

The Prosecutors Vs. the President



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THE WATERGATE prosecutors believe their best case against President Nixon personally would be for "obstruction of justice." They have evidence that he tried to cover up the burglarizing of the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist. No decision has been made, however, to bring charges against him.

The President repeatedly has tried to block inquiries into the White House plumbers' operation in the name of national security. Presidential aides have told the prosecutors, in deep confidence, that an investigation of the plumbers might reveal that the Central Intelligence Agency eavesdrops on Kremlin leaders.

We reported as far back as September 16, 1971, however, that "The CIA has been able to listen to the kingpins of the Kremlin banter, bicker and backbite among themselves."

The Kremlin eavesdropping has been the principal excuse that the White House has offered for hushing up the Ellsberg break-in. The burglary was committed by the plumbers, presidential aides told the prosecutors, not to seek a psychological profile of Ellsberg as the public has been told, but to learn the names of Ellsberg's suspected Soviet contacts.

The White House feared Ellsberg had information about the CIA's listening devices in the Kremlin and might tip off his

alleged Soviet contacts, the President's people claimed. They had reason to believe Ellsberg had named his Soviet contacts, they said, during his sessions with his psychiatrist.

When Assistant Attorney General Henry Petersen discussed the Ellsberg break-in with the President, according to Petersen's account of the conversation, Mr. Nixon warned him: "That is a national security matter. You stay out of that. Your mandate is to investigate Watergate."

The new special prosecutor, Leon Jaworski, has told Senators he doesn't agree with this point of view and will go ahead with an investigation of the plumbers' activities.

These include two mysterious missions known only as "Project Odessa" and "Project N-A." White House aides won't even discuss these missions with the prosecutors, although they have promised to let Jaworski see documents and listen to tapes relating to the national security problems.

Some of the prosecutors are seeking to determine whether the President offered the former head of the plumbers, Egil Krogh, to obstruct an investigation. Krogh's attorney, Stephen Shulman, has told the court that his client was ordered to lie, if necessary, to conceal the plumbers' operations.