

More Guilty Pleas Hinted Amid Watergate Secrecy

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 12—The Watergate trial was held in strict secrecy today, and there were a number of indications that some of the six defendants wanted to change

their pleas to guilty. Interest centered on four men from Miami, arrested in the offices of the Democratic National Committee on June 17 and subsequently charged in an indictment with conspiracy, eavesdropping and burglary.

Henry B. Rothblatt of New York, defense counsel for the four, suggested repeatedly that he was opposed to any guilty pleas. Asked whether his clients would be on hand after a scheduled session on Monday, he said, "It's possible."

Mr. Rothblatt avoided most questions. His four clients are Bernard L. Barker, a real estate agent, and three of Mr. Barker's associates—Frank A. Sturgis, Eugenio R. Martinez, and Virgilio R. Gonzalez.

A defense informant said tonight that the four men had felt they were under certain pressure to withdraw from the case, which has involved several of President Nixon's White House and campaign aides.

The informant refused to specify the source of the alleged pressure. He denied however, that it came from the Administration or from the Committee for the Re-election of the President.

Chief Judge John J. Sirica of the United States District Court here moved today's proceedings to a smaller courtroom for more than two hours where spectators were barred, the doors were locked, and heavy brown paper was placed over the windows.

In addition, there were sev-

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eral conferences at the bench between the judge and attorneys for both sides. None of these could be heard, here was scarcely a word of public proceedings throughout a six-hour period.

As court opened this morning, Mr. Barker walked to the prosecution table and handed a typewritten message to the principal Assistant United States Attorney, Earl J. Silbert.

The lawyers moved to the bench immediately for their first whispered session with Judge Sirica. During that time, Mr. Barker sat at the defense table chewing his fingernails and watching expressionlessly.

The conference was interrupted to allow Mr. Silbert to appear in the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, which later ruled against him on a key issue in the case.

Eavesdropping Ruling

A three-judge panel held, two to one, that the Government could not disclose details of the information obtained in the alleged eavesdropping on the Democrats without the approval of party officials who had been overheard.

When Judge Sirica resumed the trial early this afternoon, there was a 13-minute discussion at the bench. The judge then announced that would hold an in camera session in his regular courtroom on the second floor.

Before moving from the large, ceremonial chamber on the sixth floor where public sessions are held, Judge Sirica warned that he would impose "some pretty strict penalties" on any attorneys or defendants who discussed developments.

Several deputy United States marshals were posted at the second-floor courtroom doorways, and a crowd of newsmen were asked to remain a distance down the corridor from the entrance.

The two other defendants in

the case were present with their lawyers. The two are G. Gordon Liddy, former counsel to the Nixon campaign organization, and James W. McCord Jr., former security coordinator for the re-election unit.

After the secret proceeding, Judge Sirica reappeared in the sixth floor courtroom and summoned the jury. Mr. Rothblatt moved for a continuance until 11 A.M. Monday, and the judge agreed.

Apology to Jurors

He then turned to the jurors and said simply that he was "sorry we were unable to make any headway today" and adjourned for the weekend. The panel is to be sequestered until the trial ends.

It had been called into court today on only one other occasion when Judge Sirica explained to them that the trial would be interrupted by Mr. Silbert's appearance before the Court of Appeals.

The courthouse speculation about guilty pleas began before court opened at 9:30 A.M., and it was fed by a number of careful and sometimes cryptic statements out of court by some of the defendants and attorneys.

Mr. Rothblatt, arriving at the courthouse unaccompanied by his clients for the first time since the trial began last Monday, told reporters that there would be "surprising" developments.

The defendants cannot enter a guilty plea without the concurrence of their attorney. At the same time, Mr. Rothblatt cannot withdraw from the case without the permission of Judge Sirica.

"I will only be an attorney in this case as long as there's a trial," Mr. Rothblatt said while leaving the courtroom this afternoon. A change in lawyers could delay the proceedings.

Asked whether there had been an attempt by his clients to obtain other counsel, Mr. Rothblatt said outside the court that information "might be available to you," when the trial resumes on Monday.

On one of the many occasions on which he was asked directly whether his clients wanted to change their pleas to guilty against his wishes, Mr. Rothblatt observed, "There are a lot of rumors going around."

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