



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

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Wednesday, May 3.

Principal discussion today was again on the Summit cancellation. The President was tied up all morning with leadership meeting, the briefing by Moorer, some other things of that sort. He had me over first thing in the morning to set those up, to make the point that he wanted to postpone Annapolis for a week, keep the weekend clear, because if he does cancel the Summit, he's going to do it Monday night on TV. Then he makes the point of whether there's a real question of what we get out of canceling the Summit, and whether that's the key to winning the war, and that's what he's got to weigh.

Later in the morning he was going over the thing again. Made the point that the loss of the Summit would result in a massive Soviet propaganda war worldwide, the charges that we've crumbled Nixon foreign policy, and that the costs there are too high to pay for the short term gain that we get for taking the positive action.

Then later in the afternoon I talked to Henry. He makes the point that there's no choice on the Summit, that we have to drop it, or else the Russians will, that we can't both bomb the North and have the Summit. That's Henry's strong feeling. And he feels it's essential that we bomb the North, now that we've told the Russians that we're going to take a hard line with them and with the Vietnamese, if we don't get any action in Paris, and we haven't gotten any action. We tried to develop the arguments, and the main thing is we have to get a message to the Soviets and to Hanoi, anything here will be marginal in its effect on the war, but still could be psychologically important. The real question is how can we have a Summit meeting and be drinking toasts to Brezhnev while Soviet tanks are crumbling Hue. How can you have the President signing agreements for trade, arms, toasting peace and friendship and all that? It would be a very bad picture, and will display a great weakness after the warning.

My argument on the counter side is that canceling the Summit is going to shatter the Nixon foreign policy, people don't like to see the government helpless. President came up with the line that going to the Soviet Union in the cause of peace while they're waging war would not serve



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the cause of peace. Kissinger makes the point that we have too weak a hand to go to Russia now, but on the other side the people want hope, not just blood, sweat, and tears all the time. So President told me to make the strongest case for going ahead, and to talk to Henry about it, that he'll make no decision till Monday, and make the speech Monday night. My argument was that we should go ahead and bomb and see what happens. That we don't have to cancel the Summit, we can take the chance that they won't cancel it even if we do bomb, and then we have the best of both worlds. Henry's argument is, that creates a terrible problem for us, because the worst possible thing would be to have the Russians to cancel the Summit, blaming it on the Nixon bombing, which would make it look like we had really blown the chances for world peace.

I had quite a long anguished talk with Henry, who is obviously deeply disturbed by this whole thing. He makes the point that we have done a number of things wrong in this thing and he feels that he handled the Moscow meeting and the Paris meeting wrong in the sense that he didn't leave any flexibility. He put the issue to them solidly as the President told him to, and they didn't back down, so now we're in the bad spot. He feels that because of that, we can't back down now, that it will leave the President in such a position of weakness that he wouldn't be able to govern even if he survived it. President feels on the other hand that he can very well lose the election by what comes out of this and that it therefore becomes of vital importance. In any event, he decided not to make any decision today and to continue to ponder the thing. It turns out that Henry has sent a very strong letter from the President to Brezhnev, and there should be a reply on that tomorrow or the next day, and that will show the Russian attitude, which would be another factor in deciding what we do.

The other thing was our poll results last night showed that 60 percent of the people feel that the President should go ahead with the Summit in spite of the invasion of Vietnam. In other words, there's strong popular demand here for the Summit, and that makes it even harder to figure out how to cancel it.

End of May 3.