



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

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Friday, January 5.

The President got into quite an analysis of the Congressional opposition, arising out of his discussions yesterday and then the leadership meeting today, which apparently went very well, although his reaction afterwards was quite negative. He feels that the reason the Congress are so negative and opposing him on everything, particularly Vietnam is because they look bad themselves now, and they're trying to untangle that by putting some blame on the President. He feels strongly that they're taking the wrong approach in saying they more need buildings and more staff, rather they should be operating more effectively. He's taken the lead in reorganizing and thinks Congress should follow suit; he's told Ehrlichman to take that approach on TV this weekend.

He says Burger is overhauling the court system, too, and now the third branch should also move to overhaul and improve itself. He wants Timmons to change his approach and work Congress on an affirmative basis, not negative and defensive -- he shouldn't look like he's hanging crepe all the time. He's obviously got some doubts about Timmons, mainly because he's not strong and positive enough, and feels that we've got to change our tune -- get away from the supplicant position. We won the election, so we should let them come to us.

He got into PR tactics with Kissinger also. Told him that since he had scheduled a meeting with Mansfield, he would also have to talk to Scott and Ford, ask them to stand up and scream treason at the opponents, hitting the opponents for undermining the negotiations. And as the President thought about that, he said no, we shouldn't do that, because that would hurt us in Paris. Henry was saying at that point, that we should try to get some reaction. The President then told him to call Colson, and tell him what he want hit, attacking the patriotism and that sort of thing, but then he backed off of it again, and said that we should not do it, which was also my view.

He's concerned about Laird, who took the position, apparently yesterday, that any agreement, no matter how bad it is, is better than no agreement, he's now sent a letter to the President making that point, so he's on record with it. Typical Laird device which he's done at every crunch period.



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Kissinger made the point that no President since Lincoln has faced such a concerted opposition, the whole establishment, jumping on him at every slippage. The President said no, it's not just the opposition, it's their way of getting even for his winning the 61 percent. He told Kissinger to tell Mansfield when he met with him, that the POW deal alone won't work, that we've tried that, and they won't take it. Ziegler then came in to review the plan for the briefings. He's going to cover the reorganization, and then said that he wanted to repeat what the President said on Vietnam at the breakfast, the President said no, that the press doesn't sit in on those meetings, there's no reason why they should.

Ziegler pushed it a little, and the President then agreed on the basis that he should make the following points: that we have to proceed with the policy that we have, we feel that it's right, we should refer to the progress we've made over the last four years. Then he should repeat that the May 8 policy is in effect, that the objective, the POW's, cease-fire, and assuring South Vietnam of a way to control their own political future. Then he should build the chronology, that on May 8 we mined and bombed, on October 8 we had a breakthrough in Paris, with an agreement in principle, still with details to work out. As a result of that, the President suspended the bombing above the 20th parallel.

Then on October 26, while we were still trying to work out the details, North Vietnam announced the agreement on those issues, and Kissinger, being forced to, confirmed it. After the election, then North Vietnam backed away and posed conditions which were not what they had said to begin with, that were unacceptable, and these were in relation to POW's, cease-fire, supervision, and a number of other dilatory tactics. So Kissinger was sent back to Paris, presumably for three days -- he stayed for ten -- and it was clear during that period that there was a stalling pattern. And in the meantime, they were building up capability in North Vietnam and moving troops into South Vietnam. It was clear that there was no agreement, that they had backed away, so Kissinger returned and the President removed the suspension of bombing which he had ordered suspended on October 8. Then two days before the New Year, North Vietnam agreed to return to the negotiations, so the President again suspended the bombing and said that



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it will remain suspended as long as there are serious negotiations. He won't be optimistic or pessimistic, but there is a chance to end the war, not just to withdraw and that's what we're working for in the negotiations.

Then he got into the question of whether Kissinger supported the bombing, based on Kraft's column yesterday saying that he didn't. Then the President told Ron to deny the Kraft column. Then after Ron left he told me to call Kissinger and ask him how we should answer the Kraft thing. Kissinger said well I always say that the President and I were completely together on it, but that as a question of principle, I don't catalog what I recommend to the President. But on this point I will say that I was in total agreement, so you should just shoot it down on that basis. We need to be more definite on this the President feels. And when Ziegler hit Henry on it a little later, Henry backed off of Ziegler shooting it down, and said, well, I don't catalog the positions that I take with the President.

The other item of interest today was the President's concern about our Colson, Ziegler, Timmons capability. He feels that the President can't take the whole load in the Oval Office -- that he has to assume that someone else is going to grab things and take the initiatives from a PR standpoint the way Colson now does. He called me tonight from Camp David after he'd gone up there, and got back to that again. He said the main thing to consider now is whether the attack operation is adequate, or are we dismantling too much in view of the position that we have with the Congress. That we should consider the people we have, who would be useful, and be able to move for us if necessary. After he meets with Kissinger tomorrow, and gets that settled, then the key thing is the PR side. Maybe Kissinger should have someone with him in Paris to tell him not to smile and so on. We need to get Ziegler and Timmons in all together -- get a PR point, not just the hot news, maybe we should stiffen up our apparatus if it's not adequate. He wants me to talk to Ziegler over the weekend regarding the handling of the PR over the next week. We must not be always on the defensive, especially when the Democrats are acting their usual way anyway. The overriding point, is how it all comes out so we shouldn't worry about the Canadian Parliament, or our Congress or anything else. Thinks I also ought to talk to MacGregor. Said that



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he had talked to Gerry Ford, who's had to make a deal with Wilson because Brown won't fight for the Campaign Committee Chairmanship. So Wilson's agreed he'll resign three days before the March dinner --the President said okay we'll accept that deal, if in addition they agree to appoint Brown as the recruitment man now. And then if they do, we'll just ignore Wilson.

End of January 5.