



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

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Thursday, October 26.

Kissinger called me at 3:00 this morning to say that the North Vietnamese had gone public on their peace proposal and he was in a state of very great concern at that time. He called again at 7:00 and had simmered down considerably, as I thought he would, as he found that their thing didn't really look as bad as he was afraid it was going to.

The President got cranking on it this morning, but first was concerned about adding West Virginia in at the last minute to the Kentucky trip since Archmore wasn't going to be there in Kentucky tonight. So we had quite a hassle trying to tie something up with Archmore, but ended up adding a quick stop at the Huntington, West Virginia Airport, before we landed in Ashland.

It worked out very well. It was a very good trip, great enthusiasm in both West Virginia and Kentucky. The peace move obviously had a lot to do with that, as it was featured in the papers and on TV tonight after Kissinger's briefing today. The President wanted a quick poll made, to see what the public reaction was to the Peace Plan, as it now stands-- mainly the question of whether he should order a bombing halt while we're negotiating, or if he should continue the bombing. He made the point that we've got to attack McGovern on his peace-by-surrender plan and all the Vietnam-related issues-- abandoning the POW's and so forth. He makes the point, that only great events can change things in the campaign now, and Vietnam is the only great event happening. We've got to be sure that if it changes anything, it changes it our way. He emphasized the need in the last two weeks to keep down the jitters with the staff and said we ought to get all the surrogates in on Saturday and have Henry brief them. He told me to work with Haig on the PR on this thing, all that matters now is what the press says, that it's a political battle of the first magnitude, that we have to keep Scali clued in, get him on the road, get Rogers and Laird on salvo next week. Kissinger plays an enormous and important part now and we've got to watch every development and make the most of each of them. The question that concerns him is whether it appears we're playing politics with Vietnam. He emphasized the need for Henry to see



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the good press people, and then he came up with the idea that he ought to have a press conference before the election, maybe do it on the plane, with an expanded pool on the way out.

He also wanted to expand the schedule to do Michigan at some point as an airport stop, and he got into the McGovern attack thing, which got an awfully good rating last night. He thinks that MacGregor should issue a white paper refuting the charges one by one -- charge the big line smear at the last minute, the most vicious personal attacks on the President, repeat his earlier charges, say this is a shocking performance, not worthy of a Presidential candidate, and so on. We should keep the VP and Ziegler and so on, off of it, because it's not our issue. On the Vietnam thing, he wants to be sure we get talking papers out to the surrogates and all. Ziegler felt that he was very disturbed when Ron reported to him on Kissinger's briefing. And Ron read it that the President felt that we were getting the wrong twist on this, and that Kissinger was getting the play, and that the announcement now had been blown, where the President had hoped that he could go before the nation and make the announcement. Now, it had been made by the North Vietnamese and briefed by Henry, which kind of pulled the President out of it. He was uptight when he talked with me about the Kissinger thing too, but on the basis that Henry hadn't gotten our points over, the anti-McGovern points. And so the President wants that followed up, making the point primarily, our peace with honor versus his peace by surrender. I said that I thought this break by the North Vietnamese would turn out to be the best lucky break of the campaign for us, not because of the substance or that we'll win votes by moving people over on Vietnam, but because it takes the corruption stuff off the front pages, totally wipes out any other news.

End of October 26.