

Tigers Or Jellyfish?

"The time has come to bring [the] investigations of this matter to an end. One year of Watergate is enough."

—Richard Nixon, Jan. 30, 1974

"It is time . . . to end the self-flagellation that has done so much harm to this nation's capacity to conduct foreign policy."

—Henry Kissinger, Nov. 24, 1975

By Anthony Lewis

BOSTON, Nov. 30—Suppose that during the Senate Watergate investigation President Nixon had directed Government officials not to appear as witnesses in public session. Would the Senate committee meekly have dropped its plans to question H. R. Haldeman and the others in open hearings? Would the press have let this pass without a murmur?

Of course not. Senators and editors would have been outraged. But move to 1975—from Watergate to the C.I.A., from Richard Nixon to Henry Kissinger and Gerald Ford—and outrage is in short supply.

The Senate intelligence committee has public hearings this week on American covert activities in Chile. But Secretary of State Kissinger has refused to appear, saying it would be "wholly inappropriate" to discuss in public "any real or purported covert operation." And President Ford instructed C.I.A. officials not to appear.

The U.S. role in upsetting the constitutional government of Chile is as important as Watergate on any reasonable scale of values. Yet there have been no loud noises from Capitol Hill about the Ford Administration's pe-

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remptory refusal to take part in what could be highly instructive hearings on the subject. And the affair has had scarcely any notice in the press.

Will Senator Frank Church and his committee really stand still for a new, unilateral privilege allowing executive

witnesses to decide when their appearance is "appropriate?" Is the committee going to forget about evidence sought from Kissinger long ago but not supplied? One such item is a desk calendar that might show whether C.I.A. officials were truthful when they said Kissinger never called a halt to the coup attempts begun in Chile in September, 1970.

The Senate committee's seriousness will also be tested by Richard Nixon's attempts to set terms for his appearance. He says he must be questioned in California, by just two committee members, and he reserves the right to invoke "executive privilege." Two courts have already given short shrift to the notion that he retains any such privilege. He is subject to subpoena like anyone else. Is the Church committee afraid to issue one?

There are questions for the House of Representatives, too. Its intelligence committee has subpoenaed vital evidence on covert actions from Secretary Kissinger, and moved to hold him in contempt for failing to produce it. But there is talk that the House leadership plans to kill the contempt citation. Is that true?

And why is the House committee's chairman, Otis Pike, not moving to extend the artificial January deadline for its work? There have been delays beyond the committee's control, and the deadline is now quite unrealistic. If it were lifted, Secretary Kissinger and others would have to take the House inquiry's requests for information more seriously.

The press also has some questions to answer. It rises in a chorus of out-

rage when a judge prohibits stories that might prejudice the defendant in a criminal trial. But it yawns when the Secretary of State and the President try to keep the public from learning facts crucial to an understanding of the way America operates in the world.

Time magazine, which did hard investigating in Watergate, dismissed the Senate committee's assassination report in a page, devoting its cover to shopping. Most of the press let the subject drop after a first flurry of stories. A week later the Washington Post began pursuing some intriguing clues in the report, such as the indication that Nixon was roused to covert warfare on Chile by his friend Donald Kendall of Pepsi-Cola.

A Congressional investigator of covert activities remarked sadly the other day: "We get all kinds of pressure not to do things—and almost none to go on with our job." Why are Congress and the press so much more pliant now than they were in Watergate?

One reason is a natural respect for secrecy in the nation's intelligence services, though in fact plots to murder foreign leaders or overthrow their governments are not "intelligence." But there is also a personal reason. Henry Kissinger is a genius at softening up legislators and journalists—at co-opting them. One person on Capitol Hill said:

"Every time we get close to a nerve, we find that it leads to Kissinger. And then, soon, we get the pressure to protect him."