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The Watergate Mission

SUDDENLY Mr. Bernard Barker surfaced, and that in itself is perplexing. He gave an interview to The New York Times, but disclosed very little. He is a tough professional, with a background of intelligence work, for Cuba and for the United States (his mother was Cuban), and he stressed that nobody would succeed in making him talk about the super-secret mission in the Watergate Building in which he and three associates were engaged when early in the morning they were arrested.

BARKER AND HIS associates had cash. They had the name and telephone number of E. Howard Hunt Jr., who worked in the White House. Money transfers to Barker had been made, from funds donated to the re-election campaign of President Nixon. Maurice Stans, though chairman of the fund-raising committee, professes no knowledge of what the funds were doing in Barker's account. Former Attorney General John Mitchell says he knew absolutely nothing about it.

Barker and his friends were looking for information. Barker said he was used to "paramilitary" work, by which he gave us to understand that he was engaged in a job touching on the national security. I would guess that that is true.

The mysterious Howard Hunt, who disappeared from sight after the arrests, continues to figure in the case. Barker said that he knows no man to whom his country should be more grateful than

Howard Hunt. I concur. I have known the gentleman for 21 years and am the godfather of three of his children. Hunt is not a trifler — yet his involvement in the venture tends to magnify rather than diminish the significance of the case.

Only James Jackson Kilpatrick has publicized a version of what happened that is in any way both coherent and, though melodramatic, not implausible.

He sets forth the hypothesis of a friend knowledgeable in the ways of the intelligence community and conversant with contemporary Cuba. According to this hypothesis, the Castro government, foreseeing its economic excommunication from the Soviet Union, decided late this spring to make a deal with McGovern's Democratic Party. A very straightforward deal based on the tactical need of the McGovern people for money with which to wage the presidential campaign, and the strategic need of Cuba for more economic help in the years to come.

SOMEONE INSIDE the Castro government — so the story goes — tipped off a prominent Republican to the fact that the deal would be secretly consummated at the Watergate. The recipient of this information requisitioned a suitcase full of money with which to pay professionals to bug the Democratic headquarters.

But in turn the Republicans were betrayed, whether by someone in their own ranks or by a double agent we leave it to John Le Carre to divulge.

Material omitted from above carried by New Orleans States-Item 20 Sep 72, as marked in that clipping.