



TRANSCRIPT OF A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND CHARLES W.
COLSON ON MARCH 21, 1973 FROM
7:53 TO 8:24 PM

COLSON: Well, he said, anyway. But you know, he, that's probably the typical, uh...

PRESIDENT: Sure.

COLSON: ...little bit of an apology session (unintelligible)...

PRESIDENT: Right.

COLSON: ...I think he, I think he wanted to be sure that we knew that, uh, uh, that he wasn't, uh...

PRESIDENT: Right.

COLSON: getting off the reser -- well that's clear. One thing last night was very clear. He wanted me to be sure and he asked me whether I was in communication with, with you or with, uh, Haldeman and I said yes and, uh, he said well please, he said be sure they know we're not getting off the reservation. We, we want to help, we just feel like...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

COLSON: ...we need a channel of information. And we need to know the facts and, uh...

PRESIDENT: Um huh.

COLSON: ...we need somebody to take us into confidence once in a while and keep us clued in and, uh...

PRESIDENT: Right.

COLSON: ...and give us all the facts. We mu- we'll know how to handle them. We, we'll defend you if you...

PRE SIDENT: Yeah.

COLSON: ...we'll defend the Administration if we know what the facts are.

PRESIDENT: What's your judgment as to what, (clears throat) what ought to be done now. You know, there's various discussions about, uh, whether, uh, should be, uh, a uh, report made or something, you know, a, uh, report to, uh, the President or just hunker down and take it or what, what have you, and so forth and so on.

COLSON: Well, my feelings, Mr. President, uh, thus far, frankly, is that you're not being hurt by this at all. That this is, a, a, a Washington story still and that, that sounds incredible after all this time and all this publicity but I, I, I'm convinced that, uh, uh ...

PRESIDENT: But you see, looking to the future, I suppose, Chuck, what some of our fellows that are, you know, like, uh, when Dean, who's really done a superb job here keeping all the fires out, he's, (clears throat) he's concerned about, you know, what, what bubbles out, you know.

COLSON: Yeah, well Dean has a problem also, Mr. President. I, I didn't want to say this to you, uh, Monday night when you mentioned to me that, uh, uh, that, that Dean has done a spectacular job. I don't think anybody could do as good a job as John has done. The, the problem I foresee in this is not what has happened so far-- I mean I, I think the, uh, the mystery of the Watergate, uh, I don't know whether somebody's gonna, uh, somebody else higher up in the Committee for the Re-Election is gonna get named or not but, uh, to me that isn't of very great consequence to the country if it, if it happens. The thing that worries me is that, is the possibility of somebody, uh, charging an obstruction of justice problem -- in other words that the subsequent actions would worry me more than anything and it, that's where John has, you know, he's done all the things that have to be done but, that, that makes him a little more of a participant than, than you would like if you, if you, if, uh, he's the fellow that has to, uh, coordinate it all. It's in, uh -- of course, he's got the best privilege, he's got a double privilege but, you know the, the subsequent developments would be the only ones that would worry me. I don't worry about the, uh, how the Watergate came about. I think that's been so milked out that they get someone else, well they get 'em, that's all. And if there's testimony, it'll...

PRESIDENT: Um huh.

COLSON: ...it will get so God-damn confused. It's, it's may be the stuff after, uh, afterwards that...

PRESIDENT: You mean, uh, the me-, yo-, been saying uh, the, the, with regard to the defendants? Of course, that was all...

COLSON: Yeah, that, that's, that's that area I mean, that general area.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. Of course, that was...

COLSON: I don't want to burden you with any...

PRESIDENT: ...that had to be done. (Laughs)

COLSON: Hell, yeah. No, I'm not - no second thoughts. That's not the point.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

COLSON: The point is that, just that, it limits the ability now to...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

COLSON: ...to stand up to it. I don't know, uh, I've thought of several things. I've thought of trying to get a, uh, a special counsel in to you that could, uh, uh, you, you...

PRESIDENT: We could appoint, you mean?

COLSON: Yeah, that you could appoint. Not, not as an investigator but as a counsel. Just to handle the God-damn thing on the grounds that you don't want the Justice Department handling it, and you don't want the regular White House staff handling it -- they've got their work to do.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

COLSON: And, uh, you appoint a man of...

PRESIDENT: Which has...

COLSON: ...totally impeccable uh, credentials, uh...

PRESIDENT: Um, huh.

COLSON: ...a man known for his integrity, uh, standing before the Bar, you know, that kind of thing. But, a guy who is also totally loyal or just a damned good lawyer who would be professional then. That's one thought that I've been playing with the last couple of days.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. Hum.

COLSON: We have an advantage, you see, of getting all the, the people who have been in one way or another participating out of the damn thing so that you, you've got a guy who, uh, frankly can, can deal with, uh, deal with anybody he has to deal with.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

COLSON: Special counsel.

PRESIDENT: I think they have, of course, of course, you've got the problem of what the judge is gonna say Friday. I suppose he's gonna have quite an harangue, isn't he?

COLSON: Oh yeah, yeah, he's, he's...

PRESIDENT: He's pretty tough and then, of course, you've got the problem of, uh, the defendants, particularly Hunt. What he, what's he gonna do. That's always a problem, I know.

COLSON: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Of course he's got problems if he does anything. You know whether he's, uh...

COLSON: Oh, that's right.

PRESIDENT: You know what I mean. He's, uh...

COLSON: Yes, sir. I, my own opinion of that is that he, uh, that he just will hang in where he is. I mean, I think he, uh, that, at the moment I think that's in, in as good shape as it can be. Uh, you never know -- lot of...

PRESIDENT: There 're a lot of pressures on him, lot of pressures.
Sure are