



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

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Sunday, April 23rd. We're still at Camp David. At least it's a nice day today, so there's a chance to play some tennis. The President phoned this morning, went through quite a few things on the phone. Had me over at 2:30 this afternoon for an hour or so then again at 7:00 for just a few minutes, again at 8:00 when Haig arrived for about an hour. The principle subject through all of these was the Kissinger trip, the Soviet situation, plans for the Summit, etcetera. The President has now found that he can't go back down to Washington until late tomorrow night, because Kissinger will be coming back getting here probably somewhere between 10:00 and midnight.

The President was concerned about the news of the battle coverage today, because the situation is more stable rather than less, but you don't get that from the news, and he feels that we're not getting the, our PR and our story out. He then got in on the phone into his concern that Moscow's giving nothing regarding Vietnam...

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Audio Cassette 21, Side A, Withdrawn Item Number 1 [AC-21(A) Sel 1-1]  
Duration: 4 seconds

...accept to agree to pass a message for us...

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...and that Kissinger's been completely taken in on it. He said that Kissinger reports that...

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...Brezhnev has stressed that he can't vouch for the North Vietnamese government, but Henry says the mere fact of positive steps following my trip is good. He reports that the Russian say the enemies of the summit are trying to thwart the summit, that is, Hanoi and Peking. Regarding Henry's staying over on Monday, he says we have nothing to lose by my staying, and much to lose by my leaving early, because they've promised to transmit our proposals to Hanoi and we many get something out of that. He argues that we've given up on options on Vietnam. We have a SALT agreement that exceeds our best estimates, we have a statement of principles regarding US-Russian relations, and excellent separate explanation of MBFR and European Security Conference.

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Henry, in other words, is very effusive on the prospects for the Summit, and makes the point, which, of course, drives the President up the wall, that Brezhnev spent more time with him than he has with any other foreign visitor. The President's problem is he just doesn't agree that just the trip itself will have a big effect. Kissinger justifies it as cooling the domestic furor here and sending huge shock waves to Hanoi, but the point is we've had the shock waves to Hanoi for months. That's typical Kissinger gobbledygook, and we don't have the domestic furor here at least to the degree that we have to worry about getting it back. The President's worried about the effect in this country, especially amongst the hawks and our supporters, of his going back to talks in Paris. He makes the point that I've got to watch the situation regarding the day-to-day PR that we've got to have something positive regarding South Vietnam. We should keep pushing the invasion line. He's was also concerned that our Sunday story didn't seem to materialize.



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I talked to Haig a little later, and he was very concerned about the way we're bludgeoning Kissinger. And he says Henry's not getting snookered over there, and that we shouldn't imply it to him. That he thinks the President's putting too much heat on Henry and he thinks Henry will overreact.

The President's point is that our real problem is that the Soviet want the Summit, but they won't help us in Vietnam in order to get it, which leaves us on a bad wicket, in that we will be meeting with them during a Soviet supported invasion of South Vietnam.

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In other words, we can last through this week and through the period up to the Vietnam, up to the Russian trip. But, we can't survive after the Russian trip, if Vietnam doesn't decelerate.

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The President obviously, in analyzing all this, feels that we're trapped, and his concern is obviously very deep, and he wanted me to discuss these points with Haig regarding his concerns. Then we had, when he had me over this evening before Haig arrived he went back, well, earlier in the day, he, he told Rose to send me a copy of the instructions that he had sent Henry, and that's in my file, on today's date, it lays out his position and his concerns very clearly. When he had me over before Haig arrived, he made the point again that we need to push especially hard for the best possible news stories on Tuesday and Wednesday before the President goes on TV



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Wednesday night. He told me to get Scali back from the ping-pong trip, and so forth, and get working on this. I asked for thoughts of other ways that we could do it.

Then we got into his real major concern that Henry must be controlled regarding any briefing of press or Senators or anyone else, on the basis that there's nothing in it for us to do any briefings on the Summit. That we've got to keep the whole focus on Vietnam, and the problem is Henry doesn't have anything on Vietnam. The President then said he's not discouraged, we just have to be alert. We're on a sticky wicket at the moment regarding dealing with the Russians while they're supplying North Vietnam. Then when Haig arrived, we went back through it again. It was sort of an eerie session, because we sat over at Birch Cabin. The President had a big fire going; it was cold, and overcast outside, and while we were in there, there was a tremendous amount of thunder and lightning, and a heavy rain. The President had the lights on fairly dim, and it was quite a picturesque setting. The President made the point of the need for positive news Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Haig said he had talked to Laird, but one of our problems is the ARVN don't allow the press in, so the press write bad stories, but Defense and MACV is going to put out the positive. Haig's going to follow-up with this with Laird, Hanken, and Moorer.

The President then made the point that we're going to have a very rough story on Tuesday, and a very tough day to ride through on why we're going back to the conference table at the time that the Russians are pushing this invasion. The way this can be answered, and the only way it will be answered, is by the President giving a tough speech on Wednesday night, but we've still got to ride for 30 hours. The President again raised the point that Kissinger can't brief the press that we have to play the mystery line. Haig makes the point that the President had all these problems anyway...



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...whether or not Kissinger had gone to Moscow. In other words, the summit problem existed vis-à-vis Soviet supplying of South--, of North Vietnam. Now Haig's view is that if the worst possible thing happens, you have a basis for leveling Hanoi and Haiphong, and surfacing the secret, May 2nd talk. If the best possible thing happens, you may have a settlement on Vietnam. The President makes the point that he cannot accept Dobrynin's point that we do nothing to Hanoi and Haiphong in order to maintain the summit. In other words, we've got to risk the summit if necessary. The real problem is going to the summit with the Russians with blood on their hands is not going to look good here in this country. Haig's view of the scenario, as he sees it developing, is that first, the North Vietnamese won't be forthcoming in the talk on May 2nd, and that's the secret talk. Then, secondly, we will have to react to that by exposing the secret talks and then leveling Hanoi and Haiphong. Third, the North Vietnamese will call for a cease-fire, which we can't accept, because they have all their forces in the South, and they'll murder everyone in a guerilla operation.

The summary of it is that if the Russians want a summit meeting, they'll have it, they can do, take the steps even though they haven't agreed to so far. Haig feels that the North Vietnamese plan, and they wanted to achieve this before the summit, was to get all their troops into South Vietnam as they've now done, in, under the guise of an offensive, and then call for an in-place cease-fire, leaving all their military forces in the South to do behind-the-scenes dirty work.

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He says we may have to give up the Summit in order to save Vietnam, or we may have to postpone the Summit. It was agreed that there should be no statement about SALT before the Summit that we've got to keep Rogers and Gerry Smith locked up on this one. Also there must be no implication that we asked the Soviets for Kissinger to come. It must have, it was at their invitation that Henry went there. It's important to be sure, for Haig to be sure that Kissinger doesn't blab on a background basis on any way on his trip. The President seemed to feel better as we ended the Haig meeting. He called me, called about 9:45, said there are two things that we have to have in mind. First, we've got to convince Henry to be absolutely mum, which will be awfully hard, but essential, not because of Rogers, but because the success or failure of Henry's trip is involved. The way to make it pay off is to create a mystery now. Secondly, we have to have in mind that Haig is saying Rogers is not upset about the trip and all, and we've got to recognize the reason for that is because he knows Kissinger hasn't accomplished anything. The key here is Kissinger himself. We've got to convince him that he is to not say a word about the Summit. No reflections regarding Brezhnev's personality, etcetera. We've got to keep people away from him, and build the monumental importance of a successful Summit, which depends on his keeping quiet now. For example, the point Kissinger made...

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...Dobrynin said that three months, that it would take three months before cutting supplies would have any effect and that's too long. We would have to move quicker on Vietnam, which was a pure ruse to get Kissinger there, because they obviously have no intention of doing anything.

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He then made the point that we'll stay here until late tomorrow, when Henry comes that we're, in essence, trapped on the mountain.

The other point he got into, the other subject he got into earlier today was the question of staffing the new Administration. He tried a contingency plan regarding the Cabinet and top agencies: that he wants to be ready on November 7 to move rapidly, he'll call in the whole Cabinet in some way and have them all submit their resignations. That we've got to be hard on our friends, as well as the others, and only keep those who really can cut it. Then on new staffing we've got to start on the basis of total loyalty. Secondly, look for youth, people in their thirties and forties. And third, selflessness, people that are willing to get in and work without having to be babied like the ones we have now. We've got to concentrate on building the new establishment, which is his whole mission at this point.

End of April 23rd.