

## 537-004

**Date:** 1971-07-05

**Participant:** Richard M. Nixon

**Participant:** Ronald L. Ziegler

**Participant:** H. R. "Bob" Haldeman

**Start Time:** 16:03

**End Time:** 18:15

**Place:** Oval Office

SCROLLER TITLE: "The Jews Are Born Spies"

SCENE SETTER: Less than a week after the U.S. Supreme Court dealt a blow to the Nixon administration and sanctioned further publication of the Pentagon Papers, President Nixon and senior White House aides discussed the role of race and religion as drivers of espionage. This conversation stands as one of the cruder examples of Nixon's prejudices and his willingness to air them among confidants.

**President Nixon:** All the Jews we have around remain close, but there's this strange malignancy now that seems to creep among them. I don't know, radicalism. I can imagine how the fact that [Daniel J. "Dan"] Ellsberg is in this must really tear a fellow like Henry [A. Kissinger] to pieces, or [Leonard "Len"] Garment, you know. Just like the Rosenbergs [Julius and Ethel Rosenberg] and all that. That just has to kill them. And you feel horrible about it.

**Ronald L. "Ron" Ziegler:** Couldn't be a guy by the name of Schneider.

**President Nixon:** There ain't none.

**H. R. "Bob" Haldeman:** [*chuckling*] It would've been a Rosenstein that changed his name.

**Ziegler:** [*Laughs.*] It is. Right. It's always an Ellsberg or [*unclear*].

**President Nixon:** They're all Jews. Every one's a Jew. [Leslie H.] Gelb's a Jew. [Morton H. "Mort"] Halperin's a Jew.

**Haldeman:** [*speaking under President Nixon*] Ellsberg. Rosenberg.

**President Nixon:** [*Pause.*] But there are bad—[Alger] Hiss was not a Jew. So that proves . . . something. Very interesting thing: so few of those who engage in espionage are Negroes. Very lucky that way.

**Haldeman:** And good.

**President Nixon:** [*speaking over another participant*] As a matter of fact, very few of them become Communists. If they do, they—they're likely to get into Angela Davis. They're more of the activist type, and they throw bombs and this and that. But the Negroes, have you ever noticed? There are damn few Negro spies.

**Haldeman:** They're not intellectual enough. Not smart enough.

**President Nixon:** It may be.

**Haldeman:** They're not smart enough to be spies. They're not intellectual enough—

**President Nixon:** The Jews—the Jews are born spies. You notice how many of them are? They're just in it up to their necks.

**Haldeman:** Well, they got a basic devious abil[ity]—deviousness, that . . .

**President Nixon:** Well, also, an arrogance, an arrogance that says—that's what [*Ziegler attempts to interject*] makes a spy. He puts himself above the law.

**Ziegler:** Yeah.

**President Nixon:** I—Other than the spies for the pay. I'm talking about the spies that do it because of idealism.

CITATION: "Richard M. Nixon, Ronald L. Ziegler, and H. R. "Bob" Haldeman on 5 July 1971," Conversation 537-004, Draft Transcript, Presidential Recordings Program, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia.