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No One Laughs Now at French Bugging Scandal

By NAN ROBERTSON Special to The New York Time

PARIS, Dec. 16 - It began, like Watergate, as a "caper the entire country laughing at a botched break-in, bugging, the miscreants caught in the act on the enemy's turf. Now it is not so silly.

Twelve days after the acci-dental discovery of men install-ing a sophisticated wiretapping system in the new offices of Le Canard Enchainé, one of Europe's most famous satirical newspapers, the Government is coming under heavy fire.

The French counter espio-nage agency has been impli-cated. The Canard has named a dozen officials in the agency's employ that it said were in-volved in the undercover oper-ation.

Raymond Marcellin, the In-terior Minister, who is in charge of internal security, is in deep trouble. From the polit-ical left, right and center, mem-bers of Parliament and editori-als are calling for his resigna-tion. A court investigation has begun begun.

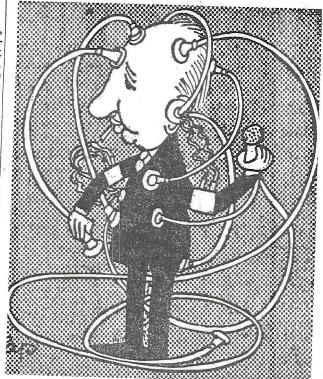
A Long-Time Needle

The Canard, which for more

The Canard, which for more than half a century has glee-fully documented political gos-sip and exposed Government scandals that others dared not print, was the object of the bugging attempt. It was first thought to be a practical joke by the weekly's madcap but devastatingly well-informed staff. But the affair is now being taken seriously much faster than Watergate was.

was. Initially sniffy Government I reaction has changed almost overnight to defensiveness. I When the news broke on Dec. 4, Premier Pierre Messmer said: "It's a story in the style of a satirical newspaper. They could have done it themselves." La Nation, the Gaullist organ, dis-missed it as a "publicity stunt" dreamed up by the Canard. Mr. Marcellin was suddenly confined to bed with fever the next day, when he was to ex-plain his budget before a clam-oring National Assembly. The Canard suggested that it might be an inflammation of the ear. Developments quickened this week. Experts confirmed that the listening devices installed in the offices, the Canard is. soon to occupy were highly sophisticated. They compared the equipment to systems dis-covered at the United States Embassy in Moscow and, more recently, the French Embassy in Warsaw. Then the Canard published the names of the intelligence Initially sniffy Government

Then the Canard published the names of the intelligence officials it said were involved. The intelligence service answers directly to Mr. Marcellin. At that point the Interior



Drawing of Minister Raymond Marcellin from Canard

Minister declared that he knew liever in the conspiracy theory nothing of the matter and had of history. After the upheavals given no orders about bugging of 1968, he published a booklet the satirical newspaper to any- with the thesis that the French body, including the intelligence and other European student up-

body, including the intelligence bureau's director, Henri Biard. On Friday, Mr. Marcellin said in Parliament that there were "machinations" at the bottom of the Canard affair, a "politi-tions be confirmed, has been cal settling of accounts." Turn-ing to the Opposition benches, he shouted: "You're out to de-stroy me and not to spare me! I won't spare you either!" The Interior Minister is a be-ernment. and other European student up-risings that year had all been masterminded in Havana. Mr. Marcellin's resignation should the Canard's accusa-ig norw margin. Meanwhile at the Canard cir-culation has soared from 453,-One of their reports said that which usually supports the Gov-The Interior Minister is a be-

The nationwide indignation aroused by the attempt to wire-tap the Canard is surprising. The French attitude toward the Watergate revelations was one of almost universal indifference until President Nixon ousted the special prosecutor Archibald Cox.

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Moreover, two investigations this year into widespread and systematic Government tapping

systematic Government tapping and bugging of the conversa-tions of French citizens—which the Government admitted— sank without a trace after the results were disclosed. Whatever the climate, the Government has remained in-transigent. The Minister for Parliamentary relations, Joseph Comiti, said that the wiretap-ping controversy was only "one of the aspects of a systematic campaign of denigration against the authority of the state." Tapping Will Continue

Tapping Will Continue

He added that despite the Canard affair, the Government had not the slightest intention of modifying its position: "Wiretapping will continue to be used to assure the security of the state the safeguarding of the state, the safeguarding of the institutions of the re-public, the prevention of crime and the protection of individ-uals." uals

uals." Shortly after Mr. Comiti's speech, the National Assembly —where the Gaullists hold a comfortable majority—rejected a proposal to create a com-mittee to investigate wiretap-ning though by an unexpected-