



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

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Monday, correction, it's Friday, March 26th. A pretty well loaded day in Washington before departing for San Clemente. Starting with breakfast for Albert, Boggs, and Ford, at which the President really laid out the line on the question of Congressional resolutions limiting the President's powers as Commander-in-Chief or requiring a withdrawal by a date certain. He hit them very hard on this and made the point very specifically that if the Congress in any way tied his hands and, as a result of that, we had to bug out of Vietnam, losing American lives, or the Thieu government fell and Vietnam went to the Communists, he would have no choice but to go directly to the people in his campaign next year, taking on the Congress and blaming them for this situation. And, he convinced them, according to MacGregor, that he would do exactly this.

He then had a Cabinet meeting on the subject of construction industry wage problems, and so on, that the Romney rump group had been meeting on. This was to call their bluff and give them all a chance to talk on the subject, which apparently was accomplished. There was a flap on a scheduled meeting with a selected group of the Officers of the Justinian Society—a group of Italian judges. Apparently, during the Cabinet meeting, Volpe sent the President a note saying it was a shame that he wasn't going to meet with all the members of the group who were here touring the White House, instead of just the executive committee, and that it would be a great political mistake to handle it the way it had been worked out. As a result of this end run, Volpe succeeded in getting the President to meet with most of the group in a chat in the Roosevelt Room, and then as the President was about to leave that, Volpe hit him again, and said, aren't you going to shake hands with everybody? The President fortunately said no, and left.

He then had a few remarks at a conference of religious leaders on the drug problem, which he felt did him and the cause no particular good.



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We had a break today on the construction industry problem, and specifically Davis-Bacon and it now appears we'll be able to reinstate Davis-Bacon by executive order on Monday, and to get a wage price panel in effect in the construction industry, which is what we wanted to begin with. This can be a major breakthrough and a darn good news story to start out the week in San Clemente.

Coming out on Air Force One, the President had a very long talk with Chet Holifield, who we brought out for the ride, and probably accomplished some good there for the long haul. In any event, he made the effort. After we got here, he told Henry that he wanted him and me to come over to talk with him at the house.

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Audio Cassette 6, Side A, Withdrawn Item Number 6 [AC-6(A) Sel 2]
Duration: 23 seconds

After Henry made his phone call to Dobrynin, which he had to do, he had talked to Dobrynin earlier and felt that he had a darn good start on a SALT breakthrough with one question still remaining in that their proposal required a settlement of ABM before going to offensive weapons, where we insist on the two being done concurrently.

So after Henry completed his call we went over to the President's house. He was up in the study with only one light on, the fire burning and the record player, or tape player going very loudly. He turned off the tape, and we sat down, and...



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Duration: 25 seconds

...Henry reviewed the Dobrynin call, which he was extremely pleased about because Dobrynin had backed off the condition and agreed to simultaneous decisions on an offensive weapons and ABM. This eliminates the last barrier and it now appears we can go ahead with a SALT settlement.

That, of course, in turn leads to going ahead with the fall summit meeting and may also help in getting Berlin settled. In addition to that, the President now agrees with Henry's long-held view that there is a remote possibility of a settlement on Vietnam with Hanoi, probably partly as a result of Laos. The President clearly has sort of a mystic feeling about the Laotian thing, and says so. He's not sure what it is or why, but he has the feeling that there may be more involved here than has so far met the eye.

He then got into the point that he had called us in for, which was to say that he'd been giving a lot of thought to our whole strategic situation at the present time, and specifically as it related to our schedule here in California. His decision was that there would be no press conference this week, that it doesn't serve our purpose at this time to have one. There's nothing that he wants to say, and no advantage to making any news that might come up at such a conference. He then referred back to Bill Rogers and the at the time of the fund speech, when Rogers had made the point to him then that he should not have a press conference, but should let the enemy run its



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course, and then go out on his own terms and make his own case. He feels that's the case now, that we're down, they're kicking us, and that it's a good time to let them go ahead and do it until we have a positive, upbeat story, and then we should move hard and fast to sell it. In other words, the basic rule is that we should never go to the press except when we're up; we've got nothing to gain now. The only argument for a press conference is for the benefit of the press, but we should have press conferences only when it serves our purposes. Both Henry and I agreed with this view, and so there was no argument.

He also feels then, that Ziegler should announce on Thursday or Friday that he will be making the troop announcement on the 7th, rather than waiting until the 15th, using the rationale that he's committed to making it by the 15th, and since Congress will be gone at the time, he wanted to make it at the close of this Congressional session before the recess. The mood he has is a, is a very mystic one, he's not highly optimistic, but certainly not down in the dumps, and has a feeling that something is happening or is about to happen. I think he's right, in the sense that I think we've bottomed out now on most of our bad stuff, and that we'll have a pretty good balance of the year ahead of us as we get at least some of these foreign policy developments, and as the economy makes some positive progress, which it almost inevitably is going to do between now and the end of the year.

End of March 26th.