

# 'Secret Seven' May Hold Key

By Irving Wallace  
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MIAMI BEACH — There are seven men in Washington, D.C., today — men whose names are little known to the public — who may hold the key to President Nixon's re-election this fall — if they hold their tongues.

If they speak out any time between now and election day in November, if they reveal the truth about President Nixon's military plans for Indochina, then there is every chance that the electorate would turn away from Mr. Nixon and throw its support to Sen. George S. McGovern.

That's the belief of Daniel Ellsberg, who was responsible for the release of the Pentagon Papers and whose trial for conspiracy, espionage and theft temporarily has been suspended awaiting a high court ruling.

In the waning hours of the final day of the Republican convention, Ellsberg sat with me in my Fontainebleau Hotel suite and revealed for the first time the existence of the group of men who could tilt the coming election to Nixon or to McGovern and by this action affect the course of the war in Vietnam.

The Secret Seven, as I will characterize them, were all formerly assistants or consultants to Henry Kissinger in the White House. They were privy to all of the administration's secret plans for the war.

At least four of the seven — Bill Watts, Tony Lake,

*Irving Wallace, the novelist, covered the Democratic and Republican conventions.*

Mort Halpren, Roger Morris — quit Kissinger's staff after our invasion of Cambodia. "It's been the first time in our history there has ever been such a group resignation over a matter of conscience," Daniel Ellsberg pointed out.

Of the seven, two are key men. "They know the most," said Ellsberg. All are out of the White House now, but all have jobs. "several" still in the government.

Ellsberg visited with a number of them, all onetime colleagues of his, a day before he came to Miami Beach. "I wanted them to join me in a press conference to reveal authoritatively how Nixon chose the option of escalating the war in Vietnam in the air while going through the motions of de-escalating on the ground.

"A few of them wavered, considered it, but finally refused. However, they did give me some of the previously secret information which I made public — namely that during Nixon's first weeks in office he sent frogmen to scout the Hai-phong Harbor, mainly to signal North Vietnam that if they didn't quit, they would one day face a blockade.

"And my friends confirmed for me what had al-

ready leaked, that after Nixon became President he secretly sent B-52 bombers in raids over Cambodia and sent American Marine units into Laos. So I came to the press conference alone and made this public."

I asked Ellsberg if he thought he could eventually persuade one or more of the Secret Seven to break their silence and expose Mr. Nixon's future war policy publicly.

"I don't know. There's a good chance I may succeed," said Ellsberg. "I've been working on the seven of them for some time. I think by my act of releasing the Pentagon Papers, I loosened several of them up. I'm going to be talking to each of them again — I'm going to be pleading with them all through this coming week.

"The other day I asked them if they had seen all the documents. One said, 'Yes, we've seen the documents. We know what's in them.' Then they gave me the secret information I gave out at the press conference. If Nixon denied the little they gave me to reveal, I think some of them might get angry enough to talk.

## McGovern

"If I fail to convince them that quitting Kissinger wasn't enough, that it is their duty to speak the truth about what's happened and may happen, then there is only one more strategy I'd try. I'd like to have George McGovern come back to Washington and talk with each of the seven of them

personally. I haven't seen McGovern in a year, but I think he'd see these men, and they'd see him, and that might make the difference."

I asked what was holding the Secret Seven back from taking the final step.

## Secrecy Important

Ellsberg shook his head. "It has to do with how you are treated if you don't keep a secret. The seven left Kissinger and this administration. But each of them wants to remain trustworthy and some day get back to a big government job.

"Once it is known that you can't keep a secret, then there's no chance ever to get back in a big government post. Government aides and consultants must be able to obey their bosses, never reveal anything that is secret, no matter how aggressive or hateful the secret may be.

"You know what it's like? If I brought McGovern to them, and they agreed to tell McGovern everything that is in the classified documents they've seen, they might win the election and presidency for McGovern. But despite their help, McGovern would never hire them for aides.

# to the Election

"If they told on Nixon to him, they might tell on him to someone else. In March of 1968 I revealed certain secrets to Sen. Robert Kennedy. It was for a good cause, the best, but by doing so I knew I was ruling myself out of a job with Kennedy."

## Defense Plan

Ellsberg admitted he'd worked out a perfect plan for the Secret Seven to tell the truth without volunteering to do so, but the plan misfired.

"Some of them, like John Van, were going to testify at my trial in Los Angeles. They would be subpoenaed for the defense, and forced under oath to talk, which they would not have minded doing under those conditions. That would have protected them.

"The trial would have started two weeks ago with the prosecution, and we'd have these men on the stand in September, in time to have impact on the election. But now that the trial has

been delayed, they couldn't testify until after the election, until mid-November. That's why I have to get some of them to volunteer to speak up in the next weeks.

## 'Four More Years'

"Those seven and I know, from what we've seen, that if Nixon is elected in November, the war in Indochina will go on for another four years. And 4 to 5 million tons of bombs will be dropped on Vietnam.

"Nixon has had a single plan about Vietnam since the day he took office. It is

more his plan than Kissinger's. From the start Nixon and Kissinger had mad confidence in a plan that would bring peace — a plan they were sure Russia would accept and that Russia would force Hanoi to come to terms.

"Their plan was to withdraw ground troops gradually, to appease the public, but to threaten Russia and North Vietnam with other forms of escalation — and the secret plan of escalation known to the seven aides over three years ago was to go into Cambodia, start protective reaction, set up the blockade of Haiphong, and go into unlimited bombing of the North.

And it's all come true. My group of seven are principled men, and they expected Nixon to give up this crazy plan. When he didn't, they quit."

I asked Ellsberg what he and the Secret Seven thought Nixon would do if re-elected.

"Well, my colleagues know his secret plan, which is to continue the war endlessly, continue it and expand it in Indochina until Hanoi cracks. My friends know the details. I don't yet."