

On foreign policy

Public rates Kissinger over President Nixon

By Kevin P. Phillips
and Albert E. Sindlinger

WITH 83 percent of the American people favorable to the job he is doing as Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger is the most admired, most closely-watched and most approved public figure in the United States today.

These and other public attitudes toward Secretary Kissinger emerged in a May 9-12 Phillips-Sindlinger nationwide telephone poll of 1117 persons.

Here are the principal findings:

- 83 percent of the American people approve of Kissinger's performance as Secretary of State, while only 17 percent are negative.

- 84 percent of those questioned reported that they had read or heard about Kissinger within the last week — a very high level — and an extraordinary 63 percent were able to tell our interviewers where Kissinger was on the day they were interviewed.

- Kissinger's foreign policy approval rate is now considerably higher than President Nixon's.

Perhaps because of the contrast Kissinger's international diplomacy offers to the squalor of Watergate, a growing number of Americans are paying close attention to the well-publicized activities of the Secretary of State.

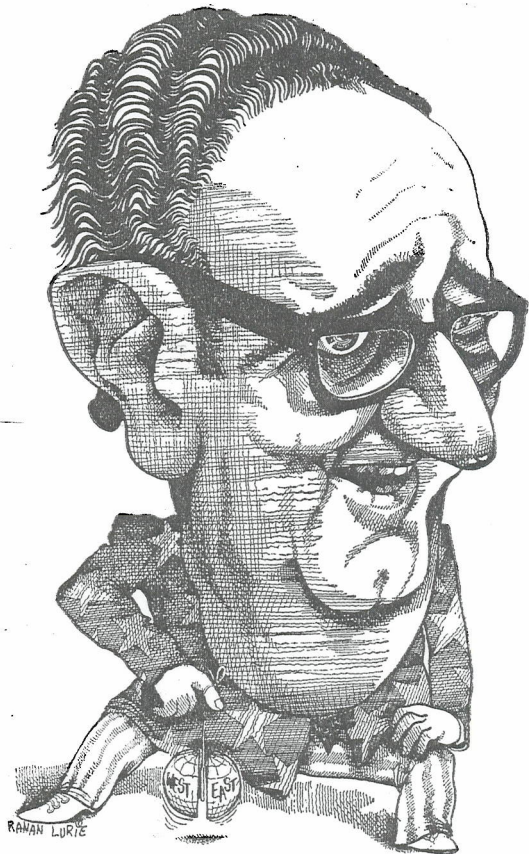
Our interviewers asked people: "When was the last time you read or heard about Secretary of State Henry Kissinger?"

These were the replies:

Sixty-three percent said today or yesterday, 21 percent said three to seven days ago, four percent said a week to a month, and three percent said over a month ago. This high attention rate—a striking 84 percent had read or heard of Kissinger within the week—is the sort normally reserved for Presidents, not Cabinet officials.

Even more surprisingly, 63 percent of those persons questioned were able to tell us where Kissinger was on that particular day — Syria, Jerusalem, Cairo or whatever. This is indicative both of the extreme interest in Kissinger and the intensity of his coverage in the media. Among the 37 percent who could not give our interviewers Kissinger's correct whereabouts, a number volunteered

Some of his critics consider Secretary of State Kissinger "a show-off," despite his popularity



1117 Interviews, May 9-12, 1974 "Now, thinking of Kissinger as Secretary of State, how would you rate the overall kind of job he is doing?"	1677 Interviews, April 29-May 4, 1974 "Now, thinking of President Nixon only on an international basis, how do you rate him?"
Excellent 48%	Excellent 23%
Pretty Good 35%	Pretty Good 35%
Only Fair 10%	Only Fair 27%
Poor 7%	Poor 12%
No Opinion 0%	No Opinion 3%

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that he was still honeymooning in Acapulco, Mexico.

An extremely favorable portrait of Kissinger emerged when people were asked:

"Now, thinking of Kissinger as Secretary of State, how would you rate the overall kind of job he is doing?"

Forty-eight percent described his performance as excellent, 35 percent characterized it as pretty good, 10 percent rated his efforts as only fair, and just seven percent described his performance as poor.

According to these figures, the public rates Kissinger's international capability more favorably than they rate the President's. Whereas Kissinger's good and excellent ratings total 83 percent, the President's foreign policy job gets a positive rating of only 58 percent. Thirty-nine percent of those questioned gave the President a negative rating, while just 17 percent said they were similarly critical of Kissinger.

Those respondents who described Kissinger's performance in office as "only fair" or "poor" were then asked to elaborate on their negative feelings. Our interviewers

then coded the responses into different groups.

About one-third of the Secretary's critics mentioned their belief that he was "too social," that he was a "show-off," that he was always "looking for the limelight," or that he was "a playboy."

Another third made some reference to his deals with Russia, either singling out the wheat deal or criticizing close U.S.-Russian ties in general.

A smaller group regretted that Kissinger had involved us in Red China. Another small minority mentioned that Kissinger had spoken too soon about peace in Vietnam because the United States was still involved. It should be noted that these persons criticizing Kissinger represents only one - sixth of the total sample.

Implicit in our findings is further testimony to the extraordinary power of the U.S. media to shape the image of a public official through the intensity and outlook of their coverage. Public fascination with Kissinger, and strong approval of his job, is closely related to heavy, favorable media attention.