

Another Nixon Plot?



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IN THE early 1970s, U.S. attorneys appointed by President Nixon began investigating Democratic governors across the country.

The governors are now convinced that Nixon used the federal law enforcement machinery to knock the Democrats out of power in as many states as possible.

Suddenly, Democratic chief executives in several states found themselves under searching federal scrutiny. Among them were Kentucky's Wendell Ford, Louisiana's Edwin Edwards, Maryland's Marvin Mandel, Oklahoma's David Hall and Pennsylvania's Milton Shapp.

Hall was convicted, although the FBI transcripts used in his trial had been altered. A former Democratic governor, Illinois' Otto Kerner, was also convicted. And only last week, Mandel was indicted.

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IN CONTRAST, only one Republican governor, West Virginia's Arch Moore, got into trouble with the Justice Department. Tax agents had found that, as a congressman, he had lived like a millionaire during the 1962-67 period. He bought a home in the fashionable Potomac hunt country of Maryland where he kept horses and threw lavish parties. Yet he reported only \$45,000 in taxable income during the entire five years.

The Internal Revenue Service recommended that Moore be prosecuted for his alleged failure to pay \$168,000 in taxes. But the Justice

Department, which was so eager to prosecute Democrats, let Moore off the hook. A Justice Department spokesman insists the case against him hasn't been closed.

Several Democratic governors got together, meanwhile, at their 1973 governors' conference to discuss the Nixon plot against them. Shapp complained that Richard Thornberg, then the U.S. attorney in Philadelphia, not only had started an investigation of him but had leaked grand jury findings to Republicans in the Pennsylvania legislature.

Thornberg subsequently was appointed assistant attorney general in charge of the criminal division, with authority over all the investigations.

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EARLIER this month, Mandel fired off a confidential, 19-page letter to Thornberg, charging that he had been the victim of a political witch hunt.

He charged, for example, that the late FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover had delivered a file full of reports about his sex life to then Attorney General John Mitchell.

Mandel also charged that "in 1970 and 1971 I was the subject of an investigation by the intelligence division of the Internal Revenue Service.

Footnote: Thornberg told our associate Jack Cloherty that he had been cleared by a Justice Department investigation of leaking grand jury information against Shapp. Thornberg also insisted he had received no pressure from Washington to start the Shapp investigation.