

Kissinger Journey Began with a Lie

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Nixon's chief spokesman casually but deliberately told a lie last Thursday to begin building the cover story for Henry A. Kissinger's latest clandestine journey—a four-day mission to Moscow.

It happened beneath the ornate chandelier in the White House State Dining Room, where Nixon was shaking hands with a stream of persons attending a reception for the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

Presidential Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler approached a half-dozen reporters covering the reception and said the President would be leaving immediately after all hands were shaken for a weekend at his Camp David retreat in Maryland's mountains.

Nixon went to Camp David. But Ziegler also volunteered that Nixon would be conferring there during the weekend with Kissinger, his assistant for national-security affairs; John Ehrlichman, his top domestic adviser; and H.R. Haldeman, chief of the White House staff.

And Ziegler added that the trio of advisers already had gone to Camp David ahead of the President.

This was not true. Kissinger hadn't gone to Camp David. He was, at that moment, in Moscow.

The German-born international scholar and presidential adviser said Tuesday that his talks with Soviet leaders on Vietnam, other world problems and Nixon's planned May 22-29 Moscow summit began Thursday evening and continued until Monday noon.

A few hours after announcing Kissinger's mission Tuesday, Ziegler said the Camp David concoction was necessary because "both sides agreed that it was desirable to keep the meeting secret and keep speculation to a minimum ..."

Ziegler said the White House decided "that pre-announcement would have led to a great deal of speculation and the trip's success could have been jeopardized," noting that "Henry's whereabouts in recent months had become a matter of a great deal of interest and a matter that we are frequently asked about."

Such carefully constructed White House cover stories had worked before. Kissinger slipped into China unnoticed last summer while he was supposedly suffering from an upset stomach in Pakistan, and he had commuted to Paris a dozen times during a 30-month period for secret but unsuccessful peace talks with the North Vietnamese.

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