



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

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

Wednesday, December 20th. The President had his physical this morning. Apparently everything went well, except that they did confirm that he had splintered a bone in his foot, and, so he was right on that problem.

He got into the Kissinger problem; he's worrying that Henry is trying to have it both ways. That the real problem is peace at hand statement, from which the President drew back, but other than that there is no difference between the two of them. He did feel Sullivan should have the briefing at State today, and he gave Ziegler the line to cover with Rogers and Sullivan. And after Ziegler went out, made the point that we can't allow Kissinger's judgment to be overriding on these things, that he can't be both close to the President and away from him. A little later he had Henry in. He said with some glee, that Haig has now joined the club. That he got kicked in the teeth by Thieu, was kept waiting five hours, and that Thieu demands total withdrawal of all North Vietnamese troops. So we have to go out on January 3rd for a separate deal, if we can get it. We lost three more B-52s today...

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Audio Cassette 29, Side A, Withdrawn Item Number 3 [AC 29(A) Sel 2-1]
Duration: 7 seconds

...and hit a Russian ship in the Haiphong Harbor.

The President is obviously very concerned about the reaction on the B-52s. The military apparently anticipated three losses for every 100 planes in raids, but we're running somewhat higher than that. He says, however, that we must not knock it off, and Kissinger agrees.



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Audio Cassette 29, Side A, Withdrawn Item Number 3 [AC 29(A) Sel 2-2]
Duration: 18 seconds

The conclusion now is that we have 2 choices: one, to scrap the peace plan, and go to a bilateral agreement, which we could move on at the requested meeting January 3rd; or two, conclude a deal with North Vietnam, and if Thieu doesn't buy it, then go bilateral. I argued for the latter; the President felt we should do the former.

The President kept coming back to the B-52 loss problem, but saying we can't back off. But can we? Will we get three losses every time? If so, it's going to be very tough to take. Thieu has ended up ignoring the President's letters, and stating his own demands, such as getting the troops out. The President says that in effect what he said is he wants us to go out alone, so we have to figure how we can without sinking South Vietnam. The real question is whether Hanoi will settle bilaterally without cutting aid to Sou--, without forcing us to cut aid to South Vietnam. They can gamble that Congress will cut off aid anyway. If we go bilateral, there will be no cease-fire, but we would argue that South Vietnam is now in a position where they can stand on their own feet. Kissinger, over and over in the meeting, really blasted Thieu as a complete SOB, says that he still may be just doing this to make a record, and then planning to cave at the end, but the main thing now is to finish the thing as best we can. The President says it's better not to get a negative agreement, and that we should go for a separate deal, which I argued against.



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He's concerned about Dole popping off, says that we may have to take this whole thing out, regarding the thing that Congress may have to take it out of the President's hands. He shouldn't indicate any doubt he's being used by the Kennedy's and so on. Kissinger said we could have had an agreement on November 20th. If we knew Thieu wouldn't go along anyway then we could have settled. He then said though I want it clear that I'm in total agreement with what we've done and what we've decided.

The President then went back to the lost B-52s and was really bothered about it, wondering if there's anything he should do. Kissinger says no, that this is the last of the extensive raids in Hanoi, and we should start reducing our losses. Kissinger keeps coming back to referring to the South Vietnamese as SOBs, maniacs, and so on. Both agreed that we can't let the word out that Haig's been rebuffed. We have to continue bombing the North, but on a less massive basis, and we should cut back on hitting Hanoi and avoid excessive losses. The President says that he doesn't think that the American public is opposed to what we're doing, but Kennedy and the commentators, and so on, can mobilize them over a period of time. If North Vietnam will agree to talk now, we'll be in good shape. The question still is whether to go bilateral, or negotiate it. If Hanoi accepts the January 3rd meeting, we should meet, settle, and put it to Thieu: in other words, the President is now shifting to my view. We should now treat Thieu with total silence, not give him another chance. The President then sort of summed it up, that gloomy as it looks at this point, something still may happen.

Truman's death is still imminent and may affect the President's travel plans, although nothing specific was said on that.



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The President had a meeting with Shultz this afternoon just before departing; the helicopter came in the middle of it to turn it off. He covered Dr. David, who doesn't want to take the AEC. The President told George to try to talk him into taking the operational job, even though we have to leave open the question of where the Energy responsibility goes. Shultz is supposed to try and sell him anyway.

On price controls, Shultz reported that, the, because we've said that we're continuing controls, the commentators, etcetera, are now moving the other way, saying that we should go against them, which is good, because it will put pressure on us from that side now, and maybe enable us to lift them. He thinks that labor will endorse the 5.5 percent wage standard. The President agreed to a bipartisan Congressional meeting on January 5th on economic matters and then we'll announce our decision shortly after that. On trade, the President said he'd like to see Shultz's approach on it that defends the American interest, but he won't go for reducing trade barriers at this time. We should make a very close Congressional check, and remember that it's a political problem, not just an economic problem; this he keeps reminding Shultz on these things. On tax policy, Shultz says he's ready with a mem--, some memorandum for the President to study, but there's a real question of whether the President wants any tax proposals in.

The President then left for Key Biscayne for Christmas.

End of December 20th.