



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

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Thursday, May 20th.

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SALT announcement day. First big event was the Cabinet meeting at 9:00, which the President completely dominated at the outset. Instead of just making his announcement, he went into quite a substantial history of how SALT has been stalemated and deadlocked for over a year. And the essence of the deadlock was that we give our negotiator an OK to do less than a comprehensive agreement. The Soviets emphasized limitations only on defensive weapons which was perfectly natural since that's what they didn't have, they were doing offensive, and they knew we were doing defensive, so they were interested in controlling us, while we, of course, were interested in controlling them.

To break the deadlock, the President felt it was worthwhile to try at the highest level and couldn't inform anyone of what he was doing except Bill Rogers. He sent a communication to the Soviet leaders at the highest level on January 8th. He said that we felt we should work toward our limiting defensive, and they limiting offensive weapons. There was no progress of any significance until Dobrynin came back from the Party Congress, then they said they were interested.

We'll be announcing a joint statement today. We knew yesterday morning that the Soviets finally had agreed. We informed no one because, first, we were concerned about a leak, and second, we didn't want any power play to appear to be being made on the Congress regarding the Mansfield Amendment.



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Then he read the statement. He said that he wanted to indicate what this does and does not mean. It's a major step in breaking the stalemate. It does not mean an agreement has been reached.

With this public indication that the government has won an agreement, progress is a very good possibility, but not a certainty. In any event, the whole thing is going to require very hard negotiations. If it's successful, it opens the door to settling the differences in other areas. I--,He wouldn't say what, but they could be very significant. Getting this far is by itself a result of doing the long, hard process; developing the US position, and fighting for it; knowing what we want and going out to get it.

He said he had talked a lot with Kissinger and had had letters to Smith, etcetera. And they wondered through it all whether it would come. It is significant; it's a first step; it could be a decisive step. This is not a time for euphoria; we still have great differences with the Soviets, especially at a time when it's most important to go ahead with our own arms and ABM programs—otherwise we would remove their incentive. If it were not for having the ABM, and if we hadn't kept it last year, the US would have had nothing to give in order to get something from the Soviets.

He then called on Bill Rogers who said this is an extremely significant action on the part of both governments. It holds out the hope that many problems can be solved; it can't be overplayed. We can claim credit later. The chances are that the developments now will come quickly—in months, not in years—but we'll have to wait and see.

He referred to the awkward language of the official agreement which was because that--,of the two agreements have to put it out, and the translation problems. He said that the ABM agreement



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will probably be a treaty, final in nature; the other will not be a treaty, but it will be binding. They are not part of the same package, but they're being done at the same time. We have to go along with this as a factor in Russian diplomacy. The President said, emphasized again the enormous amount of work that's already been done, and that ABM is a treaty and the other is on agreement, but not so precise as a treaty.

Laird said we ought to be pretty fuzzy on this point of treaty versus another kind of agreement. Kissinger said there should be no doubt that the two are simultaneous. The degree of formality will be worked out by Jerry Smith; this all too complex for anyone but Bill to speculate on. The President said the fundamental point is that they will be reached at the same time. We will continue to work for a formalized agreement on offensive weapons.

Smith said we should say probably there will be a treaty on the ABM. We shouldn't be positive.

Rogers said there would be a tremendous effort to clarify this. Our plan must be to not clarify it; it's too delicate; we should leave it to the negotiators.

The President said that should be the position of everyone in government and if asked how it happened, we should tell them—we should not tell anything. The Russians are very sensitive on this, and they would close down the curtain. We'll go on from here, but we shouldn't speculate on where we're going to go, we should leave that to the negotiators; speculation would tie our hands at a time when we need flexibility.

Laird said this is a breakthrough; for the first time we have a negotiating framework.



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Rogers said the allies always run and throw up their hands in excitement when there's any sign of hope. We must be very careful that all this doesn't move too fast. That is in terms of NATO troop reduction initiatives, etcetera.

The President said we must indicate there's some hope, but that it's not all settled. As far as ABM is concerned, if we take a walk on that, the deal is finished.

Elliot Richardson said this is extremely exciting and a very encouraging development. He understands the caution, but if we are too cautious, then the question will arise: Well, why is an announcement being made? We really need more color on this.

Rogers said answer's clear. We should answer the question on why not ABM only. The answer is that this answers the question why not ABM only. Now, the Soviet says okay well we'll have both. We can't crow, but they have backed away.

The President said if there are any questions on MIRV or anything of that sort, the answer is that there's no discussion on those, they're the subject for other negotiations.

The Vice President said will it become apparent that ABM is a treaty? If so, then the next question will be: Why the offensive thing isn't a treaty? Nothing will be gained by that.

Rogers said nothing should be said.



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Kissinger said no cabinet officer should speculate about what's in the agreement. The President said the less said about what goes on, the better; the more we talk, the less chance there is of an agreement. Smith said the fact of the announcement is great. There should be no words beyond the fact that the announcement will be helpful. The Vice President said this seems to put offensive and defensive in different positions. The President said there will be two agreements, but at the same time. Kissinger said the degree of formality is deliberately left open and is up to the negotiators; Bill and Jerry must work this out and we should not speculate on it. Rogers said we won't be in—under any pressure to say anymore, we should now say nothing more. To clarify the--, however the ABM can be a final agreement, but the offensive agreement looks to the future. And we will look to a more far reaching agreement.

Bob Dole said we should emphasize the continuing need for the ABM. The President then said we should be gracious to our opponents in the Congress, and give them an opportunity to support this. If they don't, then not only their intelligence is subject to question, but something else.

Connally then said this is a very, very significant step and it should be treated as such. Then he said most of us know now more than we need to know. Those of you who understand this should go ahead. We should now end this meeting as quickly as possible.

The President asked Moorer if he'd like to say anything and Moorer said no sir, and then did talk a little bit, saying we must realize that Smith has a tough job.

The President closed by saying while we are far apart in the negotiations, the significant thing is first, that the US has never gone into any negotiations better prepared. Secondly, the Soviet was



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not as well prepared in the first round, but they are now. Third, both of them have gone at this in a very tough and serious manner.

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On that note, the Cabinet stood up and clapped and that concluded the meeting.

Apparently the Congressional meeting went pretty well, but the President was quite adamant in his feeling of, that, as to what poor sports some of the Senators were. Even Mansfield had no comment in the meeting, and Fulbright said nothing at all, either in the meeting or afterwards. Most of the other Democrats came up to the President afterwards and told him what an outstanding thing this was. The Speaker didn't even come to the meeting; when they called him last night he said he couldn't, because he had a meeting with the Capitol architect regarding space requirements and wouldn't be able to be here, and he didn't come.

The President had a series of little meetings during the day. He had Ziegler in a number of times, Kissinger in a number of times, in between his briefings. Called Scali in to warn him that we've got to be very careful not to get crosswise with the So--, Soviets by saying that they gave in on everything and we gave in on nothing. Then he had Rumsfeld in, started to give him the pitch on wanting him to take the OEP job, and he spent about a minute and a half outlining what he had in mind, when Kissinger came in to report again. So he tossed Rumsfeld and me out, told me to go over it with Rummy. I did, and he didn't take the bait very rapidly, but did seem to have some interest. The President asked me about that later and was quite disgusted that Rumsfeld hadn't jumped at the job. He feels that he should have.



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Later this afternoon, the President had a meeting scheduled at 4:00 with Connally. Instead of having him come over, he had me call at 3:45 and say he, that the President was going to be tied up, but that he was sending someone else over to see Connally. Then the President went over and surprised him in his office. He had me go with him and sit in the meeting, which lasted about an hour and a half, and then the President spent a half hour wandering around the Treasury Building, meeting people, and so forth. By this time a crowd had built up outside, and he stopped and chatted with them as he worked his way back across the street. Connally and the President discussed the whole SALT thing and were very cheer, cheerful on the reaction to that. Then the President made the point that he wants Connally to serve as the chief Administration spokesman on the economy, and that he wants to delegate all of that responsibility to Connally. Connally made a little speech about how he certainly didn't want to take on this task, and all that sort of thing, but that it was certainly clear that the President should have one single spokesman and that it had to be the Secretary of the Treasury. So he modestly allowed as how he would take it on. They had some discussion about Arthur Burns and, and the problems of dealing with him, and got into some politics on staffing, emphasizing that Connally should build up his office, mainly with people from the Midwest, West, and South. They discussed the need for people-related goals, five or six good ones, and the President asked Connally to have his recommendations on this subject in to him by the end of June or the first of July, at which time the President was going to have two long weekends, one on budget and the other on goals.

End of May 20th.