

Watergate Raider Sought Proof of Cuba Aid to Party

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By WALTER RUGABER MAY 25 1973

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WASHINGTON, May 24—One of the Watergate conspirators testified today that he had broken into the offices of the Democratic National Committee to search for proof

of financial support of the party by the Cuban Government.

Bernard L. Barker, an American citizen who was born in Havana and who has frequently displayed a passionate dis-

Excerpts from Senate hearing are on Pages 18 and 19.

taste for Premier Fidel Castro, told the Senate Watergate committee that his search of the Democratic files had been unsuccessful.

Barker, who said that his role in the Watergate affair had been "to obey orders, not to think," added that he and his "team" had hoped their participation in the break-in would speed the "liberation" of Cuba.

Senator Howard H. Baker Jr. of Tennessee, the Republican vice chairman of the committee, was among those who sought to explore the stolid, matter-of-fact explanations of the witness.

'No Hard Evidence'

The Senator asked Barker whether the conspirators had "any reason to believe" that documentation of financial support by the Castro Government existed. The witness replied:

"The fact that the Castro Government was aiding the Democratic party had been rumored and had been spoken of freely in Miami from different organizations of personalities that I had confidence in. However, I have no hard evidence at all that this was true."

Barker, a Miami real estate agent at the time of his arrest in the Watergate last June 17, was active in the anti-Castro underground in the exile community in Florida.

He said that his "prime motivation" for taking part in the

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break-in was the belief that he could later get help from a co-conspirator, E. Howard Hunt Jr., and "others in high places" for the overthrow of Castro.

"How did you think you could liberate Cuba by participating in a burglary in Washington, D. C.?" asked Senator Herman E. Talmadge, Democrat of Georgia. Mr. Barker replied:

"If we helped Mr. Hunt and this Government in matters — which I will further add I believe in—it would establish a situation in which, besides the right that the Cuban people have to be free and independent, it would establish us as having aided this Government in this mission.

"I view that in the same way where hundreds of Cubans have been helping in Africa, in Vietnam and in other areas of the world, where the people in my particular association are extremely grateful to those sectors of this country who favor our liberation. Mr. Hunt represented this to the greatest degree."

Senator Talmadge quickly turned to another line of questioning. Baker's testimony was studded with seeming non sequiturs and unexplained references, but his great admiration for Hunt was persistently expressed.

He said that he had worked directly under Hunt in the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, and that Hunt had recruited him, 10 years later, for the burglary of the office of Dr. Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist a for the Watergate operation.

Barker said that under Hunt's direction, he had "surreptitiously entered" the psychiatrist's Beverly Hills, Calif., offices in

September, 1961. Dr. Ellsberg had been charged with the theft of the Pentagon papers.

Hunt, Barker said at one point, "represents to the Cuban people their liberation." He also said that Hunt under his Bay of Pigs code name "Eduarde" represented "the anti-Communist symbol" and the "Government of the United States in one form—in its covert form."

Barker said that Hunt had explained that the burglary of the psychiatrist's office "was a matter of national security," and that as other operations came up "at no time was I told any different."

Barker told the committee that he "personally was convinced at the time—and I am today, too—that what I did at the time was correct."

Barker insisted that he had not been under pressure to plead guilty and keep silent about the Watergate scandal, and that he had never been offered executive clemency in return for his guilty plea.

"... You have a code of ethics in work of this kind that you do not tell anything on anybody?" asked Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., the North Carolina Democrat who is chairman of the panel.

"That is correct," Barker replied.

"And so if Mr. E. Howard Hunt had pressured you into pleading guilty, you could not tell us that under your code of ethics?" Senator Ervin continued.

Thrust Brings Laughter

There was laughter in the hearing room as the Senator's attempted trap unfolded.

"This is my decision, not Mr. Hunt's," Barker said.

The exchange continued: SENATOR ERVIN. So you did consult with Mr. E. Howard

Hunt before you pleaded guilty?

BARKER. It was not a consultation.

Q. Well, it was a discussion?

A. It was a discussion, certainly.

Q. And he told you that he was going to plead guilty, and the evidence against you was overwhelming?

A. That is true.

Q. And then you decided to plead guilty?

A. Yes, but this is not pressure.

James W. McCord Jr., has charged that he had been under pressure to plead guilty and remain silent, and that an Administration aide had offered executive clemency if he would do so.

Barker said that after his arrest he had received from Hunt's wife payments of about \$45,000 or \$47,000 for bail, expenses and lawyers' fees, but he told the committee that this was part of the aid he expected to receive "if you are caught by the enemy."

The witness said, as he has in the past, that neither he nor his men had taken part in the Watergate raid for money. "We are not for sale," he said in a closing statement.