

WATERGATE

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Haldeman, Ehrlichman:

By Clark Hoyt
Knight News Service

WASHINGTON — They were Richard Nixon's "Berlin Wall," Haldeman and Ehrlichman. Ehrlichman and Haldeman, so much alike and so inseparable that even Judge John Sirica gets their names mixed up.

They met at UCLA more than two decades ago, wed college sweethearts with similar names — Jeannie and Joanne—and eventually attached themselves to Nixon, rising to become his top White House lieutenants.

The Watergate tide swept "Hans and Fritz," as they were called behind their backs, out of power on the same day—April 30, 1973.

Now trim, razor-cut Bob Haldeman and portly, balding John Ehrlichman sit less than six feet apart defendants in Sirica's stark federal courtroom.

But the old friendship, as a mutual acquaintance puts it with studied understatement, has "cooled."

They always face in opposite directions, never pass the time of day in public and always go their separate ways at breaks in their historic trial for the Watergate cover-up. Once or twice, Ehrlichman has appeared to cast a wary, almost uncertain, glance in Haldeman's direction.

The problem is that John Ehrlichman, to use an expression from the Nixon White House, has gone "off the reservation."

He has turned with a vengeance on the President he and Haldeman served so loyally for more than five years.

Through his lawyer, William S. Frates, Ehrlichman charged last week that he was "deceived, misled, lied to and used" by Nixon in the cover-up of the watergate burglary and bugging.

More obliquely, Frates served notice that, in his defense of Ehrlichman, he is likely to go after Haldeman, portraying the former White House chief of staff and Nixon as conspirators who kept Ehrlichman in the dark.

The White House tapes, said Frates in his booming voice, "might have done some people some harm, but they are the greatest thing that has happened to John Ehrlichman."

Of the five defendants on trial in the cover-up case—Haldeman, Ehrlichman, former Attorney General John Mitchell, former Assistant Attorney General Robert Mardian and former Nixon campaign lawyer Kenneth Parkinson — Haldeman is clearly the one most damaged by those tapes.

The Ehrlichman strategy seems to be part of what friends say is a genuine feeling of hurt at discovering he had not been as much an insider as Haldeman.

The Haldeman-Ehrlichman rift is but one example of what has clearly become an every-man-for-himself scramble in Sirica's courtroom.

The first week of taking evidence has revealed the outline of what Mitchell's lawyer, William Hundley, complained were the "legally antagonistic" defenses of the five defendants.

Mardian, accused of participating in meetings at which false cover stories were concocted and orders to destroy evidence were given, is casting himself as a victim of Mitchell.

Mardian's lawyer, David Bress, even went so far as to say his 51-year-old client looked up to the 61-year-old Mitchell as a father figure. The remark caused the normally dour Mitchell to break into a broad grin.

Mardian, "pure as the driven snow," believed Mitchell's denials of wrongdoing, Bress said in an open statement.

ment.

"At this point," Bress added, "I am not in a position to state the extent of Mr. Mitchell's knowledge, but I am in a position to state Mr. Mardian's complete lack of knowledge."

Similarly, Parkinson's lawyer, Jacob Stein, depicted his client as so in awe of Mitchell that he never thought of questioning the denials or orders of the former attorney general.

Stein said that just meeting Mitchell was a thrill for the 46-year-old Parkinson, a prosperous, successful Washington attorney accused of being involved in hush money transactions.

Mitchell, for his part, delivered a strong hint that he will be going after Haldeman.

Hundley, noting that the government has said it will try to prove that Mitchell approved the Watergate burglary, said he will try to prove that someone did. That unnamed someone else is expected to be Haldeman.

Thus only Haldeman was left with no clearly defined defense by the end of the week. His lawyer, the combative John J. Wilson, has so far relied on delaying tactics, raising objections at nearly every move by the prosecution.

Whether Haldeman will finally join in the attack on Nixon is an open question. Some sources suggest Haldeman and his lawyers may not yet know the answer themselves.

But an incident late last Thursday may have given a small clue:

Haldeman and everyone else in the courtroom were listening on earphones to a tape of a phone conversation between White House special counsel Charles Colson and convicted Watergate burglar E. Howard Hunt.

"We got the President in for four years, and thank God for the country we do," Colson said.

The spectators erupted with laughter and hisses.

Haldeman, who has lately been cultivating an image of mildness and geniality, suddenly dropped it and glowered at the crowd with a look of cold, controlled fury.

Nixon's 'Berlin Wall' cracking

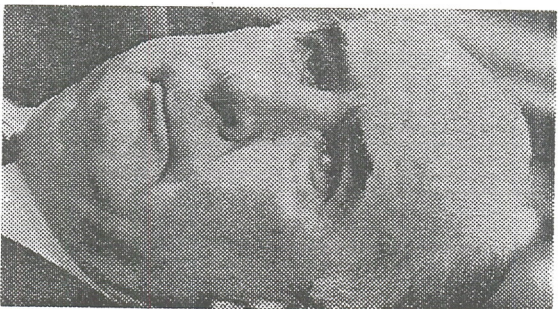
**Of the
five on
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damaged**



KENNETH PARKINSON



ROBERT MARDIAN



JOHN MITCHELL



JOHN EHRLICHMAN



H. R. HALDEMAN