

Colson Talked of Blackmailing Nixon

By Jack Anderson

On tape recordings made shortly before he began a federal prison term, Charles W. Colson said he believes the Central Intelligence Agency has evidence that still more campaign funds were diverted by the Nixon family for personal expenses.

The former White House aide said he thinks this is a major reason why President Nixon is afraid to make a thorough investigation of the CIA's mysterious role in Watergate.

Senate Watergate probers already have reported they found \$4,562 in campaign money funneled by Nixon crony C. G. (Bebe) Rebozo into such gifts as diamond-studded earrings for Pat Nixon.

Colson, however, said he believes the CIA has learned that the President and his family also made personal use of the infamous \$100,000 given by billionaire Howard Hughes to Mr. Nixon, and channeled through Rebozo.

Colson advanced his theory in three hours of talks with businessman-detective Richard Bast, whom Colson approached to investigate the CIA. Such a probe, Colson felt, would show that the CIA framed him.

The White House "dirty tricks" ringmaster said he was never able to get the President to fire CIA Director William Colby and put a Nixon man at the head of the CIA.

"They must certainly know something very heavy on Nixon," commented Bast, who was secretly tape-recording Colson.

Colson, himself a deft bugger of conversations while at the White House, replied, "They must."

"I mean, if he knows this stuff is going on and he's not doing anything about it . . ." began Bast.

"You know what I think?" interrupted Colson. "You want to know what I really think? . . . I'm loyal to the guy (Nixon) 'cause he's my friend. . . I think Bebe used that (\$100,000) for himself and for the President, for the family, and the girls. I think that the President figures—this is my worst suspicion—that if he really blows this, Hughes can blow the whistle on him."

As Colson saw it, however, it would be the CIA that put Hughes up to blowing the whistle. Hughes, Colson pointed out, had close organizational ties

with the CIA. Bast asked whether the only thing the CIA had hanging over Mr. Nixon's head was the \$100,000.

Replied Colson morosely:

"Who knows that that's the only \$100,000?"

Colson is the first to suggest the CIA has undisclosed evidence of Nixon campaign fund misuse, but there have been reports of fund-juggling ever since we first told of the \$100,000 Hughes gift three years ago.

On May 28, for instance, we reported that "Rebozo paid (for) presidential pool, pool table and architectural services." The story was confirmed almost word for word by a formal Senate Watergate report on July 10.

Though suggesting that the CIA was not above blackmailing Mr. Nixon, Colson himself told Bast he was considering doing the same thing to the President.

A recent and fervent convert to Christianity, Colson suffered an apparent relapse when he said he planned to use "a little leverage on getting the President to get off his a-- (and) stop this CIA crap."

The "leverage" was to be a report, passed on by Bast, that the President had received a hefty contribution from the Shah of

Iran. We later alluded to that story, pointing out that the Shah's representative, former Secretary of State William Rogers, had firmly denied it.

"You may be giving me the key (to getting the President to investigate the CIA)," Colson said excitedly when Bast related the tale of a royal Iranian gift.

"You may have put me in the position of being able to say (to the President) let's cut out the s---," Colson went on.

"You don't want to practice blackmail on the President. . . You don't want to put yourself in the same position as these other people have, Chuck," said Bast.

The tape purred soundlessly for a moment.

"I don't call it blackmail," said Colson.

Footnote: Colson's brief threat to blackmail the President was clearly not to save himself. He had already agreed in writing to plead guilty to obstruction of justice. In any case, he quietly informed presidential counsel Fred Buzhardt of the Iranian report and did no more about it. CIA sources said the Colson campaign funds charge is "baseless."

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