

# The Boyishness of Henry Kissinger

Back home and on top, Henry Kissinger is so full of himself these days that, if you remarked to him in conversation that the ceiling was about to fall, he would not pause for a moment in his recounting of what Golda Meir said to him or what Sadat said about Rabin or who else said what to whom.

There is a certain boyish quality about our Secretary of State which makes him intensely likable and also makes one wonder whether boyishness is not a necessary ingredient in the personalities of really first-rate men.

Why is it, for example, that when one thinks of Kissinger's predecessors one does not smile? William Rogers, Dean Rusk, John Foster Dulles were all successful men, measured by comparison with their peers. Intelligent and able men, too. Yet one looks back on Rogers as drab, Rusk as persevering, Dulles as pompous. Whereas Kissinger—well, Henry is like the 14-year-old you may know in your neighborhood, that boy next door who will recount to you with contagious enthusiasm exactly what took place at second base in the third inning of yesterday's baseball game, and recount it with such rapt attention to dramatic detail that even though you thought you were not particularly interested you

cannot help but be caught up in the action and amused by the dedication of the reporter.

What makes a man boyish? Is it ego? Is it desire? Is it determination to make a mark on the world? Is it plain genuine enthusiasm? Or is it some secret formula, spoon-fed when young by a wise and observant mother?

No doubt it comes from inside. It does not depend upon the external event. For example, when Kissinger arrived home from the Middle East last March, he was a failure; he was morose; he was angry; he had missed the throw at second base and was full of the story of what happened and exactly why he missed it and how the other team had not played fair. Like the boy next door, he was very nearly in tears. Ask the boy whether he will play in the next game. Of course, he will; he can't quit when he's down, can he? But this time, Henry has made the play at second. Recalling last March, you say, "Will you quit now while you're a hero?" He looks at you and laughs.

The quality of being boyish is so extremely attractive that it may hide all manner of weaknesses. Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill were both possessed of a boyish quality.

Their mistakes are only now becoming discerned because at the time they were making them, we were all bemused watching them try so hard and have so much fun trying.

Henry will strut a little now, traveling around the country to explain foreign policy to the hinterland, and the posture will be not unlike that of the boy walking down the high school corridor with a newly won varsity letter. He will make uproariously funny self-deprecating jokes and the audiences will love them because they seem modest, though such jokes are never funny except in the mouths of winners.

The problems of Greece and Turkey and of disarmament can wait for a little while. A boy is entitled to a moment of reflection upon things past. And after that he will spring at the next problem and we will all watch, fascinated. There he is out there, pounding his fist into his glove, estimating the chances of the hitter and the runner, never forgetting a moment about the crowd. "Tireless," the crowd will say. "Smart." "He really understands foreign policy."

All true, but not definitive. What's definitive about Henry is that he is a boy.