

The White House And George Wallace



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TO ELIMINATE George Wallace as a threat to President Nixon's reelection, the White House smuggled \$400,000 in cash to his political rivals in Alabama.

Long before the 1972 election, the President knew from his secret polling that Wallace at the head of a third-party ticket would drain votes from him. The polls showed as many as four out of five Wallace voters otherwise favored Mr. Nixon. The White House, therefore, wanted to stop Wallace from running for President as an independent.

Both the secret polling and the stop-Wallace strategy were directed by the President's former chief of staff, H. R. Haldeman. So secretive were the moves against Wallace that Haldeman didn't even confide in his brother-in-law, who served as a go-between.

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THE WHITE HOUSE strategy in 1970 was to block Wallace from winning back the governorship of Alabama. This would have deprived him of a power base and would have reduced his ability to campaign for the presidency in 1972.

Haldeman, therefore, arranged to sneak \$400,000 to Wallace's rivals during the 1970 Alabama primary. The money was siphoned from surplus campaign funds in the custody of the President's personal lawyer, Herbert Kalmbach.

Mysterious arrangements were made for Kalmbach to fly across country and hand over the first \$100,000 to a stranger at New York City's Sherry-Netherland Hotel. Not long afterward, Haldeman's

brother-in-law, France Raine, delivered another \$200,000 presumably to the same mystery man at the Sherry-Netherland. A similar tryst was arranged at a Los Angeles Bank of California where Kalmbach turned over the final \$100,000.

Neither Kalmbach nor Raine would comment on the strange transactions. Sources close to the investigation told us, however, that both men followed blind instructions. They were never told that the money would be used against Wallace.

We have been unable to identify the bagman. From White House sources, we have established only that Haldeman's man Friday, Larry Higby, was in touch with former Postmaster General Winton "Red" Blount about channeling anti-Wallace money into Alabama's 1970 Democratic primary.

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IN THE subsequent primary, Wallace had a close call. He nosed out ex-Governor Albert Brewer by a narrow 51.5 per cent of the vote.

Thereafter, the White House changed its strategy and sought to persuade Wallace to enter the 1972 presidential sweepstakes as a Democrat rather than an independent.

In May 1971, President Nixon visited Alabama and invited Wallace to ride with him on a flight from Mobile to Birmingham. No one will tell us what the two men said to each other during the plane ride. But not long afterward, Wallace announced he would run for President as a Democrat, not as an independent.

Same column, with more details, WXPpost 28 Jun 73, filed Watergate.