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The Hidden Henry Kissinger

Henry Kissinger's startling outburst in Salzburg, Austria, where he responded to wiretap charges with a show of hurt and anger, gave the world a glimpse behind his diplomatic mask.

For the Secretary of State is not always the charming, witty man of the world who embraces his enemies and achieves the impossible peace. Those who know him have discovered under the suave exterior a petulant man, a restless friend and a resourceful enemy.

Perhaps the State Department superstar should be reduced to human dimensions. He spends most of his time in the pressure cooker. When his nerves are ragged, Kissinger's face reddens, his German accent thickens, and the expletives fly like shrapnel. The purple profanity is audible evidence that his American education was shaped in the Army's enlisted barracks as well as Harvard.

During his rages, he has hurled objects, sometimes at his underlings. One former aide recalls ducking a book that came flying across the room. Another said he never saw Kissinger throw anything heavier than a pad of paper at a staff member.

His temper, however, is an uncertain Vesuvius. More often, he is soft-spoken. He avoids confrontations, prefers to communicate with his staff through memos.

Those who have labored for him describe him as brilliant if domineering. It took all his diplomatic skills and

manipulative talents to produce the Syrian-Israeli truce. For 34 days, he shuttled between Damascus and Jerusalem.

He kept up intensive, daily negotiations, providing exactly the right combination of firmness and friendliness. Many times, the negotiations came close to a blow-up. But the Kissinger magic prevailed.

He expected to come home to a hero's welcome. Instead, he was asked questions about his role in a White House wiretap operation. Suddenly in Salzburg, he trembled with a wrath he could no longer hold back. And for the first time, the world saw a Kissinger only a few intimates had known.

Before Henry Kissinger stepped upon the world stage, he became fascinated with the life and style of another German refugee: Prince Klemens Wenzel Nepomuk Lothar von Metternich. The prince was the architect of the Balance of Power system and a central figure in the Austrian government in the first half of the 19th century.

Metternich was also a dashing figure in Vienna in the bygone days when diplomats wore sashes and cavorted to the waltzes of string bands. He was as interested in the bedchambers as he was in the council chambers.

The frumpish, owlish Kissinger was an unlikely Metternich. But what he lacked in dash and savoir-faire, apparently, he made up in quiet, engaging charm.

In Richard Nixon, Kissinger found a President who appreciated his skills. For foreign policy, despite the distractions of Watergate, is still Nixon's favorite game. It was also the love of the game, not any admiration for Nixon, that brought Kissinger to the White House.

"I had never met him when he offered me this job," recalls Kissinger. "I was astonished. After all, he was acquainted with the unfriendly and unsympathetic attitude I had always assumed towards him."

But Kissinger understood that the President was the source of political power. Drawing from this source, Kissinger gathered power to himself. As a recognized expert on foreign affairs, he was able to capture Nixon's attention from the beginning.

By dint of long hours and deep thinking and demanding staff work, Kissinger came up with a strategy for every crisis. He presented Nixon with a penetrating, two-inch-thick review of the Vietnam War, for example, within a few days after the new President moved into the White House.

The two men drew close together. "I like the President," says Kissinger. "I agree with him. We've gone through all this . . . like two men in a foxhole . . . It's almost irrelevant whether we like each other. It's like asking me whether I like my arm. We have no disagreement over anything central or basic. No disagreement over policy. We're too close for that."

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