

TRANSCRIPT OF A RECORDING OF A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND H.R. HALDEMAN, THE WHITE HOUSE
TELEPHONE, APRIL 19, 1973, FROM 9:37 P.M. TO 9:53 P.M.

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PRESIDENT: Haldeman please.

OPERATOR: (Unintelligible) Thank you.
(Pause)

PRESIDENT: Hello

HALDEMAN: Yes sir.

PRESIDENT: Bob?

HALDEMAN: Yes sir.

PRESIDENT: Oh hi. I talked to the two boys here.

HALDEMAN: Couple of characters, aren't, they?

PRESIDENT: They really are, but I was very useful, very interesting. I say ah, they didn't, they only had a half hour with the uh, US Attorneys...

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: ...and they say stand firm.

HALDEMAN: Ha ha. They had a sh...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: ...short session. Apparently they had-- those guys had a busy day. They had Hunt in there and all this (unintelligible) breaking on the...

PRESIDENT: Yeah. What is up? Have you ever found out what the hell it is?

HALDEMAN: No. Just that, I haven't found out and I don't know if anyone knows or not. Nobody seems to have any idea what it is. Ehrlichman had some (unintelligible) on it that it was, that, was offered to Silbert at some point and he didn't want it. Whish has put him in a very awkward

HALDEMAN

CONT.: position which is lie is on.. He's denouncing all the tiqhole story as preposterous.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) denouncing it.

HALDEMAN: Silbert is, yeah.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) What is this? Eight cases of stuff that was carried out of the White House. Is that what it is?

HALDEMAN: That's what they say. Out of Hunt's, it was the contents of Hunt's desk.

PRESIDENT: Eight cases?

HALDEMAN: Ha ha. Six cases I guess.

PRESIDENT: Oh, that's what it is.

HALDEMAN: Six cartons (unintelligible)

PRESIDENT: And carried to where, to an apartment?

HALDEMAN: It was taken to someplace where it was stored somewhere by this guy's client. This guy's a lawyer who's telling the story. He says his client stored it for the summer and then returned it to the Committee to Re-elect just before the election.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) that have been, hmm?

HALDEMAN: Which is weird story.

PRESIDENT: They have it now then. They have the material?

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible) they don't. I don't know where the material is. (Unintelligible) apparently as, as all this stuff is coming out this guy's scared he's going to get hung on an obstruction of justice thing and so he's going in and filing notice that, that ah he knew about this...

PRESIDENT: Who is the guy, Bob? Is he somebody that worked for the Committee or...

HALDEMAN: It's a lawyer. I don't know who his client is.

PRESIDENT: That's what I meant. Who's the client?

HALDEMAN: I don't know. I haven't any idea who his client is. He ah, he won't say. (Pause) That's very strange.

PRESIDENT: Colson doesn't really know?

HALDEMAN: I don't know. I haven't, ah, John Ehrlichman talked to Colson about it so he may have more of a reading on it.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) just another - another one of those things.

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible) run all the way through with John. We have another one that, that ah, the Post going to tell the story tomorrow.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: This is an associate of John Deans', who is seeking to make John Dean's version of this whole thing public so that Dean, in his testimony before the Grand Jury will implicate people above and below himself and will state that Haldeman engineered a cover-up to hide the involvement of a pre presidential aides in the (unintelligible) operation, and that one close associate said that Dean is prepared to tell whatever that ah, whatever role he might have played in the Watergate case came as a result of orders from superiors in the White House, despite the allegations Dean had no advance knowledge of the bugging, that the truth is long and broad and it goes up and down, higher and lower, and that they can't make a case that this was just Mitchell and Dean. Dean will welcome the opportunity to tell his side to the Grand Jury. He's not going to go down in flames for the activities of others. The Post called the White House for comment on that...

PRESIDENT: Oh boy.

HALDEMAN: ...tried to reach me, I guess, for comment.
(unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: And ah (unintelligible) this guy, that he called, he tried to reach Dean and finally got through to him and he's having his calls screened by Fielding and he's hiding in a hotel somewhere. Dean called him back...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: And ah, Ron gave him the story and Dean said his first comment was "Oh fuck". And then he said I sus...I have a pretty good suspicion who it is and he's got things scrambled. I never mentioned Haldeman. I just said higher up and (unintelligible) apparently. And he said, then Ron said will "Why don't you call the Post and (unintelligible)..."

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: ...the story's not true before they run it. Dean said "Well Ron there's some fact and some fiction in it and (unintelligible) call them and deny it". And ah, he said why, Dean then said to Ron "Why don't you call the Post and say that they can't run the story unless Dean confirms it and Dean hasn't confirmed it." Ron said "That's ridiculous John and you know it. They won't (unintelligible) suggested that Dean have Fielding call the Post and handle it. And Dean said "Well I, maybe I can do that. I want you to know I'm not playing games. This is a fishing type story and they're just trying to smoke something out." A w-, later Dean called Ron back, just a minute ago as a matter of fact, and he said "I can't call the Post, but why don't you Ron? Call the guy from the Post and say that you have talked with me and that at no time did I say that Haldeman was in (unintelligible)
(Pause)

PRESIDENT: Well, so (unintelligible)

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HALDEMAN: So Ron's going to try that but...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: ...he's afraid that Dean cleverly waited 'til 9:30 to tell him that so that it would be too late to change the story.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) this is a-Look Bob, these are the things we, we, we sort of expect this don't we?

HALDEMAN: Sure.

PRESIDENT: ...the Dean thing. And ah, we just stand firm on it. That's all, don't you agree? What the hell else can you do?

HALDEMAN: I don't think, I don't think we want to (unintelligible), more of it lying down than we have to.

PRESIDENT: I agree, I agree, I--except I don't know what the hell to do with Dean, that's the problem, isn't that it?

HALDEMAN: Dean's obviously got other people playing his game now, that are tougher than he intends to.

PRESIDENT: His lawyer probably, huh?

HALDEMAN: I would say his lawyer, yeah.

PRESIDENT: His associates up and down, huh. Was he referring to Ehrlichman and you and who the, whose down?

HALDEMAN: Well, Colson...

PRESIDENT: Colson, of course.

HALDEMAN: Or it could be people over at the Committee or ah, you know, LaRue and Mitchell...

PRESIDENT: Mitchell, right.

HALDEMAN: All sorts of people.

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PRESIDENT: Your fellows, I asked them their judgment and they said that (unintelligible) for whatever it's worth, I mean they don't buy the Garment theory. Da, you know.

HALDEMAN: You mean - on, on our taking any action now.

PRESIDENT: One might, ah, yes, on...

HALDEMAN: On you taking any action now.

PRESIDENT: ...on resigning. They said, well, just have to, course with all this, you have to remember they said that they didn't see that it would, they, they, they, they just, ah, it would be uh, admission of guilt, that's what they'd say.

HALDEMAN: Well, I think they're right.

PRESIDENT: That's the point, so ah, we're going to have to fight it out.

HALDEMAN: An admission of guilt (unintelligible) as long as everywhere else really, really screws things up.

PRESIDENT: But the point is that what you do is to let them run their story and then ah, ah, their stories and so forth and so on, but then we have to play it as they say, day by day and the U.S. Attorney is uh, is confronted with a tough choice, whether he's gonna indict or put you on a list of non-indictable people.

HALDEMAN: Or nothing at all, which is what they think he's going to do.

PRESIDENT: At this moment, yes.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: They don't think he's got corroboration but if he doesn't, why that's, that's fine, and ah...

HALDEMAN: They probably told you they find this whole procedure highly...

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PRESIDENT: Yes.

HALDEMAN: ...irregular.

PRESIDENT: Yeah, they do, they do, but they say it's done, it's done, it's irregular but it's done.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Ah...

HALDEMAN: That guy's really an interesting guy.

PRESIDENT: Yeah, he sure is. I like 'em both.

HALDEMAN: I do, too.

PRESIDENT: But they ah, but they both say they have, I don't think they've seen these stories, but I mean they aren't going to be effected by stories that come out. I told 'em I said "You're gonna have a hell of a lot of stories here, it's gonna be blasting off." And, ah, I think you gotta expect more of it, don't you?

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. We just batten down the hatches and take it, isn't that right?

HALDEMAN: I'm not sure how, (Unintelligible)' We've gotta, well, we've gotta get the legal part perfected...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: ...and then we've gotta move on the public...

PRESIDENT: On the PR.

HALDEMAN: ...We can't just hunker down and take it for, for...

PRESIDENT: I agree, I agree. They, they of course ruled, I didn't talk to 'em about, what, what do they think about your making a statement or something or that sort of thing, they...

HALDEMAN: They're worried about it, but they, see, in their, they're not close to it...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: ...at this point...

PRESIDENT: That's right.

HALDEMAN: ...I think there's, you know, we can....

PRESIDENT: Right.

HALDEMAN: ...probably convince em that that's not a bad idea...

PRESIDENT: Right.

HALDEMAN: ...They've gone over my statement. I've given it to em...

PRESIDENT: Yeah, right, right.

HALDEMAN: ...there have a lot of, they don't have much trouble with it, except in a couple areas...

PRESIDENT: Right, right.

HALDEMAN: ...and, ah...

PRESIDENT: Incidentally, are you and John going to Florida?

HALDEMAN: I don't know. We, we were planning to...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: ...ah, but the thing with them, we're trying to figure now whether we should or not. It may be that we ought not to be gone this weekend.

PRESIDENT: Ought to work with your attorney.

HALDEMAN: Yeah, yeah.

PRESIDENT: Probably so, probably so, but do what you want. You know, you're certainly welcome.

HALDEMAN: Yeah, well, that, that's very nice.

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PRESIDENT: Nice, hell, it's just whatever you want, you know, your...

HALDEMAN: It ah, we were concerned about appearance if we don't go, or if I don't, but I don't really think that matters much, especially...

PRESIDENT: No.

HALDEMAN: ...because it's Easter...

PRESIDENT: It's Easter, you're going to stay with your family.

HALDEMAN: No, I hadn't thought about it. And we can just say you're going down to spend Easter with your family and we're spending Easter with our families.

PRESIDENT: That's right. It's a family deal, sure.

HALDEMAN: If we don't go, ah, wha, what we might do if it's okay, is go up to Camp David...

PRESIDENT: Right, right.

HALDEMAN: ...for a day or two.

PRESIDENT: Very excellent idea.

HALDEMAN: We've got reporters camping on the door here now...

PRESIDENT: Oh Christ, yes, go up to Camp David, Bob.

HALDEMAN: Well, we'll see, but ah...

PRESIDENT: Ah, incidentally, and I, the ah, the Cabinet tomorrow, be sure to be there.

HALDEMAN: Yes sir, don't worry.

PRESIDENT: Don't worry. We're gonna be right there and a lot of (unintelligible) I'll just uh state it out --state out front, you know my own conviction. Don't you think I should to the Cabinet?

HALDEMAN: Yeah, but don't, give your own conviction about you're gonna follow this through, but don't

HALDEMAN

CONT: support anybody. Don't say you'll stand by us or anything.

PRESIDENT: Well., why not? I mean that ah...

HALDEMAN: I just don't think you should. Look there are so many weird bounces in this, if one of us gets a bad bounce at some point and has to do something then don't you (unintelligible) in your face.

PRESIDENT: Right. (Unintelligible) I say then, that we've ah, (unintelligible) investigating this whole thing, that I ah...

HALDEMAN: And that I'm not going to mention any names.

PRESIDENT: Any names.

HALDEMAN: Because, because, as I said publicly I will say privately to you. I. I, there is going to be no cover up in this...

PRESIDENT: Right.

HALDEMAN: And ah...

PRESIDENT: And that there's, there never...

HALDEMAN: This is gonna, that uh our record on this investigation is gonna prove that we've done everything we could in the proper fashion.

PRESIDENT: Right. That's what you say.

HALDEMAN: Effecting both the need to prosecute and the need to protect.

PRESIDENT: Right. You'd prefer it and rather, and rather than, rather than to say that I stand by Ehrlichman and Haldeman and that sort of thing, that's what I would (unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: Because, see, the thing is nobody yet has, has (unintelligible) a word about, really about Ehrlichman and and they're now all saying that there is no evidence on me.

PRESIDENT: Until this story that's uh a, Dean, though.

HALDEMAN: Well yeah, that's right, and that's Dean and that, it may not go out.

PRESIDENT: Ah, ah, the Post would use it, don't you think?

HALDEMAN: I don't know, they may not. Tell me what, there's a...

PRESIDENT: It's a dangerous thing.

HALDEMAN: ...(unintelligible) being played here. There's a lot of rough games being played here and...it's

PRESIDENT: They may be afraid of the libel?

HALDEMAN: We come out better playing a strong game then we do a weak game, all the way along, but I don't think in that...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: ...that you as President should now endorse anybody.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) I guess you're right.

HALDEMAN: Because, in the first place, if you say I...

PRESIDENT: First of all, first...

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible) Haldeman and (unintelligible) Ehrlichman...

PRESIDENT: What do I say about Mitchell?

HALDEMAN: Then you lea...Well, what do you say about Mitchell, what do you say about Dean?

PRESIDENT: That's right.

HALDEMAN: There's a lot more suspicion on Dean now, are you gonna say you stand by me, but not by...

PRESIDENT: That's right, that's right. And if I say that, then Dean says, "What the hell, why don't I stand by him?"

HALDEMAN: You could say, "I'm not gonna mention any names, but I would caution any of you to come to any conclusions about any individuals..."

PRESIDENT: Yeah, that's right.

HALDEMAN: "...because there are a lot of those charges in here as well as some valid ones..."

PRESIDENT: That's right, that's right.

HALDEMAN: "...and until they are properly sorted out, it would be very wise for everybody to keep his mouth shut..."

PRESIDENT: Right.

HALDEMAN: ...and, and his open mind.

PRESIDENT: Right, right, right, right, right, right. That's good, Bob, that's good. Well, that's ah, this thing about this stuff and Hunt stuff that was carted up, I don't know what now...

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible) It's incredible. This ah, this thing is so frigging bizarre that it's, it's beyond...

PRESIDENT: Yeah, but, but, but, you say Silbert, what does he say about it, I, I didn't hear that...

HALDEMAN: Well Ehrlichman has some story, I guess he got from Colson, saying that it was this material was offered to Silbert at some point. They said they'd give it to him and he said he didn't want it, and that puts him in a very sticky wicket now that it's known that it exists, so he has said this story that this lawyer had it, ah that this lawyer's client had it for, for all through the summer, it's preposterous. It's kind of a stupid thing for him to say. There's

HALDEMAN

CONT: no point in his saying anything. He over-reacted, I guess, to this, and ah, lawyers may have told you when they talked with Silbert today, they said he was very up-tight...

PRESIDENT: mmmm.

HALDEMAN: ...and ah; very formal and...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: ...and obviously (unintelligible) harassed. (Unintelligible) know Silbert very well though, they know...

PRESIDENT: But, but. Silbert, yeah, they've only met him once. Does (Unintelligible) the, the, the law, ah, the lawyer says that he offered it to Silbert, is that the story?

HALDEMAN: No, (unintelligible) Colson says, so Colson obviously must know something about this and I think John, I, I didn't get the full fill on this 'cause John came in at the end of the meeting (unintelligible) and (unintelligible) in and, ah...

PRESIDENT: Uh huh, Colson ah, se- that it was offered to Silbert and...

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: It was contents of his safe?

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible)

PRESIDENT: His office.

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible) his office (unintelligible) safe obviously cause his safe they didn't get in so, and it doesn't, they didn't, they said that things from his desk...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: From Hunt's desk. It was the next morning. See,

HALDEMAN

CONT: that could be Colson, who was worried about the safe as I recall...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: ...too, who may have told somebody, you know, "For heaven sake get over there and, and ah, do something."

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: Well...

PRESIDENT: Anyway...

HALDEMAN: We gotta be careful not to draw conclusions.

PRESIDENT: That's right.

HALDEMAN: You just really don't know.

PRESIDENT: We don't know, that's right.

HALDEMAN: And it would be awful unfair to somebody by...

PRESIDENT: That's right, I couldn't agree more.

HALDEMAN: By skipping something.

PRESIDENT: That's what, we're not going to do that. Well, it's ah, it's certainly, the difficult one here to figure out is Dean, isn't it?

HALDEMAN: Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT: God damn him, he's ah, I don't know what ah, what...

HALDEMAN: He's totally distorted in his own mind now and he, he...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: ...consequently I guess, very dangerous...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

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HALDEMAN: ...But ah, sort of pathetic at the same time.

PRESIDENT: Yeah, yeah trying to save himself.

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible) moorings and his, ah, you know...

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) saying anything.

HALDEMAN: ...swinging out in all kinds of ways.

PRESIDENT: That's right. Okay.

HALDEMAN: We'll just have to see.

PRESIDENT: That's right, thank you.

HALDEMAN: Okay.