

# The Illustrated Secret History of Watergate

## Part II: The Cover-up Begins

By the Editors of *New York Magazine*  
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Despite conflicting and often confusing testimony, one of the most interesting things about Watergate is how much is known for certain about the planning, the break-in, and the subsequent cover-up. Many of the key events and personalities, as well as the location of key actions, are attested to by memos, transcripts, and other documents, sworn eyewitness testimony, physical evidence, etc. But, because of the secret nature of many of these events, there were no television or newsreel cameramen and no still photographers present to make a pictorial record of deeds and misdeeds.

By drawing on the extensive documentation now available, we have reconstructed a number of these covert scenes. In the chronicle that continues in this issue, all of the events illustrated are known to have taken place; none are based on hearsay or one man's word.

In last week's issue ("The Plans, the Preparations, and the Crime"), we reconstructed the events that led to the arrest of the "Watergate Five" in the early morning hours of June 17, 1972. Now the story moves into what has been called the cover-up phase, which, in more legal terms, is a matter of the obstruction of justice, a criminal offense. Many of the figures embroiled in this narrative must have found a line from Nixon's second inaugural address particularly apt. "Let each of us ask," the President said on January 20, 1973, "not just what will government do for me, but what can I do for myself?"

June 17, 1972

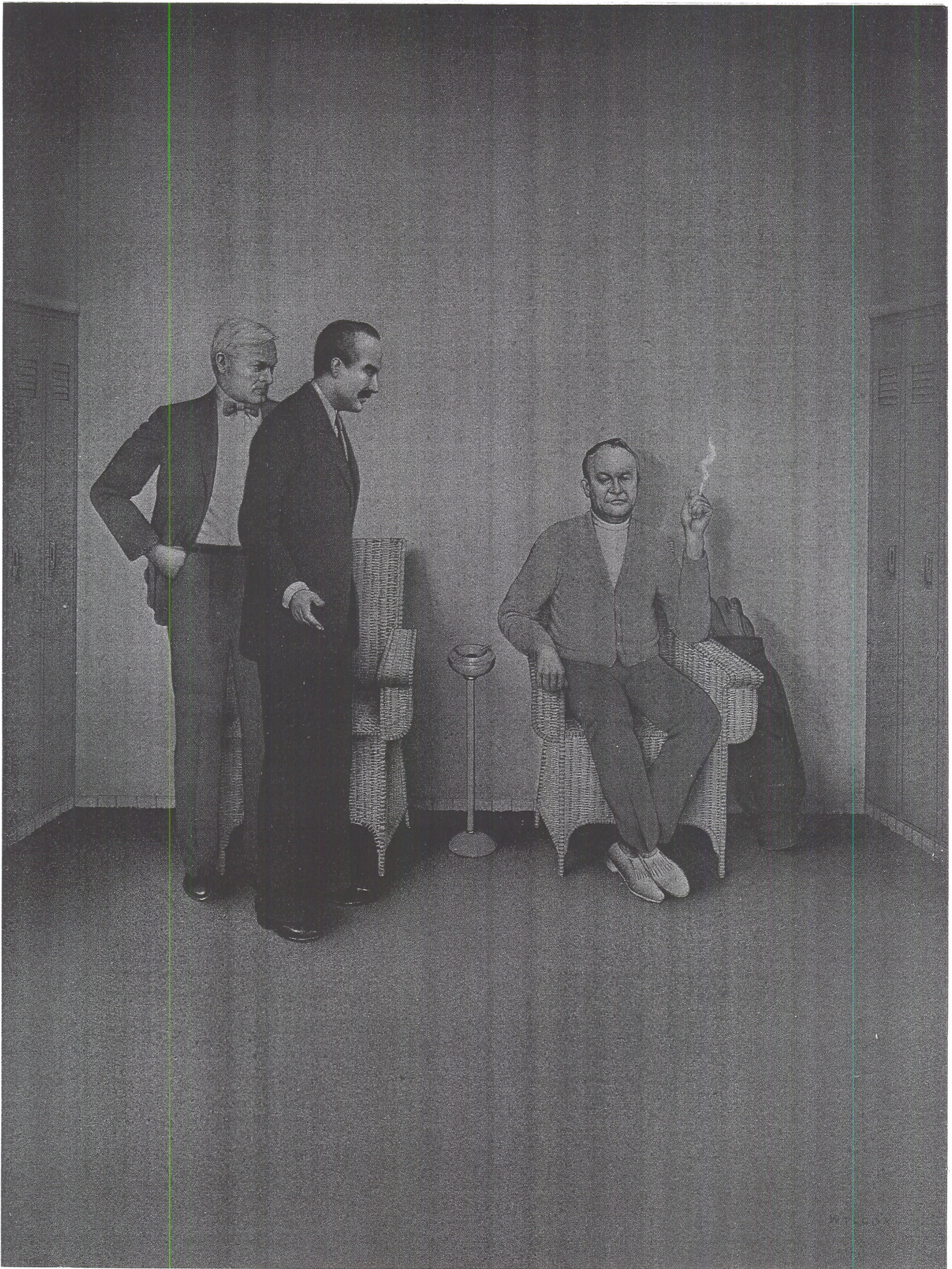
## Liddy Tries To Involve the Attorney General

Hours after the abortive break-in at the Watergate offices of the Democratic National Committee headquarters, Gordon Liddy (center), accompanied by CREEP staff member Powell Moore (left), contacts Attorney General Richard Kleindienst at the Burning Tree Club to ask him to get Watergate burglar James McCord out of jail.

The top echelon of CREEP—John Mitchell, Jeb Magruder, Fred LaRue, Robert Mardian—learned of the Watergate break-in and capture in California, where they were revving up the Nixon bandwagon for the Republican Convention. That the four men Hunt had recruited were arrested was bad enough, but that McCord, one of their own, CREEP's security chief, should have been picked up, too—that was unthinkable. Now the whole thing—the money, the surveillance equipment—could be traced back to the Republicans and, possibly, spoil Nixon's re-election chances.

One of the first cover-up tasks fell to G. Gordon Liddy, who had engineered the unsuccessful break-in. The importance of keeping McCord's position hidden was paramount, and the one man who could manage it, Liddy supposed, was the attorney general. So, with Powell Moore in tow, Liddy tracked down Kleindienst at his Bethesda, Maryland, golf club, where he was lunching before a tournament. When Liddy signaled to him, he left his table and took the two men into a locker room for a private talk. After hearing Liddy's request to free McCord, Kleindienst placed a call to Henry E. Petersen, assistant attorney general in the criminal division of the Justice Department, to tell him not to give preferential treatment to anyone connected with the case. Kleindienst then dismissed Moore and Liddy. McCord was not released.

Kleindienst, who must have realized the full implications of the break-in and Liddy's visit, refused to embroil himself in the first stages of the cover-up, but did not see fit to alert the public to the fact that a cover-up was then under way. It was not until March of 1973, long after the election, that the number and high level of the participants was made known—and then only because of a dramatic confession by McCord.



June 22, 1972

## Martha Mitchell Is Manhandled But Unsilenced

In a Newport Beach motel room, Martha Mitchell's bodyguard rips out the telephone cord just after Martha tells U.P.I. reporter Helen Thomas "They don't want me to talk."

Martha Mitchell, wife of John Mitchell, the head of CREEP, was fed up with being considered a security risk. "Can you believe," she later told a reporter, "that a man can walk into your bedroom, take over, and pull the phone out of the wall? . . . [They] threw me down on the bed . . . and stuck a needle in my behind." She was being punished because "they're afraid of my honesty."

And the government had good reason to be afraid. During the panic that followed the Plumbers' arrest in the Watergate, incriminating files were destroyed, flat denials of wrongdoing intoned, and John Mitchell, who was in California when the arrests took place, flew back to Washington and announced on June 19 that James McCord had been fired by CREEP and that his "apparent actions . . . [were] wholly inconsistent with the principles upon which we are conducting our campaign."

When Mitchell left California, he'd persuaded Martha to stay behind with her bodyguard, Steve King. Martha Mitchell knew and liked James McCord. She also knew that there was nothing "inconsistent" about his participation in the Watergate break-in. Desperate to reveal what she knew, on June 22 she called Helen Thomas to say that she was "sick and tired of the whole operation." Then Ms. Thomas heard her say "You get away" to someone in the room, and the line went dead.

Three days later, Martha called again. She was still a "political prisoner," she announced, and she had given her husband an ultimatum: give up politics or give up his wife.

Several days went by, then Martha was on the phone again, this time from the Westchester Country Club, in Rye, New York. "I'm black and blue," she said. "I love my husband, but I'm not going to stand for all those dirty things that go on."

By this time, John Mitchell wanted to get out, too. On July 1, 1972, aware he and John Dean were likely to bear most of the responsibility for the break-in, he resigned.





Summer, 1972

## "Deep Throat" Whispers The Secrets

Bob Woodward, a reporter for *The Washington Post*, awaits a still unidentified government informer, "Deep Throat," in a deserted underground garage in or near Washington late one summer's night.

Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, despite White House attempts to discredit their stories and besmirch their paper ("shabby journalism," announced White House Press Secretary Ron Ziegler), managed to penetrate the miasma of secrecy surrounding Watergate, win *The Post* a Pulitzer, and shake the foundations of the United States government. The young reporters broke essential parts of the story by carefully cultivating sources of information and then ardently protecting their sources' identities.

Perhaps their most important source was a government official at first known only to Woodward. Woodward and Deep Throat (so dubbed by a *Post* editor) had devised complicated rituals which enabled them to communicate without being detected. When Woodward wanted a meeting he would position a flowerpot on his apartment balcony. Deep Throat would draw, or have drawn, a clock face on page 20 of Woodward's home-delivered *New York Times* to indicate a meeting time. Woodward would take at least two taxis and then walk to the concrete catacombs of an underground garage where they met, usually at one or two in the morning. Deep Throat, for security and other reasons, refused to reveal too much—even to Woodward. (Woodward and Bernstein suggest in their book, *All the President's Men*, that "he felt that the effect of one or two big stories . . . could be blunted by the White House.") Deep Throat did not state, but hinted, directed, or confirmed.

However, one evening Woodward and Deep Throat sat on the garage floor until almost 6 A.M. Deep Throat, in an unusually impartive mood, told the reporter of plans to discover *The Post's* sources, attempts to wreck political campaigns, and the existence of a web of over 50 people who were involved in gathering intelligence for the White House. Characteristically stopping short, he observed that some of what had occurred was "beyond belief." He had already warned Woodward, "They are all underhanded, and unknowable."





September 15, 1972

## Nixon Offers Dean Compliments In the Oval Office

(See painting on following two pages.) This is the day a federal grand jury indicts the five Watergate burglars, as well as Hunt and Liddy. After hearing the news, John Dean and H.R. Haldeman meet with Nixon and express relief that no high White House officials have been implicated.

On August 29, 1972, at a San Clemente news conference, Nixon announced that "Mr. Dean has conducted a complete investigation of all [Watergate] leads. . . . I can say categorically that his investigation indicates that no one in the White House staff, no one in this administration, presently employed, was involved in this very bizarre incident. . . . What really hurts in matters of this sort . . . is if you try to cover it up."

This announcement was of particular interest to Mr. Dean, for, as he later testified before the Ervin committee, he had never conducted such an investigation. But John Dean had, nonetheless, been very busy. The cover-up was, as he put it, "the instant way of life at that point in time," and he was instantly embroiled in maneuvers to seal off Hunt's files, raise money for the defendants, and limit the investigation by the Justice Department and the F.B.I.

Dean's—and others'—work paid off, for on September 15, 1972, the grand jury indicted only the five burglars who were caught glove-handed in the Democratic headquarters and the two masterminds of the operation, Hunt and Liddy. No wonder Dean remembered that his reception in the Oval Office on that day was "very warm and very cordial." He further recalled before the Ervin committee that the President had complimented him on his handling of the case. When Samuel Dash, chief counsel to the committee, asked if, after that meeting, Dean had any doubts about Nixon's involvement in the cover-up, Dean replied, "No, I did not."

By and large, the transcripts of the September 15 meeting bear out Dean's recollections. When Dean said "Nothing is going to come crashing down" before the November election, Nixon replied: "Oh well, this is a can of worms. . . . But the way you have handled all this, seems to me, has been very skillful, putting your fingers in the leaks that have sprung here and sprung there."

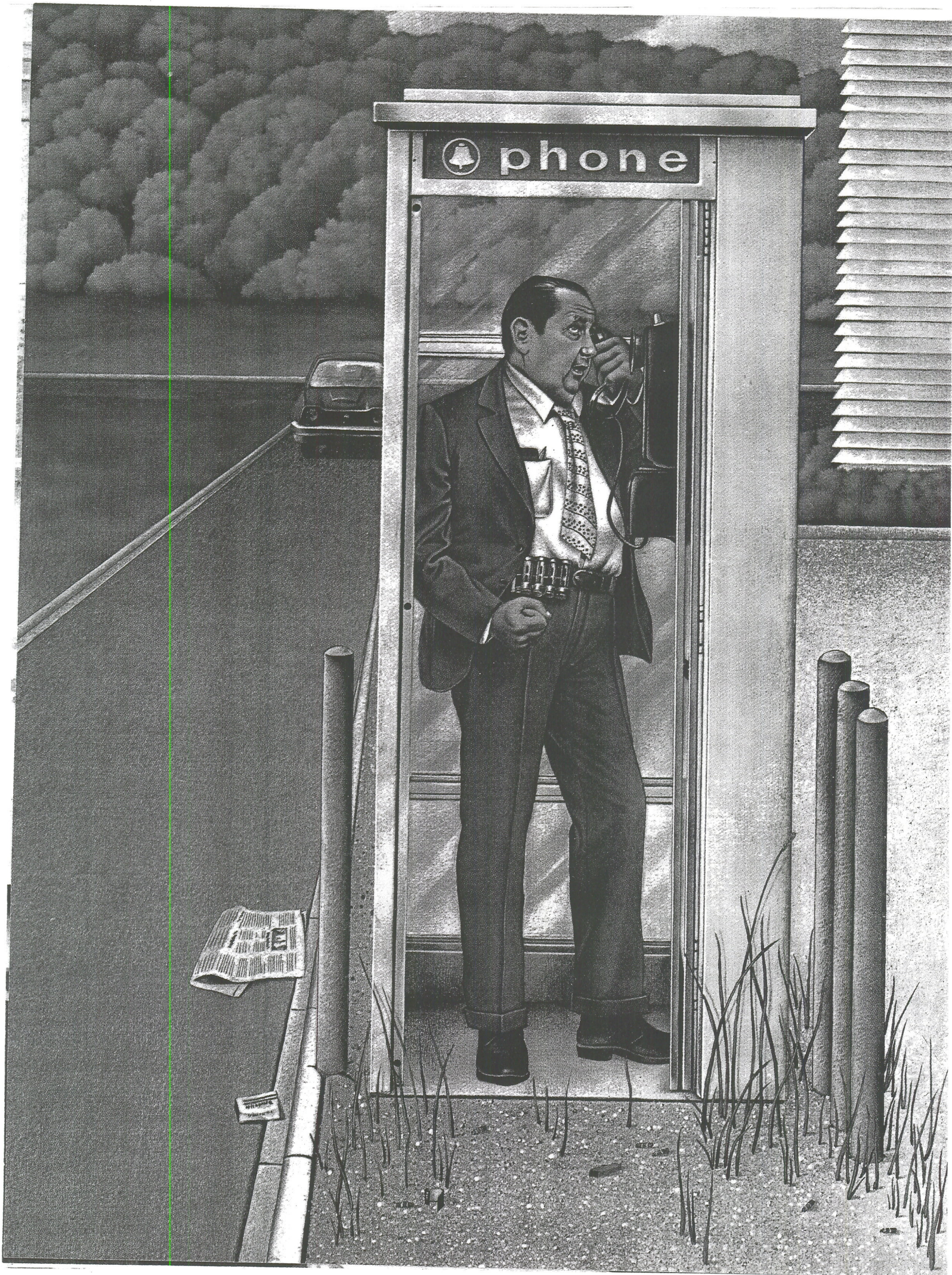
As Haldeman looks on (see caption on preceding page), Nixon cheerfully greets Dean on September 15, 1972, and praises him for "putting your fingers in the leaks" during the first grand jury investigation of Watergate.



Painting by Julian A. Rotter







Summer, 1972

## Cash Begins To Flow to The Defendants

Anthony Ulasewicz, feeding the public phone from his changemaker, receives instructions from Herbert Kalmbach to make secret cash payments to a Watergate conspirator.

In 1969 a retired New York City policeman named Anthony Ulasewicz went to work for the White House, taking orders in a chain of command that ultimately led from John Ehrlichman, the President's chief domestic adviser. Streetwise and discreet, Ulasewicz did all manner of investigative odd jobs—checking out rumors of sexual improprieties, drinking problems, and marital strife—involving foes and even friends of the administration. But his toughest assignment began on June 30, 1972, thirteen days after the Watergate break-in, when Herbert Kalmbach, President Nixon's personal lawyer, instructed him to begin dropping off sums of money to various people involved in Watergate.

Over the next three months, Ulasewicz was a busy man, distributing \$154,500 to E. Howard Hunt Jr. and his wife (who was later killed in an airplane crash carrying \$10,000 in cash); \$8,000 to G. Gordon Liddy; \$29,900 to Frederick LaRue, a White House aide; and \$25,000 to William Bittman, Hunt's lawyer.

Ulasewicz made an amusing witness before the Ervin committee in 1973, but Senator Lowell Weicker of Connecticut put Ulasewicz's testimony in a different perspective:

Weicker: Do you know where Mr. Liddy is...?

Ulasewicz: Yes, sir.

Weicker: Where?

Ulasewicz: He is in prison.

Weicker: Mr. Hunt?

Ulasewicz: He is in prison.

Weicker: Mrs. Hunt?

Ulasewicz: She is dead.

Weicker: Mr. Barker?

Ulasewicz: In prison, I believe.

Weicker: Mr. Gonzalez?

Ulasewicz: In prison... .

Weicker: Mr. Sturgis?

Ulasewicz: The same.

Weicker: Mr. Martinez?

Ulasewicz: The same.

Weicker: I think what we see here is not a joke, but a very great tragedy.

The conclusion of "The Illustrated Secret History of Watergate" will appear next week.

"...Were the tapes to go to the Nixon Library with their expletives undeleted?..."

(Continued from page 37) of his doctors to ease up:

*I just want you to know what my answer to them was and what my answer to you is. No one in this great office at this time in the world's history can slow down. This office requires a President who will work right up to the hilt all the time. That is what I have been doing. That is what I am going to continue to do... I know many will say, "But then you will risk your health." Well, the health of the man is not nearly as important as the health of the nation and the health of the world.*

There is the famous incident at the height of the Cambodian crisis. At 4:55 A.M. on May 9, 1970, Nixon crept out of the White House, accompanied by his valet, Manolo Sanchez, and three Secret Service agents. He headed to the Lincoln Memorial, where he discussed football with a handful of demonstrators. Then he took Sanchez on a personal sunrise tour of the deserted Capitol. At the House of Representatives, he was met by H. R. Haldeman, Ron Ziegler, and Dwight Chapin. The President climbed onto the dais, sat down, and simply stared out at the empty chamber.

For me, the most striking insight into the President's mentality came last year during his short-lived and inevitably doomed Operation Candor. In Memphis, Tennessee, he met behind closed doors with Republican governors who were desperate for reassurance that it was his intention to have out the truth. "Mr. President, are there any more bombshells in the wings?" he was asked. He replied that there were none.

The next day, back in Washington, Judge Sirica was informed that eighteen and a half minutes of a crucial tape recording had been mysteriously obliterated. Later testimony in the court allowed no doubt that the President was aware of this, and aware that it would have to be revealed to the court, when he gave the governors the assurance they asked for in Memphis. This was not the behavior of a politician. A politician, surely, would have said to them: "I know this is going to look bad for me, but I want you to know about it now and to know that it was an accident, and that no one in the White House deliberately erased that tape." A politician would have tried to defuse the bombshell in the wings. Nixon instead behaved like a child denying that a vase has been broken while the pieces are lying on the floor in the next room, bound to be discovered. Either he had become ut-

terly reckless, no longer concerned with his credibility, or he was unable to connect with reality.

How are we to explain the tapes—not their contents but their very existence? They are the central mystery of the man and his Presidency. Richard Nixon will go down as the first President of the United States, indeed so far as we know the first leader in the history of the world, to have bugged himself. The system, which would pick up any sounds of conversation in the President's offices, including the lowest tones, was automatically activated by voice. The President retained no manual control over its operation.<sup>2</sup>

Other Presidents had made use of tape recordings, but none, so far as we know, had so violated their own privacy. That Nixon may have wanted to get the goods on his colleagues, friend and foe alike ("Nobody is a friend of ours. Let's face it," he said to John Dean), does not explain why by his choice of system he should entrap himself. All he needed was a button under his desk, as L.B.J. had. Nor does the official explanation that they were installed to record events for posterity, for the Nixon library, wash. Were the tapes to be deposited in the Nixon library with their expletives undeleted? Was posterity to be shown a Nixon totally different from the image projected to the public in his lifetime?

### Guarded With Family

The contemporary Nixon insists on coats and ties being worn in the presence of the President. "I hope to restore respect to the Presidency at all levels of my conduct," he told an interviewer. "I believe in keeping my own counsel," he told another, Stewart Alsop. "It's something like wearing clothing—if you let down your hair you feel too naked." According to Garry Wills, whose *Nixon Agonistes* is the best book on the subject, "Nixon, so ill at ease among strangers, remains guarded with intimates, with his very family—hiding grievances from his brother under strict decorum, writing his mother in tones of a geriatric manual." Was posterity

<sup>2</sup>Although he retained no mechanical control over the system he could, of course, at any time order its suspension. We now have reason to believe he sometimes did. This could explain the missing tapes, but it makes even more remarkable the recording of conversations such as that of March 21, 1973, in which the commission of crimes was, at very least, contemplated.

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“... A powerful Presidency doesn't have to produce a crook. Nixon was not inevitable...”

point,” Nixon told an interviewer, “is performance. I always produce more than I promise.” But the performance of his administration was mostly poor, for all its military staff structures and systems-analysis jargon. It was not until 1972, with the visits to Peking and Moscow, that anything began to go right for the Nixon administration.

The fear, the real fear, of losing in 1972 goes a long way toward explaining Watergate, by which we mean not simply the break-in at the Democratic National Committee headquarters but all the other abuses of power—bribery, corruption, sabotage, and espionage—which went on. Because by the time of the actual Watergate break-in in June, 1972, Nixon had his re-election virtually sewn up; and because with McGovern for an opponent he won by a landslide of the votes cast, it is easily forgotten just how vulnerable he was—or felt—at the early, formative stages of the affair. In mid-1971, a White House aide told Haynes Johnson of *The Washington Post*: “The President was walking into a one-term Presidency on almost every issue.” The opinion polls showed Ed Muskie, the hero of the mid-term campaign, running ahead of the President, with Kennedy and Humphrey running Nixon neck and neck. By May, Muskie was beating Nixon 47 per cent to 39 per cent!

### The Power Machine

The narrow win in 1968, and the grave uncertainty concerning 1972, had another consequence. Nixon never felt that he possessed adequate power, or adequate power that he could use openly. His conversation with Dean on September 15, 1972, by which time his re-election was certain, is revealing:

*P: We are all in it together. This is a war. We take a few shots and it will be over. We will give them a few shots and it will be over. Don't worry. I wouldn't want to be on the other side right now. Would you?*

*D: Along that line, one of the things I've tried to do, I have begun to keep notes on a lot of people who are emerging as less than our friends because this will be over some day and we shouldn't forget the way some of them have treated us.*

*P: I want the most comprehensive notes on all of those who tried to do us in. They didn't have to do it. If we had a very close election and they were playing the other side I would understand this. No—they were doing this quite deliberately, and they are asking for it, and they are going to get it. We have not used the power in this first four years as you know. We have never*

*used it. We have not used the Bureau [F.B.I.], and we have not used the Justice Department, but things are going to change now. And they are either going to do it right or go.*

There is no suggestion here that self-restraint has held them back. The suggestion rather is that there were things they didn't dare do, or things they couldn't do through insufficient control of the power machine. For example, J. Edgar Hoover had vetoed a plan approved by the President in July, 1970, which would have authorized breaking and entering and other illegal acts by the intelligence gathering and law enforcement agencies. In consequence, a covert parallel network began to be constructed in the White House: in December of 1970 an Intelligence Evaluation Committee to collect domestic intelligence, and in June, 1971, the Plumbers unit, which we may assume was not idle between the Ellsberg burglary in September of that year and the Watergate operations in the early summer of 1972. And we should remember that Nixon's one decisive act after his re-election, before his administration became crippled by Watergate, was the brutal terror bombing of the North Vietnam cities in December, 1972.

The decision-making structure of the Nixon administration reflected the same concern with the lack of effective power. The White House staff grew from 250 to 510. Foreign policy was conducted from the basement of the White House, and Henry Kissinger's National Security Council apparatus effectively replaced the State Department. The State Department was “bureaucracy,” a bad word in the vocabulary of Nixonism. The budget was similarly drawn into the White House. In order to narrow the bases of decision-making (and also to spare the President human contact, which he found so uncongenial), overlords were created in each major area of government. The wires led back to the White House, where the President could deal with one man per subject. H. R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman exercised power far greater than any cabinet officers except John Mitchell and John Connally during his brief tenure as Secretary of the Treasury.

### Concentrated Power

The cabinet fell into disuse. In 1972 it met only six times. In that year there were only six bipartisan meetings with the congressional leadership, only

twelve with the Republican leadership. There was nothing new in Presidential impoundment of funds voted by Congress, but the Nixon administration's use of that power was novel and ominous. For impoundment was used to remove from the Congress the power of the purse, the power to determine national priorities.

It was the same story with the party. The election campaign was run from the White House through CREEP (the Committee for the Re-election of the President). In 1972 Nixon did not run as a Republican candidate but simply as Richard Nixon. As in the midterm elections, reactionary Democrats in the South were helped in their campaigns against Republican candidates; other Republicans received little help from the President and none of the vast sums of money that had accumulated at CREEP.

Within the White House, too, power was concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. A former campaign staffer, Richard Whalen, one who got out in good time, has described how Haldeman and Ehrlichman "regarded governing as little more than an extension of campaigning. Campaign politics, regardless of party and candidate, is inherently conspiratorial. Because the only purpose and binding force of the enterprise is victory, almost any means toward that all-important end can be justified with a modest amount of rationalization." Others have since testified to this atmosphere.

Hugh Sloan told the Ervin committee: "There was no independent sense of morality there . . . If you worked for someone, he was God, and whatever the orders were, you did it . . . It was all so narrow, so closed."

Dean: "The White House is another world. Expediency is everything."

Tom Huston (a sponsor of the plan which Hoover vetoed): "No one who had been in the White House could help but feel he was in a state of siege."

Jeb Magruder: "Because of a certain atmosphere that had developed in my working at the White House, I was not as concerned about . . . illegality as I should have been."

The men around Nixon were men without constituency, without commitment; not one of them had ever run for office. They were men from advertising agencies, real-estate men, salesmen and image manipulators: in Whalen's words, "buttoned-down, scurrying aides," who "had the mission of protecting the President from disorder. . . ." Haldeman, who had seen Nixon break down in his 1962 California campaign, had the special task of preventing this from happening again. Haldeman and Ehrlichman controlled the flow of information to him, were intermediaries to his decisions and orders. Ehrlichman

once told a cabinet officer that the President had no philosophy, that he did only what was feasible and tactically rewarding. "There is no ideology, no central commitment, no fixed body of thought," said another White House aide proudly. Whalen quotes another as saying, "Haldeman and Ehrlichman shield the President by monopolizing him. One of them is present at every meeting—he sees no one alone. He has made himself their captive. Sometimes the 'Germans' don't carry out Nixon's orders, or they let papers sit on their desks for a while, because they are certain he won't find out. How can he find out? All the channels flow back to Haldeman." When the President on April 30, 1973, the night of their resignation, described Haldeman and Ehrlichman as "two of the finest public servants it has been my privilege to know," he meant it. The transcripts show that he could hardly contemplate life without them.

### Split Personality

Nixon was not corrupted by power; he corrupted power. A powerful Presidency doesn't have to produce a crook any more than a strong man has to be a thug. Richard Nixon was not inevitable. Watergate was not decreed by the Vietnam war, nor by the civil war at home: Hubert Humphrey could have been elected President in 1968 and very nearly was. Nixon very nearly won in 1960, and at that time there was no war, no social disorder. McCarthyism rose and fell under Truman and Eisenhower, militarism and obsessive concern with national security grew under subsequent Presidents; but there were no Watergates.

Nixon's Presidency is the projection of his personality. Lacking any firm commitment or ideological belief, he made do with the traditional, fundamentalist values of his Middle American background which he expounded in public. The force of his destructive personality is evil, but happily his exercise of power has been inept and lacking in direction, mistaking appearance for substance, concerned more with petty vendetta than with wide-scale repression. As Haldeman lamented: "We are so (adjective deleted) square that we get caught at everything." A PR man does not have the makings of an effective tyrant. Watergate was entirely characteristic of Nixon's Presidency—dishonest, disgraceful, inept.

"How could it have happened?" It happened because the American people elected Nixon to be President, an unfortunate choice. But how were they to know that he might be a psychopath? "Who is to blame?" Nixon is to blame—Nixon's the one.

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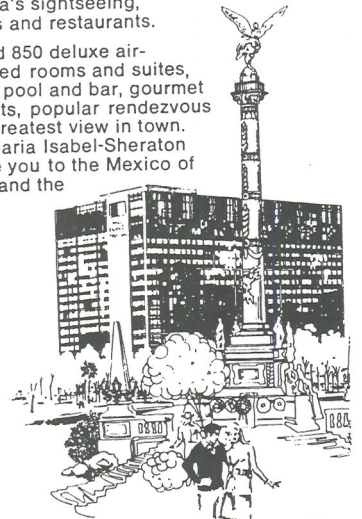
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