

Watergate-Era Nixon Tapes: A Portrait of Suspicion

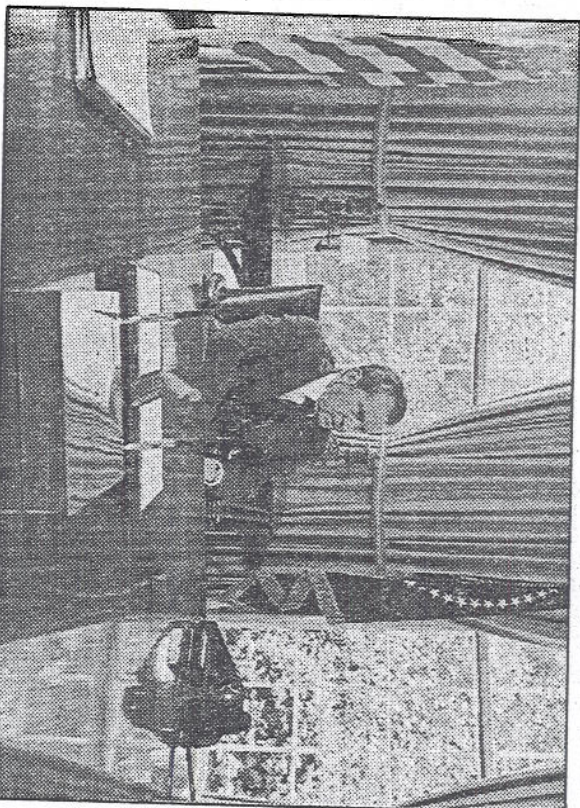
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It is September 1972, a presidential election year, and in the Oval Office Richard M. Nixon is looking beyond his anticipated re-election by planning a purge of suspected enemies in the bureaucracy. Days after he begins his second term, Nixon tells aides H.R. Haldeman and John W. Dean III, the cleansing will begin.

"I want there to be no holdovers left," he says, speaking first about the Treasury Department. "The whole goddamn bunch go out . . ." He then turns to other departments, spelling out his intentions: "You're out, you're out, you're finished, you're done, done, finished. Knock the hell out of there."

Nixon's aides are enthralled. "You'll end up with one hell of a government," Haldeman, his chief of staff, says admiringly.

This conversation is one of many Nixon tapes made public for the first time yesterday by the National Archives. Some provide additional details about his efforts to



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Ex-president talks of purging government of enemies on newly released tapes.

cover up the Watergate affair—the June 1972 break-in at Democratic National Committee offices here that led to Nixon's historic resignation two years later. More striking, however, is what these conversations once again demonstrate about the attitudes and at-

mosphere that flourished inside the Nixon White House.

The tapes will introduce a generation of Americans who came to maturity after Nixon and Watergate passed into history to a vengeful, paranoid Nixon who lashes at enemies without—and

suspected enemies within. He distrusts nearly everyone—Jews, bureaucrats, the press, even people he has appointed to high office.

All this stands in sharp contrast to the Nixon of the 1960s, whose views are accorded respectful attention by presidents and publishers as those of a wise elder statesman.

On May 5, 1971, for instance, more than a year before the Watergate break-in, Nixon responds to national demonstrations against the Vietnam War by wondering aloud whether part of the trouble isn't inspired by Jews.

Nixon: "Aren't the Chicago Seven all Jews? Davis's a Jew, you know."

Haldeman: "I don't think Davis is."

Nixon: "Hoffman, Hoffman's a Jew."

Haldeman: "Abbie Hoffman is and that's so."

Other names are mentioned. Nixon: "About half of these are Jews."

Another theme, constantly expressed, is Nixon's distrust of, and See WATERGATE, A7, Col. 1

On Tape, Nixon Plans Purge of Enemies

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hatred for, the federal bureaucracy.

"We have no discipline in this bureaucracy," Nixon tells aides in another Oval Office conversation in April 1971. "We never fire anybody. We never reprimand anybody. We never demote anybody. We always promote the sons-of-bitches that kick us in the ass. That's true in the State Department. It's true in HEW [the old Health, Education and Welfare Department]. It's true in OMB, and

true for ourselves, and it's just got to stop."

Nor does Nixon limit his hatred of the bureaucracy to faceless civil-servants. He is equally contemptuous of his own Cabinet officers. Attorney General John N. Mitchell had been "captured by the bureaucracy," he tells Dean and Haldeman during the Sept. 15 meeting. "Mitchell was told, quote, get over there and help me, ah, break some of those guys, they're not even worth, they're not worth a damn," Nixon says. He says Secretary of State William P. Rogers "was totally captured by the American bureaucracy, [Defense Secretary] Mel Laird, he didn't change anybody"

The Sept. 15 meeting previously had become famous as the session in which Nixon ordered Dean to start taking notes on those "who tried to do us in."

The new transcripts of a later part of the meeting flesh out the president's plans, including rambling discussions in which Nixon and his aides plot how to pull the tax records of prominent Democrats after the election.

"We have to do it artfully so that we don't create an issue by abusing the IRS [Internal Revenue Service] politically," says Nixon.

"And, there are ways to do it. Goddamn it, sneak in in the middle of the night"

Haldeman is cautious, saying that they "shouldn't take the risk of getting us blown out of the water before the election." But after the election, he adds, "let the Democrats down there squeal and say Nixon's pulling the tax files of all the Democrats Let them scream about repression and, all that stuff"

Dean offers a suggestion: "The other thing is you could always increase your compliance program . . . just happens that a lot of Democrats get caught"

Haldeman: "We'll pull, we'll pull a lot of Republicans too and just don't look at those after we pull 'em."

Then Nixon says: "Well, they're gonna get it sure we've just got, we've got to do it, even if we've got to kick [IRS Commissioner Johnnie M.] Walter's ass out first and get a man in there."

This leads to a broader discussion about Nixon's future agenda. "It's going to be rough game," warns Nixon, one in which resignations will be demanded and positions may not even be filled. "We can leave the whole goddamn government empty," notes Haldeman, "and it wouldn't hurt the world one bit."
