

investigations

The Master Spy of Watergate Talks

THE SCENE for Act II of Watergate was the same as for Act I: The high-ceilinged Caucus Room in the old Senate Office building. The long green-topped table with the seven Senators and their counsel facing the hot television lights. The small, nondescript witness table. The rows of folding chairs overflowing with restless lawyers and spectators.

Senator Sam Ervin (Dem.-N.C.) raised his eyebrows and his gavel at 10 a.m. (EDT) last Monday and the hearings resumed.

But while the stage seemed virtually unchanged, there was an enormous difference. Watergate I had been a shattering experience for the nation — 37 sessions of televised inquiry involving the highest levels of the Administration. There had been no rival sensations.

And over everything had hung the question: Was President Nixon himself involved in either the planning or cover-up of the Watergate affair?

Galaxy of News

Watergate I had spun off a galaxy of sensational news. The question of President Nixon's involvement now centered on his nine private tapes that presumably could settle once and for all whether John Dean III had told the truth about what and when he told the President about the cover-up. That was in the courts.

Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox was tracking down the most sensational Watergate material for his Grand Jury. Court cases were pending involving former Attorney General John Mitchell and ex-Commerce Secretary Maurice Stans, and former top White House aides John Ehrlichman and H.R. "Bob" Haldeman.

Beyond that, there was the latest sensation — Vice President Spiro Agnew's troubles in Maryland.

Along with this competition for Watergate II, political leaders insisted that the public was "bored" with Watergate. The latest Gallup Poll reported 47 per cent were bored: 48 per cent were not.



HUNT

—AP Wirephoto

professional "spy" who had ordered his former Bay of Pigs buddies into the Democratic National Headquarters the night of June 17, 1972 and, when subsequently found guilty of conspiracy and sentenced to 35 years in prison, had kept his mouth shut in the best "stiff upper lip" CIA tradition.

Now Hunt, the author of 40 spy thrillers, was obviously worn, ailing, bitter. He had suffered abuse in prison, he said, and the old code of the CIA (which he had served 21 years until 1970) — it takes care of its men and their families when in trouble — had broken down.

"I am crushed by the failure of my government to protect me and my family as in the past it has always done for its clandestine agents," he told the committee.

Hired by Colson

However, he would testify as fully as he could, Hunt said, because Judge John Sirica had indicated he might mitigate Hunt's harsh sentence if the former agent would talk.

Hunt said he had been hired by Charles Colson, until recently a White House



BUCHANAN

counsel. (Colson a week ago appeared before the committee and refused to answer questions, saying they might tend to incriminate him.)

Hunt had participated in the Sept. 3, 1971 burglary of the office of Dr. Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist and a number of other such "clandestine" activities until arrested for the Watergate affair.

He told the committee it was he who thought the Kennedy Administration "was implicitly if not explicitly responsible for the assassination of (South Vietnam's President) Diem and his brother-in-law" but

Thus, like a badly written play, the second act (campaign "dirty tricks") and third (campaign financing) threatened to be anticlimaxes.

Still, as E. Howard Hunt sat down in the witness chair and begun to speak, the old fascination came back. This was the proud

"there was no hard evidence, such as a cable emanating from the White House or a reply coming from Saigon..."

So Hunt, with Colson's alleged encouragement, prepared false cables to "fill the gap." Hunt said Colson planned to give them to the press to discredit Catholic Kennedy for killing Catholic Diem and win Catholic votes for the Republicans.

'Double Agent'

On the second day of testimony he said he now suspected that one of those involved in Watergate was a double agent. "The most likely subject," he said, was Alfred Baldwin, the former FBI agent who was posted as lookout.

Baldwin had never been charged in the case and had

'Leaks' were, he said, damaging to his reputation

testified against those involved. Baldwin had been hired by convicted Watergate burglar James McCord through a "help wanted" ad that Baldwin had placed in a law enforcement journal. Hunt said Baldwin had an uncle who was "a Democratic judge" in Connecticut and a girl friend who was a Democrat.

Senator Lowell Weicker (Rep.-Conn.) challenged Hunt's "facts." Weicker said he had investigated the charge and found that the only relative Baldwin had in Connecticut that "fit the description" was former Governor Baldwin and in fact was "Mr. Republican in Connecticut."

The alleged girl friend was a secretary Baldwin had taken to lunch once, said Weicker. And Hunt's contention that Baldwin had not warned the crew that lights were going on and off in the building was also false. Baldwin had warned Hunt's men.

Hunt's greatest sympathy came from a Democrat, Senator Herman Talmadge of Georgia. He was "relatively low on the totem pole" in the political espionage operation, Talmadge remarked, yet while others remained at liberty, he Hunt, was imprisoned. Didn't he find that a strange commentary on justice? asked the Senator.

"Yes, sir," replied Hunt.

"It does me also," said Talmadge.

However, Hunt stuck to his contention that he had not "blackmailed" the Nixon Administration into putting up money for bail and legal fees for himself and the other Watergate conspirators.

He had asked for money because they had been involved in a "clandestine entry operation conducted under the auspices of competent authority." He had believed it stemmed directly from Attorney General John Mitchell and involved national security — the search for evidence the Democrats were receiving campaign contributions from Castro's Communist Cuba.

Just how much the Administration had provided Hunt was not clear but apparently at least \$240,000, according to past testimony.

'Dirty Tricks'

Next witness was one of the President's leading speech writers, Patrick Buchanan, who had been described in "leaks" from the committee as the author of 1972 campaign strategy and of the so-called "dirty tricks" that wrecked the candidacy of Senator Edmund Muskie (Dem.-Me.) and other Democrats.

Buchanan excoriated the committee for leaks he termed damaging to the reputation of a witness. As for political sabotage, "Republicans were not responsible for the downfall of Muskie; Republicans were not responsible for the nomination of Senator (George) McGovern."