

Dick Nolan**The cover-up story**

Some books and authors deserve a better break in the marketplace than foul circumstances accord them. One such book is "The Great Cover-up," whose author, Barry Sussman, is ploughing along in the considerable wake left by Bernstein-Woodward, the star reporters of the Watergate expose.

It is not fair to say that Sussman's book is better than the Bernstein-Woodward account. But it is far more complete. It is a more useful book. It will be the key source for future historians. For the present crop of readers it provides the first thorough and detailed narrative of Watergate and its related scandals from the initial police call to the resignation of Richard Nixon.

I have found myself sweating out the Sussman book in some empathy with the author, who happens to be a newspaperman's newspaperman. As city editor of the Washington Post, it was Sussman who directed his team in that paper's brave and brilliant pursuit of the big story.

As that story unfolded you must often have thought, as I did, how useful it would be if somebody would only pull it all together and give us a comprehensive summary. We got the details in headlines and big type as sensation followed sensation. It was a tough story to follow. There were times when we lost track even of who was indicted, who was in jail, who was on trial, who was disclosing what about whom. Until Sussman came along and did a workmanlike job we were still lacking the complete and readable summary and ready reference.

Bernstein and Woodward, in "All the President's Men," have given us an exciting account of how they covered the story for the Post. Sussman fills in further details, but more importantly he puts the story itself between covers. We now have Watergate whole, thoroughly indexed, the permanent record.

Sussman's book so far hasn't reached the audience it merits, though. That's one reason why I am calling it to your attention with highest recommendations. Book reviewers, having dealt with the Bernstein-Woodward account, appear to have signed off on Watergate and turned their attention

elsewhere. So has much of the press in general.

It strikes me that this is an error, because only the first phase of the Nixon scandals is over, Watergate proper or Watergate I.

From the beginning there have been the heaviest pressures to bury the scandals, to "get them behind us," as the politicians put it. In another time-worn phrase, though, the Nixon resignation rather marked not the end, nor even the beginning of the end, but the end of the beginning.

We don't have it all yet. There are loose ends left dangling, leading God knows where.

We know, for example, of the close relationship between the Teamsters and the Nixon administration. We know of the close relationship between the enormous funds of the Teamsters and the hungry coffers of organized crime. We don't know the relationship, if any, between Nixon and crime, but the threads are there.

We know of the links between the Nixon administration and Robert Vesco, and of Vesco's incredible operations up to and including his late incursions into gun-running. But we do not know yet what all this is about. Where does Nixon's brother Donald figure in this? What were the Nixons into?

There is the elusive Bebe Rebozo, and Rebozo's bank, and laundered money, and the Mexican connection. We haven't begun to unscramble the Rebozo-Nixon relationship and write it clear. And where does Howard Hughes fit into the picture?

There's the CIA operation, a ragbag of loose ends plucked forth in the initial Watergate inquiries. There are the Cubans of Miami: Who are they, and what are they about?

Closer to home in California we have not satisfactorily concluded even the matter of the assassination of Robert Kennedy, although official records in Los Angeles are filled with unexplained ambiguities, including mismatched bullets, an unexplained close range wound, and the possibility of two weapons having been used although only one assassin sits in jail.