

# The Washington Post

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## Break-In, Tape Gap Cited

# Haldeman Accuses Nixon

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H. R. Haldeman, Richard M. Nixon's closest aide during the White House years, believes Nixon "himself caused those burglars to break into" the Watergate.

Later, when the historic White House cover-up was unraveling, Haldeman is convinced it was the president who personally attempted to erase incriminating portions of his secret tape recordings.

Haldeman, currently in prison, consigns the role of the Watergate "heavy" to Charles W. Colson, whom he describes as "the iron-man bully." And he ascribes much of the motivation for installing the fateful White House tape recorders to Nixon's concern over "the unpredictable Henry Kissinger," whom he depicts as a scheming, conspiratorial figure.

The president knew that Kissinger was keeping a log of everything they discussed, and he wanted a rival record of his own. According to Haldeman, Nixon had become aware that Kissinger was "given to

second thoughts on vital matters" they had discussed in private.

It was Kissinger, Haldeman says, generally confirming other accounts, "whose anger at leaks really started the 1969 FBI national security wiretapping." And it was Kissinger who pressed Nixon to fight the publication of the Pentagon Papers by tell-

*This report was written by staff writer Haines Johnson from information supplied by writer Nancy Collins. Staff writers Bob Woodward and Scott Armstrong contributed to the report.*

ing Nixon that not to resist "shows you're a weakling, Mr. President."

But it is Haldeman's picture of Nixon, as sketched in his forthcoming book, "The Ends of Power," that commands the most attention. The latter two-thirds of the book was made available to The Washington Post and it adds new insight and facts

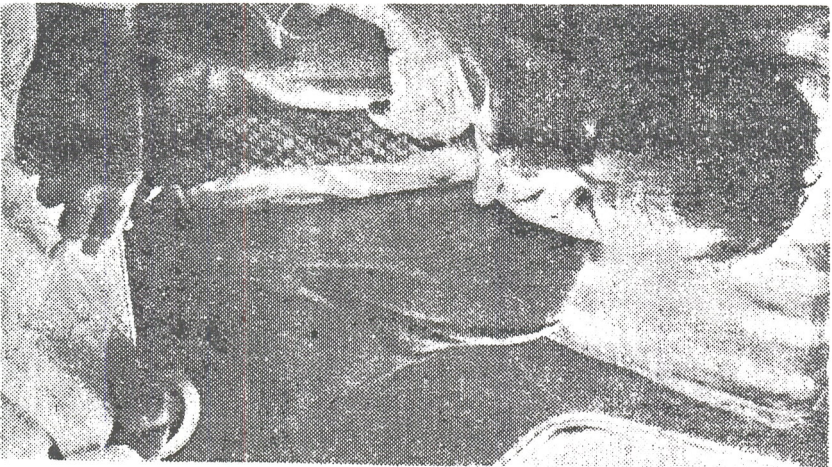
about the Watergate scandal and the history of the Nixon administration.

While Haldeman defends the president's public policies and goals, he shows a petty, vengeful Nixon in private, railing and ranting at enemies, obsessed with conspiracies, and deceiving even his closest aides.

Thus Haldeman joins another top—and imprisoned—Nixon official, John D. Ehrlichman, in indicting their former leader through the pages of a book. Ehrlichman's vehicle was the fictionalized "President Richard Monckton," a dark and brooding character. Haldeman's is nonfiction, but in it he compares Nixon to the paranoid and fictional, Captain Queeg.

One incident in particular captures the private flavor of those traumatic days inside the White House when President Nixon and his men battled for survival. It came in April 1973 when Nixon and his aides knew that John W. Dean III, the president's counsel, was talking to federal prosecutors. Of critical concern to Nixon was what he

See HALDEMAN, A2, Col. 1



United Press International  
months after the Watergate burglary.

## HALDEMAN, From A1

had told Dean in the now-famous March 21 meeting when they talked at length about the break-in and pay-offs to the Watergate criminals.

Nixon, Haldeman says, "had become compulsively and incessantly worried about Dean's mythical tape recorder."

Privately, that was the least of Haldeman's concern. As he tells it:

"Frankly, I was sick of hearing about Dean's recorder. By now it was almost definite I would leave the White House in disgrace, and the president was going on worrying that Dean might nail him with the same device he hoped would protect him: a tape recorder."

Haldeman tries to reassure him, telling him it was impossible, inconceivable. Nixon keeps worrying, alternately blowing up in anger and then pleading.

Had Haldeman ever heard that Dean might have secretly taped anyone, any time?

Haldeman was transparently so annoyed that he felt like saying that Dean always used a tape recorder. He felt like adding: "In fact, unknown to you, Mr. President, I am his secret transcriber feeding the prosecutors. Instead I said, 'Never, never.'"

The conclusion of that incident reads:

"To which Nixon laughed nervously. 'Well, if worse comes to worse and he does have one, well, we've got one, too.'"

These types of episodes are scattered throughout Haldeman's book, which is divided into nine sections and a conclusion. The book will be serialized next week in such papers as *The Washington Star*. Excerpts will be published in *Newsweek* magazine, with formal publication later.

Articles have already reported the extreme secrecy with which the Haldeman project was being handled—the melting down of the type after various sections were printed, the almost clandestine meetings of a handful of editors, the careful handling of the page proofs in what is said to be more than a million-dollar property.

Publication date is Feb. 27.

The excerpts made available to *The Post* include many references and quotations from the Nixon tapes. In the excerpts, Haldeman makes the following allegations—some new, some old—about Nixon:

- That Nixon was involved in the Watergate cover-up from "day one" and three days after the burglary on June 17, 1972, told Haldeman they would be raising money for the Watergate defendants.

- That Nixon personally authorized the illegal wiretap on the telephone of columnist Joseph Kraft. Haldeman describes that wiretap as "a Nixon project all the way" Nixon had told David Frost in their television interviews that he had never broken the law.

- That despite his repeated denials, Nixon told Haldeman that he might have ordered the break-in at the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist. Ellsberg was a defendant in the leaking of the Pentagon Papers.

- That Nixon proposed possibly illegal means he employed to recover classified documents from the Brookings Institution and from the Internal Revenue Service.

- That Nixon indicated he might not obey a Supreme Court decision requiring that he turn over his tapes as evidence for prosecutors unless the justices so ruled unanimously. At the time there was public speculation whether Nixon would obey the court's order. Haldeman says Nixon told him



Haldeman, right, films Nixon advisers in October 1971. From left, Kissinger, Secretary of State

three weeks before the decision that "if they leave any 'air' we can handle it." Haldeman interprets this to mean that Nixon would not have obeyed the order to hand the tapes over if the court had only reached a majority decision. The court did reach a unanimous decision and Nixon announced his intention to comply seven hours later.

### Watergate

In addition to these, Haldeman offers his interpretation of other critical aspects of the Nixon presidency and of the problems that led to the first presidential resignation in American history. Among them are:

Haldeman's version of the seeds of the break-in, which he himself labels "belief" and a theory of the case, has to do with Nixon's feelings about Lawrence O'Brien and the celebrated ITT scandal involving allegations of

fixing an antitrust case and a subsequent payoff of \$400,000. O'Brien, then the Democratic Party chairman with offices in the Watergate complex, had long been a key political adviser to Nixon's political opponents, the Kennedy brothers.

Colson, Nixon's White House counselor who had earned a reputation as the President's "hatchet-man," also had what Haldeman describes as a longtime enmity toward O'Brien. Colson had worked for Leverett Saltonstall, a Republican senator from Massachusetts, while O'Brien was employed by the Kennedy's in the state.

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fixing an antitrust case and a subsequent payoff of \$400,000. O'Brien, then the Democratic Party chairman with offices in the Watergate complex, had long been a key political adviser to Nixon's political opponents, the Kennedy brothers.

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Haldeman's thesis about the break-in holds that both Nixon and Colson were passionately determined to strike back at O'Brien in the spring of 1972, in the weeks before the break-in in June 1972. They both felt O'Brien was striking unfairly on the ITT case, a point that has been made elsewhere. Nixon's tactic, always throughout his long political career, was to counterattack. And, in the conspiratorial way of Nixon and his inner circle, the conviction grew that O'Brien himself was vulnerable. It was public knowledge that O'Brien, a lawyer, was getting a large retainer from Howard Hughes—Haldeman cites the sum of \$180,000 a year. There, Haldeman suggests, was the weak point for O'Brien. There must be pay dirt there.

"Which leads me to my own theory of who initiated the Watergate break-in. Richard Nixon, himself, caused those burglars to break into O'Brien's office."

It's Haldeman's belief that Nixon passed the word to Colson "to get the goods" on O'Brien's connection with Howard Hughes. In turn, Colson dealt with E. Howard Hunt, who conferred with G. Gordon Liddy, who oversaw the bigging of the Democrats'

office in Watergate.

Haldeman's account of Colson is singularly unflattering.

"Dealing with Colson was no fun for White House staffers at any level," he writes. "If he was superior in rank, he would bully them. If he was inferior, he would smile—and remind them he had 'the ear of the President.' Which he did. Never more so than in the ITT case."

In another incident involving Colson, Haldeman recalls angrily dressing down Colson so severely that it left Colson sobbing. The point was that if Colson didn't stop charging off on his own, Haldeman was going to take his complaint directly to Nixon. And that would have been the end of Colson.

### The Tapes

Haldeman's theory on the famous 18½-minute gap on one of Nixon's cru-

cial Watergate tapes is fascinating. It's that Nixon tried to erase it, but was so clumsy he couldn't succeed and left the rest of the task to someone else possibly his secretary, Rose Mary Woods.

Here's what he says:

"My own perception had always been that Nixon simply began to erase all of the Watergate material from the tapes when he started to worry that they may be exposed.

"But Nixon was the least dextrous man I have ever known: clumsy would be too elegant a word to describe his mechanical aptitude. . . . So I believed that Nixon had started *trying* to erase the tape, himself, but realized—at the rate he was going—it would take him 10 years. . . ."

After his resignation in April 1973 as Nixon's chief of staff, Haldeman says Nixon referred to the 18½-minute gap as "Rose's 18 minutes." That

could be a ploy on Nixon's part to place the blame on someone else, Haldeman suggests. Woods took public responsibility for the gap at the time. It is not known whether the full

Haldeman book describes what was in the 18½-minute gap.

### 'Deep Throat'

In his book, Haldeman names Frenzo Fielding as the secret source for Post reporter Bob Woodward, dubbed "Deep Throat" in the Woodward-Bernstein book "All the President's Men" and subsequent movie of that name. Fielding was a White House staff assistant to John Dean. Fielding has denied the Haldeman allegation.

Again, Haldeman offers no evidence for this; it is his deduction. Woodward said he has never commented on the identity of any sources, and will not do so now.

### Kissinger

Haldeman's portrayal of Henry Kissinger is tinged with bitterness and venom. The Kissinger who emerges is a publicity-hound who courted the press, giving them one version of his role and in private talking another. Kissinger's presence clearly was irritating to many of the Nixon loyalists.

One of Ehrlichman's gambits, Haldeman recounts, was collecting nude photographs of various starlets Kissinger had dated. Then over a period of time, the photographs would be dispatched, in official folders, to Kissinger with bawdy instructions on what to do with them.

Kissinger's actual advice on such things as wiretappings and prosecuting in the Pentagon Papers case some day may prove embarrassing to the former secretary of state, Haldeman suggests. By that, he means many of Kissinger's private words remain on Nixon's tapes and still may be played publicly at some future date. Kissinger, according to Haldeman, said that Ellsberg used drugs and had "weird sexual habits."

But throughout this latest, inside account of the Watergate trauma and the Nixon years it is Haldeman's view of Nixon that dominates the book.

See HALDEMAN, A3, Col. 1



White House Photo

l. From left, Kissinger, Secretary of State Willam P. Rogers, unidentified aide, and Colson in doorway.

## HALDEMAN, From A2

The Nixon seen through Haldeman's eyes is a small man, keenly and obsessively aware of his personal legal vulnerabilities from Watergate and other illegal White House projects. Nixon comes over as haunted by the severity of his problems. He's a cold, distant and humorless leader frantically trying to protect himself and willingly sacrificing his top aides—Haldeman and Ehrlichman—in the process.

Ehrlichman seems to have come to the same conclusion. In an interview in *The Post* published in January last year, he said that had he known in 1968 what he later learned about Nixon, "I suspect I would have stayed home from that campaign."

It's Haldeman's opinion now that Nixon was manipulating everyone at the center of all the many spokes to the Watergate wheel. And, in this blunt and unflattering portrait, Nixon's handling of Watergate especially shows him as the opposite of what he most wanted to be—tough and decisive.

Haldeman's writer in his book project, Joseph DiMona, has told *The Post* that at first Nixon's top former aide intended to write a totally different book. It was going to be pro-Nixon. But Nixon's performance on his interviews with David Frost on television changed Haldeman's mind.

As the drama unfolded, Nixon becomes totally preoccupied with his survival. Haldeman describes moments where he seemed to age visibly—and particularly of Nixon's sense of shock when Ehrlichman first suggested to his face that he might be impeached.

One of Haldeman's points raised at length, has to do with what he terms the hidden story of Watergate. Nixon, as president, felt unable to take control of the federal bureaucracy. Pitted against him were four great power blocs of Washington—the press, the bureaucrats, the Congress and the intelligence community. Haldeman terms these power centers the wolves."

All of these reacted against Nixon's plan to reorganize and gain control of the bureaucracy at the beginning of his second term in 1973.

Haldeman also charges that there were Central Intelligence Agency "plants" in the White House. But he does not offer any new evidence to support that allegation.

At length, he reviews old theories about the CIA setting up the Watergate arrests along with previously reported allegations that the Democrats and columnist Jack Anderson had advance knowledge of the break-in, but took no action to stop it.

Haldeman says he basically believes these theories.

Another key figure in the Nixon White House who comes off unfavorably is Haldeman's successor as chief of staff, Gen. Alexander M. Haig. (Haig presently serves as NATO commander in Europe.)

Haldeman says that he often discussed strategy for the Watergate defense with Haig. After the Saturday Night Massacre of Oct. 20, 1973, Haldeman says he got a call from Haig with the following warning:

"They have an uncanny intelligence operation in the Jewish community that is out to get you—and the Parade editor—is a part of it."

In his own self-portrait, Haldeman seems to be trying to fight his public image as the driven task-

master on top of the White House staff. He sees himself as unaware, confused at times, unwitting, given to wry bursts of humor. This belies the Haldeman Washington came to know over the years—the loyal, unquestioning guard to the President's gate, the tough guy always in command.

Haldeman puts forth the idea that he was handicapped throughout the entire affair because he wasn't a lawyer. He didn't see that what was supposed to be a political containment operation after the Watergate break-in was actually an illegal conspiracy.

By his account, Haldeman was surrounded by lawyers in the White House who plotted every move to protect themselves. He particularly singles out Nixon, Ehrlichman, Colson and Dean.

His description of other aspects of his relationships come as a surprise, too. He and Ehrlichman always were linked as the Watergate twins, inseparable and in tandem. But in his book Haldeman clearly tries to show that Ehrlichman was going his own way, and more than willing to let Haldeman hang alone.

Haldeman is also notably silent on other important unresolved questions about the Nixon administration. One of these has to do with the role of Charles (Bebe) Rebozo, Nixon's confidant. There is hardly any mention of Rebozo in the book.

All he says is that when Rebozo's name came up in conversation with Nixon the president reacted uncomfortably and defensively.

There have been innumerable books and analyses of the Nixon administration. In years to come, there will be many more. Nixon's own memoirs are scheduled for publication this spring.

An analysis of the Haldeman material shows that he has drawn on the printed works of public testimony of the Watergate era. He cites, in paraphrase or by direct quote, previously released transcripts, the Watergate committee report, grand jury hearings on the tapes and other general material that stems from public testimony.

A careful reading shows that, among the other works from which he builds his narrative, are: Fred Thompson's "At That Point in Time;" Dean's "Blind Ambition;" Woodward and Bernstein's "All the President's Men;" and Colson's "Born Again." He also takes from Nixon's televised interviews last year with Frost.

Haldeman does not pretend to give the definitive Nixon-Watergate story. He says he recognizes that the public may never know the entire story, and that many mysteries remain.

Now 51, Haldeman received a prison sentence of from 2½ to 8 years for his conviction in the Watergate cover-up. Late last year, Judge John J. Sirica reduced Haldeman's sentence to one to four years. He has been serving that sentence at Lompoc, Calif. Haldeman will be eligible for parole next June 21, one year to the day after he entered prison.

Haldeman, like Ehrlichman, was one of the strongest Nixon defenders before their criminal trials. Both have undergone public changes in attitude. Unlike Nixon to date, Haldeman now says he understands that the Watergate cover-up was an illegal obstruction of justice.

Despite his disillusionment, he says he is still proud of his White House service and still grateful to the opportunities Nixon gave him.

Yet, as he also says, "I have paid a terrible price for that privilege."