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# The Coming Task In Watergate

**IT IS PROBABLE** President Nixon in his Monday exposition of Watergate got himself off the hook, to employ a latter-day, somewhat cynical vernacular.

It may be a week or two before we can appraise the mixed attitudes of the country over his position, a phenomenon attending all presidential action.

We may expect hard-core Democrats will not be contented with his resolution of the case. Neutrals and independents in their view of him may fall on either side of the fence. Republicans in the main will be satisfied. This is the usual course of political partisanship.



Whatever the state of national opinion now and in the immediate future, it will be subject to some shifts, depending on what Mr. Nixon does to implement what he said. His wisest decision was to authorize his new Attorney General, at discretion, to employ special counsel to pursue the Watergate investigation. There is ample precedent for this procedure.

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**A** **N ASSOCIATED PRESS STORY** out of Washington said H. R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman are still on the White House payroll for a "transition" period. The credibility factor requires that the "transition" be only long enough to acquaint their successors with the duties of office.

That is, in the current complexities of White House administration, a President needs a chief of staff (Haldeman), and a chief of domestic affairs (Ehrlichman). These posts will not be easy to fill, and may call for interim appointments, but it is obligatory that Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman be separated from their desks at the earliest practical moment.

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**T** **HOUGH THE PRESIDENT** voiced faith in the integrity of both aides, they can hardly escape from the category he himself defined Monday, when he spoke of those "whose zeal exceeded their judgment, and who may have done wrong in a cause they deeply believed to be right."

As to Mr. Nixon's own position, there seems inner evidence in his exposition of a reasonable doubt that he had advance knowledge of the Watergate espionage conspiracy, or gave orders to carry it out. No prudent Executive could risk a hypothetical development in which a subordinate, in desperation, might confront him.

Regarding concealment while Watergate was reaching climactic development, that is another matter. It is a prevailing human relation that a principal may have abiding faith in a subordinate who is under suspicion and attack, and avoid precipitate action against him pending clarification. Apparently some clarification emerged just in the past week, for Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman did not bow out voluntarily, despite the polite protocol of formal, self-shielding resignation.

Mr. Nixon still has much to do to mend the damage Watergate has done to his Administration. As he is a man of perception and decision regardless of what you and I may think of him, the odds are good that he will work vigorously to overcome his seventh and greatest crisis.

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