

United States: new faces

The change of administration in Washington will have consequences for Latin America, including a better chance of resolving the Cuba issue. The choice of Vice-President and the fate of General Vernon Walters are also significant for inter-American relations.

The departure of President Nixon from the White House has been received with considerable satisfaction throughout Latin America, and with positive joy by the Cubans who regarded the former President as 'a personal enemy of the Cuban revolution'. Raúl Castro said that Nixon's resignation 'permitted serious hopes of a re-establishment of relations between Cuba and the United States'. The possibility of a solution to the Cuban question is perhaps the major implication for Latin America. Kissinger has long recognised the failure of the United States policy of embargo and blockade, but has been prevented from making any move on this question by Nixon (*see* Vol. VIII, No. 10). Kissinger should now be able to operate with reasonable freedom in Latin America, without having to worry about Charles 'Bebe' Rebozo. Among Kissinger's first acts as President Ford's secretary of state was to send a warmly personal letter (*'Estimado Tony'*) to Panama's foreign minister Juan Antonio Tack, assuring him that the change of President would not affect the United States' determination to negotiate a 'new and modern treaty' for the Panama Canal.

In fact, the question of Panama may prove tougher than the question of Cuba. Congress will not make it easy for Kissinger to make meaningful concessions to Panama, where there are still United States interests to be preserved; with respect to Cuba it is merely a question of recognising that the game is lost, something Nixon never found easy. Under President Gerald Ford, it is likely to be harder for Latin Americans to exploit the contradictions between the legislative and executive branches of government in the United States (*see* Vol. VIII, No. 14). President Ford will be weaker than was Nixon from 1969 to 1973, but at the same time he is likely to be treated with greater sympathy and understanding by congress. Ford is very much a man of congress, and in this respect will have some of the advantages enjoyed by the late President Johnson during his first term in the White House following the assassination of Kennedy.

There is no reason to suppose, of course, that the Ford administration will be less conservative in its outlook than its predecessor. The new President will certainly be under pressure to deal with

inflation, and this could easily involve recession and confrontation with cartels of commodity-producing countries. In fact, on fiscal questions Ford is probably more conservative than his predecessor; almost alone among senior members of congress, he always refused to lard his constituency with projects from the federal pork barrel.

As far as Latin America is concerned, much hangs on the appointment of a Vice-President. Nelson Rockefeller remains anathema in almost every Latin American country as a result of his family's long involvement in the affairs of the continent. Almost anyone else would have a less negative effect on inter-American relations. Another personal factor which could affect United States policy in Latin America is the fate of General Vernon Walters, now deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and once military attaché in Brazil in 1964. General Walters acted as Nixon's interpreter on his disastrous tour of Latin America in 1958, and when he was appointed to the CIA in March 1972 he was regarded as being 'Nixon's man'. During the Watergate cover-up, John Ehrlichman described Walters as a 'good friend of the White House'. There is considerable confusion and conflict of testimony as to whether Walters did or did not tell Patrick Gray — acting director of the FBI — to call off the investigation into laundered funds coming from Mexico on the ground that covert CIA operations might be jeopardised. Walters is not a career CIA man and his enemies may use the Watergate affair to be rid of him. This would place on the sidelines one of Brazil's 'best friends in the United States'. Walters' part in planning the 1964 military coup is notorious and he has many close connections with the Brazilian high command.

Walters has been active in recent months in advancing the view that Brazil should follow Argentina back to some form of constitutional rule. He visited Brazil at the end of July after going to Portugal (*see* last week's issue), and sought — perhaps unsuccessfully — to use his influence to bolster President Geisel's sagging political fortunes. If Walters goes, there may be less direct pressure on the Brazilians in this respect, but Kissinger and Walters share the view that military governments on their own cannot provide the institutional stability Latin America needs. The governments of Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela are probably more in line with Kissinger's view of United States' interests than are the less stable regimes of Brazil and Chile.

8 AUG 1974

STAT

Approved For Release 2005/07/01 : CIA-RDP91-00901R000700090028-5

Haldeman's Testimony, Tape Conflict

By Timothy S. Robinson
Washington Post Staff Writer

The tape transcripts released Monday by President Nixon of his June 23, 1972, conversations with former White House chief of staff H. R. (Bob) Haldeman are in direct conflict with Haldeman's sworn testimony about those meetings before two Senate committees.

In summing up the June 23 meetings in May, 1973, testimony before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee that was investigating alleged CIA involvement in the Watergate affair, Haldeman testified under oath that:

"We had only very sketchy knowledge of what and who were involved in the Watergate affair. We had no reason to believe that anyone in the White House was involved and no reason, therefore, to seek any coverage of the Watergate investigation from the White House."

At another point in testimony before the same panel, Haldeman said, "We did this in the full belief that we were acting in the national interest and with no intent or desire to impede or cover up any aspects of the Watergate investigation, itself."

Before the Senate Watergate committee, Haldeman described the President's concern over the possibility that the FBI investigation might uncover CIA operations and said that was why the President ordered him to contact the CIA. "I believe that the action I took with the CIA was proper, according to the President's instructions and clearly in the national interest," Haldeman told the Senate Watergate committee on July 30, 1973.

By contrast, the taped June 23, 1972, conversations show that Haldeman and the President discussed details

of FBI information about the Watergate break-in and that the President approved Haldeman's suggestion that he call the CIA as part of a cover-up of the involvement of Nixon aides in the Watergate affair.

Willfully lying under oath before a Senate committee constitutes perjury, punishable by a jail term of up to five years and a \$10,000 fine. Haldeman has not been charged with perjury in connection with his testimony about the meetings with the President, but, does face three perjury counts in the Watergate cover-up case for his testimony before the Senate Watergate committee concerning the payment of alleged "hush money" to Watergate defendants.

The Watergate special prosecutor's office would not comment yesterday about the possibility of any future perjury charges being filed against Haldeman for his Senate testimony about the June 23 meeting. However, it is known the prosecutors re-examined the testimony after the President released the June 23 transcripts Monday.

In the first meeting of the day on June 23, Haldeman relayed to the President what he said was a suggestion from former White House counsel John W. Dean III and former Attorney General John N. Mitchell that the CIA be told to block an FBI investigation of the Watergate break-in.

It is clear throughout the transcript that Haldeman and the President were worried that the FBI would be able to trace funds to the Nixon re-election committee and to the involvement of Nixon campaign aides, about any "national security" interests.

"Once, early in the conversation, President Nixon mentioned that the investigation of former White House consultant and CIA employee E. Howard Hunt in the Watergate case 'will uncover a lot of things. You open that scab there's hell of a lot of things a we feel that it would very detrimental to has this thing go any further. This involves the Cuba Hunt and a lot of hanky that we have nothing to do with ourselves. . ."

Then, 10 pages later in the transcript, the President added, almost in passing, that Haldeman should tell the CIA: "Look, the problem is that this will open the whole, the whole Bay of Pigs thing and the President just feels that, ah, without going into the details — don't, don't lie to them to the extent to say there is no involvement, but just say this is a comedy of errors, without getting into it, the President believes that it is going to open up the whole Bay of Pigs thing up again."

As a result of that meeting, with those two fleeting references to the CIA, Haldeman met with CIA officials with what he told the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee was a "five-fold" purpose:

"One, to ascertain whether there had been any CIA involvement in the Watergate affair;

"Two, to ascertain whether the relation between some of the Watergate participants and the Bay of Pigs was a matter of concern to CIA;

"Three, to inform the CIA of an FBI request for guidance regarding some aspects of the Watergate investigation because of the possibility of CIA involvement, directly or indirectly; I could interject there that this request had been made known by John Dean, counsel to the President, and had been transmitted by me to the President immediately upon being told of it by John Dean. The President, as a result of that, told me to meet with (CIA) Director (Richard) Helms and (CIA Deputy Director) General (Vernon) Walters and John Ehrlichman to get into this matter as I am laying it out here.

The purpose was to discuss White House concern regarding possible dis-

the Watergate suspects, not be expanded into unrelated matters which could lead to disclosure of their earlier national security and CIA activities."

Haldeman testified further that he did not recall any discussion at any time of a suggestion to involve the CIA in Watergate matter except as he described in his testimony.

"In summary, the meeting of June 23 with the CIA was held at the President's request in the interest of national security," Haldeman told the senators.

Haldeman testified in much the same way before the Senate Watergate committee. He referred the committee to the statement he had made before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee as one containing "considerable detail" on his account of the meeting with CIA officials and the reason for it.

In addition, he testified: "... the meeting, one of the purposes of the meeting, as assigned to me by the President on the morning of the 23d . . . in addition to ascertaining whether there was any CIA involvement, whether there was any CIA concern about earlier activities of people who had been arrested at Watergate, was to tell the CIA directors that the FBI had expressed concern that as to whether there was CIA involvement or any impingement."

Haldeman further testified that "the question raised was not solely the question of whether the CIA had been involved in the Watergate break-in but also whether the investigation of the Watergate break-in, which was to be thorough and total, could possibly impinge upon the activities totally unrelated to Watergate and related to national security and to covert CIA operations, the activities of some of the individuals who

continued