



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

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Friday, May 26th. We're still struggling with SALT. The meeting that was supposed to be at 10:00 didn't happen, and so the President called me in and was going over some of the plans for the toast and the dinner tonight, and all that. Then said that he was waiting to see what they were going to come up with for a meeting today. At 11:00 Henry came in and said that they're developing their answer on SALT now, and that he's to go get it. That the Politburo's been meeting since 7:00 this morning on it; and that there'd be no session this morning, it'll be this afternoon on the Middle East. And, the first question is whether Rogers should be there, because Gromyko will be, but they don't want Rogers there if anything's to be decided, so there was some discussion about that. Dobrynin then burst in and confirmed this schedule thing, and Henry and Dobrynin left. So the President was then set with four hours to kill.

We had some discussion on the plans for the return speech and his report. He said that he feels the people expect a report from the President, but the Congress thing is a spectacular, but we really need a working session with them. He rules out the Oval Office. He figures that the disadvantage to the Congress is that the press will get comments from everyone. Then he gave me a lot of material for Andrews to use in developing the speech, making the point that we had some significant agreements. What they mean is gratifying. There's still some unsolvable, unresolved problems. We have to find, in the speech to handle Vietnam; the need for America to maintain strength; have confidence in ourselves; we can't assume that the world has changed. We need to maintain these kinds of talks, and we should talk about the competitiveness of our economy, talk about the agreements, the friendship, the peace, all helpful, but now we're to the point of where do we go from here. We're going to build on all of these a structure with more cooperation wherever we can. It's still a dangerous world; all the problems are not solved. The US must condition themselves in a way, the same way that enabled us to get to the summit to begin with. We need pride in the country. He should sum up what it all means. Put the trip in perspective, and explain why we were here. We still have more difficulties such as Vietnam and



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the Middle East, but we've established a better basis for communicating on those problems at the highest level. As great nations will continue to be competitive.

Then at 11:30 Kissinger burst in again, to say he had just come back from the meeting Dobrynin had taken him off to...

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...say that regarding SALT, they've accepted everything we wanted including the ten to fifteen percent significant change item.

They want to sign it today at 7:00 or 8:00. So the President said fine, add Smith and the delegation to the dinner tonight. And we called Ziegler and said that the signing will be today. Called Chapin and told him to move the dinner one hour later, and shifted everything around on that basis. The President went to his 3:00 meeting on the Middle East, got back around 5:30, was in with Henry. Apparently there's still some problem on SALT. They called me in to say that we now have to move the dinner back to the original time and speed up the whole operation as much as possible, so that we can put the SALT signing at 11:00 tonight. I raised the point that Rogers had called me asking to see the President, because he and Flanigan need to review the whole trade situation with him. The President agreed to do that after the 11:00 signing. Then Ziegler called with a disastrous problem, because the Soviets had released the commercial agreement



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which wasn't supposed to be put out till tomorrow. So Ron had to scurry and hold a briefing on that, which created something of a flap, but no real problem.

This is dictated at 7:00 on May 26th, and that's it up to this point.

Continuing Friday, May 26th. The last dictation was a little after 6:00. They shoved the dinner along as fast as possible, and ended up getting it over by just a little after 10:30, so the President wasn't in too bad shape in getting back for the signing ceremony, and it was held just a few minutes after 11:00, with everybody getting a great feeling of the historic nature of the occasion. The problem, however, was Ziegler caught me on the way into the signing, said we had real trouble, because things had gone astray at the pre-signing briefing, with Kissinger and Gerry Smith, and that was the thing that had him concerned. Turns out that Smith came into the briefing, sort of took over from Kissinger and blew the answers on several of the items, creating totally the wrong impression, and had Kissinger right up the wall as a result. I got over to Kissinger during the signing ceremony, and with, under great strain, convinced him, sort of, that he ought to go back and do another briefing after the signing. But we had the problem of, he refused to do that with Gerry Smith on the platform, first of all, and secondly, he refused to do it for an international group, and they were scheduling an international briefing for right after the signing. We left it with Ron, as we were walking back, that it would be done on the basis of their doing the international briefing first and then Ron assembling some American journalists to resume the US briefing. Klein, in the meantime, would make sure that Gerry Smith was kept out of the way, and that Henry had the podium to himself.

After the signing, while we were waiting for Henry to go over, I spent about 45 minutes pacing up and down the halls of our quarters, trying to calm Henry down, as he was ranting, raving, and



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cursing Rogers and Smith. He had learned from Pete Flanigan that Rogers had ordered Smith and Nitze to stay on Henry's heels at all times, and under no circumstances to allow Henry to have a press conference of any kind out of their presence. So that's why Smith had come into the thing. As the more Henry and I talked the more it became apparent to me that the problem was more psychological than real. In other words, Henry was upset because it hadn't gone the way he wanted it to go, but it really hadn't gone as badly as he was envisioning it in his own mind.

As we were still waiting, the President called Henry and asked him to come in. Henry told me that he was so mad that he didn't think he should see the President, and would I please go in and handle the thing, so I did, told the President what the problem was. He, of course, was quite disturbed, too. He had just met for 45 minutes with Rogers and Flanigan on trade, after the signing, and so this was at about midnight. The more he thought about it, the madder he got, and in the middle of that discussion, Henry walked in, reviewed the thing in more livid detail for the President, and the President told me to call Bill Rogers, tell him that Ziegler was outraged by Smith's conduct at the briefing, that he was an utter disaster, that you're to shut him up, he's to do no more briefings without the express permission of the President, or he's fired. I said, you know, what good, what will that accomplish, and the President said, I guess you're right, it won't accomplish anything, so forget it. Then he brooded for a few minutes, picked up the phone himself, asked for Rogers, said I'll call him and hung it up. Then he said, when he calls back, you take it, and tell him what I just said, so I did. Pete Flanigan in the meantime, it turns out, had told Henry that he had also heard Rogers say something to the effect that we can't let the White House get credit for this. The more we pinned Henry on that, it turned out that was conjecture rather than reporting. In any event, I talked to Rogers, who was quite surprised by the whole thing, but did make the point to him that only Henry was to do the briefing, and that that's the way it was to go.



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So that night, as far as I was concerned, ended at about 1:00 or a little after when I went back to bed. The President went to bed, but said Henry is to wake him up when he got back, which was, apparently, at about 2:00, and fill him in on how the briefing went. Apparently it went extremely well, so things got back on the track later on.

End of May 26th.