

Buzhardt said he would listen immediately. Taking the President's copies, he headed back to his office. He threaded the magnetic tape to the second Nixon-Haldeman conversation of the day—from 1:04 to 1:13 p.m.—and adjusted the headphones.

"Okay, just postpone," he heard the President say, but he couldn't make out the rest. He heard scratching noises, as if the President were writing as he talked. The scratching stopped. "Just say," the President continued, and he added something which was unintelligible. And then, "very bad to have this fellow Hunt, ah, he knows too damn much, and he was involved—we happen to know that."

Buzhardt stopped the machine. The allusion wasn't too bad, he decided. The President knew about Hunt's involvement. That was never covered up. Buzhardt pressed in the playback mechanism and heard Nixon talking in the vague terms about Hunt's being "likely to blow the whole Bay of Pigs thing." The President seemed to be considering what excuse or cover story might be fed the CIA. "I don't want them to get any ideas we're doing it because our concern is political," the President said.

"Right," Haldeman answered.  
 "And at the same time, I wouldn't tell them it is not political..."  
 "Right..."

Was that what he had heard? Buzhardt rewound the tape and listened again. Yes.

Buzhardt let the conversation run to the end before he took off the earphones. There were, as the President had insisted, references to the CIA and national security, but it sounded as if Nixon and Haldeman were solidifying the cover they had agreed upon earlier that day. Rehearsing their lines? Buzhardt went to the next Nixon-Haldeman conversation, an EOB meeting that took place between 2:20 and 2:45 that afternoon. It was elliptical, but it also implied strongly that the CIA was being used to stop the FBI for political reasons.

Buzhardt put the headphones down and walked back to the President's office.

"Now, doesn't that clarify it?" Nixon asked as Buzhardt walked in.  
 "No." The two conversations made things worse.

Nixon insisted. They demonstrated that national-security purposes were real.

The tapes don't show that," Buzhardt replied. "They make it clear that the security business was the cover for national-security reasons."

"What were they?"

"The President didn't really reply."

Buzhardt repeated his conclusion.

The two men stared at each other. Finally Nixon broke silence. "I disagree," he said emphatically, and he walked out of the room.

Buzhardt collected himself slowly. As he walked down the hall to his office, he thought about how many times he had gone home from work and told his wife, "I think the President thinks if he can convince me, everything will be okay." There was no convincing the lawyer this time.

Are certain than ever that the June 23 conversations were fatal, he called St. Clair. He told him about his discussion with the President, and now he insisted that St. Clair listen to the tapes.

St. Clair was anxious as he came in to listen. In San Francisco, he remembered, the President had told him that the initial tape was "not that bad." Hearing the conversation now, he had trouble understanding its meaning. "Other things," he did not recognize some of the words in the scenario and really didn't know the whole well enough. Patiently, Buzhardt identified Dahl and Ogartio and explained their significance to St. Clair.

St. Clair asked to hear it again. But a second hearing was to persuade him that the President's assessment was not conclusive. St. Clair said that the conversation was a direct refutation of what the President had said in his May 1968 statement. That construction of events was basic to St. Clair's defense—a "bare point," Buzhardt called it. Significant evidence which undermined the May 1968 statement was probably fatal. For two years the Pres-