



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

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Saturday, September 18th. The President met with the AG this morning for quite a long time. At the latter part of it, he called Ehrlichman, and then later Colson and me, in. That led to some discussion of the Pentagon Papers. The President making the point that everyone had said this was going to tear the Democrats up, but this is only going to work out if we keep it grinding. We've now let Muskie and Humphrey, and et al. crawl off of the war issue. He says we've got a problem on how to get it up front again. If we let it go to Congress for an investigation, we can't control it; if it goes to the courts, then it comes out too late after the elections and doesn't do us any good. So we're at an impasse, and we're doing it too legalistically. The, our opponents' interest is to forget the Papers. Our interest is to play them up. Another problem is that Kissinger's deeply involved because of his students and associates; also, Elliot Richardson. And a smart Congressional counsel will call Kissinger and Richardson. So the point is that we've got to separate the questions of the stealing of the papers and of the content. For high visibility, we could go after the newspapermen, but that gets to stealing, rather than to content. The only way to open up the content is to get into the assassination of Du--, of Diem, and that sort of thing. Fulbright has definitely decided not to have Congressional hearings, so we have to get someone to blast it out. The feeling was that we should leak the juicy tidbits as a way to force the Hill's hands, to get to the underlying documents. We need to make sure that the stuff that we leak was already out somewhere though. Another problem is, that that way, we can't calculate who's going to get hit by the shrapnel.

On another front, we could also move to open Bay of Pigs and Cuban Missile Crisis, and we can do those right away without waiting for the Vietnamese election. Henry's concern is that his name is in the files, also he feels that there's discussion of the war now is not helpful. So the President decided to call Henry into our meeting to discuss it, but he was already gone; he had left for New York.



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Audio Cassette 13, Side B, Withdrawn Item Number 13 [AC-13 (B) Sel 7-1]
Duration: 10 seconds

Another problem is that this would draw out and expose the CIA and would rub off on the present CIA. But the positive side of that is that it makes the Harriman types the villains.

Even an idiot, and then the President came up with the comment that even an idiot has a chance to be President, and a lot of them have made it.

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Audio Cassette 13, Side B, Withdrawn Item Number 13 [AC-13 (A) Sel 7-2]
Duration: 14 seconds

He felt the Diem incident is the best ground to plow. It involves Harriman and Kennedy. He doesn't think Kissinger is involved I it. The press is afraid of it. Makes the point of what got us into the war: first, the Laotian Agreement which was Harriman; and second, the Diem coup which was Kennedy. Our opponents are terribly vulnerable on both.

Another advent--...

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[Begin tape reel AC-14(A)]

[September] 18th continued. I was making the point that another advantage of this is that it also lets LBJ get on our side and clears him from the other Pentagon Papers charges. The President feels we shouldn't worry about Kissinger's argument that this stirs things up in Vietnam, that the election is, in effect, pretty much done with now, anyway. The question is how to open it up. We need to maybe put our guy on television, such as our CIA guy, that we should take the next two weeks to develop a scenario. The President ordered Ehrlichman to have the full Diem story on his desk by the end of next week, also the total Bay of Pigs story, also told me to get Huston back to finish the bombing halt story.

At that point, the Attorney General left, and we had a little discussion about the OEO extension. The President feels that if it's not cleaned up in the House, he will, will veto it, and he isn't too worried about making the Libs mad, because they're not going to be with us anyway, obviously.

He made the point that it's necessary for Ehrlichman, working with Colson, to think in purely political terms from now on. The Democrats are doing this, and we must too. We're so naive that we've let Vietnam dribble away from us. And on other things, like the IRS question, we just can't fool around. We must understand that the bureaucracy is disloyal, and in a campaign, they'll really cut us. Ehrlichman pointed out that leaks have gone up dramatically in the last six weeks, especially in the national security area, according to his investigation.



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At the end of that meeting, the President and I left for Camp David. There was some talk about J. Edgar Hoover, apparently, when the President met with Mitchell, and the President asked me to set it up to have Hoover in for breakfast at 8:30 Monday morning. He's going to give him the word on his departure at that time, apparently. Mitchell called me at Camp David to let me know that the President had also raised the point of making Hoover a counselor to the President. Mitchell thinks he got that turned off, but he was just warning me. I didn't hear anything from the President at Camp David except a brief phone call while Jo and I were out playing tennis, and the President asked if we were watching the football game on TV, and I said no, I was playing tennis. He said UCLA was doing pretty well. They were ahead of Texas, 7 to 0. But that I ought to get them not to televise the rooting section, because they were a pretty ratty looking bunch.

End of September 18th.