



H. R. Haldeman Diaries Collection, January 18, 1969 – April 30, 1973

National Archives and Records Administration, Online Public Access Catalog Identifier: 7787364

Wednesday, March 31.

The Democratic Caucus had their vote this morning on the question of pulling troops out of Vietnam. They got a reasonably good compromise through, and on the basis of that, we had long discussions about how to handle a reaction and decided that our position should be that we were very pleased that they're supporting the goal of the President to end the war and get our prisoners released as soon as possible. It did avoid stating a specific time certain, and our particular victory was that they didn't put in a date of the end of 1971. They have called for end of involvement by the end of the 92nd Congress. We've turned it basically to a positive for us, and I think it will stick pretty well that way.

Later in the day, the House voted on the draft extension, and we almost lost our two-year proposal to an one-year amendment. But the two-years carried by 200 to 198. Gerry Ford led the fight on this one and apparently did extremely well.

The bigger thing today was the Calley decision, which was announced yesterday of guilty-- (or several days ago) of guilty, and then the sentence today of life in prison. The public reaction has been enormous, and all in favor of Calley and against the conviction. The question now is what the President should or should not do in reaction to this, as public opinion continues to mount. There's a number of varying views within the staff, and we still haven't gotten it figured out.

The President, however, has talked to several Congressmen, including Ford, and this evening at dinner to John Connally, all of whom feel very strongly that he should make a strong move and that he should go right away. They want strong and fast action, and the President is inclined to that direction too, feeling that when public sentiment sets in on something like this, it won't turn. People think this is a bad rap, and therefore, it's not one where we should sit back and take a negative on it. Ehrlichman and others have some concern about taking too much action too quickly, and we've had a great deal of discussion about it during the day and the evening, and we'll have to arrive at some kinds of decisions by tomorrow.



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Audio Cassette 6, Side A.
Duration: 30 seconds

We got into another Helene Drown flap tonight. She's been camping at the house since yesterday and refused to leave even to go out to dinner with Connie Stuart tonight before the Connally's arrived. So the President maneuvered back-and-forth to try and avoid her and successfully did so. She then came back from dinner early in hopes of catching them then but the President had just escorted them out to the helicopter before she arrived so she missed out all around.

In the conversation in the President's office today, Henry got into the general position we're now in. He says that he really has the feeling now that he smells some good moves coming up. He's convinced that the USSR wants a détente, and this is pretty much confirmed by Brezhnev's very conciliatory speech to the Party Congress. He thinks that this is just one more indication that they do want to take a much lower-key position from here on out. The President tends to concur in this view.

End of March 31.