

Haldeman

Blames

Nixon

Washington

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

Later, when the historic White House coverup was unraveling, Haldeman is convinced it was the President who personally attempted to erase incriminating portions

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of his secret tape recordings.

Haldeman, who is now 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 Haldeman 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 in generally confirming other accounts, "whose anger at leaks

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really started the 1969 FBI national security wiretapping." And it was Kissinger who pressed Nixon to fight the publication of the Pentagon Papers by telling 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 Moncton," a dark and brooding character. Haldeman's is non-fiction, 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 Dean III, the President's counsel, was talking to federal prosecutors. Of critical concern to Nixon was what he had told Dean in the now-famous March 21 meeting when they talked at length about the break-in and payoffs 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 Nixon, 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 in some publications next week, with formal release of the book to come on February 27.

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.

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

- That Nixon was involved in the Watergate coverup 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 be 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 three weeks before 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 several hours later.

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