

# SECRECY BACKED IN PLUMBER CASE

## White House Said to View Disclosure as Threat to an Agent Inside Soviet

WASHINGTON, Nov. 29 (AP) —The White House has told Federal investigators that the life of a foreign intelligence agent inside the Soviet Union would be endangered if a still-secret "plumbers" operation were disclosed, informed sources said today.

The sources said that the plumbers, a White House intelligence unit that was responsible for the burglary of the office of Dr. Daniel Ellsberg's former psychiatrist in 1971, had also undertaken a secret operation to halt a news leak that allegedly endangered the spy's life.

The project, possibly the mysterious "Project Odessa" that has figured in recent testimony about the affair, remains a secret.

Hints have been dropped in sworn statements by former Administration officials that it involved wiretapping and possibly other, more embarrassing, incidents.

The sources said that the White House had asserted that it acted to halt publication of information about Central Intelligence Agency eavesdropping on Russian leaders inside the Kremlin, including Communist party chief Leonid I. Brezhnev.

### Krogh Affidavit Cited

The head of the plumbers unit, Egil Krogh Jr., said in an affidavit last May that he was told by the C.I.A. in 1971 "that a news story had put in jeopardy the life of an intelligence agent."

The agent reportedly is not an American and remains outside the United States.

Mr. Krogh did not specify the news story, but it was about this time—Sept. 16, 1971—that the columnist Jack Anderson published a column saying that the C.I.A. had been able to eavesdrop on Kremlin leaders.

Mr. Anderson said in a telephone interview today that he had published the story only because transcripts of the overheard conversations convinced him that the Russians were aware that they were being overheard.

He said that he had deliberately omitted from his story any reference to how the eavesdropping had been carried out. "I know how we did it," he said.

Even if the C.I.A. agent's life would have been endangered in 1971, there appears to be some question about whether full disclosure of the plumbers' activities would now cause the same danger.

The Chicago Tribune, reporting on the affair in a Washington-dated article today, quoted one anonymous official as saying that the agent was no longer active.

### Another Official Quoted

The Scripps-Howard news service, in a similar article today, quoted another official as saying that not just one person, but possibly "a number of persons," could be harmed by disclosures about the plumbers.

The official hinted that it was the agent's family and friends "still in Eastern European countries" who would suffer, the news service said.

The White House, at various times, has briefed several high-ranking investigators about the matter.

They include the ranking members of the Senate Watergate committee, the panel's two top counsels, one former special Watergate prosecutor, Archibald Cox, and the present special prosecutor, Leon Jaworski.

Former Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson has also indicated knowledge of the matter. None have divulged what they learned, although Senator Howard H. Baker Jr., a member of the Watergate committee, has said that he believes disclosure should be made.

Mr. Krogh has been indicted on charges of lying to a Federal grand jury. His trial starts Dec. 11.