

TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDING OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT
AND CHARLES COLSON ON JANUARY 8, 1973, FROM 4:05 P.M. to
5:34 P.M.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) Incidentally, uh, Haldeman was telling, uh, told me that that, uh, apparently that Hunt is going to, uh, (unintelligible) now -- very definitely. I think it's the right thing for him to do, Chuck.

COLSON: Uh, he's doing it on my urging.

PRESIDENT: Well, I understand that Haldeman is after some kid they've got that -- whether he was -- quit because he wanted him to bug Gary Hart.

COLSON: Yeah, that's true. Yeah, he was the one that bugged McGovern headquarters. Yeah, I suspect so.

PRESIDENT: But how could that be, for this reason: Watergate came before McGovern got off the ground and I didn't know why the hell we were bugging McGovern.

COLSON: Well, remember that was after the California primary.

PRESIDENT: Watergate was?

COLSON: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Oh.

COLSON: We knew, I mean, at that time (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: Hmpff, Christ, I hope he didn't tell McGovern.

COLSON: (Laughs) Well --

PRESIDENT: Well, suppose, I told Haldeman, I said, well "suppose, uh, suppose those in the Congress does call him." He said, "He didn't do it." You know, nothing. That's the thing about all of this. We didn't get a God-damn thing from any of it that I can see.

COLSON: Well, apparently we did, of course, at Watergate mainly Hughes, and we knew.

PRESIDENT: I don't know. (Pause) Well, don't let it get you down.

COLSON: Oh hell no...

PRESIDENT: I know it's tough for, uh, for all of you, you, Bob, John, and the rest. We're just not gonna let it get us down. This is a battle, it's a fight, it's war and we just fight with a little, uh, you know, uh remember, uh, we'll cut them down one of these days. Don't you agree?

COLSON: I do. I, the only thing I hope is that the trial -- apparently Liddy is going to go the trial.

UNIDENTIFIED: (Unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: Uh, not now.

COLSON: That's probably a good thing because the only one who's in a, is in a very desperate...

PRESIDENT: Sensitive position is Hunt.

COLSON: ...and, uh, the others will just tell the truth and prove their case. But there is one advantage to it, there will be a hell of a lot of stuff that's come out.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

COLSON: and there will be some counts that will not be, that will be dropped, I think, against Hunt at this point, and there will be appeals pending in the other cases. Now that has got to be (storage count] (Unintelligible). That makes it very, very--

PRESIDENT: As long as this trial is going on, the Congress will keep its God-damn cotton-pickin' hands off that trial --

COLSON: Well, it could be because obviously they will prejudice the defendants in this connection. You could get a, you could get a -- it, it --

COLSON a lot of this only comes out, out, this will
(Continued) delay the Congress getting to the point
where they could even immunize the
witnesses. Uh, a question of prosecuting
because of lack of rules of evidence and
that kind of specifics, etc. Uh, and the
only question we have hanging from it at all
is the fact that (unintelligible) no
Government reports, providing these guys did
what they, what they, Ehrlichman.

PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, they're going to make
the Government prove its case, but none of
them are going to testify, isn't that
correct?

COLSON: Correct.

PRESIDENT: Are they?

SEVERAL VOICES: (Unintelligible) McCord.

COLSON: That's another subject McCord
(Unintelligible) hanging on to
(unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) appeal for all these guys.

COLSON: (Unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: But you know, Chuck, it's something they all
undertook knowing the risks. Right? Whatta
they'd think?

COLSON: I (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: Did they think they'd get caught?

COLSON: No, I don't think that at all, I think they
thought that, uh -- well, practically, uh --

PRESIDENT: The Democrats would drop it after the
election? No?

COLSON: I think they figured that, that these were
all guys who, uh, CIA.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

COLSON: And...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

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COLSON: ...they all were taking orders from people like (unintelligible) acting on behalf of John Mitchell and others... (Unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: Mitchell would take care of them. (Unintelligible) How could he?

COLSON: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: No way.

COLSON: That's, that's what they were -- Hunt's lawyer, he said he thought he, Hunt, objected to it violently because of the way Liddy handled the job. He said Liddy ordered him into Watergate. (Unintelligible) He said he didn't want any part of it. So we won't have to. But, he and Hunt may recognize...

PRESIDENT: Well, I'm glad that you [chose the twenty fifth]? (unintelligible) because basically I, uh, question of clemency Hunt's is a simple case. I mean, uh, after all, the man's wife is dead, was killed; he's got one child that has...

COLSON: Brain damage from an automobile accident.

PRESIDENT: That's right.

COLSON: (Unintelligible) one of his kids.

PRESIDENT: We'll build, we'll build that son-of-a-bitch up like nobody's business. We'll have Buckley write a column and say, you know, that he, that he should have clemency, if you've given 18 years of service.

COLSON: (Unintelligible). We'll write one.

PRESIDENT: That's what we'll do.

COLSON: He served under Hunt in CIA, of course. (Unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: We'll call him after, after. That's that's it. It's on the merits. I would have difficulty with some of the others.

COLSON: Oh, yeah.

PRESIDENT: You know what I mean.

COLSON: Well, the others aren't going to get the same...Aren't...The vulnerabilities are different with the others also.

PRESIDENT: Are they?

COLSON: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Why?

COLSON: Well because, uh, Hunt and Liddy did the work. The others didn't know anything direct that is (Unintelligible). bankrupt today.

PRESIDENT: Uh, well, I think I agree, but you know --

COLSON: See, I don't give a damn if they (laughs) spend five years in jail in the interim.

PRESIDENT: Oh, no.

COLSON: What I want of course, they took that attitude

PRESIDENT: They took that application because...

COLSON: I mean they can't hurt us. Hunt and Liddy were direct guardians of the meetings, discussions are very incriminating for us. More important that they.

PRESIDENT: Liddy is pretty tough.

COLSON: Yeah, he is, he is, apparently one of these guys who's a masochist, he, uh, he enjoys punishing himself. That's okay, as long as he remains stable. I think, he's tough.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

COLSON: He's an ideologue, not the kind who (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible). Let's not hope by God --

COLSON: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Jesus.

COLSON: (Unintelligible). Good neal they right wing

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PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible). Well, it's the last day I'm fifty nine. (Unintelligible).
(Privileged material deleted)

PRESIDENT: I wrote a little note to Ed Williams, his offer -- about his offer to go the game, and that sort of thing, a nice little note.

COLSON: What the hell does he want?

PRESIDENT: Would you be bugged if I see him?

COLSON: No, the guys won't see him He hasn't set the, he hasn't set the, uh (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: Now, I assume, Chuck --

COLSON: Yeah, he is coming.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

COLSON: He wanted, he wanted to come in at 3:30 today, uh --

PRESIDENT: That's right. I, I thought it would be good.

COLSON: And, uh, the chest's open all day long. Chris, Chris said that he got drunk 'cause he was, he was...

PRESIDENT: He does look like (unintelligible) of the Irish, remember?

COLSON: Yeah, and he was lamenting the fact that he ever took the Watergate case out with him because he said he missed that -- it ruined his chances of getting appointed to the Supreme Court.

PRESIDENT: Well maybe he has a good chance for it. (Pause) Now, you know what I mean?

COLSON: That's what he wants.

PRESIDENT: Well, you could, you could point out, you know, the fact that, uh, the fact that, uh, if they make a, uh, make some mental notes (unintelligible) what the hell (unintelligible). When you get to Presidents have always...Bobby Baker, say you want the facts. (Unintelligible). Let's face it the Johnson (unintelligible). Democratic Party ...and all that, and frankly that, the President is sort of puzzled sort of that they seem to take the Watergate as a vendatta. It's not -- , I'm not angry you understand, because you've got to represent the client. Just was puzzled by it. And they got word that, uh, they got out before (unintelligible) much really happened. Good get the point?

COLSON: That, that, I think that I...

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible).

COLSON: The thing I'm sure he recognized is that the Watergate matter was completely out of this control. That 's his (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

COLSON: He only gets to the civil side. He can't -- there's nothing now that he can do with the Watergate.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

COLSON: Uh, and he realizes we've had wild publicity adverse to what the jury (unintelligible) they could indict him. Right? (Unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) but, uh, let him feel there's no hard feelings, we don't have hard feelings, but that's the -- we can handle people. I, I, I'm a great believer in just being, you know --

COLSON: He wants to (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: How is he?

COLSON: (Unintelligible).

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PRESIDENT: Anyway the point is that, uh, you want to see him for other -- that, uh, you never know, we've got to play every string we've got here, don't you agree?

COLSON: Absolutely.

PRESIDENT: Think he's worth seeing?

COLSON: (Unintelligible) definitely see him. No problem with that.

PRESIDENT: He is a friend of the, uh, soothsayer...Mitchell.

COLSON: Mitchell.

PRESIDENT: She signed his letter, you know. That's how we got the letter, and, uh, it's obvious that, uh, that, uh, he's trying to at least make a -- hold out some sort of a (unintelligible).

COLSON: oh, absolutely, absolutely. Because the, the way that really came about is he called, uh me and asked if she could run it over and give it to him. Send it over I told him, I said "Forget it." I said (unintelligible) I don't know what you've got. I'm glad I gave it to him. But, I did call him, him back and I said, you know, "Be glad to have you drop by and say hello to people." He just said, "Set a time. He couldn't believe that George (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: Well, we gotta figure it, Chuck (unintelligible) this could go on and on and on (unintelligible) it would be one witness after another.

COLSON: I don't think that's important at this time. I'm not worried about the court proceeding, uh...

PRESIDENT: Well, as long as the court proceeding is going on (unintelligible) by God, Mansfield, the opposition has clearly -- (unintelligible) great, great dangerous for the Congress to get (unintelligible). They cannot -- it it -- Jesus Christ, suppose it's for the communists (unintelligible) everybody else would be jumping down the throats of the congress for interfering with the rights of the, the quote charged but not yet proven guilty individuals.

COLSON: Look at Ellsberg.

PRESIDENT: Look at Manson case. You remember what I said about that? Christ, that's a, now what the hell is this? Where is the, where is the single standard here, Chuck?

COLSON: Well, this is, uh, this is, this is the classic case of the double standard. There isn't been, except for Bill Buckley, one single iota of sympathy for these fellows, none at all.

PRESIDENT: Well, the point is, too, it isn't just the sympathy the point is, the point is there hasn't been any outrages about whether they're guilty or not, no cry of outrage raised about the Congress meddling in their civil rights. God damn it, the Congress goes forward with an investigation while they are still in -- I think that's why the court proceeding has its advantage. As long as that court proceeding is on, the Congress should keep its God-damn hands off.

COLSON: Well --

PRESIDENT: I think some of our guys up there have got to do that, they've got to say that.

COLSON: (Unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: Or will they?

COLSON: No, I think they will. I think, uh, they have been relatively silent on this and that's just as well because at this point let's not throw

PRESIDENT: Democrats.

COLSON: Democrats into the wash here. Uh

PRESIDENT: Yeah, but Mansfield's not optimum on this.

COLSON: Yeah, but that was Watergate written quite some time ago. (Unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: Oh, was it? Is that so?

COLSON: He wrote that letter back in November. Just released it. I think the reason he released it frankly was to, uh...

PRESIDENT: Take Teddy off the hook.

COLSON: Yeah, take Teddy off the hook, and also, it was kind of a warning that you'd better have an open trial. And, uh I think the timing of that was, was more, uh, designed, not to let us think we could get away with being able to suppress, uh without complications, suppress (unintelligible) because throughout the (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) Sweetheart. Yeah.

COLSON: That's right.

PRESIDENT: (Laughs) unfortunately, unfortunately. We're not that way. Can you imagine the way Johnson would have handled it?

COLSON: Yeah. I can.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

COLSON: The U.S. Attorney would, would get off his fanny (snap fingers) like that or told to. Just take a little tip. (Unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible). Well, I don't know -- we can't control that show. I don't -- we can't get away. (Unintelligible).

COLSON: I don't think so.

PRESIDENT: No.

COLSON: No, the stake will be sort of stalemate.

PRESIDENT: That's what it amounts to basically. That's all Watergate. And incidentally we'll survive it.

COLSON: Oh, sure.

PRESIDENT: I just don't believe that as time goes on -- I think people can tire of it too. The Watergate thing can hang around like ITT and I think you get tired of ITT.

COLSON: Terribly, terribly.

PRESIDENT: You think so?

COLSON: Yes, I do. I think they'll develop the Watergate probe on this, unless they get a big name. If they do that it's a different story so be it.

PRESIDENT: What do you think, if they get big names, the big name denies it but, that's what happened in Africa, uh, but you really must be (unintelligible) to fix somebody. That must be very basically a hearsay proposition all, all up and down the line from what I--. Well, now you told me that. I just sensed it, what the hell -- at least Mitchell was that smart. He was close to it but not in it directly.

COLSON: No.

PRESIDENT: No, they can't

COLSON: This is perjury.

PRESIDENT: Perjury that's a damn hard rap to prove. (Unintelligible).

COLSON: (Unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: We did it with Hiss. Well, I'll tell ya, it ain't easy. You gotta get it; they haven't got that kind of evidence on Mitchell, Jackies(?) uh, or anybody else. Have they?

COLSON: No, I don't think that -- I don't know who the hell -- I keep finding that difficult because case on this (unintelligible/**REMOVED**).

PRESIDENT: You fight from (unintelligible). I don't know what to fight.

COLSON: No, well, I think if they get to the stage where they are volunteering and the Senate gets really serious really concerned about about putting them on television. Complicates the justice. That's one of the things I get most concerned with him and that was last week was the (unintelligible) agreeing to drop certain counts of Hunt's indictment in exchange for a guilty plea on three counts.

PRESIDENT: They did do that?

COLSON: Yes, but you see, that precludes him from taking jeopardy on two different counts. Therefore, he couldn't refuse to accept congressional immunity (unintelligible) even though it may be given immunity, but the 5th ammendment says I can't be forced to testify against myself (unintelligible). Iam not questioning they way duty is (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: Oh, you fight that right through?

COLSON: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: And, if necessary you say I want to --

COLSON: I mean, Bittman, Bittman's admitting he can take that one to the Supreme Court.

PRESIDENT: You don't want -- a hell of a (unintelligible).

COLSON: (Unintelligible) will probably pass enough time, so that by then he will have serve his sentence.

PRESIDENT: I don't think that's -- I don't know (Unintelligible).

COLSON: Teddy's in an awkward position. They way it looks we can't him. It's hard to figure about this.

PRESIDENT: Oh, did he?

COLSON: Yes sir. Yesterday, in the Washington Post (we ran an apartment page)? to go through the (unintelligible), just takes a jackhammer to attract.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) I've read that one chapter --

COLSON: Yeah. Fantastic. I was going to tell you to take that (unintelligible) right now. This gal was under that portrait in the Barbados report.

PRESIDENT: He may be destroyed before he gets off the ground, Chuck.

COLSON: Yeah, I think so. I think Dave Kennedy may be (unintelligible)...

PRESIDENT: But you see come in in the first chapter. (Unintelligible).

COLSON: (Unintelligible) run into it.

PRESIDENT: Well, that's what you're doing.
(Privileged material deleted) (There is more here on Sept. 21 clean-up copy).

PRESIDENT: Let me tell you, uh, one thing, the, uh, that your President is working on (unintelligible) looks good now. (Pause) The Watergate thing goes too far and we start getting investigated for it, we will have to, uh, get out and get everybody's (unintelligible) on it. Uh, the uh, Johnson bugging of the President for example, last summer. Now you talk about bugging the Democratic Committee and failing that, for example, and bugging a candidate for President the last two weeks of the campaign...

COLSON: Or close to it.

PRESIDENT: ...by the FBI.

COLSON: Yeah.

PREPSIDFNT: ...by the FBI. Deke DeLoach did it. Johnson brought him (unintelligible). Deke DeLoach has told Mitchell and Hoover had told Mitchell (unintelligible). The question is whether or not Mitchell will say that and whether he believed Deke DeLoach (unintelligible) job. Liddy is a former FBI man and he discussed that with Mark Felt and said I was ready to do it. He said, under oath? Would he mind doing it?

COLSON: He worked for John Kennedy.

PRESIDENT: Well, I don't mind (unintelligible) but I just say, just say forget you heard it. But I heard they're going to play for keeps.

COLSON: Well, there's another thing that has to be brought out too, and that is if we get really

COLSON: in thick, and if the going gets rough in
(Continued) Congress -- I don't know whether it will, you know. The court proceeding is going to run its course, and that's beyond our control ' the country's control. Then I think we've got to prepare, be go all they we are going to be (unintelligible) is floating around. Birch Bayh (unintelligible/**REMOVED**) security money (unintelligible/**REMOVED**).

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible/**REMOVED**) can we (unintelligible/**REMOVED**). Well, I just don't know. I just don't know. If we did, why have we done it before.

COLSON: Well, because Clark Mollenoff run a whole series on Birch Bayh's funding. I think kind of look the other way. The Justice Department -- but those were (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: Statute of limitations problem. (Unintelligible). I don't know. But anyway we've got that on the (unintelligible). I don't know how (unintelligible). How do we get such stuff out, (unintelligible).

COLSON: With Kennedy, when Kennedy said (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: that I don't know about. But that's one story.

COLSON: The point is that the only way that those guys (unintelligible) they really (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: But the point is, but let me, but let me say, having that in mind, would you not agree, though that, that the Johnson thing would indicate to you that the President of the United States (unintelligible) would, uh -- I would frankly hope and wish we could add that half of the problem -- I would like for it to happen. Although maybe it was better that it not happen. Because Johnson, Johnson cannot deny that it happened.

COLSON: Just knowing Johnson, I wonder if he actually saw the need to call up Marvin Watson and say Marvin you get DeLoach's ass over here and tell him what you want done. (Unintelligible). Regardless, it doesn't matter whether it was someone close to Johnson or Johnson.

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PRESIDENT: of course he says he did it because of Vietnam and...All that. But nevertheless, he leave to great deal McGovern noad--his talk S(n with the North Vietnamese, the Terrirists and all that.

COLSON: Pierre Salinger or uh -- (Unintelligible). Handed it to the President.

PRESIDENT: Close to the election, close to the election but (unintelligible) a hell of a lot though.

COLSON: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: That's the whole point.

COLSON: I was thinking if it came to -- that we could give it something. Save of our guys.

PRESIDENT: With what kind of an effect -- It would have some effect on (unintelligible).

COLSON: I (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: They would certainly say now (unintelligible). Look here, what the hell are we talking about here? (Unintelligible/**REMOVED**). We would deny on a stack of Bibles that he didn't know anything about it. And now who the hell is going to believe it?

COLSON: Nobody.

PRESIDENT: Well,we would say it done for political purposes...

COLSON: It would be like the January 25th announcement when you talked about a whole series of issues and, and went on, everybody after that including some where a list of questions (unintelligible) mansfield said, well that's what were been urging it on the President all the time (unintelligible) he says it is (unintelligible). And your answer would be, I'll let the court proceeding go ahead (unintelligible) and now that, now that you're not satisfied with justice (unintelligible) and meet with...

PRESIDENT: Right.

COLSON: Let's call a spade a spade. Somebody had to deal with it. Deke would, uh, do it. He would do anything.