



# Transformation of Henry Kissinger

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**H**ENRY KISSINGER is eating crow. In little bites to be sure, and with such a straight face that the tough stringy meat seems to be going down smooth as tapioca.

In fact, however, the Secretary of State is systematically acknowledging past mistakes and moving to correct them.

Perhaps the most notable confession of error centers on what is generally considered to be Kissinger's major achievement — the opening to China. The drama of that new policy tended to obscure the fact that the secrecy of Kissinger's first trip and the suddenness of the announcement disturbed American relations with several allies — especially Japan.

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**B**UT IN A SPEECH to the Japan Society in New York the other day, Kissinger paid his debt to history. He acknowledged that "a new policy toward China in 1971" led to "painful . . . misunderstandings with Japan."

"Let us be frank," he then said of the misunderstandings. "Our own tactics contributed." Which at the very least has to mean that the secrecy of Kissinger's first Peking visit was a mistake.

The same speech included an implied disavowal of Kissinger's most marked weakness — his undervaluation of the

moral and libertarian elements of foreign policy. "We have learned the important lessons from the tragedy of Vietnam," he said.

One of these was that "outside effort can only supplement, but not create, local efforts and local will to resist." Another lesson was that the "essential underpinning" of resistance to subversion lies in "popular will and social justice."

Earlier, in a series of notable speeches in St. Louis, Kansas City and Paris, Kissinger had come off his old insistence that economic issues, like questions of morality and liberty, were mere bagatelles — the small change of great power politics.

Indeed, Kissinger has now become the foremost American exponent of the primacy of economic issues in foreign policy.

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**T**O BE SURE, the self-transformation still has a way to go before Kissinger's most virulent critics will be satisfied.

No doubt reasons for calculation explain some of the changes. The old Kissinger style was well fitted to President Nixon. The new style suits President Ford. But it is a rare thing to see a high official make a positive response to criticism. Considering the trouble he is taking, it seems clear that he wants to stay Secretary of State for a long time.