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FACE THE NATION

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- George Herman, CBS News
- Seymour Hersh, The New York Times
- Daniel Schorr, CBS News

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Please credit CBS News' "Face the Nation."

HERMAN: How do you feel about Mr. Alch's suggestion that this conflict between your testimony and his be resolved by polygraph--lie detector tests?

MR. McCORD: Well, I have no objections to polygraph tests. I've taken them in the past. I think there are certain things that need to be built into them in order to insure that they're objective and unbiased. I think first of all that there not be any so-called selective persecution or prosecution in this case, that all others who are witnesses, whose statements are at odds, likewise be afforded the chance to take a polygraph test--not just the two of us, that an independent--

HERMAN: Is that a positive requirement in your willingness to take a test, that all others take it as well?

MR. McCORD: Well, it's my suggestion. I can't decide what the Senate might do.

SCHORR: Mr. McCord, on Friday you were interviewed by a Florida prosecutor, Richard Gerstein. What is he looking into?

MR. McCORD: I believe he's looking into any matters in Miami that may be a part of the Watergate conspiracy, in which any conspiring or overt acts took place on the part of the--any of the defendants or those who may become a defendant in the state of Florida.

SCHORR: Does that have to do with the matters now subject to grand jury action in Florida that have to do with the indictment of Donald Segretti, or are they concerned with things more specifically associated with Watergate, like Bernard Barker's bank account, Mexican checks that came into that bank account--were you asked about that?

MR. McCORD: I was asked certain questions, but my impression was

it covers the entire scope of those things referred to as the Watergate operation, not simply Mr. Segretti's role.

SCHORR: So it did concern Bernard Barker again, the laundering of funds through Mexico--the money that ended up in Barker's account. Were you asked specifically about Bernard Barker's bank account and the money that came in?

MR. McCORD: I was asked questions about all personalities who are defendants in the Watergate case, and any events that transpired in Florida that might indicate a role in a conspiracy.

SCHORR: Does it sound like--as though there's going to be a Florida Watergate case?

MR. McCORD: I don't know.

HERSH: Mr. McCord, in your statement about the CIA and its involvement and the attempts to get you to say you were part of a CIA conspiracy, you made a reference to conversations with Robert Mardian, who was then an--had gone to CREP from the Justice Department. Can you tell us what impression--what Mardian told you while the two of you worked together at CREP that led you to believe as early as May, 1972 that the Nixon administration or some persons in it wanted to take effective control of the CIA?

MR. McCORD: Well, my--I had conversations with Mr. Mardian on two or three occasions. I believe the one that led me to some of these impressions or conclusions was one in which he volunteered the statement, while we were somehow discussing intelligence and intelligence matters, that he--Mr. Mardian--and the Attorney General, Mr. John Mitchell, Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman, had been appointed, presumably within the past year, to what he described as an intelli-

gence advisory committee. Perhaps this is what has been referred to in the press as the intelligence evaluation committee or some such, that's been referred to in connection with the Internal Security Division. What struck me as unusual was the membership in that particular committee--if it were to deal with intelligence operations and an advisory committee to oversee it, because it dealt with perhaps the most powerful figures in the White House and in the administration itself--Mr. Haldeman, Mr. Ehrlichman, Mr. Mitchell, and finally Mr. Mardian. And the composition as such was what struck me as unusual at that time, and indicated political flavor.

HERSH: Did he say anything--excuse me--did he say anything to ^{you} about it specifically, that they were going to take over the CIA, they were going to shake it up?

MR. McCORD: He indicated in a few words that the objective was some control over the intelligence function.

HERMAN: Did he say to what ends--

MR. McCORD: No, he did not.

HERMAN: --to increasing domestic surveillance or anything of that sort?

MR. McCORD: No, he did not.

SCHORR: You indicated earlier that you had some tapes of material that you got from the Justice Department's Internal Security Division, which was then under Robert Mardian. What's on those tapes?

MR. McCORD: Some of the material which was made available to me, originally authorized by Mr. Mitchell--that is, the contact with the Internal Security Division--material out of presumably FBI reports and other government agency reports pertaining to potential violence

or forthcoming violence directed at either the Republican National Convention in Miami, Florida, or perhaps against the Committee to Re-Elect the President here in Washington.

SCHORR: You earlier said in your testimony before the Senate that the kind of material that you were getting from the Internal Security Division would be similar to material which you thought was also going to the Democratic Party.

MR. McCORD: Yes.

SCHORR: They have since denied having gotten any material. Do you have any way of knowing that the Democrats also got help from the Internal Security Division?

MR. McCORD: Well, it was my understanding that--certainly for the convention, the Democratic National Convention in Florida--that such material, whether it came from the Internal Security Division or some other agency--any material bearing upon potential dangers to life--life and property of the personnel there--would certainly be made available to the Democratic National Committee or its--the proper authority within that, in order that they could take preventive measures. And I had no doubt in my mind but that it was made available to--

SCHORR: But since some of the measures that were being taken--judging by testimony since--involved infiltration and possible provocations, wouldn't they be in fact--have been playing against themselves to advise the Democratic National Committee of what they in fact themselves might have been planning to do against the Democrats?

MR. McCORD: I don't really know how to answer that question, except to say that it was my understanding that they were being kept

informed of anything that might endanger life and property, and I had no reason to doubt it. These other matters--some of these had not come to light at that point in time, and it was only after June 17 that in fact they surfaced in the press.

HERMAN: Mr. McCord, Mr. Dean has said that the truth is coming out inch by inch with a mile to go, and he says there are going to be grand juries in other cities. Were you in a tight little cell that had knowledge only of what you were doing in the Watergate and one other place perhaps? Would you have knowledge of some other activities in other cities besides the one you mentioned--Las Vegas raid, which never came off, apparently. Do you have knowledge of any other activities that have not yet been published?

MR. McCORD: I believe most of the knowledge that I have has come out in the testimony before the Senate--that is, that my knowledge was fairly restricted, certainly in terms of political espionage and in terms of other activities of the so-called plumbers group--Mr. Liddy and Mr. Hunt--who I had not known prior to the time they were associated with the Committee to Re-Elect the President.

SCHORR: About Las Vegas--you weren't really asked very fully before the committee about that. You testified that one plan which didn't come off involving Liddy and Hunt had to do with an attempt to break into the office of Hank Greenspun, the editor of the Las Vegas Sun. At first there was a story around that they were looking for something connecting Senator Muskie with some possible blackmail material. Later, however, there were other versions. You testified that there was supposed to have been a plane waiting, owned by Howard Hughes, to fly that material to a Central American country. Do you

why that operation didn't come off, and did it in fact concern Senator Muskie--or might it in fact have concerned something that Hughes might have been more interested in himself--that is, Greenspun's purported material that has to do with campaign finance dealings between President Nixon and Howard Hughes?

MR. McCORD: Well, my--my knowledge on that came from Mr. Liddy and Mr. Hunt. Why it never came off--my impression was that the events of June 17 preempted it--that is, the men were arrested. Perhaps it might have come off at a later time. In terms of the allegation as it pertained to Mr.--to Senator Muskie, I believe I stated in my testimony that my conclusion now is that that was not really the purpose of the entry operation. I was not questioned on that at length, but my conclusion^{now} was that the operation was targeted against obtaining--was for the purpose of obtaining documents which might be helpful to Howard Hughes, obtaining them from the safe of Hank Greenspun.

SCHORR: Why would the administration have been interested in obtaining documents helpful to Howard Hughes?

MR. McCORD: I assume, since the airplane, the aircraft, were supposedly those of Howard Hughes, that this would be as a favor to Howard Hughes.

HERSH: Mr. McCord, let me get back to something you said earlier. Are you now saying that Mr. Alch did not tell you about offers from the prosecution to reduce charges in return for your cooperation last fall? You were not informed of those offers?

MR. McCORD: I'm stating--there's a yes and no answer, to be accurate about it. Offers of immunity were conveyed to me early--in

the early part of the fall. The offers to drop charges as such and to plead guilty--to drop charges in exchange for testimony--the version that's given by Mr. Alch is inaccurate in this respect. I was told on October 25--approximately October 25, when this offer was conveyed that all charges--that certain charges would be dropped--I was told only that the prosecution had in mind essentially going to the judge and in effect asking that he be lenient towards me, in terms of a sentence, if I provided testimony. I was not told by Mr. Alch that any specified number of charges against me would be dropped in exchange for testimony. That fact was not conveyed to me.

HERSH: One more question--Judge Sirica is going to sentence you, I think, on the fifteenth. Is that correct--June 15?

MR. McCORD: It's scheduled for that.

HERSH: What on earth are you doing here? I thought you were supposed to stay low, except for appearances before the Senate. I know you've been--certainly have been quoted in the press as giving interviews, et cetera. What are you doing here on television? Why?

MR. McCORD: I understood that you gentlemen wanted to question me, and I have no objection to answering questions on this subject, since it's been so fully aired in the Senate hearings.

HERMAN: Did you get--did you check with the court and with Judge Sirica to make sure that this came within his guidelines?

MR. McCORD: I understood that there was no bar to my talking to the press.

SCHORR: We don't have much time left, but let me ask it briefly and get a brief answer. So much of what you did depended on your trusting George Gordon Liddy. How could you have taken all that Liddy

told you and proceeded on that alone?

MR. McCORD: Because I also heard other matters from Mr. Hunt in which--we had three-way discussions--which verified in my own mind that Liddy was telling the truth as to the role of Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Dean, and that has since in fact been borne out--in Magruder's testimony, for example.

HERMAN: Well, as it stands we have very little time left, but what fascinates me--you're an American citizen; you have a lovely home in a lovely suburb. You must have known that invading the political party--the opposition political party--was not in keeping with America's philosophy. Did you believe there was a conspiracy? What reason did you have?

MR. McCORD: We have much longer than the time here would require to adequately answer the question.

HERMAN: We have to break off at that point. I'm sorry we don't get a chance to hear your answer. Thank you very much, Mr. McCord, for being with us today on FACE THE NATION.

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ANNOUNCER: Today on FACE THE NATION, James McCord, convicted former security chief for the Committee for the Re-Election of the President, was questioned by CBS News Correspondent Daniel Schorr, Seymour Hersh of the New York Times, and CBS News Correspondent George Herman.

Next week another prominent figure in the news will FACE THE NATION.

GEORGE HERMAN: Mr. McCord, you've been described as one of the best wire men in the business, and two witnesses before the Senate Select Committee hesitated to contradict you flatly because they thought you might have some tape recordings which would bear you out. Do you have stashed away any place some tape recordings or other hard evidence which will support your side of the argument?

MR. McCORD: Well, I can understand their concern when they made such a statement, but I do not in fact have such tapes in my possession.

ANNOUNCER: From CBS Washington, FACE THE NATION, a spontaneous and unrehearsed news interview with James McCord, convicted former security chief of the Committee for the Re-Election of the President. Mr. McCord will be questioned by CBS News Correspondent Daniel Schorr, Seymour Hersh of the New York Times, and CBS News Correspondent George Herman.

HERMAN: Mr. McCord, in everything about the Watergate it seems we have to get down to such fine details and such fine points that I feel I must pick you up on one word in your first answer. You said you do not have such tapes, and that could be interpreted to mean only tapes concerning Mr. Caulfield and Mr. Ulasewicz. Do you have any tapes or any hard evidence or documents or recordings which would tend to bear out your side of the story, vis-a-vis anybody in the Watergate story?

MR. McCORD: I think to answer your question in terms of what I meant to say, I don't have such tapes of conversations with Mr. Caulfield or other persons. I did make some tapes prior to June 17, of some material which had -- which I had received from the Internal

Security Division of the Department of Justice. I referred to those in the testimony. I turned such tapes back to the Senate Watergate Committee. They have them in their possession now.

HERSH: Mr. McCord, let me say generally, first of all, everything you've been saying for the last two months has been proven to be relatively true, relatively accurate, but I have to ask you this question. Why didn't you start talking last October when the federal prosecutors in the case gave you an opportunity, in effect, to drop some charges, take a reduced sentence, in return for some cooperation?

MR. McCORD: Well, there's probably more than one answer to that. In the first place, I was a bit surprised, after my arrest in June and after I got out of jail, after about four days, why the FBI never at that point in time came to see me. I was in a mood in which I perhaps would have told FBI agents whom I trusted or knew perhaps the whole story at that point in time, and I was rather surprised that they never contacted me. I was surprised by some other things, such as why the FBI never executed search warrants. Now in terms of the offer of immunity, which the prosecution offered me in the fall, a little bit later in time, after I saw certain things developing, there was a consideration of whether my testimony would in fact have put the other men away, the other defendants away, beyond question into prison, but still leave free some of the principals in the case, people I have since named before the Senate Watergate Committee -- Mr. Mitchell and so on. And I had not -- I was reluctant to do that. That, to me, was in effect a selective form of prosecution, if you want to call it that, and I'll have more to say about that later.

Some of the offers that have been referred to in the papers

concerning the offer of the prosecution to drop charges against me, in exchange for testimony, which occurred in October -- around October 25, were not in fact conveyed to me by my attorney Mr. Alch.

SCHORR: We will come back to that later, but I have another question to ask you now, Mr. McCord. Former Presidential counsel John Dean is quoted today as having said in testimony, both before the prosecution and the Senate committee staff, that he attended a great number of meetings, described as somewhere between 30 and 50 meetings, with President Nixon, in which Mr. Dean alleges the President had to know about payoffs to defendants and about efforts to cover up; in one of which the President was quoted -- even as having asked -- how much more money was it going to cost? Do you know anything of your knowledge of the possible involvement of the President?

MR. McCORD: I have certain conclusions that I've reached on this subject, based on my participation in the Watergate operation. I can state conclusions, if you want it. This is not knowledge, but it's conclusion based on the role that I played in the operation.

SCHORR: Well, I'm not a lawyer, so go ahead.

MR. McCORD: It was my conclusion, first of all, in February, and it's my conclusion now that the President in fact set in motion the Watergate operation, approved it, and followed through on it. It accounts to me for most everything that has been done in terms of the cover-up since that time, the efforts to pay the conspirators to keep them silent, the efforts to get them to take executive clemency, the large number of people in the White House staff who played a role in trying to cover this thing up, the role of the President's own attorney, Mr. Kalmbach -- all of these things verify in my own mind

my conclusion, but my conclusions go back to some other matters as well.

SCHORR: Not even John Dean has suggested that the President set in motion the Watergate conspiracy. Until now, the worst allegations that have been made had to do with the cover-up. Do you have anything to support that conclusion?

MR. McCORD: What I draw my conclusion on is this -- that first of all Mr. John Mitchell, according to Mr. Liddy, while Attorney General, considered and considered in more than one meeting the Watergate operation, that Mr. John Dean, the counsel to the President, sat in on those meetings, that subsequently the operation was approved, that there was a 30-day delay between, I think, the second reported meeting and the final decision on it. To me this meant one thing -- that the Attorney General had taken the matter to the President for final approval. Mr. Mitchell, whom I knew very well, was a very decisive man. He didn't agonize over decisions. He didn't delay over decisions. Every morning about 8:30 he would drive to the President's office and spend a period of time in the President's office. There was an opportunity to discuss such matters. I felt that matters of this consequence would, in fact, be conveyed to the President before Mr. Mitchell undertook or approved an operation of this breadth and of this impact. These are some of the things that lead me to that conclusion, plus the matters I referred to in terms of the cover-up later. I don't believe those steps would have been taken to cover up for Mr. Mitchell or other lesser principals.

HERMAN: I have to ask you about when you came to this conclusion because of some of the things that came out in the hearing.

Did you come to this conclusion that the President was involved before you switched to Mr. Fensterwald as your lawyer? You'll recall that Mr. Alch has charged that Mr. Fensterwald said -- we're out to get the President. I'd like to know --

SCHORR: After the President.

HERMAN: We're going after the President. He gave two versions of it, one in an interview and one inside in his testimony, and I'd like to know when you began to come to this conclusion in relation to your relationship with Mr. Fensterwald?

MR. McCORD: Well, I reached this conclusion in February of 1972, that early.

HERSH: In other words, you're saying that from the moment you went into the Watergate building, you thought the President himself had probably approved the mission and knew specifically what was going to take place there?

MR. McCORD: I was convinced, completely.

HERSH: On what basis again? You're just talking about conclusions -- on what basis?

MR. McCORD: Well, I worked within the Committee to Re-Elect the President, I saw all of the matters that were referred to Mr. Mitchell, the matters -- likewise documents and so on -- that were referred to the White House -- there was complete coordination. Very little was done without complete White House knowledge and White House approval. I knew the nature of the man, Mr. Mitchell, John Mitchell, and I believe that he would not undertake such an operation with such impact and such risk without the approval of the President. There are ^{other} / factors, but you have to have lived within

that arena to really understand the atmosphere that prevailed.

SCHORR: Mr. McCord, you've been through some rigorous questioning elsewhere and this may not be as rigorous, yet we have to pursue this a little bit. It does seem suspicious that you only began trying to implicate the President for the first time after Bernard Fensterwald began to represent you, and if he's accurately quoted, he seems -- in fact, he said in an interview with me that going after the President was a third or fourth priority of his, but he didn't deny that he had some animus against the President. Your relationship with Mr. Fensterwald has now become a part of this whole story. Mr. Alch said that your first contact with Mr. Fensterwald came when you made a contribution to a committee in which he was involved called the Committee on Assassinations of Presidents. What do you believe about the assassination of President Kennedy?

MR. McCORD: I haven't looked into it, I have no knowledge of it. What he is referring to is a payment by check, which I gave to an individual who worked for me. In turn, that individual, not having a bank account and knowing Mr. Fensterwald very well, who is a very wealthy individual, turned around and gave him the check. Mr. Fensterwald issued him, I think, one of his own or cash for it. It's as simple as that.

HERMAN: But wasn't this a contri -- was this not a contribution from you to the committee?

MR. McCORD: No, it was not.

HERSH: You're talking about Mr. Russell, aren't you?

MR. McCORD: Yes, Lou Russell.

HERSH: And that's all it was? He simply cashed a check. I

must say that's the way I heard the story months ago.

MR. McCORD: And that's the accurate statement of fact.

HERMAN: But that covers all that was implied in Mr. Fensterwald's remark about checks?

MR. McCORD: Oh, yes.

SCHORR: And you have no special theory about assassinations? You haven't become involved in some of the investigations that have gone on about the assassination of President Kennedy?

MR. McCORD: No, I haven't. I haven't been so involved and have no set conclusions.

HERMAN: Let me take you back again to your feeling about when you began to come to this conclusion. You say you came to this conclusion in February, which was four or five months before you actually went into the Watergate, or at least before you were caught in the Watergate, is that correct?

MR. McCORD: That's correct.

HERMAN: When did you decide that there was a plot, or when did you begin to feel that there was a plot inside the administration, or some part of the administration, to take over the Central Intelligence Agency?

MR. McCORD: To take over, or-- ?

HERMAN: To get control of, to use the Central Intelligence Agency for things which you did not think it should be used for?

MR. McCORD: Well, I think some of the matters on which I reached a conclusion came to a head in December, 1972, when Mr. Alch on two separate occasions endeavored to get me to -- in fact, to use as my defense the story that this was a CIA operation. There had been

stories floated in the press as early as July, 1972, trying to lay such a foundation, and then it took an overt -- it came into being when he made this approach to me on two separate occasions. At that point in time I began to think very seriously about a lot of other matters that seemed to me to be an improper use of the Central Intelligence Agency itself. Now does this answer your question?

HERMAN: Well, it answers my question in part, but it also raises another question, and that is, you and Mr. Alch have a disagreement over exactly what he said about the CIA role. He says he asked you whether you did have a role -- whether the CIA did have a role in it, and you are saying and have said that he suggested that this be blamed on the CIA and that the documents could be falsified. And I ask you now to recall as best you can exactly what Mr. Alch said, bearing in mind his denial of your first version of it.

MR. McCORD: Sure. Well, my best recollection is, as I previously stated in Senate testimony -- simply this -- that there was first a meeting on December 21, 1972, in the Monocle Restaurant, at which not only he was present, but my local attorney, Mr. Bernard Shankman, was present. Now if Mr. Shankman's testimony is truthful and accurate, and he's such a man that I believe will give true testimony, he will corroborate the fact that Mr. Alch began to make, in quotes, a pitch to me, to use as my defense that this was a CIA operation.

HERMAN: Was this a subtle pitch or was it unmistakable?

MR. McCORD: It was very unmistakable --

HERMAN: There's no ambiguity whatsoever?

MR. McCORD: None whatever. I asked Mr. Alch, for example, when he first began to get into this, trying to figure out what was going

on -- I said, Mr. Alch, you are my attorney, what is your advice in this matter? And his answer was, I advise you to use this as your defense. Now, Mr. Shankman can verify this statement. There were other statements that -- and questions that continued in the line of the use of this defense. Mr. Alch stated, isn't it a fact that as a former CIA employee, you could be recalled, you could have been recalled to active duty in order to carry out such a mission? And I said it's a fact that CIA employees can be recalled to active duty, yes. He then began to make such statements as, well, we could subpoena Mr. Schlesinger, who had just been announced as the CIA director -- he'll go along with it -- these are his exact quotes. Whether it's a fact or not, I don't know, but this was Mr. Alch's statements. There are other statements he made, but the heaviest pitch came on the second meeting in Mr. Alch's office in Boston, in which throughout about a four and a half hour period the pitch was continued -- why won't you go along with this defense? And I stated that I can't, it's not true.

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