

NIXON TAPES, MONDAY, 14 JUNE 1971

OVAL OFFICE MEETING WITH BOB HALDEMAN, 3:09 P.M.

SOURCE: NIXON PRESIDENTIAL MATERIALS PROJECT, OVAL-519-1, CASSETTE 747

TRANSCRIBED BY EDDIE MEADOWS, NATIONAL SECURITY ARCHIVE, THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

NIXON: [Unclear] ask you what you thought about the - I was - I think that story in the Times should cause everybody here great concern  
[Unclear] bunch of crap  
[Unclear] that's the most - that's the most unbelievable thing - well that's - uh, that's treasonable, due to the fact that it's aid to the enemy and it's a release of classified documents  
I can remember how much [unclear] the Hiss case - a few little pumpkin seeds, slipping a little stuff to one guy [unclear] - huh?  
But turning - turning stuff over to the [unclear] - this turns it over to the enemy, and puts the whole damn thing right out there - in the paper!  
I'm concerned about Henry's staff [unclear] don't have the confidence, because - I asked him - I said now look here - [unclear] Gelb

HALDEMAN: Over at - Murray G - I mean - uh,

NIXON: G-E-L-B [unclear] Brookings

HALDEMAN: Yeah, I know - over at Brookings

NIXON: [Unclear] had all these files - this is the thing - why didn't we go get them?

HALDEMAN: Well, remember I talked to you about that - a year ago  
Tom Huston was all alarmed, and was in here and said they have all this - this file and everything - they've got it over at Brookings - they've moved it out of the defense department - copies out of the defense [unclear] pentagon - took the whole file over there - and he argued - and we had - uh, we had some discussions about it  
He argued that what we should do is - is send some people in on a routine s - they've moved - they have a secure safe over there, to hold this stuff in - move some people in on a routine security check, find the stuff in it and confiscate it and walk out  
And - uh, [unclear]

NIXON: Why didn't we do it Bob?

HALDEMAN: I don't know  
But here, this sure shows - I'm not sure, as a matter of fact, that this is precisely the same material; there is other material there too

NIXON: [Unclear] this must be the material [unclear]

HALDEMAN: Yeah, but there's a lot of copies of this and there's some other stuff that there're only three copies of - one of which is over at Brookings, according to Huston  
Huston is an alarmist, but - uh, Dick Allen was an alarmist when he said we ought to cut out Symington's - uh- investigate [unclear] - we didn't do that, and [unclear - both talking] we've been hurt badly by it

NIXON: We have  
[Unclear] There's another that's involved and this is Halperin

HALDEMAN: That's right; Halperin and Sam Gelb have been working together

NIXON: How much does Halperin know - [unclear] does he know about the [unclear]?

HALDEMAN: I'm not sure

NIXON: Henry talks [unclear 'to him?'] an awful lot - [unclear] talking to people about what he's doing

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[Unclear] that's just four times as great an opportunity for it to leak - you don't need four agencies [unclear]

HALDEMAN: The way to get him on that is just to remind him who he took with him to Paris

NIXON: Lake

HALDEMAN: And is he really happy that Tony Lake is - bouncing around [unclear, both talking]  
Plus - and it's more dangerous now; in my view it wasn't this dangerous when he was working for Muskie as it is now, because now he's out of a job  
[Unclear] sure he wouldn't leak it; he wouldn't use that information - well bullshit, you know if [unclear, both talking]

NIXON: [Unclear] remember - remember he told me - said he was very bright [unclear] - brightest guy we've got; you can't make me fire him [unclear]

HALDEMAN: That's right

NIXON: We finally did

HALDEMAN: That's right

NIXON: And he was [unclear]  
Remember Edgar Hoover was right [unclear] remember he put the finger on him

HALDEMAN: The bugs showed that - the taps showed that - what Halperin

NIXON: Neil Sheehan of the Times is a bastard; he's been a bastard for years, on Vietnam  
He got this [unclear]

HALDEMAN: [Unclear] long time; Klein says the team that's on it has been on - on - he - he's [unclear] - the team has been on leave, or - or has been submerged for three months

NIXON: Boy, if I were the publisher [unclear] great newspaper, I wouldn't print this stuff - [unclear] top secret information

HALDEMAN: I don't understand why we don't -

NIXON: I - I just - I mean Haig tells us we've gotta not react and all [unclear]

HALDEMAN: But - uh - if - uh - what's the use of the classification system - why the hell do we classify anything if - if a newspaper feels no compunctions about printing it?

NIXON: [Unclear, both talking] then I think the thing to do is to - see, it's a [unclear] - find out what the statute of limitations [unclear] - I think it's plenty long on this sort of thing  
I don't think we can do much now, but if the statute of limitations is a year, and we've got a year I know - I know that we can charge them then  
And we can just go in and put - uh, subpoena all these bastards and bring the case [unclear]

NIXON: [Unclear] Henry's staff and his own - and his people - you know, that [unclear]  
I guess he went over and talked to the Brookings people himself  
I warned him about that; I said 'Henry don't go over there'  
I said - there - those people - that's - that's the Democratic National Committee

HALDEMAN: [Unclear]

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NIXON: We don't have one friend at Brookings, Bob - no - we [unclear] - we need to remind George Schultz that Charlie Schultz is the guy at Brookings - you understand?  
So do you still want Charlie Schultz around?  
They play the game that way Bob; they are a bunch of bastards  
They'll lie, cheat - anything - and then squeal when somebody else does  
See basically that's what gets back to the whole Hiss syndrome - the intellectual - the intellectuals [unclear] because, basically, they have no morals

HALDEMAN: Well this thing too is clear, it seems to me it - it hurts us in that it puts the war back up into a high [unclear] tension level, but the facts in it

NIXON: Hurt the other side

HALDEMAN: Don't hurt us politically so much - they hurt the others - but what they really hurt - and this is what the intellectuals - and why the motivation of the Times must be is that it hurts the government  
What it says is - Rumsfeld was making this point this morning - what - what it says is - to the ordinary guy, all this is a bunch of gobbledygook  
But out of the gobbledygook, comes a very clear thing: [unclear] you can't trust the government; you can't believe what they say; and you can't rely on their judgment; and the - the implicit infallibility of presidents, which has been an accepted thing in America, is badly hurt by this, because it shows that people do things the president wants to do even though it's wrong, and the president can be wrong

NIXON: [Unclear] Roosevelt's involvement [unclear] World War II era came out; You know, how he knew what was happening and he did it deliberately  
Pearl Harbor thing was undoubtedly [unclear]

HALDEMAN: You had that one - one article by that admiral what's-his-name that - that - uh, U.S. News carried, that - that told that whole story, and - and there was - but it was never official; it was - and it could be discredited because it was just one guy's testimony  
This stuff is out of official files; you can't discredit this stuff

NIXON: Well, so much for that; the story is out; there's nothing you can do about it - [unclear] I guess

HALDEMAN: My feeling is that we shouldn't - at least Haig's urging was that - that we shouldn't do anything about it

NIXON: [Unclear 'why?', 'fine?']

HALDEMAN: Until we know what - see what we've got - and that by doing anything we would only escalate it more

NIXON: I think he's right

HALDEMAN: It'll be interesting to see now how the - the other papers - and the t.v. and all pick this up; but I can't imagine [unclear, both talking]  
I would think they'd be doing white papers on it; and everybody [unclear] - Christ, it's just grist for the mill - that - that - uh

NIXON: Right

HALDEMAN: Won't quit  
[Unclear, both talking]

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Because the other [unclear 'interest-'] see what the Times decides to print, and what they don't  
They picked an interesting time in - chronologically, they didn't start at the beginning; they  
chronologically started at Tonkin - and - and it's interesting to - contemplate why  
[Unclear] beginning stuff is all there

NIXON: You mean the Kennedy time  
[Unclear] with regard to what - with regard to our relations with the Times  
I just feel that very strongly [unclear] just feel that [unclear] got a paper that will be this  
irresponsible, Goddamn - don't give 'em anything!  
Henry talked to that damn jew Frankel all the time - he's bad, you know - don't give 'em anything!  
[Unclear] I don't want anything done [unclear 'obviously?'] - I want - I just wanna cool it with  
those damn people, because of their disloyalty to the country  
[Unclear 'Kennedy?']  
[Unclear] very hard to understand - legal function - left-wingers - trying to do that  
I mean look, you could imagine a - you could - you could underst- you could justify say a Goldwater  
trying [unclear] Johnson for lying before '64  
[Unclear] politically, this - uh [unclear] makes Johnson look terrible

HALDEMAN: Johnson and Rostow end up -

NIXON: Pretty bad

HALDEMAN: Total disaster

NIXON: Yeah, but on the other hand [unclear] - this is a bunch of God-damn left-wingers who are trying to  
destroy [unclear]

HALDEMAN: Because of that, there's going to be - uh, I'm sure - uh, a [unclear] that runs through here  
that - that will say that we put it out, in - in an attempt to

NIXON: [Unclear]

HALDEMAN: Yeah  
[Unclear] surface, the apparent damage here is not to us; it's to the - it's to the Democrats

NIXON: Yeah

HALDEMAN: But the real damage is -

NIXON: Well, I'll tell you what to do - I don't agree with these little boys around here -  
Your - your staff doesn't know anything about things like this Bob  
You know what I mean - they have good intentions, but not good judgment because they haven't  
been through enough  
Tell you what I want done: Get the story out on Gelb right away to the [unclear -'columnists'  
chiefs?]  
I want that out; that's the way [unclear]  
Do you understand how to do that?  
Just say - I mean - get Huston to get all the facts together - get Buchanan to get the story -  
get Lasky to write it [unclear], or anybody else you can get to write it - write a little  
story  
[Unclear] you know, anybody, doesn't make any difference - but get that story out now - that's -  
that's what to hand in - charge Brookings - let's get Brookings involved in this - get  
Brookings involved  
Another way to do it rather than having to do that is to have a senator arrange a speech on the  
Senate floor; [unclear] privilege, and - uh, and charge the whole thing [unclear]  
That might be better, than have a column

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HALDEMAN: Senator [unclear]

NIXON: Anybody's alright to do it, except Goldwater [unclear]

HALDEMAN: Goldwater would do it; Dole probably would [unclear]

NIXON: Dole shouldn't be used, but anybody else  
[Unclear] a little fun [unclear] - doesn't have to be a senator  
[Unclear] oughta do it - make himself famous - but it has to be done  
Let's - let's smoke Brookings out - smoke 'em out - [unclear]  
The way to do it is through a speech, probably, rather than an ar - uh - a column  
[Unclear] They can [unclear] they can't be sued  
Charge Gelb - use his name, and the information [unclear] he leaked it [unclear] charges should  
be brought against him  
[Unclear] Huston - is he around?  
Alright, put him to work - [unclear] - I wanna prosecute these people [unclear]  
[Unclear] now, on the other hand, when you talk to - uh, to Haig about -

HALDEMAN: Yeah

NIXON: This bad situation over there  
Haig has got to remember now that we've got to watch - we've got all our men and papers  
[unclear]  
[Unclear] reruns of the wedding [unclear] on t.v.

[TAPE RECORDED FROM NPMP COPY, 30 MAY 2001, TRANSCRIBED 11 JUNE 2001]