

**NIXON PRESIDENTIAL MATERIALS STAFF****Tape Subject Log***(rev. 9/08)*

Part of a conversation between President Nixon and H. R. Haldeman in the Oval Office between 10:12 am and 10:30 am on May 4, 1971.

Conversation No. 490-12

Haldeman: The, uh, demonstration thing, now has arrested seventy-eight hundred. No incidents of any importance, no stoppage of anything. They're gonna have a "people's press conference" -- whatever that is -- at eleven-thirty in Franklin Park and then march on Justice Department.

President: Um-hum.

Haldeman: March that, that meeting in the park for the press conference, which [unintelligible]. As soon as they start marching to the Justice Department, we arrest them.

President: Good. Well, Jerry Ford was very, he always, said he was back in his district. Everybody there said they wanna be sure and give a firm stand. Have we got that across?

Haldeman: On the demonstrators? Yes! The *Washington Post* editorial this morning just, just smashed 'em.

President: Did it?

Haldeman: Yeah.

President: On what ground?

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Haldeman: On the grounds that, that --.

President: Tryin' to hurt the cause of the war, Bob?

Haldeman: In the, in the sense that --.

President: [Unintelligible] it's wrong to trash, period.

Haldeman: Well, they did it on that. They hit that --.

President: Good.

Haldeman: Their point was, this is, you know, it's fine to, to prote-, to demonstrate objections, but that, that trashing, obstructing traffic 'n' all that is not permissible. You know, the, they're very strong on it. It's totally irresponsible and go on and on. Very bad thing, they said, they, also that the demonstration by doing this totally fails to show what they would suggest President Nixon do above and beyond what he is going in disengaging US troops in Vietnam. [Unintelligible]. Say they agree with what you're doing, but they sure put it that nobody was showing, coming up with any better idea.

President: [Sighs]

Haldeman: I think you're gonna [unintelligible] apart. When they hit the rough stuff they, they cited the examples of the rough stuff.

President: Yeah.

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Haldeman: And, uh, I think that, that's what you need.

President: That's right.

Haldeman: And they commended the [unintelligible].

President: Well, [unintelligible].

Haldeman: -- skill o' the police dealing with 'em. [Unintelligible] complained about, they'll get to 'em, is that civic rights types 'll be into 'em now 'n' start squealing about they shouldn't have been arrested or not --.

President: [Unintelligible].

Haldeman: Charges 'n' all that sort of stuff.

President: [Unintelligible] let, they're loose now, let them all let loose.

Haldeman: [Unintelligible] are out now. You got about fifteen hundred or so. Well, that's [unintelligible].

President: Just round 'em up. They were ordered to clear the streets and they didn't clear the streets, get them the hell in cuffs.

Haldeman: A-and they're starting it again now.

President: Huh?

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Haldeman: Then they'll start it again. If they start marching again, we'll just scoop them back up. [Laughs] [Unintelligible].

President: Well, if they scoop, incidentally [unintelligible] Democratic Congress or not. [Unintelligible] Democratic Congress, I hope, I hope so.

Haldeman: [Unintelligible].

President: I think the Congressmen and the [unintelligible]. Congress --.

Haldeman: I think maybe, well, I dunno. It just, it, this is really becomes a test of how much militant, real militant force, strength there is. 'Cause obviously they all want to, because they, they've been frustrated. They've gotta prove they've got some balls, and the only thing they can do is go ahead with that final act of theirs. Now, they're playin' the sort of do-good-type kids, 'n' peace demonstrators 'n' stuff that, that don't know the difference probably won't do it. They'll have trouble mobilizing those types, so what ya yet' ll be the hard core.

President: I tried to get the leaders to get the line that [unintelligible] the breaking the peace and so forth. They never get very good lines. You put that out to our others. Colson said he was, so I think maybe if I were you, trying to do, Bob, is to be idea that we're being goddamn firm with these people, you know, without being like Reagan, rushing in, in a squad car, uh, and uh, but we can't do that, but, uh --.

Haldeman: Well, I think that's come through. The press, I mean, thinks you were [unintelligible] --.

President: Nobody's been playing anything about staying away in California, have they?

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Haldeman: No, which is really interesting. There were, there was no --

President: Well, everybody likes a touch of it.

Haldeman: -- not a glimmer of that and that, that o' course your praise to the police played really big, 'cause Wilson used it. He did it damn well. He, the guy must be a hell of a guy, 'cause he used, he fired up his troops. He, he did, he used that as the --

President: He did?

Haldeman: -- as the, uh, you know, the, the locker room half-time talk.

President: What'd he say to 'em?

Haldeman: He said, he cited the thing. He said that it was, the President had asked that he issue commendations to all members of the police force for, uh, the outstanding work they've been doing, so forth. And then he, concluding, said, "It is the President's desire that the Government's work," that the Government, you know, not be stopped, or something like that. And that was, it w-, it kinda reads like a locker room pep talk, the way, the way he did it, and he [unintelligible] it. He ra-, he apparently went on their communication radio thing and, and said this to all the police on the police radio. I don't think that --.

President: I can't help but feel, Bob, that this one hurt the demonstrators and hurt us, and helped us. I don't think the war thing which the, Mort Allin's thing would indicate was [unintelligible] weak, that they, I mean, y-y-you just don't know [unintelligible]. There you see, fellas, there you see: everybody throw up their hands, be against the war.

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Haldeman: Ya need some o' that to dramatize it. I, I don't think you woulda had --.

President: Dramatize what?

Haldeman: The fact that those people were in here demonstrating.

President: I think that they were bad people.

Haldeman: That's right. That was, see, everybody's commending the police for their restraint 'n' all that. In other words, that it's clear who the bad guys are. It's not even like Chicago, where the bad guys --

President: Yeah.

Haldeman: -- were the police --

President: That's right.

Haldeman: -- for awhile.

President: That's right.

Haldeman: And the way the media played it, certainly was that. Now the people, the people's conclusion was the other way even then, even with the media making the police the bad guys. In this one the media aren't making the police the bad guys. The stories are, are on the basis that the, uh, what a good job the police are doing. You know, there was one, uh, column somewhere in the *Post* or the *Times*,

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something by some [unintelligible] named Greenfield, who lives in Greenwich Vill-, or, in, uh, Georgetown --

President: Georgetown.

Haldeman: -- who was, uh, talking about how the police were beating up on the demonstrators.

President: Well, that's too goddamn bad!

Haldeman: But then she came to the end. She, and she said and that she and her neighbors were all out watching what was going on 'n', 'n' she said she caved in. She said, "We all concluded after it had moved away the police had done exactly the right thing. [Unintelligible] had used great restraint in the way they did it." But earlier in her column she talks about how they were clubbing some guy. But obviously they got it --

President: I may have read that column somewhere.

Haldeman: -- damn little of that though. I mean, the news stories are all on the, the other side of it. If they march on the Congress, it would just be great. Make one stop, and that leaves all the other things looking, uh, it'll be interesting to see what they do at this press conference. Of course, they don't have Rennie Davis. He's been their [unintelligible].

President: Polite impression, I mean, i-i-it should be the last thing people see, so it's just as well to let this be a, rather than a veteran's throwing medals over the wall.

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Haldeman: Damn right!

President: That's the point. Well, it's like the San Jose thing. Public impression o' that was unfortunately blurred by this speech thing and then reaction, ya know, and that poor that, goddamn, ya know, the way it was handled.

Haldeman: Yeah.

President: Lousy presentation. There, and that became the issue rather than the rock-throwing.

Haldeman: Rather than what you were talkin' about.

President: Now that this may become an issue rather than the vet-, rather than the medal-throwing.

Haldeman: I think it will, I think it will. This is, is hotter type stuff than [unintelligible]; it will, it has, leaves a more vivid impression in your mind than the medal thing. The medal was sorta, it was --

President: Emotional.

Haldeman: -- compelling, emotionally. But [unintelligible] it's a sort of credit. Unfortunately, the veterans were raggedy-looking people, too, and so they look like the same kind of people as these people, even though they didn't act the same way. But what these people've been doing is pretty bad. They, they got a lot of stuff on how they were pushing cars into the intersections and dumping. This Meg Greenfield's column, she was talking about "I was looking out my window

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and were dumping my garbage on the street." [Laughs] Said, "I did the only thing I could do. I went out and got my garbage cans 'n' put 'em in my living room 'cause I know if I brought 'em back and put 'em where they [unintelligible], they'd just take 'em out in the street again."

President: It was raining on people last night, I guess about [unintelligible] anyway. It's good to get that little bit [unintelligible] over.

Haldeman: She said, uh, she said, [laughs] [unintelligible] said, "There was one amusing sidelight to it which is that the, the gay group were pushing cars out in, in the street, too, and every time they move a Volkswagen out to jam, block the street they'd all embrace each other." She thought that was just keen. [Laughs]

President: God.

Haldeman: [Laughs] Her car. That ain't gonna go over real well either with folks.

President: I wish they got some pictures o' that.

Haldeman: Yeah. The fags out there, embracing each other as they pull cars, into the street, throwing boards with nails in 'em into the roadways. You know, a lot of stuff that just, it really did turn into kinds Halloween around here.

President: I told [unintelligible], I said --

Haldeman: [Unintelligible].

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President: -- I gave 'em a little lecture about the fact. I said, "You know, Henry, they hung on, on us, but it, their subversive thing." And I said, "Now at this point we're just handling it." You know what I mean?

Haldeman: Um-hum.

President: [Unintelligible] to our positive steps. We were trying to do the right thing. [Unintelligible]. That's a very sharp point to make [unintelligible] on the [unintelligible] statements. Hell, we may smear the bastards.

Haldeman: Damn right.

President: God damn it, smear 'em! They, uh, they deserve it. He's discovered that lately that it's the [unintelligible], the --.

Haldeman: [Unintelligible] kind of a good break for the Muskie [unintelligible] is their great moderate hero. Here he is on the platform with a guy who's now been arrested for inciting to riot.

President: He was on the platform, really?

Haldeman: Last Saturday.

President: Was he, was he on that, did he go up?

Haldeman: Uh, no, no. He was on, no. The platform, the time he was actually on the same platform was Earth Day. But he was, he was, he endorsed [unintelligible].

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President: [Unintelligible] the rally and Rennie Davis was there.

Haldeman: [Unintelligible] he spoke up for it, and, uh, Rennie Davis was a key factor. I think ya can tie it. You know, people, Rennie Davis symbolizes it. You can tie to Rennie Davis, and then it's kind of a good thing to do, instead of just tryin' to, lotta bad people there.

President: Hmm.

Haldeman: And he's done pretty well this time in getting out the congratulations from Madame Binh and all that sort of stuff. The fact that the --

President: Yeah.

Haldeman: -- North Vietnamese --

President: The enemy.

Haldeman: -- are all for the --.

President: Yeah. Hugh Scott was saying he got a couple licks, [unintelligible] agreed that they had talked to Madame Binh about it.

Haldeman: He did, at the hearings. This is just an incredible thing', you know. If people would, if, that, that kind of stuff is good to get over, too, 'cause you --.

President: Have you, have you got a little group of Legionnaires to go down and tear down the Viet Cong flag? [Unintelligible].

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Haldeman: That's, we're tryin' to ---

President: Buchanan. Huston.

Haldeman: -- get that cranked up. Some hard hats apparently moved in yesterday --

President: On [unintelligible]?

Haldeman: -- on the demonstrators, uh, where they, uh, some guys down on a construction project got fed up with what was gain' on in the streets or somethin', moved down and just muscled 'em out. Put the cars back where they belonged.

President: [Unintelligible] people that should be mad about that. They should be mad. Now we see --.

Haldeman: I guess a lot of citizens were, a lotta people just, you know. I was talking last night. There were apparently a lot of incidents where people just, ya know, just got fed up.

President: Um-hum.

Haldeman: That was great when the NBC [laughs] cameraman --.

President: [Unintelligible] full of spirit. I thought the cameraman shouldn't've recorded it.

Haldeman: Yeah, but it still s- --

President: Symbolizes.

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Haldeman: -- symbolizes, the people see what the cameramen are just as bad as --.

President: He said, "I'm a Middle American."

Haldeman: Yeah. [Laughs] Smashed him. [Laughs] And the camera just went right over the thing. You know, the film kept going, so you got the sky going by when it fell over.

President: Just hold right where we are. Don't move any more.

Haldeman: Awful glad we're going ahead with this. You know, this, we were worried about whether we should do the Agriculture Day because of the demonstrators.

President: Oh, yeah!

Haldeman: But of course we should do it.

President: [Unintelligible] farmers come in 'n' get sore.

Haldeman: That would be great. They've decided to try 'n' screw this up. On the, the evidence is that they're gonna still try to make the effort tomorrow. Then [unintelligible] give up. They've got to make the follow-up after that anyway. Supposed to go to Nashville.

President: That's, what's [unintelligible]?

Haldeman: Bobby Seale's trial [unintelligible].

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President: That's nice.

Haldeman: They'll try and get him re-released. [Unintelligible]. Six thousand troops today --

President: Yeah, I --.

Haldeman: -- sent back to Fort Bragg.