

What Else Does Mr. Nixon Know?

If Special Prosecutor Ruth gets his way, the last big mystery of the Watergate may be cleared up by Richard Nixon himself.

The last big mystery is what E. Howard Hunt meant when he wrote his recently disclosed memorandum of Nov. 14, 1972.

"The Watergate bugging is only one of a number of highly illegal conspiracies engaged in by one or more of the defendants at the behest of senior White House officials," Hunt wrote in an appeal for more help from the Nixon White House. And he added: "These as yet undisclosed crimes can be proved."

Historian Arthur Schlesinger has written that "this extraordinary statement has met with nearly total incuriosity." Schlesinger asks, "Is no one interested in what these 'highly illegal conspiracies,' these 'undisclosed crimes' were, and what 'senior White House officials' ordered that they be committed?"

The answer is that Special Prosecutor Ruth is very much interested and will make every attempt to interest former President Nixon, too.

Ruth's mandate—the same mandate given to Archibald Cox and Leon Jaworski—clearly establishes his right to investigate the crimes Hunt alleges. In addition to authorizing the Special

Prosecutor to investigate the "unauthorized entry into Democratic National Committee headquarters and all offenses arising out of the 1972 presidential election," the mandate gives the special prosecutor power to investigate "allegations involving members of the White House staff or presidential appointees . . ."

Ruth had no knowledge of Hunt's memorandum until a few weeks before it was revealed in court early this month. He has asked U.S. Dist. Judge John J. Sirica for permission to question Richard Nixon more broadly than ordinary cross-examination might entail. He wants to raise subjects other than those raised by defense attorneys. If Mr. Nixon's health improves, and Judge Sirica grants Ruth the latitude he is asking for, there will be nothing to stop him from pursuing the Hunt memorandum.

Moreover, the former President will have to answer truthfully or face consequences from which even his "pardon for all crimes" will not protect him. That pardon covers crimes committed while Nixon was President. It won't protect him from perjury should he choose to answer Ruth's questions untruthfully.

The problem for Ruth, then, is to try to find out what Hunt was talking about. There have been rumors in this

city for a long while that the "plumbers" undertook the break-in of various embassies around town. There are also rumors that the "plumbers" planted a false birth certificate in Indiana in order to give rise to the 1972 campaign charge that Democratic nominee Sen. George McGovern had fathered an illegitimate child.

But even if these acts (somebody did break into the Chilean embassy and somebody did plant a fake birth certificate in Indiana) can be traced to the White House, it is doubtful whether anybody of Howard Hunt's mentality would consider them as crimes. Hunt must have been talking about more serious matters.

Would Hunt consider conspiracy to assassinate a crime? For many months this town has also been buzzing with the rumor that Hunt and his men plotted the death of Gen. Omar Torrijos, the Panamanian strong man, and that Hunt made a trip to Mexico in connection with this plan.

Hunt might think a conspiracy to assassinate a foreigner was nothing but foreign policy and, in any event, the conspiracy was never carried out. The chances are, then, that Richard Nixon has knowledge of some serious domestic crime and that, eventually, he will have to talk.