



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

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

Thursday, December 7th, at Camp David. We started off the day with the Dole problem, since I called him this morning to confirm his appointment with the President today, and make sure he was ready to make his announcement. And he took a very bitter approach; indicated to me that there had been a lot of press stuff out indicating he was being forced out and that sort of thing. That he didn't think that was right that he wasn't going to go along with it, and he didn't know whether he was ready to move ahead on his resignation or not. That he was going to be talking to his State Chairman from Kansas later today, and then would call me back. He got into quite a bit of tirade on the whole situation, blaming it on White House leaks and that sort of thing. Although it's clear from checking some of the stuff he was referring to, that they must be Dole-originated leaks, which he's trying to do in self-defense, not realizing he's hurting himself more than he's helping. I talked to Mitchell about it, and he didn't have much to offer in the way of help.

The President had apparently had talked to Ford sometime this morning about the Dole thing, too, and had me call Ford back and see if we could get his help, and Gerry was concerned about the situation, but didn't feel that there was much he could do about it. Then tonight, Colson called Larry to report that Dole had called him saying he had decided he was the only friend he had at the White House, and then launched into a ten minute tirade against me, followed by a statement that he was being forced out and screwed in the press, and that sort of thing, and that he wasn't going to stand for it. That he had the votes on the Committee, and that he wasn't going to get out, he was going to fight it. So, we now launched Bryce Harlow and John Mitchell to see if they can get him to listen to reason.

We got into a few other personnel things today. The President talked to Colson about his pleasure with Webster; who is going to the IRS; he thinks that he's going to be very good. Also he met with Charlie Walker today and told Chuck that Walker's setting up a new PR firm, wants Colson to talk with him, that the two of them ought to work together. He talked a little about



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Packard in the Business Council. The President said he's not going to go out doing the meetings with the Departments, and that sort of thing, like he did four years ago. That he's tried love with the bureaucracy and that didn't work now he's going to try a little fear and respect. He also says he's not going to do any more birthday phone calls unless there's some special reason for it. He said to go ahead and give [unintelligible] the Cuban, for a non-Castro South American Ambassador post. He wanted to know if we are using any astronauts in our personnel search.

And then we got into the Kennedy situation at the first meeting this morning. He got into the point that the rallying theme won't work when the people's spirits are up. We have to wait and try to rally the people later, if the public spirit drops, but as of now, it hasn't dropped and there's no way to rally it, because there's no need to rally it.

Then later this morning, he made the point that he doesn't think that Kissinger's thinking clearly regarding the reality here and in Congress, and he wanted to be sure that Colonel Kennedy had a full set of notes on the meeting that the President had with Kennedy and Rush and Moorer this afternoon. He said that both Moorer and Rush have the same opinion that the President does, that we've got to go ahead with negotiations, so we can't fold up and resume the bombing. He said to tell Kennedy, Kissinger to stay tomorrow night at Paris, after their meeting tomorrow, and then come in Saturday morning. He said that I need to grapple with him as soon as he arrives, depending on the situation. That I have, to get the TV point out of the way, that it's not our option, and on his resignation, that's okay for the President, but it's bad for Henry. The President concludes that Kissinger's in a worried state at this point, for three reasons: one, the Italian interview; two, because the negotiations have failed; and three, his concern about Rogers, and it's hard to tell in what order. He said to hit Kissinger very hard on the television thing. That Ziegler, Colson and Connally all agreed that it would be disastrous. That on May 8th and Cambodia, people were low and needed to be rallied now they're high and you can't rally them.



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Then I was over at 5:00 and he had Ehrlichman join us discussing some personnel items. And then Manalo brought in Kissinger's cable, which the President read and then reviewed the highlights with us. He had apparently had made a little progress, but not very much, although he now realizes we should move for agreement. He still put the two choices to the President, though, after laying out all the pitfalls involved in each, especially the negotiating route. He wanted Kennedy to make a copy of this and give it to Rush on an eyes only basis, and then have Rush call the President as soon as he's read it and give him his opinion.

DECLASSIFIED - E.O. 13526, Sect. 3.4: by MS, NARA, June 12, 2013
Audio Cassette 28, Side A, Withdrawn Item Number 15 [AC-28(A) Sel 13-1]
Duration: 1 minute 13 seconds

The President then told us that the result of the Moorer and Rush meeting was agreement that Congress would pull the plug on Thieu if it was clear that he had blocked the agreement. Both of them agreed it that we should take the October 8th agreement if we could get it, even if Thieu won't go along. Moorer thinks Thieu will in the crunch. That he'll have to.

The President says Kissinger without knowing it has a self-destructive instinct. He doesn't want to risk an agreement that fails. He thinks it's better to bust it off let the President put the blame on North Vietnam and continue that bombing until we get the prisoners back. But the result of that will be South Vietnam is lost between now and July. Moorer agrees that that would happen. The President says Thieu is the one that screwed up as a result of Kissinger pressing him too hard. So Kissinger realizes his place in history is on the line and he's concerned regarding the reports the President has pulled him back. The clinker in Kissinger's break-off proposal, and the idea of resuming the bombing, is that we're not sure that they'll give us the POW's in July, even though



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we think they will. And we don't know that South Vietnam will survive even so. The real question is, doesn't Thieu have to come around?

The President will have, had said that he'd have an answer to Kissinger's cable in a couple of hours. He wanted Rush's and Kennedy's reactions. Kennedy's view was that the cable left us in precisely the same question as yesterday; that he's not sure what Kissinger meant by referring to a "recess" in the cable. He says Kissinger is correct regarding the attitudes of the two Vietnams. And Kennedy said he was going to put the question to AI as to what their opinion really was. Kennedy thinks that he, Kissinger was recommending the negotiating option yesterday, and that also today he recommends going for an agreement, but is warning of the consequences. The President feels Kissinger's choice is the bombing option, but it won't work unless the President goes on TV, and, as he sees it, that's not in the cards, he moves to the other option. If the President won't step up and do it, in other words, then I have to take the other route. Kissinger always prefers the big action play, against all odds, and winning it. The President says I do, too, if you win it. Kissinger wants to push the President into taking a course of action that Kissinger warned against. The President is getting into quite a lot of psychological reaction to Kissinger, and Ehrlichman did likewise. Ehrlichman feels that deep down Kissinger would like to get out of it now and lay it on the President. That Kissinger wants, subconsciously, to flee rather than fight, but he'd deny that and would say he's recommending fight, but actually he's fleeing from the complex, and therefore, the right thing. The President is convinced that if Kissinger came back without an agreement, he would resign. When he returns, I've got to get him firmly on board, to see it through all the way. No hang-dog position. We can't let him drop the word that he wanted to hang tough and the President forced him to make the best deal that he could. Ehrlichman's case is that Kissinger has a vested interest in an agreement and to show that he's improved on October, and that he can't separate from the President to the right. The President says unless it breaks down.



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Audio Cassette 28, Side A, Withdrawn Item Number 15 [AC-28(A) Sel 13-2]
Duration: 20 seconds

The President feels we just can't spend anymore; anymore money, lives, time, effort, agony on the war. That we can get out now because of what he's done on May 8th, and that was Rush's view, he said. His conclusion is we have to make an agreement...

...so he says give Henry a terse reply. There has been movement in today's meeting, and we should go. Then Henry should plan to return to Camp David so he can have a full day with the President and with Haig. The President said that he, that I should indicate to Henry that he's doing a superhuman job. We know how tough it is; that he had a long meeting on the military option today with Admiral Moorer, and he's now drafting a reply with instructions. He, these were his instructions when the call, the phone call came in from Henry, and I took it while the President went out for a swim.

Henry was calling from Paris, said that he hadn't heard from me for a few days and so he was just calling to check in with me. Then immediately he said, basically, I wanted you to know that I'm in favor of going ahead, but I did want to warn about the implications that are involved. Then I said, well you're clearly making some progress in the negotiations and it looks better, doesn't it? And he said, yes, we're slowly getting there, and if we all know what we're getting into, it's the right thing to do, but it's not the millennium. It will be a better agreement than October would have been. We still have the option, though, of going the other way, and he wants us to know that, and we can do it by putting the heat and the blame on the others, as he spelled out in his



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message. Basically, he thinks the course the President suggests is the one he favors. If we don't quite make it, he'll recess in order to consult. I asked him how he saw the timing working out, and he said it's a question of whose nerves hold out the longer. We'll have a pretty clear view by tomorrow. He'll probably come back Saturday morning. If things break rapidly, he'll send Haig back and he'll stay there to work out the details. At the latter part of the conversation, the President came bouncing in from the pool, waving, saying, do you need me, and I said, no, as I continued the conversation, so he went on into his room to get dressed.

I talked again to Kennedy, and he said he'd talked to Haig and that AI thinks that we're really talking about the second option, but we'll recess after tomorrow's meeting in any event. Kennedy feels we shouldn't force a recess after tomorrow, but we should try and lock the whole thing up if we can. Then the President talked with Rush and then had me get on and get Rush's view and make notes on it. Rush says that basically his position is that Hanoi has not given up its ultimate objective and Saigon has not given up its ultimate objective. Hanoi wants to unify all Vietnam under their control. Thieu wants all of the North Vietnamese out of South Vietnam. Our objectives, on the other hand, are outlined in the May 8 speech, and the President got the support of the nation at that time, because he made a decision to take strong action and because he outlined a reasonable and solid program of victory. Now we're in negotiations that give the President his objective, and our objectives are reasonable. We should not allow our enemies to push us around and we should not allow our allies to veto. We can't tolerate South Vietnam's objection. We've achieved our objective. Henry, going out saying peace is at hand has set us in that position. The record will show that we have achieved the May 8 objectives plus more than that. We can't say that we must have what Thieu wants, because then we won't get the support of the Congress or the country, so then both we and Vietnam will be defeated. If Hanoi breaks the agreements after we make one, then we'd have a good chance of getting support to go in and react to the breaking of the agreement. On the other hand, if we go the other way, world opinion would say that we put Thieu ahead of our POW's. In other words, we can't make the argument



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that we're bombing in order to save our POW's, it'll be clear that we're bombing in order to save Thieu.

The President dictated a cable which I wrote out in longhand, then rewrote in longhand and sent over for typing, brought it back, read it to the President, he approved it, and I had it sent down as the cable to Kissinger, telling him to take the second option, but to view it as a fixed decision with no further debate. Kennedy agrees with this route and those are the instructions to Henry tonight.

The President felt very relieved and figures he's made the decision now and can live with it, and he then obviously felt quite relaxed, had John and me stay for dinner. And after we left, he had the four secretaries come over to watch a movie with him.

End of December 7th.

Oh, later this evening, he decided to go ahead on the Justice Department changes. He'd been stalling on the decision as to whether to go with Dean Sneed as the Deputy Attorney General, but he decided tonight to do so. Kleindienst is really fighting it, and Mitchell is strongly opposed to it, so Ehrlichman is in the middle of the flap on the thing, but...

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[End of December 07, 1972]