



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

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Saturday, February 27th. Having cancelled his plan to go to Camp David last night, the President ended up with a basically free Saturday. A good chunk of the morning was filled with a two and a half hour meeting with Rogers, Laird, Kissinger, and Helms, to which Moorer and Sisco were added. This was on the Mideast situation as Henry had made the point that things were getting again to another crisis level. They apparently had a pretty good session. And the President seemed relaxed and unconcerned afterwards. He was then at loose ends and sort of bouncing around trying to figure what to do.

He called Garment in just to have a general chat with him and asked Finch to come in at the same time, but he was tied with a meeting and so came in a little later. He didn't have anything in particular to cover with Garment. Ran through sort of a general review of what was going on and then got into his Carl Sandburg book on Lincoln, in which he was particularly impressed with a section on General Maurer in the Civil War-- a man of whom no one has ever heard, and that was precisely the point. He was apparently one of the greatest generals of the war, but Sandburg's big point was that he never spoke of himself and he was a man they could always count on to get his job done with no fuss and no discussion. The President found this very impressive and was making the point that a great many of our staff are of the same caliber. He was, of course, implying that he was referring to Len. He also made the point that he wanted to put, get Len onto television talking about the President in the anecdotal area and the personal background, etcetera which, of course, Len could do very effectively. In that general discussion, and as Finch joined us, we concluded that White House staff, in general, cannot go on television regarding substance, and only those who know how to avoid getting into substance should go on at all.

He then got into considerable discussion on the general PR situation, questioning whether any of what we've done in the domestic area has really done any good. Also, he's starting to take the



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line again that maybe we should just forget all of our efforts, that things are pretty well set and there's nothing we can do about it in any event; so we might as well quit trying.

He then gets immediately back to trying to figure how to handle the Laos ground action in Vietnam; taking on the networks; how to get more going on the Hill regarding Vietnam; and a long discussion of timing of TV press conferences as to whether they should be every two weeks, every week, or what—Ziegler was in for part of this discussion.

He also made the point that when Eisenhower left office there were no American ground forces or advisors in Vietnam, and no Americans had been killed in Vietnam. Eight years later, when Nixon came in, he found there had been two hundred thousand American casualties, for over forty thousand American dead, and that's the light in which the records should be looked at. The Democratic administrations of the sixties got us into the war. The Nixon Administration is getting us out. If the Democrats want to fight the war issue on a partisan basis, this is the way they are going to have to take it. He wants Dole to take this on and for others to follow up, softening it, of course, by saying that we've had the approval of a strong loyal minorities of Democrats who support the President and his efforts, and that they deserve great credit, and then cites them.

He feels that in the general PR area, we've got to spend more time on communication, getting our line out, and less on the little odds and ends type items. He got intrigued with the idea of doing more radio talks as a result of the State of the World thing on Thursday. He thinks he can do specific radio speeches to the old people, young people, Indians, Mexicans, rural types, etcetera, and then do a very brief TV excerpt out of this.



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He had asked Harlow to get into the VP problem the other day, and Harlow called me today to say that he did talk to Sohmer about the Gridiron, and he thinks maybe he's made some progress there. But he was not able to get the VP alone last night to talk about his staff problem and the whole intergovernmental relations operation, but he'll try to do that over the weekend.

The Mideast thing kept popping up today as we went along, because Henry is still concerned. The President asked me to get to AI Haig and ask him what he thinks we should be doing: What would he and Henry change? Or what would they do that we aren't doing now?

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Audio Cassette 5, Side A, Withdrawn Item Number 7 [AC-5(A) Sel 6]
Duration: 12 seconds

Recognizing that we, the President, will not accept the proposition that we will base our planning on the approach of satisfying the Israelis.

In order to pacify Rogers, he wanted me to be sure and call Bill and tell him that we had not been responsible for Henry going on CBS news the other morning, and that this had been something worked on by Herb Klein in violation of instructions. I had the talk with Haig, but it was interrupted because the President, at 3:00, all of sudden ordered up a helicopter for Camp David said he wanted me to go along, so I had to rush out and take off with him. Haig reported our conversation to Henry, and as soon I got to Camp David, I had a call from Henry...



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Duration: 3 minutes 48 seconds

...who started in on his same thing of saying everything is a terrible disaster and that even though they got some things worked out this morning in the meeting, that, that State now wants to send a cable endorsing the Arab position and he feels this would give the Soviets a signal that they now have a clear shot at the Israelis. He feels he's been in the horrible position of seeing a collision coming and not being allowed to say anything. He says there's a total lack of confidence on the part of the Israelis in both Rogers and Sisco. He says, further, that we've lied to Israel, and that State, include, meaning Rogers and Kissinger have lied to the President. For example, they've lied to the President in saying that Rabin is embarrassed by this situation, and he urges that the President ask Rabin himself and let him tell them how he feels. He says if we're willing to see Israel destroyed, then, okay, but if we're not, then all this is a lot of bologna. And that as a result of our present process, the Soviet will become a permanent Mediterranean power.

Through all this, as he kept talking about the problems, I kept pushing him on, paragraph-by-paragraph, on what would he do about it, which is what the President wanted to get smoked out, because, Henry keeps coming into him with the dire predictions, but never with any solutions. I finally got him to say that first of all they should stop running the same play. That they now want to send this cable and they shouldn't do it. They should slow down and think about it for a week.

His main point is that we should figure out what it is we want all the way; exactly where we want to come out. Then, we should talk to the Israelis, and work out a position, rather than euchring them step-by-step, which he claims is what Rogers is doing now. Secondly, he thinks we should get Soviets involved. Third, we should get a package together of what we want. And, fourth, the



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President should check the veracity of what he's being told. He feels that Rogers and Sisco keep asking the President for one decision at a time, and that instead we should tell the Israelis what we're willing to do, and lay out what we expect them to do.

He says the problem really was clarified at the meeting today and that State had been saying that all they want is to get Israel to put down just any proposal. But then the President flushed them out by saying, well, what if they propose to stand firm on the '67 borders. They then said that wouldn't be satisfactory. His point is that Israel will fight over the '67 borders, and that that's the problem we've got to figure out. But that we have to talk to the Israelis and the Arabs to decide it.

His point really is that we've got to determine what exactly is our peace settlement, and go with it. He made the point also that his feeling is that not only is the President perhaps right in feeling that Henry is emotionally involved here and therefore not the right person to be dealing with it, but that the President himself has a hang up regarding the whole Jewish matter. He refuses to be squeezed and he has to decide if he wants to let the Soviets have the Mediterranean and bring an Israeli war which they'll probably lose. He makes the point that the President is so sensitive to being squeezed by the American Jewish community that he overreacts the other way.

He feels that once the President gets a course, we can design the policies and move ahead, but that now, under the way were working, we're just feeding Rogers' and Sisco's egos rather than getting what we want done. He urged that I set up a meeting between the President and Rabin so the President would hear the Israeli side.

After going through all that, we went over to Aspen to dinner. The Connallys are up here for the weekend, so the President had them plus John Ehrlichman, who came up for the dinner. It was Connally's birthday and we had a birthday cake. Very pleasant, light-hearted dinner chat. The



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President selected *Around the World in 80 Days* as the movie because the Connallys hadn't seen it and he was sure they would be delighted with it, which they basically were. He was hysterical through it; as each scene was coming up, he'd say "You're going to love this particular part," or "the scenery is just great, now watch this closely," and so on. He obviously has seen it time after time and knows the whole thing practically by heart. He also got a big kick, as did Connally, out of identifying the old stars as they appear in their bit parts.

End of February 27th.