



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

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Monday, April 10th. The President wrote his Ehrlichman memo over the weekend; handed it in this morning. I asked him to make some changes, because he had written it on the basis of putting John in charge of the operations of other people and selling the Domestic Program, where I wanted him to just take on the responsibility himself plus working with us on planning. The President agreed with the change and we've revised it. He said when we were talking about it that I should talk to Ehrlichman and that he should put up a chart of the issues to emphasize and to keep a running log on them like the Red Cross drive does on Main Street. He feels the issues are busing, property tax, dope, and prices. And our defense against opposition attacks should be to attack them back, not to answer them. We should hit them on the people who would destroy the economy with wild spending schemes that would raise taxes; pick out their programs and price them out. We should hit hard with a sharp cutting edge, hit marijuana because the President's against it, hit abortion because he's against that. Tilt to the right because the tendency is to tilt to the left. He pushed very hard on this and we'll see what we can get John to do.

On Vietnam, he had some long sessions with Henry today, and Henry told me afterwards that he had talked the President into dropping the idea of giving a TV speech this week, or a press conference. And the President later told me that he had decided to cancel the speech.

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Audio Cassette 20, Side B, Withdrawn Item Number 1 [AC-20(B) Sel 1]  
Duration: 26 seconds

Henry's feeling is that we've got something going with the Russians. He thinks he's got them shook pretty much and that they're going to swing into forcing the North Vietnamese to the conference table. In fact, Dobrynin promised that they would come back to the talks on the 24th.



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So, on that basis, Henry feels that any speech that takes any kind of soft line will back away from the tough acts we're taking and thus soften the impression on the Russians, which he doesn't want to do. Also, he thinks we should maintain a very hard line with Hanoi and that the speech now would tend to weaken that also. Henry, obviously, has got his view across to the President.

This afternoon, the President talked with me for quite a while about Vietnam, going into the background, and so on. He feels very strongly that we've got to make an all-out effort now, and that it really is a do-or-die proposition. The North Vietnamese have committed all of their resources to the current attack, and the South Vietnamese have pretty much committed all of theirs to the defense. We're doing virtually everything we can do, short of putting American troops in, which we won't do. The President has moved the bombing activity up to a very high level and intends to maintain it there, and do everything else he can to, in the way of naval action, and so forth, to give the South Vietnamese a chance to win this one. It's apparent that we can, that we have the potential at least to break the North Vietnamese back, but the question is whether or not the South Vietnamese will be able to hold. If they can, the President comes out in extremely good shape, because it would be almost inevitable that we'd move immediately from this attack to the conference table within the next few months, and that we might get something settled by summer. On the other hand, if the North Vietnamese take Saigon, swing through, which is at least possible...

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...then we have to admit that we've lost the war, we pull out and as the President says, he doesn't care what the domestic reaction is, because sitting in that office next year won't be worth it anyway. American foreign policy will have been destroyed, because the Soviets will have established the point that they can accomplish what they're after by force of arms with other countries.

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He is very concerned about staff references to our concern on this thing, as was evidenced in the Semple article today, and he wants me to have Henry give the staff a charge in the staff meeting tomorrow.

He seems to feel that he is dealing with the very major crisis and he wants his calendar kept pretty clear so that he can concentrate his thinking on this area and the decisions he has to make. He's revised his schedule somewhat with that thought in mind and is planning to spend a great deal of time with Henry. Of course, he has to go to Canada Thursday night and that will break into it, but as of now we're back to where Vietnam is the overriding subject at least for a little while.

End of April 10th.