statement:

"We're not going to spend our time responding to your 6:30 inquiries on this type of story which disservices the truth both in fact and feeling." Warren declined to discuss the specifics raised in the story.

In his account of Kissinger's July 27 suggestions that Mr. Nixon publicly disassociate himself from his three former aides, Andrews quoted Kissinger as saying

of the three: "If they were evil incarnate, they could not have had a greater triumph of hurting the President."

After receiving Kissinger's suggestion that the President announce in his Aug. 15 speech that he had "cleaned out the old staff (and) . . . gotten rid of these people," Andrews said, he took the recommendations to Ziegler.

After deriding the suggestion as "contrition," according to Andrews, Ziegler said, "the President shouldn't talk about his mistakes . . . but turn Watergate into a plus . . . reassure the people of the health of the system. The President shouldn't say he's sorry again. He's already said it once."

Andrews further quoted Ziegler as saying, "If we don't pull it (the Aug. 15 speech) off, we'll limp through the next four years."

Ziegler wanted the President to come across as "a lawyer, a politician and a teacher," Andrews said. Ziegler, according to Andrews, contended that the President's constituency needs to be reassured (that) . . . the values personified by the President are not a charade . . . An attack on the President is an effort to show those values are a charade."

The President's Aug. 15 Watergate speech generally followed the lines suggested by Ziegler and contained no direct references to Haldeman, Ehrlichman or Colson. Mr. Nixon said only that he accepted personal responsibility for "serious abuses" of political ethics by unnamed members of his staff.

As recently as Nov. 11, when Andrews said he met privately with Haig, the White House chief of staff told him he was "of one mind" with Kissinger about the President's need to disassociate himself from his former aides.

Confirming the thrust of Andrews' account, a present high White House official said: "It is also my understanding that Gen. Haig and Kissinger have urged the President by one means or another to break with Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Colson . . . It is also my understanding that there have been frustrations in this area."

The official said he, too,

has problems communicating with the President about Watergate. "I understand everyone does," the official said, and he named Haig, Kissinger and Ziegler as being among those who he believes feel inhibited in talking about Watergate with an at times unresponsive Mr. Nixon.

According to the official, only Rebozo and Abplanalp "are able to consistently and freely talk with the President" about Watergate and other sensitive issues.

Both the current official and Andrews said Kissinger and Haig have tried not to offend the President in presenting their views because of their awareness of Mr. Nixon's personal loyalties to his former aides.

"Henry doesn't want to shoot his bullets on this one," Andrews said, adding: "Kissinger is pragmatic about it. He also doesn't want to know how much the President is involved in Watergate . . . He looks on resignation or removal (of President Nixon from office) as events that would be cataclysmic to world order."

The present high White House official, meanwhile, said Haig "used up about all his good will (with Mr. Nixon) in urging the President to release the (Watergate) tapes" in obedience of a court order last October.

Another White House source said that former White House Counselor Bryce Harlow "implored" the President to release the tapes for several months before it was done.

The source said that Harlow disagreed also with the President's continuing defense of his former aides, but explained it in terms of what the source said "was the President's sense of loyalty" to the men who served him in his first administration.

On Nov. 1, after it was publicly disclosed that two of the subpoenaed Watergate tapes were missing or had never been recorded, Haig met with about 20 to 30 of the second and third echelon White House staff members.

According to Andrews' notes of the meeting, Haig said: "To (publicly) release a transcript (of the remaining subpoenaed tapes) would have been fatal . . . The tapes, while not confirming criminality, contain juicy tidbits which in the hands of the President's enemies"

could be used to destroy him.

Andrews quoted Haig as later telling him that for months the President wouldn't let Haig, White House Special Counsel J. Fred Buzhardt or anyone else listen to the tapes because the conversations revealed the nature of the "political hard ball that was played."

Numerous sources have previously reported that the tapes reveal some rough if not harsh language by the President and his former top aides.

Andrews resigned after four years on the White House staff as a speechwriter and an assistant to Ziegler. Considered one of the President's brightest and most loyal subordinates during his tenure on the staff, he has said since leaving that he believes the President should resign if he fails to provide all the facts on Watergate to investigators and the public.

At least four sources have said in recent weeks that the President has kept in close contact with Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Colson. The sources said that met shortly after Haldeman met shortly after Haldeman testified before the Senate select Watergate committee in August.

Two sources this week said that Ehrlichman met privately with the President about Sept. 13. This was more than a week after Ehrlichman had been indicted in California on charges of conspiracy to commit burglary in connection with the White House "plumbers" break-in at the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

John J. Wilson, the attorney who represents both Ehrlichman and Haldeman, met privately with the Presi-

dent - several times last April, a courtesy apparently not granted to any other lawyer representing a person under investigation in Watergate-related cases. Haldeman also was allowed to listen to several of the White House tape recordings last summer.

Colson resigned from the White House staff early last year to open a private law practice here. Haldeman and Ehrlichman resigned under pressure April 30 when the President said they were "two of the finest public servants it has been by privilege to know."

On Aug. 22, the President said that when all the facts come out, Haldeman and Ehrlichman "will be exonerated." And again on Nov. 17, the President called his two former top aides "dedicated, fine public servants" who will "come out all right" when the Watergate investigations are completed.