



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

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Saturday, March 31.

In San Clemente. Ehrlichman and I talked this morning to Kleindienst to review the Gray question on the FBI. Agreed that he was through and had to be out. Kleindienst recommends Matt Byrne as the best prospect for a replacement, but agrees that Henry Petersen should also be questioned. We also got into the question with Kleindienst to the Watergate handling and more particularly the need for some cooperation from him, and some discussion of strategy. He feels that he probably ought to appoint a three judge panel to replace himself as the prosecutor on the case, since he's basically disqualified.

The Vice President called me on the phone, says he felt that Ziegler's statement yesterday went far enough on the thing of satisfying our people that we're going to be-- or trying to be forthcoming. He thinks that his personal feeling, based on his information from the Senate, their next line of attack is going to be to discredit the prosecution by attacking the prosecutor and, for that matter, the FBI. His impression is-- they have the impression that he had information that he didn't use. They're going to currently try to develop that. And that the testimony-- there was testimony before the grand jury that was wrong, and he knew it and did nothing to impeach it. He thinks this will probably leak out through Dash. He wanted the President to consider his idea on how to handle it, which would be an immediate move to appoint a special prosecutor, and he recommends Dean Rusk who has no patience with the Senate, is dean of a law school, no obligations to the Nixon Administration and can't be faulted in any way. He thinks Tom Clark would be another possibility. In any point, he thinks our strategy should remain a quick, affirmative retaliation on anything they hit us on.

The President wanted Buchanan to get out, but not from the White House, that thing on the worst quotes by Ramsey Clark and Fonda and so forth, to put out in contrast to what the POW's are saying and to hypo what Fonda and all of them are saying now about the stuff they'd said about how great the North Vietnamese are and their attacks on the war, all of that. Also bring in Teddy



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Kennedy's quotes, and all the others, on Cambodia, Sante, May 8, December 18, and so on. Get this to Congressmen and Senators.

The President then had Ehrlichman in, and we had a long session on Kleindienst and the Watergate and the question of strategy. We went back and forth, and I made the very strong case that we had to develop some way of getting out ahead of this on the basis of covering the whole truth in the White House and letting the others areas defend themselves as best they can. On the basis from my viewpoint that this doesn't do them any harm because they're going to have the same problem one way or the other. And so what we're talking about is whether the White House shares the problem with them, or not, and there's no point in so doing because it doesn't help them, hurts the White House, and isn't true in any event. John and I are going to have to spend a lot of time on strategy on this over this week, and the President's obviously anxious to get things going. He called later on in the evening, or afternoon, and then talked to John also.

Tonight was the John Ford dinner, which went very well. The superclimax, which nobody will probably ever know, was when Ford did a magnificent job after he was wheeled up to the stage, was standing up by himself, walking to the podium and accepting the Film Institute Award, then sitting down while the President made his remarks, then coming up to receive his Medal of Freedom. And his response to that, he said that he wanted to quote Captain Jeremiah Denton, who had said he was stunned by the reaction of the people, and so on, and that he felt the same way. Then he said the President had talked with him on the phone about the reaction of the POW's, and he had told the President that he had cried and blubbered like a child when he saw them coming off, and then had gotten out his rosary and said a few prayers and then had said a simple little prayer himself, that was the prayer millions of Americans say in their homes, God bless Richard Nixon. It was an extremely impressive moment, and one that nobody there, I don't think, will ever forget. It really stuck it to the anti-Nixon types in the film crowd.

End of March 31.