

Two Men Who Wouldn't Comply



— Jack Anderson

PRESIDENT NIXON'S top aide, H. R. Haldeman, ordered tax audits on a dozen White House targets, but the Treasury official assigned the hatchet job ripped up the list in revulsion.

In passing on the order for the audit, which would have violated Internal Revenue Service rules, Haldeman stated or implied he was acting on President Nixon's personal orders, according to then White House aide Clark Mollenhoff.

"Either Haldeman told me the President wanted (the audits) done or that was the implication," said Mollenhoff, a Pulitzer prize-winning reporter.

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AS MOLLENHOFF remembers it, Haldeman called him in March or April 1970, and informed him he would be getting a list of names on which a "routine examination . . . or audit" was to be done.

Shortly thereafter, either Haldeman himself or the late Murray Chotiner, also a White House aide, delivered the list of about a dozen names. Mollenhoff had made a few tax inquiries at IRS before, but he told us that "this time, it was one of those things when there was something different."

Nevertheless, he forwarded the names to IRS Commissioner Randolph Thrower with a request that they be examined. Thrower told us that if the list had been backed up with specific data, he would have sent it to the field as he is required to do.

But, he said, "I certainly did not want to do it," with only a list of handpicked targets. In milder, but final words, he told Mollenhoff he wouldn't go through with the deal and backed it up with a memo.

Far from slacking off, the White House tried a second approach. This time Chotiner summoned the Treasury Department's highly respected law enforcement director, Martin Pollner, to the White House.

"I got this call that he wanted to speak to me," recalled Pollner, now a New York lawyer. "He told me, 'If it's possible as a public service (since) anyone can be audited, these are people I suggest.'"

Without further ado, Chotiner produced an envelope and handed it to Pollner. In it were about a dozen names typed on paper with no letterhead.

"I felt it was an improper approach," Pollner said, explaining his distress. Yet, he was also aware of the dangers of refusing White House orders.

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BADLY SHAKEN, he left Chotiner to return to his own office just across the street. But once outside of Chotiner's sight his resolve hardened. He took out the list and "I ripped it up and threw it away," as best he recalls in a trash can near the White House.

While neither Mollenhoff nor Pollner say they can remember the names, Thrower said he recollects they were definitely not names of administration figures simply being checked out.