
Betty Beale: Washington

White House mystery of a cancelled dinner

WASHINGTON — THE CONFLICTING REPORTS from the White House about the dinner last week for Latin American foreign ministers are a clue to the cause of contradictory testimony about Watergate. There must be more truth than fantasy in Gen. Al Haig's comment about the "sinister source" that goofs things up, because those gremlins have been at it again.

For instance, the press office in the East Wing of the White House (the First Lady's wing) said the dinner had been planned for over a month but had been taken off the calendar. By whom? No one knew. Except that it wasn't done in the East Wing. Mrs. Nixon, it seems, was shocked to learn Monday afternoon that no invitations had gone out to the dinner of 120 which she and the President actually gave two nights later, and no plans had been made for it. 24 APR

The social secretary's office said no plans had been made because it never had been on the First Lady's calendar. It had been proposed, but many things are proposed that do not materialize. Indeed, not until about 5 p.m. on Monday did the schedule for the dinner come over from the office of the President's appointments assistant. Steve Bull.

Said another staffer, Mrs. Nixon definitely thought the dinner was on because both the foreign ministers of Brazil and Venezuela remarked upon her departure from their respective countries a month before that they would see her in the White House.

Who goofed and how is still a mystery, but it does show that when there are a lot of fingers in the pie, things are not as black and white as legal brains want them to be.