



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

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Thursday, June 19.

Press conference day. President stayed at Residence all day. Came out at 5:45 to greet Pat on return from her trip. Called over frequently on specific questions - number of Vietnamese killed; number of Negroes in America; how to pronounce Marchi; view of political types regarding Marchi endorsement (they said he should, and he did), date of Finch-Mitchell statement on guidelines, etc.

Rather startling answers on some Vietnam questions. Said he hoped to beat Clark Clifford's goal on withdrawals (all out by end of next year); there would be more withdrawals this summer - decision in August; he wasn't "wedded" to Thieu regime; he was not opposed to a cease fire, etc. Also said we'd like to start SALT talks July 21 and they might be in Geneva or Vienna.

All this shook Kissinger pretty badly. He feels that it will probably mean collapse of South Vietnam government in near future and will result in South Vietnamese troops fighting us. Thieu will consider it a betrayal - as will all Southeast Asia - and it will be interpreted as unilateral withdrawal. Kissinger thinks maybe President has decided to pull out, and is taking this step knowingly. I don't think so. I feel he just wanted to hit back at Clifford - and overplayed his hand. If this is the case, Kissinger feels we'll have monumental and maybe impossible job in trying to build around President's statements and re-shore up our own previous position. Poor Kissinger gets really shook by these things, and for good reason. He's been pushing the opposite approach. He's been discouraged deeply the last few days because he feels Vietnam plans aren't working out right. President knows this and may have reacted. Kissinger says we won't know real effect for about two weeks. Tough.

President went to ball game after press conference and dinner, at about 8:45, with Julie and David.

Will be interesting to see what tomorrow brings - his mood was great today, which usually indicates he's made a big and tough decision, and maybe he has. I hope not, for Kissinger's sake.



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President called at home later - riding high - feels he was very effective. Likes prime time idea.