



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

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Saturday, April 8.

President called me over at 11:00 and kept me there until 1:30 on another beautiful sunny morning, so I never did get outside today because I had to leave at 2:30 for Washington and the Gridiron Dinner.

The-- we got into the question of question of political planning, the need for setting up a group with Ehrlichman, Shultz, Colson, MacGregor, and Mitchell to meet daily and maybe weekly with the President. He thought about having a Camp David session with that group but then got shifted off of that by the need for using his time otherwise. He then got into the question of whether to have the press conference this coming week, felt that there's no problem with the domestic questions, but the big question is Vietnam. And he's concerned that he shouldn't comment in the middle of the battle, that he needs to know first where we stand, and that within a week or so we will know. He's not clear as to how he would handle the negative questions because he has to be very cautious about the outcome. We can't get a credibility problem, with the President appearing confident and then getting setbacks.

He feels that on Vietnam, Rogers should take Kennedy and Humphrey on, that it'd be good for him to have a press conference, for instance on Monday. That Buchanan-- then he-- in thinking it over, he decided not to do the press conference. He had me talk to Henry and Henry's point was that from a foreign policy viewpoint the military situation is not clear enough and that it is a problem, there's no advantage. If domestic attacks build, he can see a reason to do it. He suggested we wait until Monday when we'll know the degree of buildup and then decide whether it should be a speech or a press conference. He thinks we ought to take a very tough attitude, call our opponents "sell-outers" and so on. He sums it up that it depends what the President wants to do, if he wants to take a soft line he should wait a week, if he wants to take a hard line, hitting the defeatists, then it would be an asset. We've done everything we can, we should attack the opponents, we will not turn this over to the Communists. It's a chance, good chance, to be tough. Henry feels that the news media are basically with us on Vietnam. Oliphant and Schecter both



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said that they didn't sense the same kind of panicky reaction that there was during Tet. So he sums up the foreign policy view, he doesn't see a need for a press conference but he has no objection unless we're going to be tough when then there would be an advantage. He thinks there are many arguments for it, that we should probably decide to do it and then drop it later if we find it not a good idea.

The President decided the other way, because he like Henry's idea of giving a speech instead. And so he told me to have Safire start on the draft of his speech, making the point that: one: there's been a massive invasion--

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Saturday, April 8 continued. Discussing the point of the Vietnam Speech on television: Wants to make the point number one: that there's been a massive invasion by the North Vietnamese in violation of the Geneva Accords and the bombing halt agreement; number two: South Vietnam's resisting the invasion and fighting well; number three: there are no American forces involved on the ground and there will be none; number four: we are using our air power: a) to protect American lives, b) to assure the continuation of our withdrawal program, c) to prevent a Communist takeover in Vietnam with the inevitabl-- inevitable bloodbath that would follow that; number five: on the negotiating front, every offer that we've made is still on the table. He's instructed Porter to review the negotiations, but we will not negotiate at the point of a gun. We make the point then that this is a difficult decision, that this is a war which was not begun while Nixon was in office. When he came here, there were 550,000 troops there. We've brought about--



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nearly 500,000 of them out. We will bring this to a conclusion, but this is an hour of testing. It's not a time to listen to the voices of the defeatists. I note that those who-- that there are those who suggest we withdraw and go crawling to the conference table. This would have an enormous repercussion, it would mean that we could only negotiate a surrender and this we will not do. I called Safire and gave him this detail and now he's to work up a speech for the President to have tomorrow night when he gets back.

As a minor sidelight, the President had me call Bowie Kuhn, the Baseball Commissioner, to suggest that the President and the Vice President step in to help on the owner/player negotiations. Kuhn said that there's a lot under the surface, that they're moving to a good zone, there's some chance of a tentative agreement this weekend, and that he appreciated the President's offer but that he didn't think they should move on anything on it now.

I came up and went to the Gridiron dinner tonight. It was a lousy dinner. Humphrey started off well in his speech but folded, Goldwater did a good job and got a standing ovation at the end, which Humphrey did not. The Republican skit was reasonably good, they had a Haldeman song on Bally-Hoo, that was pretty poor, they had a couple of good songs, one Billy Graham singing "Put Your Hand in the Hand of the Man Who's Learned to Use Chopsticks" and Buckley and Goldwater singing to the tune of "The Old Rugged Cross", the "Old Double-Cross", and those two were pretty clever. The rest of it was pretty dull, except for Teddy Kennedy, who did "Jesus Christ Superstar".

End of April 8.