



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

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One, two, three, four.

This will be a special roll of commentary on the China trip starting with our departure from Washington on Wednesday, February 17th.

Thursday, February 17th. The departure ceremonies and the takeoff from Andrews all went very well, with no problems. The President seemed to be in great spirits on the chopper going over to Andrews, as he, too, felt the whole thing had gone well.

The Leadership meeting had been very positive and upbeat. He had received a standing ovation, and everybody, even including Fulbright, had wished him well on the trip, so things seem to be off to an auspicious start. We saw a little bit of the TV coverage after we got on the plane, because they had the set on the table in the staff room, and it appeared that coverage had been extremely good, according to those who had watched it, by getting out to the plane early. It was kind of an odd feeling because we, they covered the actual takeoff of the Spirit of '76 and we were on the plane watching the TV covering the takeoff, which was sort of fascinating.

The President called me, had called me up to his cabin with Ziegler and Kissinger to discuss plans, and so on. Called me up at 11:10 and kept me up till 2:10, so I had three solid hours in the cabin with him, starting about a half hour after takeoff. He wanted to discuss the original plan he had had for briefing the press in Hawaii. He felt that the points he would make would be the logistic details, the fact that there'd be no press briefings while we were in Hawaii, some guidance on press conduct while we're there, setting the tone for the fact that there'd be no news, and mainly emphasizing the press' role in opening communications with China. The fact that they are there as Americans on an historic venture not just as reporters covering the trip.



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We discussed this some. He talked about his philosophy of his relationship with the press, and the need to have established in their minds the way this thing is going to work, so that we won't get into a problem of their expecting things that don't happen. Kissinger then outlined his concern that the President doing this in Hawaii would be a signal to the Chinese that this was as they were afraid, just a PR venture, and that this would be very undesirable. The President then suggested that we consider having a reception for the press, rather than a substantive briefing. Ziegler then suggested that rather than the President doing this, we ought to consider just Ziegler doing it, which is, of course, what Kissinger wanted to begin with. Actually, what Kissinger wanted was to do it himself, but he realized that was out, and felt it was better to have Ziegler do it than the President. Ron then said he could approach it on the basis of giving them a further fill on the leadership meeting today and expand from there, which would give them a basis for something to talk about. It was agreed, that that was what was to be done. The President then asked Ron how--, asked Henry, however, to recap some of the points that he had made at the leadership meeting, feeling that that would be helpful to Ron in his talk with the press. Henry's points were covered in sort of random form.

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He said that as leaders they are charming, but fanatic, and so on; that they're the heirs of the Confucian theory that virtue is power, but you can't use this description of them.

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The President pointed out that he expected that the meetings that he would have would be a beginning process that would require much longer discussion than was possible on this trip. He then mentioned that Henry's theme was this whole thing presents a formidable challenge of preparation, and this is especially true because none of us has any long experience in the Chinese field. Kissinger then said that the differences here are we stress peace, where they stress justice. We stress stability, where they stress conflict. He concludes, therefore, that there are three levels on which we have to judge the success of this trip. The first, and lowest level is the specific agreements that we make there, that is the actual news that comes out on a specific basis. The second, and more important, is their judgment of our leadership. The question of whether we have a world outlook, a sense of the-- , and a sense of history. Are we reliable? Then the President interpreted that as being really, can we act as a nation, or simply as a babble of voices? In other words, make the point of how we need and appreciate bipartisan support. That this is not a personal trip, but what follows will carry over for years ahead. Then Henry's third point was, and the most important of all, the third level on which to judge results, is the impact of their society on our society. The President interjected that this must come later, that this is a theme for a speech when we get back, but should not be used by Ron in talking with the press.

The President said to cover the fact that coming out of the legislative leaders' meeting are the thoughts, these various thoughts. And that Ron should not say who said what, but make the main theme bipartisan support. He said we cannot adequately or accurately judge this trip by the hot or spot news, but only by what happens in the years ahead. This is not a trip to accomplish immediate objectives, but to achieve a longer range goal. The President also said that Ron needs to set the stage on the basis that there may not be a communiqué; that there will be a problem, too, in briefing on the communiqué. The President can't do it, Ziegler can't do it, so Kissinger has to do it, but he should have Marshal Green with him, not Rogers. The principals should stay away from it. So, I have to handle that with Rogers and explain why. The briefing would not be covered with television or sound. And then we got into a discussion of whether it should be



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background or on the record. Ziegler recommended that it be on the record. The President said call it a background briefing, but then put it on the record, so that it's referred to not as a press conference but as a background session.

Then Henry said that Ben Bradlee had called him and discussed this whole question of whether the *Post* would participate or honor a background session, and said he would if they would agree to allow them to identify the briefer at the beginning of the article. Ziegler blew his stack at that and said we should never be in the position of making a deal with Ben Bradlee, or the *Washington Post*. The President agreed with him, and the decision then was to keep the *Post* out of it, and make it a background thing; don't buy Bradlee's deal. The President emphasized the need for close discipline on the press during the week that no one is to talk to the press unless we decide to do so. That we've got to create the impression that this is a very tough bargaining session, not all peaches and cream. That we've got to be sure Buchanan and Scali are tuned in on the point of staying away from the press.

He then raised a subtle point that someone can make, but not us that the last visitor the Chinese had who came from Camp David was Khrushchev, and that wasn't a good experience. We hope this one will be different.

At this point Ziegler left, and the President and Henry got into a general discussion of our present position reviewing the whole strategy of how to approach the Chinese, the--, Henry's theory of their views versus ours, and so on.



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Henry then left and the President shifted to some domestic matters, and said on the problem of price and wage controls that he wants Shultz to get a hold of it, but to talk to Connally first, make the point that he's doing this to help Connally. He then also got into the Weinberger memo, said that our people have got to be totally non-defensive and quit asking what we're doing wrong. They've got to start acting on the basis that the President is right. Quit analyzing everything, even with the best of intentions. We need to create an aura of confidence and mystique that we believe in the leader, and not that we're self-examining and critiquing. Instead, we should go on our strong points, take the offensive, hit our line; that we're now in the period where we win or lose, so we have to ride it out as winners. We've done damn well, we need to get credit for it.

He then raised the point of having Scali going into Peking on the press plane ahead of us, and give us an advance feel and his judgment on the press mood, the Chinese mood, and so forth, possibly coming back and joining us in Shanghai then flying into Peking. I discussed this with Ziegler afterwards, and he felt this was a very bad idea, and in fact wouldn't really be possible, that we shouldn't try to do it. So we're going to drop that.

The Hawaii arrival got a little botched up, since there was a huge crowd at the airport, and the President felt he had to go to the fence, although it was agreed he wasn't going to. He did, but very briefly. After we got to the Residence, he had Henry and me come over, and we had sort of an incredible chat with Mrs. Nixon, who wasn't the least bit interested in getting any advice from any of us, particularly from Henry, on how to handle things, and kept expressing her own views on the Chinese, which are not very favorable ones. Mainly drawn from the television documentaries she's seen, apparently. The President was obviously in great spirits as a result of the departure activities and all, and seemed to Henry to be doing his homework in very good form also.



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End of February 17th.