

June 15, 1972
3:47 – 5:25 pm

Conversation No. 736-1
Cassette No. 2252
Oval Office

[Conversation between the President and H.R. Haldeman about table arrangements for an upcoming State dinner]

Nixon: God, thank God I – I didn't look at that thing carefully the first time.

Haldeman: They didn't have the President at your table?

Nixon: No! You see, they – when you have the damn round tables you do it just the opposite way.

Haldeman: But not for a State dinner.

Nixon: That's right. Actually, they ought not to have it at a round table.

Haldeman: That's right.

Nixon: I wonder if we could change it that way, I mean I really—

Haldeman: She said there were [inaudible]. I wouldn't worry about it for the Mexicans. They're so screwed up, if you think back to how they did their dinners! [Laughs]

Nixon: Yeah.

[Removed section]

Haldeman: Son of a bitch, boy, he was playing that for every nickel it was worth! He knew he was on Mexican television.

Nixon: Incidentally, I think so that I don't have to – with the number of Mexicans we've got and the clatter to the ears, it will be a little deafening. I think I might make the toast short and let [the man] translate the damn thing. I'd be happy to translate my toast and his. You've got about [unintelligible], you know?

Haldeman: Yes?

Nixon: Otherwise...

Haldeman: (Interrupting) Some of them speak English now.

Nixon: Not as many as you think. I'm rather amazed how many don't.

Haldeman: It is astonishing.

Nixon: You see... We know that Mexicans in Mexico are very proud not to, many of them.

Haldeman: You'd think the ones that rise to the top in politics would, though.

Nixon: It is always disconcerting to have that –

Haldeman: Simultaneous?

Nixon: Yeah. When you're talking, you've got to have – babbling at a guy's ears and he's babbling at your side.

Haldeman: Well there's some merit to giving a short toast too. It might keep him down to a short one.

Nixon: No it won't. [Haldeman laughs] Well I made a short little communiqué, I mean, not [unintelligible] statement, but knowing that he wanted to make it – that he would talk longer. And he did. He wasn't as long as I thought he'd be, though.

Haldeman: No? He actually – his main statement was fairly short and then he had to add that after he gets up there.

Nixon: He's an awfully nice guy.

Haldeman: Is he?

Nixon: Oh yes. He's got enormous energy and, and drive, honest – I think he's honest.

Haldeman: He looks like a more powerful guy than Díaz Ordaz.

Nixon: Yes, he's much more healthy—

Haldeman: Definitely. Díaz Ordaz is in bad shape.

Nixon: Yeah. He's a terrific guy.

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