

# Mission Impossible:

*Despite tantalizing rumors, no one has yet proved that the CIA played any official role in the Watergate burglary. Still, there is a moral link: the atmosphere created by the CIA's prolonged failure to overthrow Fidel Castro. After its disaster at the Bay of Pigs in 1961, "the Company" redoubled its futile efforts, hiring scores of Cuban exiles in Miami to conduct secret operations against the Castro regime. As Miami became virtually a Company town, the*

*CIA turned idealistic refugees into hardened agents, creating a pool of blindly patriotic pawns—a pool from which the White House plumbers eventually plucked their Cuban troops, the Watergate burglars.*

*Harper's has extensively interviewed two of those burglars, Bernard Barker and Eugenio (Rolando) Martinez. Below are excerpts from a longer work in progress which Harper's is preparing for future use.*

Eugenio Martinez

**W**E CUBANS HAVE NEVER STOPPED fighting for the liberation of our country. I have personally carried out over 350 missions to Cuba for the CIA. Some of the people I infiltrated there were caught and tortured, and some of them talked.

My mother and father were not allowed to leave Cuba. It would have been easy for me to get them out. That was my specialty. But my bosses in the Company—the CIA—said I might get caught and tortured, and if I talked I might jeopardize other operations. So my mother and father died in Cuba. That is how orders go. I follow the orders.

I can't help seeing the whole Watergate affair as a repe-



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## The Watergate Bunglers

tion of the Bay of Pigs. The invasion was a fiasco for the United States and a tragedy for the Cubans. All of the agencies of the U.S. government were involved, and they carried out their plans in so ill a manner that everyone landed in the hands of Castro—like a present.

Eduardo was a name that all of us who had participated in the Bay of Pigs knew well. He had been the maximum representative of the Kennedy administration to our people in Miami. He occupied a special place in our hearts because of a letter he had written to his chief Cuban aide and my lifelong friend, Bernard Barker. He had identified himself in his letter with the pain of the Cubans, and he blamed the Kennedy administration for not supporting us on the beaches of the Bay of Pigs.

So when Barker told me that Eduardo was coming to town and that he wanted to meet me, that was like a hope for me. He had chosen to meet us at the Bay of Pigs monument, where we commemorate our dead, on April 16, 1971, the tenth anniversary of the invasion. I always go to the monument on that day, but that year I had another purpose—to meet Eduardo, the famous Eduardo, in person.

He was different from all the other men I had met in the Company. He looked more like a politician than a man who was fighting for freedom. He was there with his pipe, relaxing in front of the memorial, and Barker intro-

duced me. I then learned his name for the first time—Howard Hunt.

There was something strange about this man. His tan, you know, is not the tan of a man who is in the sun. His motions are very meticulous—the way he smokes his pipe, the way he looks at you and smiles. He knows how to make you happy—he's very warm, but at the same time you can sense that he does not go all into you or you all into him.

We went to a Cuban restaurant for lunch and right away Eduardo told us that he had retired from the CIA in 1971 and was working for Mullen and Company.\* I knew just what he was saying. I was also officially retired from the Company. Two years before, my case officer had gathered all the men in my Company unit and handed us envelopes with retirement announcements inside. But mine was a blank paper. Afterward he explained to me that I would stop making my boat missions to Cuba but I would continue my work with the Company. He said I should become an American citizen and soon I would be given a new assignment. Not even Barker knew that I was still working with the Company. But I was quite certain that day that Eduardo knew.

We talked about the liberation of Cuba, and he assured

\* The Robert Mullen Co., a public-relations firm and reported CIA front in Washington, D.C.—Ed.

us that "the whole thing is not over." Then he started inquiring: "What is Manolo doing?" Manolo was the leader of the Bay of Pigs operation. "What is Roman doing?" Roman was the other leader. He said he wanted to meet with the old people. It was a good sign. We did not think he had come to Miami for nothing.

Generally I talk to my CIA case officer at least twice a week and maybe on the phone another two times. I told him right away that Eduardo was back in town, and that I had had lunch with him. Any time anyone from the CIA was in town my CO always asked me what he was doing. But he didn't ask me anything about Eduardo, which was strange.

**T**HAT WAS IN APRIL. In the middle of July, Eduardo wrote to Barker to tell him he was in the White House as a counselor to the President. He sent a number of memos to us on White House stationery, and that was very impressive, you know. So I went back to my CO and said to him, "Hey, Eduardo is still in contact with us, and now he is a counselor of the President."

A few days later my CO told me that the Company had no information on Eduardo except that he was not working in the White House. Well, imagine! I knew Eduardo was in the White House. What it meant to me was that Eduardo was above them and either they weren't supposed to know what he was doing or they didn't want me to talk about him anymore. Knowing how these people act, I knew I had to be careful. So I said, well, let me keep my mouth shut.

Not long after this, Eduardo told Barker there was a job, a national-security job dealing with a traitor of this country who had given papers to the Russian Embassy. He said they were forming a group with the CIA, the FBI, and all the agencies, and that it was to be directed from within the White House, with jurisdiction to operate where all the others did not fit. Barker said Eduardo needed two more individuals and he had thought of me. Would I like my name submitted for clearance? I said yes.

To me this was a great honor. I believed it was the result of my sacrifice for the previous ten years, for my work with the Company. In that time I had carried out hundreds of missions for the U.S. government. All of them had been covert, and most were very dangerous. Three or four days later, Barker told me my name had been cleared and several weeks after that came the first assignment. "Get clothes for two or three days and be ready tomorrow," he said. "We're leaving for the operation."

Barker didn't tell me where we were going and I did not ask. I was an operative. I couldn't afford to be aware of any more sensitive information than was critical for the success of my missions. There would be times when I would take men wearing hoods to Cuba. They might have been my friends. But I did not want to know. Too many of my friends have been caught and tortured and forced to talk. In this kind of work you learn to lose your curiosity.

So it was not until I got to the airport in Miami that I discovered we were going to Los Angeles. There were three of us on the mission. The third man, Felipe de Diego, was a real-estate partner of ours. He is an old Company man

and a Bay of Pigs veteran whom we knew we could trust.

In all my years in this country I had never been out of the Miami area before that day. I had always been on twenty-four-hour call. I kind of expected my CO to ask where I was going, but he simply said it was fine for me to take a few days off, that there wasn't much to do at the time. I sort of thought he did not want to know what I was doing.

We stayed at the Beverly Hills Hotel and met in Eduardo's room for our only briefing. As we walked in I noticed the equipment—devices to modify the voice, wigs and fake glasses, false identification. Eduardo told us all these things belonged to the Company. Barker recognized the name on Hunt's false identification—Edward J. Hamilton—as the same cover name Eduardo had used during the Bay of Pigs.

The briefing was not like anything I was used to in the Company. Ordinarily, before an operation, you have a briefing and then you train for the operation. You try to find a place that looks similar and you train in disguise and with the code you are going to use. You try out the plan many times so that later you have the elasticity to abort the operation if the conditions are not ideal.

Eduardo's briefing was not like this. There wasn't a written plan, not even any mention of what to do if something went wrong. There was just the man talking about the thing. We were to get into an office to take photographs of psychiatric records of a traitor. I was to be the photographer. The next day we went to Sears and bought some little hats and uniforms for Barker and Felipe. They were supposed to dress up as delivery men and deliver the photographic equipment inside the office. Later that night we would break in and complete the mission.

They looked kind of queerish when they put on the clothes, the Peter Lorre-type glasses, and the funny Dita Beard wigs. But that was not my responsibility, so I waited in the car while they went to the office of Dr. Fielding to deliver the package. Just before leaving Barker had whispered to me: "Hey, remember this name—Ellsberg." Eduardo had told him the name, and he told me because he was worried he would forget it. The name meant nothing to me.

**B**ARKER AND FELIPE were supposed to put the bag inside the office, unlatch the back door, and come out. After the cleaning lady left, we were to go back in. Now, it happened that we had to wait for hours and hours because no one had figured out when the cleaning woman would leave. Finally, I believe, a gentleman came in a car and picked her up.

So at last we went to open the door—and what happened? The door was locked. Barker went around to see if the other door was open, and after a long wait he still did not show up. We didn't know what to do. There had been another man in the briefing the night before in Eduardo's room who hadn't said anything. Later, I learned it was probably Gordon Liddy, but at the time I only knew him as George. Just at that moment, he came up to us and said, "Okay, you people go ahead and force one of the windows and go in."

Eduardo had given us a small crowbar and a glass cutter. I tried to cut the glass, but it wouldn't cut. It was bad,



bad. It would not cut anything! So then I taped the window and I hit it with this very small crowbar, and I put my hand in and unlocked the window.

According to the police, we were using gloves and didn't leave any fingerprints. But I'm afraid that I did because I didn't wear my gloves when I put the tape on the window—you know, sometimes it's hard to use gloves. I went all through the offices with my bare hands but I used my handkerchief to wipe off the prints.

Inside the doctor's office we covered the windows and took out the equipment. Really, it was a joke. They had given us a rope to bail out from the second floor if anyone surprised us; it was so small, it couldn't have supported any of us.

This was nothing new. It's what the Company did in the Bay of Pigs when they gave us old ships, old planes, old weapons. They explained that if you were caught in one of those operations with commercial weapons that you could buy anywhere, you could be said to be on your own. They teach you that they are going to disavow you. The Company teaches you to accept those things as the efficient way to work. And we were grateful. Otherwise we wouldn't have had any help at all. In this operation it seemed obvious—they didn't want it to be traced back to the White House. Eduardo told us that if we were caught, we should say we were addicts looking for drugs.

I had just set up the photographic equipment when we heard a noise. We were afraid. Then we heard Barker's familiar knock and we let him in. I took a Polaroid picture of the office before we started looking for the Ellsberg papers so we could put everything back just as it was before. But there was nothing of Ellsberg's there. There was nothing about psychiatry, no one file of sick people, only bills. It looked like an import-export office more than a psychiatrist's. The only thing with the name of Ellsberg in it was the doctor's telephone book. I took a photo of this so that we could bring something back. Before leaving

I took some pills from Dr. Fielding's briefcase—vitamin C, I think—and spread them all over the floor to make it look like we were looking for drugs.

Eduardo was waiting for us outside. He was supposed to be keeping watch on Dr. Fielding so he could let us know if the doctor was returning to his office, but Eduardo had lost Dr. Fielding and he was nervous. A police car appeared as we drove away and it trailed behind us for three or four blocks. I thought to myself that the police car was protecting us. That is the feeling you have when you are doing operations for the government. You think that every step has been taken to protect you.

Back at the hotel, Barker, Felipe, and I felt very bad. It was our first opportunity, and we had failed; we hadn't found anything.

"Yes, I know, but they don't know it," Eduardo said, and he congratulated us all. He said, "Well done," and then he opened a bottle of champagne. And he told us, "This is a celebration. You deserve it."

I told Diego and Barker that this had to have been a training mission for a very important mission to come or else it was a cover operation. I thought to myself that maybe these people already had the papers of Ellsberg. Maybe Dr. Fielding had given them out and for ethical reasons he needed to be covered. It seemed that these people already had what we were looking for because no one invites you to have champagne and is happy when you fail.

The whole thing was strange, but Eduardo was happy so we were happy. He thanked us and we left for the airport. We took the plane back to Miami and we never talked about this thing until we were all together in the District of Columbia jail.

In Miami I again told my CO about Eduardo. I was certain then that the Company knew about his activities. But once again my CO did not pursue the subject.

**M**EANWHILE, HUNT STARTED to do more and more things that convinced us of his important position in the White House. Once he called Barker and told him the President was about to mine Haiphong Harbor. He asked us to prepare letters and a rally of support in advance. It was very impressive to us when the announcement of the mining was made several days later.

I made a point of telling my CO at our next meeting that Hunt was involved in some operations and that he was in the White House, even if they said he wasn't. After that the CIA chief of the Western Hemisphere asked me for breakfast at Howard Johnson's on Biscayne Boulevard, and he said he was interested in finding out about Howard Hunt's activities. He wanted me to write a report. He said I should write it in my own hand, in Spanish, and give it to my CO in a sealed envelope. Right away I went to see my CO. We are very close, my CO and I, and he told me that his father had once given him the advice that he should never put anything in writing that might do him any harm in the future. So I just wrote a cover story for the whole thing. I said that Hunt was in the Mullen Company and the White House and things like that that weren't important. What I really thought was that Hunt was checking to see if I could be trusted.

John Paul Jones monument and the Naval Academy in Annapolis. Remember that, prior to this, all of my operations for the United States were maritime.

**A**FTER THREE DAYS Eduardo aborted the McGovern operation. I think it was because the boy got scared. Anyway, Eduardo told us all to move into the Watergate Hotel to prepare for another operation. We brought briefcases and things like that to look elegant. We registered as members of the Ameritus Corporation of Miami, and then we met in Eduardo's room.

Believe me, it was an improvised briefing. Eduardo told us he had information that Castro money was coming into the Democratic headquarters, not McGovern's, and that we were going to try to find the evidence there. Throughout the briefing, McCord, Liddy, and Eduardo would keep interrupting each other, saying, "Well, this way is better," or, "That should be the other way around."

It was not a very definite plan that was finally agreed upon, but you are not too critical of things when you think that people over you know what they are doing, when they are really professionals like Howard Hunt. The plan called for us to hold a banquet for the Ameritus Corporation in a private dining room of the Watergate. The room had access to the elevators that ran up to the sixth floor where the Democratic National Committee Headquarters are located. Once the meal was underway, Eduardo was to show films and we were to take the elevator to the sixth floor and complete the mission. Gonzales, our key man, was to open the door; Sturgis, Pico, and Felipe were to be lookouts; Barker was to get the documents; I was to take the photographs and Jimmy (McCord) was to do his job.

We were all ready to go, but the people in the DNC worked late. Eduardo was drinking lots of milk. He has ulcers, so he was mixing his whiskey with the milk. We waited and waited. Finally, at 2:00 A.M., the night guards said we had to leave the banquet hall. So then there was a discussion. Eduardo said he would hide in the closet of the banquet room with Gonzales, the key man, while the guard let the rest of us out. As soon as the coast was clear, they would let us back in. But then they couldn't open the door.

It is difficult for me to tell you this story. I do not want it to become a laughing matter. More than thirty people are in jail already, and a lot of people are suffering. I spent more than fifteen months in jail, and you must understand that this is a tragedy. It is not funny. But you can imagine Eduardo, the head of the mission, in the closet. He did not sleep the whole night. It was really a disaster.

So, more briefings, and we decided to go the next night. This time the plan was to wait until all the lights had gone out on the sixth floor of the Watergate and then go in through the front door.

They gave us briefcases, and I remember that there was a Customs tag hanging on Eduardo's case, so I pulled it off for him. He got real mad. He said that every time he did something he did it with a purpose. I could not see the purpose, but then I don't know. Maybe the tag had an open sesame command to let us in the doors.

Anyway, all seven of us in McCord's army walked up to



Little by little I watched Eduardo's operation grow. First Barker was given \$89,000 in checks from Mexican banks to cash for operational money. And then Eduardo told Barker to recruit three more men, including a key man. He signed up Frank Sturgis and Reinaldo Pico, and then Eduardo flew down to talk to our friend Virgilio Gonzales, who is a locksmith, before recruiting him. Finally orders come for us to report to Washington. The six of us arrived in Washington on May 22 and checked into the Manger Hay-Adams Hotel in time for Eduardo's first briefing.

By that time Liddy, whom we had known as George from the Fielding break-in, was taking a visible role in the planning. Eduardo had started calling him "Daddy," and the two men seemed almost inseparable. We met McCord there for the first time. Eduardo said he was an old man from the CIA who used to do electronic jobs for the CIA and the FBI. We did not know his whole name. Eduardo just introduced him as Jimmy. He said we would be using walkie-talkies, and Jimmy was to be our electronics expert. There was also a boy there who had infiltrated the McGovern headquarters.

There was no mention of Watergate at that meeting. Eduardo told us he had information that Castro and other foreign governments were giving money to McGovern, and we were going to find the evidence. The boy was going to help them break into the McGovern headquarters, but I did not pay much attention. They didn't need me for that operation so I had some free time.

During the day I went off to see the different sights around Washington. I like those things—particularly the

"The United States is essentially a commonwealth of third-rate men—that distinction is easy here because the general level of culture, of information, of taste and judgment, of ordinary competence is so low. . . . Third-rate men, of course, exist in all countries, but it is only here that they are in full control of the state, and with it all of the national standards." —H. L. Mencken

"On Being an American," 1922

the Watergate complex at midnight. McCord rang the bell, and a policeman came and let us in. We all signed the book, and McCord told the man we were going to the Federal Reserve office on the eighth floor. It all seemed funny to me. Eight men going to work at midnight. Imagine, we sat there talking to the police. Then we went up to the eighth floor, walked down to the sixth—and do you believe it, we couldn't open that door, and we had to cancel the operation.

I don't believe it has ever been told before, but all the time while we were working on the door, McCord would be going to the eighth floor. It is still a mystery to me what he was doing there. At 2:00 A.M. I went up to tell him about our problems, and there I saw him talking to two guards. What happened? I thought. Have we been caught? No, he knew the guards. So I did not ask questions, but I thought maybe McCord was working there. It was the only thing that made sense. He was the one who led us to the place and it would not have made sense for us to have rooms at the Watergate and go on this operation if there was not someone there on the inside. Anyway, I joined the group, and pretty soon we picked up our briefcases and walked out the front door.

**"An historical assessment would be that [Watergate] was probably, to use the word 'scandal,' the broadest but the thinnest scandal in American history. . . . When they say this is like Teapot Dome, that is comparing apples with oranges, and, shall we say, rather poor oranges, too."**

—Richard M. Nixon  
May 13, 1974

**"It is hard to imagine how a nation could give itself two greater handicaps than the Vietnam war and the Watergate scandals."**

—Barry Goldwater  
September 11, 1973

**"If Watergate has done anything it has just brought the family together again."**

—David Eisenhower  
July 10, 1973

Eduardo was furious that Gonzales hadn't been able to open the door. Gonzales explained he didn't have the proper equipment, so Eduardo told him to fly back to Miami to get his other tools. Before he left the next day, Barker told Gonzales that he might have to pay for his own flight back to Miami. I really got mad and told Barker I resented the way they were treating Gonzales. I was a little hard with Barker. I said there wasn't adequate operational preparation. There was no floor plan of the building; no one knew the disposition of the elevators, how many guards there were, or even what time the guards checked the building. Gonzales did not know what kind of door he was supposed to open. There weren't even any contingency plans.

Barker came back to me with a message from Eduardo: "You are an operative. Your mission is to do what you are told and not to ask questions."

Gonzales got back from Miami that night with his whole shop. I've never seen so many tools to open a door. No door could hold him. This time everything worked. Gonzales and Sturgis picked the lock in the garage exit door; once inside, they opened the other doors and called over the walkie-talkie: "The horse is in the house." Then they let us in. I took a lot of photographs—maybe thirty or forty—showing lists of contributors that Barker had handed me. McCord worked on the phones. He said his first two taps might be discovered, but not the third.

With our mission accomplished, we went back to the hotel. It was about 5:00 A.M. Eduardo said he was happy. But this time there was no champagne. He said we should leave for Miami right away. I gave him the film I had taken and we left for the airport.

**T**HERE WERE THINGS THAT BOTHERED ME about the operation, but I was satisfied. It is rare that you are able to check the effect of your work in the intelligence community. You know, they don't tell you if something you did is very significant. But we had taken a lot of pictures of contributions, and I had hopes that we might have done something valuable. We all had heard rumors in Miami that McGovern was receiving money from Castro. That was nothing new. We believe that today.

A couple of weeks later I was talking with Felipe de Diego and Frank Sturgis at our real-estate office when Barker burst in like a cyclone. Eduardo had been in town, and he had given Barker some film to have developed and enlarged. Barker did not know what the film was, and he had taken it to a regular camera shop. And then Eduardo had told him it was the film from the Watergate operation. Barker was really excited. He needed us to come with him to get it back. So we went to Rich's Camera Shop, and Barker told Frank and me to cover each door to the shop in case the police came while he was inside. I do not think he handled the situation very well. There were all these people and he was so excited. He ended up tipping the man at the store \$20 or \$30. The man had just enlarged the pictures showing the documents being held by a gloved hand and he said to Barker: "It's real cloak-and-dagger stuff, isn't it?" Later that man went to the FBI and told them about the film.

My reaction was that it was crazy to have those important pictures developed in a common place in Miami. But Barker was my close friend, and I could not tell him how wrong the whole thing was. The thing about Barker was that he trusted Eduardo totally. He had been his principal assistant at the Bay of Pigs, Eduardo's liaison with the Cubans, and he still believed tremendously in the man. He was just blind about him.

It was too much for me. I talked it over with Felipe and Frank, and decided I could not continue. I was about to write a letter when Barker told me Eduardo wanted us to get ready for another operation in Washington.

When you are in this kind of business, and you are in the middle of something, it is not easy to stop. Everyone will feel that you might jeopardize the operation. "What to do with this guy now?" I knew it would create a big problem so I agreed to go on this last mission.

Eduardo told us to buy surgical gloves and forty rolls of film with thirty-six exposures on a roll. Imagine, that meant 1,440 photographs. I told Barker it would be impossible to take all those pictures. But it did seem to mean that what we got before encouraged Eduardo to go back for more.

We flew into National Airport about noon on June 16, and Barker and I went off to rent a car. In the airport lobby, Frank Sturgis ran into Jack Anderson, whom he had known since the Bay of Pigs, when Anderson wrote a column about him as a soldier-adventurer. Frank intro-

duced Gonzales to Anderson, and he gave him some kind of excuse about why he was in town.

On our way to the Watergate, we made some jokes about the car Barker had rented. It gave me a premonition of a hearse. The mission was not one I was looking forward to.

Eduardo was waiting for us at the Watergate. This time he had two operations planned, and we were supposed to perform them both that night. There was no time for anything, it was all rush.

We went to eat at about five o'clock. Barker ate a lot and when he came back he felt really bad. I was not feeling too good myself. I had just gotten my divorce that day and had gone from the court to the airport and from the airport to the Watergate. The environment in each one of us was different, but the whole thing was bad; there was tension in those people.

Liddy was already in the room when Eduardo came in to give the briefing. Eduardo was wearing loafers and black pants with white stripes. They were very shiny. Liddy was not happy with those pants. He criticized them in front of us and he told Eduardo to go change them.

So Eduardo went and changed his pants. The briefing he gave when he came back was very simple. He said we were going to photograph more documents at the Democratic headquarters and then move on to another mission at the McGovern headquarters after that. McCord was critical of the second operation. He said he didn't like the plan. It was very rare to hear McCord talking because usually he didn't say anything and when he did talk he only whispered.

Before we left, Eduardo took all of our identification. He put it in a briefcase and left it in our room. He gave Sturgis his Edward J. Hamilton identification that the CIA had provided to him before, and he gave us each \$200 in cash. He said we should use it as a bribe to get away if we were caught. Finally, he told us to keep the keys to our room, where he had left the identification. I don't know why. Even today, I don't know. Remember, I was told in advance not to ask about those things.

**M**CCORD WENT INTO THE WATERGATE very early in the evening. He walked right through the front door of the office complex, signed the book, and, I'm sure, went to the eighth floor as he had before. Then he taped the doors from the eighth floor to the bottom floor and walked out through the exit door in the garage. It was still very early, and we were not going to go in until after everyone left the offices. We waited so long that Eduardo went out to check if the tapes were still there. He said they were but when we finally got ready to go in, Virgilio and Sturgis noticed that the tape was gone, and a sack of mail was at the door.

So we said, well, the tape has been discovered. We'll have to abort the operation. But McCord thought we should go anyway. He went upstairs and tried to convince Liddy and Eduardo that we should go ahead. Before making a decision, they went to the other room; I believe they made a phone call, and Eduardo told us to go ahead.

McCord did not come in with us. He said he had to go someplace. We never knew where he was going. Anyway,

he was not with us, so when Virgilio picked the locks to let us in, we put tape on the doors for him and went upstairs. Five minutes later McCord came in, and I asked him right away: "Did you remove the tapes?" He said, "Yes, I did."

But he did not, because the tape was later found by the police. Once inside, McCord told Barker to turn off his walkie-talkie. He said there was too much static. So we were there without communications. Soon we started hearing noises. People going up and down. McCord said it was only the people checking, like before, but then there was running and men shouting, "Come out with your hands up or we will shoot!" and things like that.

There was no way out. We were caught. The police were very rough with us, pushing us around, tying our arms, but Barker was able to turn on his walkie-talkie, and he asked where the police were from. And then he said, "Oh, you are the metropolitan policemen who catch us." So Barker was cool. He did a good job in advising Eduardo we were caught.

I thought right away it was a set-up or something like that because it was so easy the first time. We all had that feeling. They took our keys and found the identification in the briefcase Eduardo had left in our room.

McCord was the senior officer, and he took charge. He was talking loudly now. He told us not to say a thing. "Don't give your names. Nothing. I know people. Don't worry, someone will come and everything will be all right. This thing will be solved."



Bernard Barker

**T**HE FIRST NIGHT we were very impressed with the D.C. jail. It was always around 100 degrees, and you dripped sweat. At nine or ten o'clock they put the lights out, and for a whole hour persons just screamed at each other and the guards and everything else. It's like something out of Dante—screams, cursing, and so forth. I asked one of the old-timers, and he said it

is like this every night—just letting off steam like the hour of frustration.

Those were the real hard days. Earl Silbert, the prosecutor, treated us very, very rough. His language was rough. By that time, they had traced the money back to the bank in Miami, and they thought we had money all over the place. When we went into the mission, I had put all our identifications and wallets in a bag in the hotel room, and I told Howard that if something happened he would have everything, including my address book with the White House phone number. But when Hunt left the room, he was in such a big hurry that he left everything there. This was a very bad mistake, of course, because they immediately established the connection with Hunt and the White House, and they traced all those phone calls between Hunt and me. They had the connection on a silver platter. But I guess Hunt had enough things to worry about then.

McCord had the highest rank of our group in jail then, and so we looked to him for leadership. But we didn't trust him totally, because McCord was very friendly with Alfred Baldwin, and to us Baldwin was the first informer. To me, Baldwin represented the very lowest form of a human being. McCord was also different from the Cuban group because he did not know about the Ellsberg mission.

After a time in the jail, McCord said, "Bernie, I have come to the conclusion that the best thing for us to do is to get our own attorneys. I am going to get F. Lee Bailey. He is a big attorney." He said I better start thinking of getting one for the Cubans.

That is when I met Henry Rothblatt. I told him that we did not have money to defend ourselves and he said, "Don't worry. I am just the right man for this case. I want it, and I'm not interested in your paying me one red cent." Rothblatt inspires a great deal of confidence. He isn't afraid of any judge. He showed me a book he had written. He had been associated with Bailey. He had defended the Green Berets in their big case. He said, "This is so similar to the Green Berets case that without your telling me what it is all about I can make a pretty good guess." I was glad that we had Rothblatt. We established the attorney-client relationship, and under it I told him about the Watergate and the Ellsberg break-in. So he knew we couldn't use the truth as our defense in the Watergate case, because we could not reveal our recruitment for the Ellsberg mission.

It took us a long time—months—to get out of jail. We had to get fifteen or twenty friends in Miami to put up the equity on their houses for our bail. When we got out, I was with Rothblatt and there were cameras and people all over the place. By this time I was almost out of my mind. He said there would be people harassing me wherever I went. So I started thinking, and I said, "Henry, there is one place where nobody will bother us."

He said, "Where is that, Bernie?"

And I said, "The Watergate."

And he said, "You know, I think you got something." So we took a cab to the Watergate, and there was nobody there. We got a room, and I called my wife Clara in Miami. I told her I was at the Watergate, and she screamed, "You are playing with fire!" You know how women are about these things. I was acting in a logical way.

The next day I got a call: "Do you recognize my voice?" And I said yes. It was Dorothy Hunt. She told me to go to Miami and stay in the airport and meet the next flight of the same line. I made sure that Dorothy was not being followed, and then we went to my home. She said, "From now on, I will be your contact," and it was quite evident that the Dorothy that I had known had a split personality, because for the first time she used the operational terms that Howard and I had always used. She said not to trust Rothblatt too much, that she didn't like him. She said to start figuring out how much assistance we would need. Up to this time, we had not had any at all. She said remember the spirit of the old organization—that if you are caught by the enemy, two things will be done: (1) every effort will be made to rescue you, and (2) all expenses and your family will be taken care of. Even today, the families of those who were lost at the Bay of Pigs are being aided, and it is something you expect on a mission.

Dorothy was a very wonderful woman. She was very strong, and she would occasionally tell Howard if he was being excessive or something. She spoke seven languages, including Afghan. She was a direct descendant of Crazy Horse, and when she died her tribe offered a special place for her burial. When she died in December, right before our first trial, I came up to see Howard and he was a broken man. He looked eighty years old. He said, "Well, you do what you want, but I am going to plead guilty."

I said, "Why, Howard?"

And he said, "We have no defense. The evidence against us is overwhelming."

I said, "What about Liddy and McCord?"

And he answered, "Liddy and McCord are in a different sector. We are in one sector and they are in another. They have their own plan."

**N**OW, THIS INDICATED TO ME that we had our plan. This is why I told the Senate Watergate Committee that Hunt did not order me to plead guilty. He didn't. But if the man who is your leader, the man you admire and would follow, says he is going to plead guilty and that we have a plan, then that means something. He told me to go see Henry if I was worried about the case.

So I went to New York, and Rothblatt picked me up at the airport. And in the car, I said, "Henry, we can't say anything about the Ellsberg matter, we can't use national security, we can't talk about our recruitment—what is our defense?"

He looked at me and said, "Well, I am going to aggravate that Judge Sirica to the point where I am going to drive him out of his cotton-picking mind, and he is going to make so many mistakes with his arrogance that this will be a perfect case on appeal."

I said, "Henry, you are talking about appeal. Does that mean we are going to lose the case?"

"Naturally," he said. "We are going to win on appeal."

"Henry, what you are trying to say is that we have no defense."

He said, "Well, that's one way of looking at it. But I'll beat this thing. Watch."

I said, "Henry, I am going to plead guilty."

"Oh, no, you are not."

"Howard is going to plead guilty."

"I don't give a damn what Howard is going to do," he said. "If we plead you guys guilty, we would be giving up the ball game. And if you do plead guilty, I will not be your attorney. I will not be part of it."

So I told him, "Well, Henry, I have followed your advice and I like you very much personally, but you have not been able to gain the sympathy of Hunt and all these other people."

"Bernie," he said, "they are a bunch of bastards. They'll double-cross you. They'll sell you down the river."

I resented that very much at the time. Perhaps he was right. I don't know. I told him that I am a nice guy to get along with, but that I don't let anybody make up my mind, that I would let him know later. So I went back and consulted with Rolando. Then I talked with the others. I said every man has to make his own decision, and we all agreed that if Hunt pleaded guilty, we all would. So Rothblatt left us right at the beginning of the trial.

After the trial, we were waiting for the sentence in jail, and we were all under tremendous strain. And McCord told me one day: "Bernie, I am not going to jail for these people. If they think they are going to make a patsy out of me, they better think again."

So I said, "Jimmy, you are probably a lot more intelligent than I am and you know a lot of things, but let's face it. In my way of thinking, you don't do this because of these people. You are going to have to live with McCord, and I am going to have to live with Barker. I don't do this because they are deserving or undeserving, but because I have my own code."

Howard was very proud that we had stood up. We had played by the code and not broken. We took everything they had, and it was plenty. The judge sentenced me to forty-five years and the others to long terms, and he told us that our final sentence would be affected by what we told the grand jury and the Watergate Committee, by our cooperation. We were very worried, but we did not let out the Ellsberg thing. We were exposed by the very people who ordered us to do it—without their even being in jail. Krogh popped, they all popped, and our new lawyer Schultz came in and said that the Ellsberg matter is out now in the papers. He said we had better tell everything to the grand jury while they were giving us immunity.

The day before we went into the grand jury, we talked it over with Hunt. He said, "National security. We don't talk. None of us talks." We all agreed that it was a matter involving a traitor, and so we wouldn't say anything. The next day, the grand jury asked each of us if there had been other break-ins, and we said no.

## AMERICAN SPIRIT

We are responsible, not our leaders, since we follow them. We let them divert our loyalty from the United States to some "party"; we let them boss the party and turn our municipal democracies into autocracies and our republican nation into a plutocracy. We cheat our government and we let our leaders loot it, and we let them bribe and wheedle our sovereignty from us. . . . We break our own laws and rob our own government, the lady at the custom house, the lyncher with his rope, and the captain of industry with his bribe and his rebate. The spirit of graft and of lawlessness is the American spirit. —Lincoln Steffens  
*The Shame of the Cities, 1904*

I was very much surprised when Hunt came back and said he had told them everything. We didn't know what to say. We just looked at each other. And Liddy turned around and walked away. He asked the guard to transfer him somewhere else, and he said, "From now on, it's every man for himself."

By this time, Hunt was totally changed. I don't want to talk for him or against him. Every man has many judges. Sirica was a judge, Gesell has been my judge, and then I am going to have to judge myself, and we will be judged by time. Hunt will have to live with his own problem. I feel sorry for him.

**I**T IS VERY HARD TO KNOW the truth in these matters because the truth has many aspects. If I am asked my name on a mission, I give my operating name. That is not a lie; it is a cover. I am not Barker then. I am another person. It is a different dimension. I, Barker, would never go into a building in the dark of night, but the operator—this guy with a false name holding his beliefs or fighting a windmill or something—could very well do this.

The truth is confusing, and that is why I have so much trouble answering whether I would go through with these missions again. If Howard Hunt came today and asked me five times, I would say no to anything he said five times because I have lost faith in him. But we are not talking about men as individuals; we are talking about ideas. After I heard Krogh say that the Ellsberg thing was not national security but an attempt to smear him, that disgusted me. I believe in the law; it keeps me safe. I would not do it again if I knew what I know now.

But if you ask me to do something for my country, I could no more say no today than I could then because I would be betraying everything I have fought for, the only thing I have. I'm not rich, I'm not good-looking, I'm not young. The only thing I have of value is that I have devoted myself during a whole lifetime to what I consider a duty.

How do you know when your country asks you to do something? You are supposed to know. In the Senate Watergate Committee, I told them that I don't pretend to have all the answers. I believe that I have been caught up in a current of time. When I think of these things, I believe that I was never someone who went out looking for trouble. One thing always seems to lead to another. My first revolution came to me in Cuba in 1932 when I was a twelve-year-old with an American father. The second world war led me to the U.S. Army Air Corps and a German prison camp (my B-17 was shot down), which led to police work back home in Cuba, which led to contacts with the FBI. The FBI led to the CIA and Hunt and the Bay of Pigs. The Ellsberg mission led to Watergate, and the Watergate led to jail. It was a continuation of things over which I had no control. Sometimes I have the feeling that I'm in the middle of a great big river like the Mississippi and I am just carried by the current and there is no way of getting out.

I have reached the saturation point. Let's face it. How much bigger trouble can you get into than Watergate? If I get into something bigger than that, my God, I will be shot off to the moon or something. It's impossible. □