



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

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Monday, May 8th. The President came down from Camp David last night after the, seeing a movie, then spent the day over at the EOB getting ready for his speech. He called a couple of times on the phone so that, on the details of the speech and all, then; no, correction he didn't spend the day at the EOB, he had the NSC meeting that went virtually all morning, from 9:00 until 12:00, and then went over to the EOB. He called, had me call Connally back, and he spent some time with Connally and Henry after the NSC meeting. Then at 1:00, he called me over, went through some minor details, and then raised the point in his mind that we ought to consider the question of...

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Audio Cassette 21, Side B, Withdrawn Item Number 7 [AC-21(B) Sel 6]
Duration: 10 seconds

...going ahead with the summit and taking no action now and then taking this action right after we got back.

He called Henry over, and had me make the argument on this point to Henry, saying that he didn't agree with it, but that I had raised it. I didn't do very well on making it, and at 2:00 exactly, the President said, well, it's 2:00, the time's up. We go. Henry was a little dismayed at that point and started arguing some more, but the President said, nope, the decision is made, no further discussion, and from then on, I think he felt very solid on the thing and moved on that basis.



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He decided to have a Cabinet meeting after the speech, or I recommended that. He agreed that we do it. That they'd be in the Cabinet room to watch the speech, and the President would drop in afterwards.

I talked to Billy Graham during the day and he said to tell the President to get tough, that that's what people wanted. The President dictated a memo to me on the line that we should get out on the major purposes of the blockade and the backup arguments, on the President's courage and so forth. The speech went very well; he gave it, put it together well, and gave it, delivered it very well. I think we'll develop substantial support.

At the Cabinet meeting the President explained the background, said that as far as the speculation on the Summit was concerned, we were aware of the risks there, but an American President couldn't be in Moscow while the Soviet guns and tanks were in Hue. And we should say we're prepared to go forward and negotiate, or to continue with the Summit, or whatever, and that the responsibility now is the Russians. This decision wasn't easy. You can never be sure. The case for bombing, or doing nothing at all, all had to be weighed, but this is the best course at this time: to defend our interests, to get the POW's, and to put an end to the war.

The VP said you can depend on all the Cabinet to support this; we're all aware of your strength over the three years; you've given careful notice ahead of all your actions; the Soviet part of your speech was extremely well phrased. The President said he wrote every word of that himself. He said the ball's now on their side of the net.



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Rogers said there's nothing really we can add to what you said. There are a couple of things regarding the legal qualifications: this is not a blockade because it's not on the high seas; it is within the territorial waters; the enemy has mined the harbors in South Vietnam, so they can't complain about our doing it. This is all in the Departments, in all the Departments we've got to get the word to our people that everybody should have a staff meeting in the morning. Tell them the chips are down that it's easy to support when things are going well, but we need to support now, and there'll be all hell to pay if you don't. You should do likewise. He said he was going to do that with his Department and to tell the other Cabinet members that they should do likewise with theirs. That there should be no second guessing the President has thought of all the factors made a tough decision. Now we want everybody to support it, publicly and privately. Said it's not really very tough to sell because the people are ready for it.

The President said I hate to give you a tough one like this with the Democratic convention two months away, and then the election, but the die is now cast. This is going to end one way or another; we're not going to break down. The airstrikes will concentrate on the rails and POL.

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The question was raised about how close to the Chinese border. Initially, there'd be a twenty-five mile buffer, but we won't say what we won't do.

The President said this is a very simple deal: a cease-fire, POW's, and out in four months.



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Elliot Richardson said we've seen you a number of times on TV talking to the nation. I have a sense that I have never seen you more resolute or strong, or reflective, or exceedingly thoughtful. There's a real possibility that the people will respond with support because of your leadership. The people want to respect and support.

Rogers said that's a good line for all of us to take to our people.

The President then said, this has to work; we've crossed the Rubicon, instead of the foolish gradual escalation of LBJ, this is cleaner and more defensible. We deny the enemy the sources to wage war. We have a definite precise goal, to cut off the sources for making the aggressive war. You should all reflect the same confidence, calm, done the right thing; we'll stick to the course. No weak men on the team.

Then after the Cabinet meeting, he had me come over to the EOB, where we had some dinner and had Henry in. We reviewed some of the comments on it and Henry went out. Then he told me to talk to Connally on the basis that if the Summit's canceled, he has to stay a couple of weeks. If the Summit's on, he can go ahead and go. We went through the switchboard being jammed, all the telegrams, and that sort of thing.

At 10:45 the President called Meany and asked for his support. Shultz had called him earlier and set up a Kissinger call. Meany told him he thought he'd be pleased with what he had to say to say, and the President closed by saying that there'll be a time when we'll all be together again.



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Then he said to try and figure a way to get Connally on TV in support of us. He had me check Rose Woods and Billy Graham and some of the others for their reactions. We got some very good, very positive reactions, and I think we're in good shape on the response to the speech.

End of May 8th.