



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

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Monday, May 1st. In Texas this morning, the President called from Connally's house, wanted to review last night a little bit. Felt that maybe a talk would have been better than the Q and A, and he wants to follow-up on doing a big outdoor barbecue right after the Convention, which Connally suggested. He also said he had just talked to Haig, and Quang Tri, in Vietnam, is still going to pieces, and that we should just let it drop. The problem is that Kissinger is so interested in his talk in Paris that he's delaying the plane raids, and keeps arguing that we need to set up public opinion in order to go ahead with the raids. The answer, of course, being that we'll lose public opinion if we delay the raids: it's the raids that they want, not the talks. He says he shook Kissinger re: the Summit and made it clear that we won't go into a Summit if we're in a bad position on Vietnam at the time, so he's got to get Vietnam worked out.

On the plane coming back to Washington, he got into some points from Connally: he's got a package of 20 bills from Moncrief that he told Connally to give to me to give to Rose for the private operations. He raised again the follow-up on his big barbecue rally. Had some other thoughts on last night, particularly concerned with our lack of attention of the local press, and the question of whether the Q and A technique was worth the effort. He said he felt that Kissinger's not playing it straight with him on Vietnam that he's holding off on the air strikes, not because of the reason he's giving the President, but because he doesn't want to louse up his talks. The President says he needs time now to make hard decisions on the war; that Kissinger's judgment is wrong on public opinion, and he's got to stay on top of this whole thing himself.

At 6:00 this evening, after a long session on SALT and some meetings with Henry, the President had me in. Henry then came in; said that everything was settled on the Russia trip logistically that we wanted except they still insist that we use their airplane which the President says to give in on. Henry then read the report from Abrams which in effect says that Quang Tri is lost, the battle for Hue begins, and Kissinger makes the point that if we lose Hue, it'll be a real setback,



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although Quang Tri is not so much so. Abrams report goes on to say that he feels that he has to report that it's quite possible that the South Vietnamese have lost the will to fight or to hang together, and that the whole thing may well be lost. Henry hedged around before getting to that part of the Abrams report, but the President kept telling him to get to the point of the summary, and Henry finally did. Then the President took the report, read it himself, and we spent quite a little time just talking over the various questions of how the Vietnamese can have fallen apart, Henry making the point that the pattern seems to be that they can hold for about a month and then they fold up, and that we've now passed the month, and they're following the pattern and folding.

The President made the point very strongly to Henry that his instructions in Paris remain the same. He's not to give anything, and that we're perfectly willing to sacrifice the Summit if necessary. That under no circumstances will the President go to the Summit while we're in trouble in Vietnam. And he makes the strong point that we will go ahead with the hard strikes the latter part of the week if Henry doesn't get positive action in Paris tomorrow.

He then brooded a bit about it and said if the whole thing collapses, then all we can do is go to a blockade and demand our POW's back, and Henry agreed with that. And then the President said, but then we're defeated, and Henry said, Yes, that's right, and then we'll have to tighten our belts. The President sort of laughed. He's obviously facing the very real possibility now that we have had it in Vietnam, and that he's going to have to deal with that situation instead of one of acceleration. Both he and Henry agreed that regardless of what happens now, we'll be finished with the war by August, because either we will have broken them or they will have broken us, and the fighting will be over. There still seems to be some possibility of a negotiation or a cease-fire, because it's quite possible, maybe even probable, that the North Vietnamese are hurting even worse than the South Vietnamese, and that both sides may be ready to fold. The



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President also got into a thing with Henry about the absolutely incredible turn that the SALT meeting took today...

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...as Rogers and Gerry Smith in effect, rejected the President's settlement with the Russians, which went way further than they had hoped for a few weeks ago. But now they're saying it isn't strong enough and that it freezes us in an inferior position on the submarines, overlooking the fact that we are inevitably in an inferior position on submarines no matter what, because we can't catch up with them physically on the production side. The question is whether we freeze at the inferior level we are now or at an even more inferior level later. That, that doesn't seem to have gotten through to them.

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The President was thoroughly disgusted with Rogers and his attitude on the whole thing.

End of May 1st.