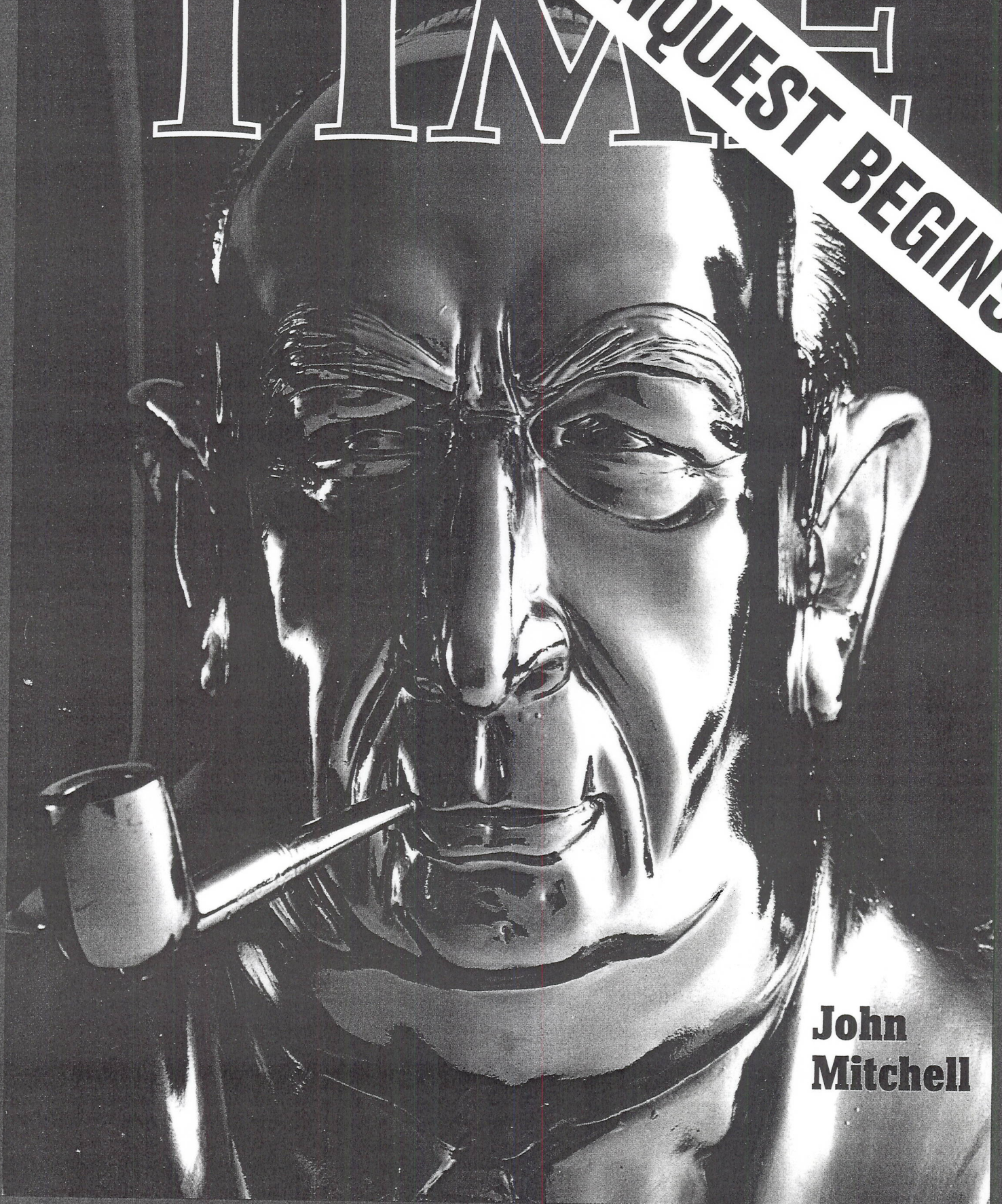


FIFTY CENTS

MAY 21, 1973

TIME

THE INQUEST BEGINS



**John
Mitchell**

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THE NATION

AMERICAN NOTES

McCarthy's Ghost

One of the strangest accusations in the Watergate scandal is the charge that the press has been guilty of "McCarthyism." Joe's unhappy ghost was raised most insistently by Wisconsin's William Proxmire, who inherited McCarthy's Senate seat and who has privately stated that he thinks President Nixon is "up to his ears" in the Watergate mess. Said Proxmire: the secondhand press accounts of what White House Counsel John W. Dean III told federal investigators represent a "McCarthyistic destruction of the President." Vice President Spiro Agnew followed with an attack on the publication of anonymous "hearsay" as "a very short jump from McCarthyism."

True, the press has published a number of Watergate disclosures—plainly labeled as secondhand—that would not be accepted under the rules of evidence in a court of law. But the press has no power to subpoena witnesses or to compel testimony (or, for that matter, to imprison its targets). If a reporter gets information from a reliable source who insists on anonymity he has no choice but to preserve that anonymity. When he tries to check an accusation with the official involved, that official is free to lie about it to a reporter—and sometimes does.

All this is a long jump indeed from Joe's irresponsible guerrilla tactics back in the days when McCarthyism was a kind of Washington swamp fever. He dealt in false allegations that various public officials (and distinguished private citizens too) were either Communists or dupes of Communism. He attacked not just alleged Communists but also their colleagues, friends and relatives. He almost never seriously tried to check facts. Finally, he was backed by a whole apparatus of secret interrogations and blacklists by which a victim could be deprived of reputation and livelihood without any chance to defend himself. The term McCarthyism should be used with precision—as a synonym for nothing less than demagoguery and deceit.

A Thought on Watergate

Some of the men involved in the scandal might do well to ponder this quotation from George Bernard Shaw: "Power does not corrupt men; fools, however, if they get into a position of power, corrupt power."

All Clear, Comrades?

Resident Russian correspondents in at least three East European capitals, Warsaw, Bucharest and Belgrade, have a pet theory about the Watergate affair, which is both unintentionally amusing as a bit of Byzantine fantasy and also revealing about the paranoia that still often underlies the Soviet view of the world. The theory goes like this:

"Reactionary elements" in the American Government, ruling circles and big business have been bitterly opposed to Richard Nixon's policy of rapprochement with the Soviet Union. They were galled by his trip to Moscow, infuriated by his policy of increased trade—but the final straw is the planned visit by Leonid Brezhnev to the U.S. next month. So they have got together and cooked up the Watergate scandal in order to discredit Nixon and sabotage his policy toward the Soviet Union.

One incredulous American reporter's comment on this scenario: "Then how come it's been liberal newspapers and politicians leading the attack on Nixon, if the whole thing is a plot by the reactionaries?" The Russian comeback: "Look at Barry Goldwater. You call him a liberal? Wasn't he one of the first to talk about impeachment?"

And so it goes.

Auld Lang Syne

One of the week's few really engaging news items, permitting escape from Watergate, involves Douglas Stewart McKelvy, a Yale man who liked his liquor, his fellow toppers and his own boozy sense of humor. When he died on March 14 of a liver ailment, at age 41, he left a will that extended his benevolence, posthumously, to all three. Along with bequests to his two children, he donated \$6,000 to each of two favorite East Side Manhattan bars "to defray the cost of liquid refreshments for their patrons until such sums shall be exhausted." A millionaire by inheritance ("He didn't do anything," says one drinking crony), McKelvy laid down no rules about how his money should be spent, whether on friends or strangers, regular customers or freeloaders. The manager at one bar, Gregory's Corner, has decided to start a guest book and to admit only the regulars to any party he throws with the gift. "That's a lot of booze, a lot of pouring," he says. "We don't want to throw open the doors. In a little place like this, the money could be forever."



Above: President Nixon at Republican fund-raising dinner; below: With Agnew at G.O.P. dinner; right: Business as usual at White House swearing-in.