



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

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Wednesday, May 19.

This was about a 99 percent SALT day, as we set the notification process in motion. Henry met with Gerry Smith for breakfast at 8:30. The President had Rogers in at 9:00, and they informed both of them. The President called me in at 10:20, also Henry was in, and reported on Rogers' reaction. The President had the feeling that there was very much of a problem, that Rogers' reaction was really almost no reaction at all, but he clearly had the feeling of wondering what was going on. While we were in talking about this and starting to lay plans for timing for tomorrow, Rogers asked me to be called out of the meeting with the President and asked me to come over to see him. I went back into the Oval Office; the President told me to go ahead and do it, to make the point to him that this wasn't a State Department matter that it cuts across Departmental lines and is clearly the President's responsibility, and that it was not in the interests of anybody to inform anyone. In January, when he initiated the first letter, he expected nothing; when Dobrynin came back from the Party Congress, Rogers was gone and then it gelled fast. The President told me to be frank on the whole relationship with Rogers and to be tough. If Rogers got to a point of a very stiff objection, I should tell him to take whatever action he felt he had to take. He said to make the point that it was important that no one get any credit for this except the President. That Kissinger will background because it cuts across Departmental lines, but there will be no claim of credit; that's the mutual arrangement we've made with the Russians, and it has to be kept that way.

I then went over to the State Department, had about an hour with Rogers. He was clearly very upset. His basic point was "Why didn't you tell me that you were doing this? There's no need for me to be involved, but I do have to be informed." He made the point that both Kissinger and the President had promised him that they would not have any other further meetings with any Ambassadors, and particularly Dobrynin, without letting him know. He said he would bet a large amount that all the magazines would have a full report on the number of meetings Kissinger had with Dobrynin, etcetera. This would make him a laughingstock again; it destroys his effectiveness and credibility. For instance, at NATO everybody will know that he's not in on



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what's going on. He also made it clear that he's hurt and raised the question of whether the President's sending him a signal; if so, he'll go. I didn't really respond to that. He said he just didn't know what to do. He did want the President to know his feelings.

He then interjected that he thinks it's a great development and he's all for it, but then went right on to say how can he explain it to Congress. He was particularly disturbed because the President told him that he was going to inform Smith this afternoon, but as soon as Rogers got back to the State Department, Smith came in and Rogers learned that he had breakfast with Henry and was told before Rogers was. Smith said to Bill that he was sorry about the whole thing and that he wanted Bill to know he didn't have anything to do with it. Bill said if there's any leak on any of this it will be from the White House, because no one at State knows anything about it. He returned the secret letters, so that he could say he didn't have them. He made the point that if the President doesn't trust him, he can't do his work. He was very clearly upset. He didn't buy my explanation regarding the cutting across Party lines, and so forth. He didn't buy my point that Dulles and Eisenhower dealt this way that Eisenhower dealt directly with the Soviets because he said Dulles always knew what Eisenhower was doing. He very clearly resents Kissinger; he asked how many meetings Henry had with Dobrynin and whether there were memos of conversation. He claims he's fully posted Henry on everything that he's done, but is not being posted by Henry. This is in direct opposition to what Henry says, and I raised that and Bill got quite distressed. To sum it up: it was clear he was very worried about the short-term impact on his own image and hadn't yet figured out the long-term implications.

When I got back to the office he called, saying he had been thinking about it, and it was clear that we should develop a Party line as to how this all transpired. He wanted to know what the President wants to say regarding who was involved, and so forth. I then went back into the President's office and reported all of this to him, after which he had Henry come in and we discussed it some more, particularly the point of establishing the line. The President said that first I should remind Rogers about the fact that in January the President had told him that he was going to send a letter. He told Rogers he doesn't trust Gerry Smith or the SALT group, and



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therefore in order to break the deadlock, he might send a message or write a letter to see if he could get something going; he would do this on his own. When I-- then he said that I should make the point strongly and-- that our line is that this is a Presidential initiative that we will not discuss the details of how it was accomplished; we won't let anyone describe the process. We don't want any puffing, because it was a mutual thing with the Russians. The point is the President broke the deadlock, and then it was implemented at the appropriate levels in the government. It's not in our interests to indicate what the negotiations were. He told me to point out to Bill that as a matter of fact, Rogers was the only one to know anything about this ahead of time, and therefore, he's being oversensitive. He said that after his early-- his letter early this year, nothing gelled except garbage until the Monday after Rogers had left for Europe, when Dobrynin came back from the Party Congress and took exactly the line the President had offered in January and that the Russians had earlier refused. If Bill's asked whether he was involved, he should say we won't disclose any details of the negotiation, but he can say he was informed. Also he can make the point that the position was, of course, well worked out with the NSC and all concerned ahead of time, and the President stated his position in a press conference.

The President then had me go out and call Rogers and give him that line. In the meantime, Rogers had put a call in to the President; so I called Bill, filled him in on this, and then the President returned his call and had a pretty good chat with him. Made the point that he wanted Bill to call Mansfield and tell him, before the vote, that this was coming up, not in specific terms but an important development, but that the President was holding off on notifying anyone or calling a leaders meeting until after the vote, because he didn't want to appear to be trying to affect the vote. Right after he hung up from that call, Ziegler came in, and the President, as he hung up, heaved a deep sigh, looked out the window and said it would be goddamn easy to run this office if it didn't-- if you didn't have to deal with people.

Later this afternoon, he had Ziegler in for discussion with Kissinger on how to handle the basic line and the announcement. They went over some wording on how to open the President's announcement. That was at 4:00, then at 4:40, he had Ziegler, Scali, Kissinger, and me in to



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review the line Henry's going to use in his briefings. It was really pretty funny because he kept telling Henry to go ahead and tell him what he was going to say, and then every time Henry would start a sentence, the President would interrupt him to tell him what he should say. He made the point that Henry must not discuss at all how it happened, not one word in any of his sessions. He should describe the nature of the breakthrough, that the negotiations were stalemated because the Soviets had limited it only to defensive weapons, and that we've insisted that it include offensive weapons, as the President has pointed out in several press conferences. He then should say that as a result of negotiations involving the highest levels of both governments, there has been a break and that simul-- we are now able to move ahead with simultaneous negotiations in offensive and defensive weapons. There is already a lot of substantive work done, and this is a chance to give a pat to the SALT team, etcetera.

We got into considerable discussions on timing of the various briefing meetings and locale for the President's announcement. We ended up doing it in the press room as originally planned, with a Cabinet meeting at 9:00 and a leaders meeting at 10:00.

The other big thing for today was the Mansfield vote, which started in the afternoon with a resounding defeat for the Nelson Amendment, which was the first one up and was the compromise that they'd all agreed to back, but it lost very heavily. Then as the afternoon went on, they got into debate and then started moving into the other amendments, which went on into the night, all of them losing by substantial margins, which of course, pleased the President greatly. At one point after the Mathias Amendment, which was supposed to be the crucial one but which lost 73-24, the President was going to call Cooper—because he and Rogers had been working on Cooper—to thank him. For-- I told him not to-- I suggested he not do it until we get the final vote on Mansfield, which he agreed to, and that was a lucky thing because it turned out after we got the tally that Cooper had voted with Mathias; so it would have been singularly inappropriate to have called and thanked him at that particular point. The final vote on the Mansfield Amendment came through at 10:30, and we won it 61-36, which was a much stronger vote than we expected. So we came out extremely well.



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[End of May 19.]