



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

National Archives and Records Administration, Online Public Access Catalog Identifier: 7787364

Tuesday, January 23rd. Discussion in the staff meeting this morning on the budget question, whether Cap should launch it or Roy Ash, and agreed finally to go back to the plan of having Cap launch it, although we had originally decided to shift the thing over to Roy.

Got word from Henry first thing this morning that he had initialed the Vietnam agreement and that was set, so we had sessions on planning of the speech for tonight. It's still a question of Haig's briefing our PR staff, which he feels he shouldn't do, because it'll drive Henry up the wall. We shifted the briefings and all around because of the Johnson funeral plans, so that Henry is going to do everything on Wednesday morning earlier. And the President said he wanted Haig also to sit in in case Henry had to leave the one meeting to go to the next. Then we went round and round on getting all those schedule items straightened out and the question of when the President informs the leaders and all, that we have to keep the agreement quiet because of our agreement with the North Vietnamese, and then we reopened, I reopened the question of his going to Congress. He had decided last night, after Johnson had died, that he definitely would not go up to Congress, but our people still felt he should, so we discussed that and went back and forth on the question of whether he should go up or not. And Haig argued that the problem of going up there is that you bring them in more, and that first, you may have a bad situation, even Sunday when the cease-fire starts, and then the unraveling of the thing is going to be harder to manage if he's made a big thing out of it with Congress. Second, that Hanoi would misread it, because this isn't a peace settlement, it's a cease-fire, and the euphoria would lead Hanoi to cheat. And third, a question of taste, of going up to Congress right after LBJ's death.

The President had us do some checking with other people and the Speaker first said it was too late an hour, it being at 10:00 at night, and also too short a notice, that he'd really have to crack, but on the other hand, all important messages in history have been made to the Congress, it would add prestige, and on balance, he should do it to Congress, but it's up to the President to do



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what he wants. Ford agreed with the Speaker, only more strongly he felt the President should do the Congress. Mansfield felt the other way that he probably should not. Connally started out by saying, all you're doing is using the Congress, but maybe they'd appreciate it. You shouldn't be deterred by the LBJ thing, that's no problem; you should make the decision on other grounds. On balance, you should go to Congress because it will help the relations; it shows them deference, but it's not all that critical. It would be a good opportunity for a nonpartisan tribute to Johnson, Connally felt. After going round on round on it, he decided at about 1:00 to do it in the office, and I think it was probably a good decision. He said there'd be no advance text and no text available till after the speech, by agreement with North Vietnam, and set up his briefing schedule and TV schedule on that basis.

We had the Cabinet meeting at 8:30 actually started at 8:45. The President opened by saying that this is basically a pro forma meeting we're doing it for the purpose of the eyes of the world and the nation, so that they will think that we have consulted with the Cabinet, but we can't really get into anything now because we can't release the agreement until tomorrow. Then he read the official statement that he'll read on TV tonight; he said all our conditions have been completely met.

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DECLASSIFIED - E.O. 13526, Sect. 3.4: by MS, NARA, June 12, 2013  
Audio Cassette 30, Side A, Withdrawn Item Number 10 [AC-30(A) Sel 6]  
Duration: 28 seconds

He called on Kissinger to discuss Cambodia and Laos which really threw Henry, because that's not supposed to be known, and is not in the agreement. Henry said the major thing on Cambodia and Laos is that it's essential not to talk about it. It won't be in the agreement, but there will be a



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cease-fire in Laos in 15 days we have a strong reason to believe. Cambodia will be more complex. We believe there will be a de facto cease-fire emerging in 15 days, but it will be messier than Laos.

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The President said the GVN and Thieu are totally aboard and will issue statements to that effect; that there will be heavy fighting between now and the cease-fire. That after the cease fire there will be inevitable violations, which is why the supervisory body is so important, and the fact that it will be distributed all over the country and four times larger than anything we've had there before. He said on a note of interest, you might want to know when we believed it would, that we would break the deadlock. There was a total deadlock in December, not just on the details until, and we think that it was because the North Vietnamese wanted to wait and see what Congress would do, so we bombed them. Then on the 30th of December, they met our conditions to return to negotiations; Kissinger arrived on the 8th for talks. Then he had Henry tell what happened. Henry says we resumed the talks on Monday the 8th; the first day was brutal and there was no hope; and at the President's instructions, after that, I said I would leave on Wednesday night. So on Tuesday, which happened to be the President's birthday, there was a major advance on the two outstanding issues; they put a new man in charge of the technical agreements. And on the 9th, they really started moving, so Henry sent a cable to the President; the President replied saying it was the nicest birthday present he could have.

They settled almost the entire agreement and protocol that week and then they had to work out the details last week. When it was announced last night, no, when he arrived last night in Paris, there were only three things still to be done, and those were settled quickly this morning; it was all done by 12:30. The President had then wired him to say he could have more time because of



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the LBJ death, but they, the North Vietnamese weren't about to take more time; they were determined to settle today.

Then the President summarized it, saying it's interesting to note that without Vietnamization there could have been no settlement, because there would have been no incentive on either side to settle, plus, of course, our own military actions. That none of this was made easier by the totally irresponsible actions of Congress and the resolutions that called for a settlement that was less than what we got. He read one sentence from his speech about the POW-for-withdrawal-question and the fact that POW wives had opposed that. So, he said, we have a cease-fire for Vietnam, possibly in Laos and Cambodia, we have peace with honor, the POW's back, the supervised cease-fire, and the right of South Vietnam to determine their own future. It's been long, painful and difficult for all of us; this is not Johnson's war or Kennedy's war. They did start it, and they did handle it badly, but the US was involved. We now have achieved our goals; a peace for Vietnam, the right of the South Vietnamese to determine their future without an imposed Communist government. The fact that we have stood firm as a country was responsible and has had a decisive effect on the world. If the United States did not prove to be responsible in Vietnam, if this had ended in defeat and surrender, the Chinese and the Russians would have no interest in talking to us, Europe wouldn't consider us as a reliable ally, in spite of their bitching about the war. We must understand, for the US to keep the peace and save freedom, we have to be responsible, and that's what this peace is about. It was not a Republican achievement. We, he has as much contempt for the Republicans who would cut and run as he does for the Democrats; and thank God for those who stood with us, like the hardhats.

He got fairly emotional at the end, but did a darn good job at the Cabinet meeting, although he worried Henry a little about some of the areas that he went into. The speech itself was also very good, and reaction afterwards indicated that it will take a few days before we see how the tone



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really sets in. In any event, it's been a rather historic day, and hopefully the whole thing will stick and prove worthwhile.

Henry has obviously been up quite tight, and, but he's looking forward to his big press briefing tomorrow and then his probable appearance in each house of Congress for a while on Friday.

End of January 23rd.