

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: The Cabinet
 General Alexander Haig
 James St. Clair
 Major General Brent Scowcroft
 [The President not present. Secretary
 Kissinger was in Geneva.]

DATE AND TIME: Monday, April 29, 1974
 7:30 p.m.

PLACE :

Haig: Let me go over the essential issue with the Judiciary Committee.

The first demand was for ten tapes. The President abided by the Appellate Court decision. The Court gave 4-1/2 of those to the Judiciary Committee. We delivered 19 tapes to Jaworski along with the additional material.

We voluntarily turned over to the Judiciary Committee all the material given to Jaworski.

Then they asked for 42 tapes. We asked for specificity. Three weeks later they were more specific. We answered and said we had to review the tapes to decide how much to provide. That did not sit well, and a subpoena issued. It is due tomorrow. The President will respond with the transcripts of all relevant material comprising the President's knowledge and actions with respect to Watergate. It is in 49 volumes.

The tapes have been cleaned up to take out bad language and comments about people to the extent it could be done without jeopardy to evidence.

All this material will be made public tomorrow. It will be a bombshell to the American people. There is some tough stuff in the tapes which could not be eliminated. You will have to "hunker down" on some of it.

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DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, SEC. 3.5
NSC MEMO, 11/24/98, STATE DEPT. GUIDELINES
BY lh NARA DATE 8/5/04



How will anyone know we didn't doctor the tapes? The President will offer to the Chairman and Minority Member to come to the White House to listen and verify the accuracy of the transcripts. This is on subpoenaed tapes. On the voluntary documents, they can hear the part we are turning over.

Why not let the staff listen? The President listened to it all and he won't give it to paid officials who will try to put hookers on it.

Everything pertinent to the President's knowledge and actions is here. There is no need for further turnovers. Material is exculpatory, troublesome, and devastating to Dean.

It will be persuasive to the American people -- not to the press who will try the devil theory on the material. It will be so to any fair-minded person, however.

Read this material -- I think then you will be able to stand up and be heard. If we don't make it this time, time is very short. Now is the time to turn this around.

St. Clair: Why is it necessary for the President to take this step? Otherwise he would be getting into an even longer credibility gap, because it looked like he was hiding something, because the President could never prove what was enough.

How do we prove we have nothing to hide? The President decided to let the people know what there is and make it public. The transcripts tell it like it is--it reads believably. The case will ride or fall on this presentation.

There are already requests for 142 tapes above what has already been requested.

The subpoena tactically was important for us. They knew they wanted more, but were stampeded into going now. We will give them what they asked -- if it exists -- and whatever more is required to get out the full story. This should satisfy the demands.



No President has ever given such material. It is confidential -- and it should also demonstrate the need for executive privilege. We have cleaned them up. They are ambiguous but they carry a clear message: (1) The President did not know about the coverup prior to March 21. [Mr. St. Clair read the excerpts where Dean said the President didn't know and where the President said the coverup was wrong.] And the President was not informed the payments were made until a month later.

The charge is the President was involved in the coverup since as early as September '72. This is clearly impossible -- as Dean says. Since that has been established, the charge has shifted to the charge that President did not move to prosecute the case. This is wrong, because the President asked Dean for a report. Dean was unable to do it so the President asked Ehrlichman to do it, who asked for three weeks. The Justice probe was going on simultaneously. On April 15 they all sat down and compared notes and decided the matter had to go to the Grand Jury and President decided to waive immunity. Then there was the problem of immunity for Dean. He warned he would bring the President in on other -- not Watergate -- matters.

The results show that the President carried out his law-and-order responsibilities. The summaries are greatly condensed, but everything in them happened.

We have a good case. The President has suffered by virtue of not turning over materials that were given to the Grand Juries. A fair reading of the material will exonerate the President. There will be those who will twist the material, but the weight of the material is clear.

Bush: Why wait until now?

Haig: When you read the material you will see the kind of courage it took to release these. Also the President genuinely believes that the ability of the President to talk to his staff has to be preserved.

Remember that the first charges were that the coverup started on September 15. That was the first ten tapes. Those tapes cleared him, so the charges then shifted. No one ever says the earlier charges are false; they just shift position.

The President's respect for the principle of the executive privilege has led him to give this material because the credibility gap became unmanageable.

Morton: Why not let more people hear the tapes?

Vice President: [Described the system on confirmation hearings on derogatory material.]

St. Clair: The Committee has already agreed the Chairman and Minority member should listen to those that were already turned over. Mansfield has said this is a pretty good arrangement.

Haig: This whole thing demonstrates the personal courage of the President. I hope we can match it in the days ahead with the flak we will get in the days ahead. The evidence, though, is conclusive.

The speech is not tub-thumping. It has some humility but is strong.

Cabinet Mtg 29 April 74 ✓

1930 (Hay/St. Clair)
Pres not present

Hay: Essential issues w/ Judiciary Center.

First demand was for 10 tapes - Patched by appellate court decision. The court gave 4 1/2 of those to a Fed Center. We delivered 19 tapes to Janowski & editorial material.

We voluntarily turned over to JC all material given to Janowski.

Then Sobus asked for 42 tapes - we asked for specifics - 3 wks later they were more specific. We answered & said we had to review c tapes to decide how much to provide. That did not sit well & subpoena issued - due tomorrow.

Pres will regard as transcripts of all relevant material comprising P knowledge & actions w/ respect to W.G. It is in 49 volumes.

~~Some~~ Tapes & hand up to take out bad language & comments about people to extent could be done w/o jeopardizing evidence.

All this material will be made public tomorrow. It will be a bombshell to Am people. There is some tough stuff in c tapes which could not be eliminated. You will have to "hunker down" on some of it.

How will anyone know ~~what~~ we didn't do in c tapes? I will offer to Chmn & Minority to come to WH to listen & verify accuracy of c transcripts - This on subpoenaed tapes. On voluntary documents, they can hear c part we turn over.

Why not let staff listen? I listened to it all & he won't give it to paid officials who will try to put brackets on it.

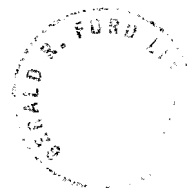
Everything pertinent to P knowledge & action is here. No need for further turnovers.

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& clear.

It will be ~~persuasive~~ persuasive to our people -
not to press who will try claim they are
material. Will be so to any fair minded
person, however.

Read this material - I think then you will be
able to stand up & be heard. If we don't make
it this time, time is very short. Now is the
time to turn this around.

St Clair Why necessary for P to take this step? Getting
an ever larger credibility gap because it looked
like he hiding something, because P could never
prove what was enough.

How do we prove we have nothing to hide? P decided
to let people know what is - make it further.
The transcripts tell it like it is - it reads
believably. The case will rich or fall on this
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already requested.

St Clair → The subpoena tactically was important for us. They
knew they wanted more, but were stampeded
into going now. We will give them what they
asked - if it exists - and whatever more is
required to get onto full story - This should
satisfy demands.

No P has ever given ~~the~~ such material. It
is confidential - and should also demonstrate
a need for special privilege. We have cleaned
them up. They are ambiguous but they
carry a clear msg: (1) Petid not know



about currency prior to March 21. (Read excerpts
having Dean say P did not know, & said currency was
wrong) P was not informed payments were made
until a month later.

Charge is P was involved in currency since as early
as Sept 12. This clearly impossible - as Dean says.
Since that has been established, a charge has shifted
to charge that P ~~has~~ did not want to find
prosecute a case. This is ~~not~~ wrong, because
P asked Dean for report. Dean urged so P
asked Erlich, who worked for 3 weeks. Justice probe
going on simultaneously. On Apr 15 they all
sat down & compared notes & decided ^{a matter} they
had to go to Grand Jury & P decided to waive
immunity. Then there was a problem of immunity
for Dean - he warned he would bring P in on
other - not contravene - matters. The results show
that he carried out his lower order responsibilities.

The summaries are greatly condensed, but everything
in them happened.

We have a good case. P has suffered by virtue of
not turning over material given to Grand Jury. For
a fair reading of a material will exonerate P.
There will be those who will trust a material -
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kind of courage it took to release this. Also P
genuinely believes that ability of P to talk to his staff
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Remember that a 1st charge was that currency started
on 15 Sept. That was a 1st / 10 tags. There were tags
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No one ~~ever~~ ever says a early change folder,
they just shift position.
Prospect for a principle of labor principle has led him
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VP (Described system on confirmation hearing
on derogatory material)

St Clair Conto has already agreed that minority should
listen to those already translated.

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This whole thing demonstrates a personal management.
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flak we will get in a day ahead. Evidence,
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