

Is He Indispensable? Answers to the Kissinger Riddle

By Tad Szulc

“...His identification with Watergate politics and new questions about his diplomacy presage the fading of his brilliant star...”

Secretary of State Henry Alfred Kissinger may well be the most successful and intellectually accomplished diplomat in modern history. But his standing in Washington is now, at the very moment of his worldwide acclaim and glory, suddenly in question. His star is sliding into eclipse in the Washington firmament, almost imperceptibly, perhaps, but inexorably. It is not a matter of mere wishful thinking by envious enemies. It is, rather, the result of some observable and probably inevitable facts of political life.

At his startling Salzburg news conference Kissinger firmly linked himself with Richard Nixon's political fate, something he had studiously avoided during the two years of the Watergate trauma. And doubts are now emerging over the long-range validity of many of his policies, most recently those in the Middle East and particularly at the time of the October war and its aftermath. Though his skillful diplomacy has brought an unprecedented measure of stability to the region, its foundations remain fragile and the price uncertain. Israeli planes are still bombing Palestinian guerrillas in Lebanese sanctuaries.

As a foreign policy practitioner, Kissinger had long and wisely sought to keep foreign affairs separated from the quicksands of Watergate—this is presumably why he moved the center of gravity of policy-making from the White House to the untarnished State Department. But at the last, Nixon seems to have succeeded in forcing a political linkage on Kissinger because impeachment politics urgently required that the President be por-

trayed as a world statesman whose removal would threaten global peace. Hence, Nixon's triumphal Middle Eastern tour in the footsteps of Henry Kissinger's trail-blazing diplomacy.

Paying the price for his share of power—perhaps not all that reluctantly, inasmuch as his personality thrives on it—Kissinger embarked during this whole period on brinkmanship.

As some of the facts of Kissinger's obsessively secretive *modus operandi* are becoming known, there are reasons to believe that, instead of triumphs, his wartime Middle East policies could easily have led to unmitigated disaster. They were certainly rich, following his Vietnam negotiating pattern, in acts of misleading, if not deceiving, foe and friend alike. And his most recent diplomatic triumphs—military disengagements on Israel's Egyptian and Syrian fronts, “new diplomacy” toward the Arabs, the apparent diminishing of Soviet influence in the Middle East—may now be perceived as leading to new dangers and deceptions.

A quick reconstruction of recent events, based on fresh material from sources intimately familiar with the situation, suggests these points of peril:

□ Kissinger, largely misinformed over the battle conditions in the Middle East last October, opposed for a full week a resupply airlift for Israel.

□ Furious with the British government over its insistence on an ironclad “cover story” for the refueling of American aircraft at British facilities, Kissinger blocked for three days a critical secret reconnaissance mission by high-flying SR-71 planes over the Middle East battlefield. Still angry with

Britain, Kissinger has severely restricted the flow of secret intelligence to the British, despite an existing Anglo-American intelligence agreement.

□ For two weeks, Kissinger refused to launch serious diplomatic efforts to bring a Middle East cease-fire on the theory, according to insiders, that a long-range political settlement would be facilitated if both the Arabs and the Israelis made each other suffer. When Israel trapped two Egyptian armies and moved into Syria, things nearly got altogether out of hand.

□ During the night of October 24/25, Kissinger caused the calling of a worldwide alert of United States forces on the excuse that the Russians were preparing to land seven airborne divisions in the Middle East to rescue the trapped Egyptians and that Chairman Brezhnev had sent a threatening note to that effect. Top intelligence experts say there was *no* evidence of such Soviet plans and that the Brezhnev note, described as “brutal,” concerned an effort to organize a United States-U.S.S.R. peacekeeping force.

□ Kissinger's success in the frantic efforts to obtain the Syrian-front disengagement was linked to a larger effort to improve the U.S. political position in the Arab world. His diplomacy centered on persuading Arab leaders in Egypt, Syria, and elsewhere to “make a deal” based on promises of sizable American economic aid (including nuclear technology for Egypt as well as Israel, though the latter already possessed it) and pressures for further Israeli withdrawals from lands occupied in 1967.

The problems created by Kissinger's

"...A prisoner of his own concepts, he rejected the idea that the Russians would help start a conflict in the Middle East..."

diplomacy are serious. They range from the risk that the Congress, painfully aware of the new Arab oil wealth, may refuse economic aid—notably the nuclear reactors for Egypt—to the possibility that the new Israeli government may refuse to withdraw from Arab territories pending a foolproof peace settlement.

We do not know, of course, what secret commitments, if any, Kissinger may have made in the Middle East. It took nearly eighteen months before we learned of secret commitments made to the North Vietnamese in the course of the long truce negotiations in Paris in the fall of 1972—such as assurances that all U.S. civilian employees attached to South Vietnam's armed forces would be withdrawn within twelve months of the signing of the accord. (It did not happen, partly because the truce has been repeatedly violated.) Nixon's triumphal tour of the Middle East notwithstanding, there are serious reservations in the Congress and elsewhere about the real nature of Kissinger's promises and commitments to the Arabs.

Congress is already disturbed by the administration's 1972 commitments to the Soviet Union for vast development credits and by the political climate that made possible the disastrous grain sale to the Russians. It is carefully weighing the price of détente. When the Middle East headlines have receded, Kissinger and his policies may become highly vulnerable to Washington scrutiny. For one thing, both he and Nixon failed to win assurances of a steady flow of Arab oil.

As the mood changes in the capital, the indispensability of Henry Kissinger is no longer an article of faith. And as Ohio's influential Democratic Congressman Charles A. Vanik remarked recently in the context of proposed export-import bank credit to Moscow, "The question is whether we can afford Henry Kissinger." These elements—Kissinger's identification with Nixon in terms of Watergate politics and the new questions about his secret diplomacy—thus seem to presage the fading of his brilliant star.

It is, of course, impossible to predict when the Kissinger star will burn out. Long months may pass before his extraordinary power and influence wane and he reverts from his present status of Nietzschean superman to the role of ordinary mortal. He still commands wide national support: he was recently declared the most admired public fig-

ure in the United States on the basis of an opinion poll—Americans in the seventies are starved for heroes—and at least one congressman has proposed a constitutional amendment to change Section One of Article II, which bars a naturalized citizen from the Presidency of the United States.

But nothing is permanent in Washington politics, and there are many reasons why Kissinger's exclusive domination of U.S. foreign policy for five and a half years may soon end.

His departure could come suddenly, through an irate act of resignation—something he threatened to do in Salzburg, Austria, two weeks ago in the course of the most stunning histrionic performance of his entire public career—or gradually, through a progressive erosion of his universal image as the diplomatic miracle worker as his successes and methods are increasingly questioned in the light of cold reality. This process has already set in quietly.

For the truth is that Henry Kissinger, the owner of one of America's most monumental egos, can function effectively only as a superman and superstar in his own right. The early days when he was simply President Nixon's *éminence grise* in foreign affairs are far behind him. He is now the "President for Foreign Affairs."

If there ever were any doubts about how Kissinger regards himself, they were dispelled when he announced at his dramatic Salzburg news conference, en route to the Middle East with Nixon, that "I do not believe it is possible to conduct the foreign policy of the United States under these circumstances when the character and credibility of the secretary of state is at issue. . . . And if it is not cleared up, I will resign."

In defending his honor, as he issued his Salzburg ultimatum, Kissinger was specifically referring to the latest controversy over his part in "national security" wiretaps on his associates and Washington newsmen. But, clearly, he was also addressing himself to the problems of his diplomatic credibility, the object of a much more serious controversy now moving to the fore.

Kissinger has such a thirst for applause and adulation that he can brook no questioning or criticism in any area of his activities. It was the very fact that newsmen (perhaps not in the most elegant ways) have publicly raised questions about the accuracy of his testimony on the wiretaps during his confirmation hearings last September be-

fore the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that led Kissinger to declare that his "honor" was at stake.

It remains uncertain why Kissinger, always poised in public though given to frequent temper tantrums in the privacy of his office, chose to put on the bewildering Salzburg performance. Washington is full of theories on the subject—none of them flattering.

One theory is that Nixon prevailed on him to chastise the "leakers" in the House Judiciary Committee, now holding impeachment hearings, along with persuading the media to identify Kissinger, the hero of the hour, with his own cause. Another theory has it that the secretary of state decided on a show-down because he really believed that his honor was impaired and his diplomatic effectiveness damaged. It is known, however, that Kissinger acted against the advice of his closest State Department counselors and friends. (No other embattled secretary of state ever dreamed of asking for a congressional vote of faith in his integrity.)

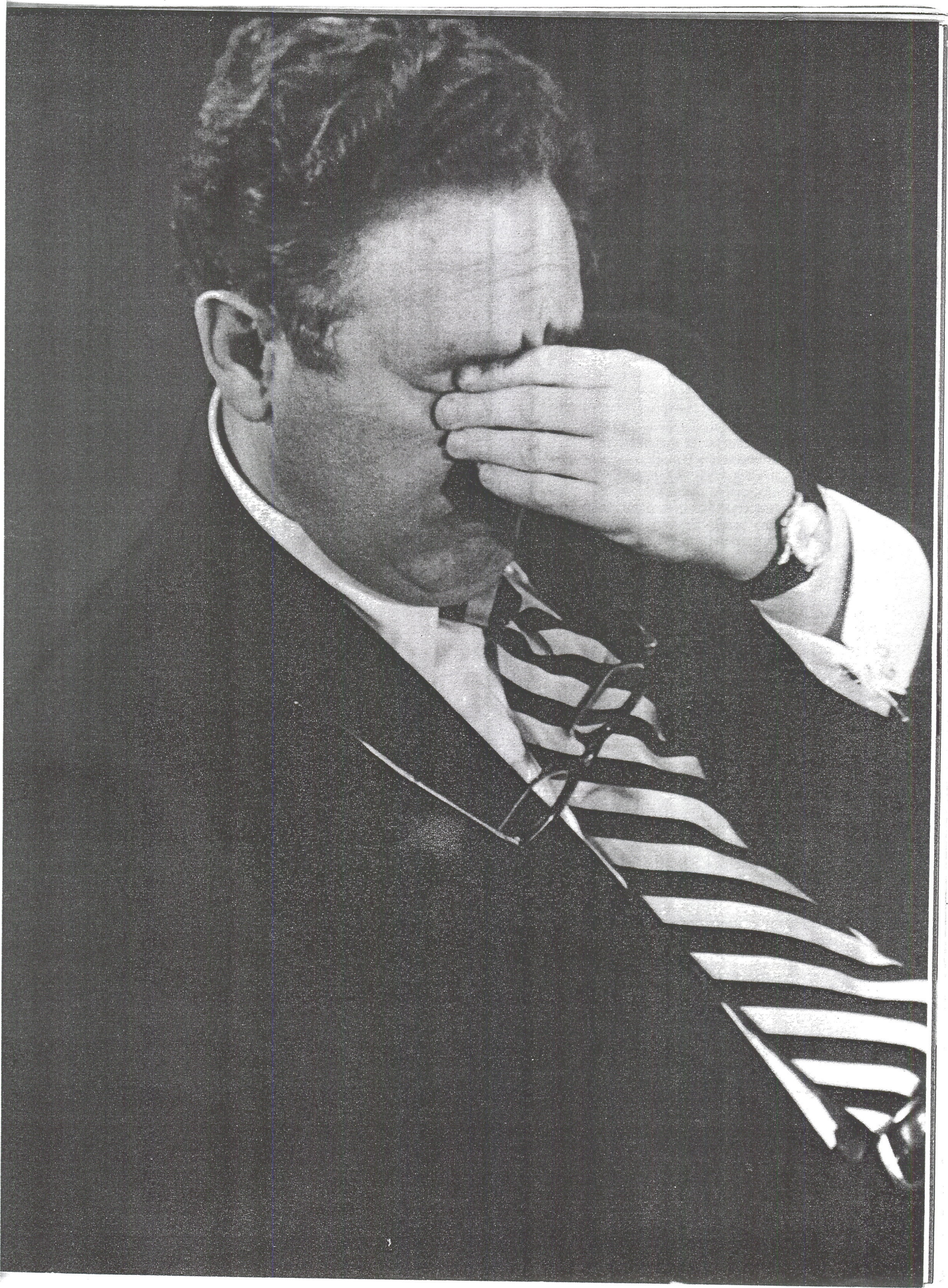
Finally, there is the theory that Kissinger deliberately used the wiretap issue to extract from the Congress carte blanche for whatever future policies he may wish to pursue. This, quite obviously, is unthinkable in our system of checks and balances. Though scores of senators (including Teddy Kennedy) signed the "Kissinger-Is-Honest" resolution and such newspapers as *The Washington Post* reported that readers' mail was running 2-to-1 in Kissinger's favor, the town does not care for ultimatums. In the end, the Salzburg exercise may boomerang.

The question of whether Kissinger told the full truth when he testified last year that he had not "initiated" the seventeen controversial wiretaps will presumably be settled by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in good time. But in the end, it matters little whether Kissinger came up with the idea or simply submitted names of candidates for wiretapping.

What does matter, however, is the moral implication of going along with the notion that one's closest associates should be subjected to secret eavesdropping. Kissinger's stated excuse was "national security"—the argument invoked by the White House for the establishment of the Watergate Plumbers—on the ground that his hand-picked assistants were leaking secrets to newsmen, or thinking about it.

Even the rationale for the anti-leak measures was absurd. The wiretaps be-

Kissinger negotiating in Geneva: After the brilliant success, new dangers and deceptions?



“... Neither Defense Secretary Laird nor Secretary of State Rogers knew his closest aides were bugged, for Kissinger’s benefit...”

gan after *The Times* of London, followed by *The New York Times*, reported in May, 1969, that American B-52's were secretly bombing Cambodia. Was the White House trying to keep this knowledge secret from Cambodian peasants or their government?

But, it now appears, Kissinger was more motivated by his determination to control every aspect of foreign policy planning and execution than by leaks to the press. This, in turn, relates to his obsession with secrecy at all costs—not only in terms of foreign governments, which would be understandable, but also of other members of the U.S. Government, with the possible exception of President Nixon.

Without total secrecy, Kissinger would have been unable to conduct diplomatic affairs according to his own lights and without consulting anyone in the administration. Even before he became secretary of state and while he served as the President's special assistant for national security affairs, Kissinger succeeded in cutting out members of the National Security Council, men of cabinet rank, from the policy planning process. The secretaries of state and defense and the director of the Central Intelligence Agency often had no idea what Kissinger was up to.

An ancillary reason for secrecy—and Kissinger's fear of leaks—was his perceived need to protect himself from Nixon's palace guard (the Ehrlichmans, Haldemans, etc.) who always suspected and detested him. Thus, the whole pervasive White House climate affected Kissinger from the very start. As it turned out, John Ehrlichman became the possessor of wiretap transcripts on the persons recommended by Kissinger for that treatment, and Ehrlichman's own defense at his forthcoming trial may well touch upon material in them.

Kissinger has a rather arrogant view of the process of government. Stated simply, it is that the bureaucracy, no matter on what level, stands in his way and must be curbed before it can raise its ugly head to question his views. If nothing else, Kissinger was one of the initiators of the cult of secrecy in the White House.

It may be argued, up to a point, that Kissinger felt responsible for security in his office and thus agreed to the wiretapping of his principal aides. At his Salzburg news conference, he listed three categories of persons whose names were submitted to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for possible wiretapping: “Individuals who had

adverse information in their security files; individuals who had access to information that had leaked; and individuals whose names had appeared as a result of the investigation that submission of the previous two lists might entail.”

But new information obtained on these “national security” wiretaps suggests that Kissinger's interest in surveillance transcended these concerns and went to the heart of his preoccupation with secrecy.

Thus on May 12, 1969, three days after Kissinger allegedly discussed the matter with J. Edgar Hoover, the late F.B.I. director, a wiretap was installed on the home telephone of Lieutenant General (then Colonel) Robert E. Pursley, then the principal military assistant to Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird. It was maintained for a number of months, then discontinued, and installed again on May 4, 1970. On the latter date, another wiretap was placed on the home telephone of Richard F. Pedersen, then counselor of the State Department and now U.S. ambassador to Hungary.

General Pursley, now retired, and Ambassador Pedersen were, respectively, the closest personal associates of Secretary Laird and Secretary of State William P. Rogers. In this sense, these were indirect taps on Laird and Rogers themselves, who often conferred with their top aides after hours. The presumption is that Kissinger had access to material, in summary or otherwise, obtained from these taps.

Inasmuch as General Pursley and Ambassador Pedersen were not Kissinger's personal security responsibility and were the most unlikely sources of leaks, it is a fair assumption that the White House wanted to keep track of what Secretaries Laird and Rogers might have known about secret foreign planning in the White House. Both were statutory members of the National Security Council and, under normal circumstances, entitled to top secret information. But neither Laird nor Rogers was ever informed that his immediate associates were bugged. For Kissinger's benefit.

Laird, who learned about the wiretap on General Pursley only last January, said that he was continuously in touch with his military assistant on a whole range of issues. The tap may have told the White House a great deal about Pentagon thinking on such controversial issues of the day as the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT), Viet-

nam, and Cambodia. It should be noted that Kissinger often disagreed with the Pentagon over SALT and that both Laird and Rogers opposed the 1970 Cambodia invasion.

After being apprised of the wiretap on General Pursley, Laird made this comment: “There was a wiretap, as I understand it, put on my military assistant back in 1969. That particular wiretap was perhaps on a list that Dr. Kissinger had suggested to the F.B.I. I was not aware of the wiretap on my military assistant at the time, but I can assure you that that disappointed me at the time. . . . [He] was in very close touch with me night and day.”

In Salzburg, Kissinger repeatedly deplored news leaks. But, as every diplomatic correspondent knows, Kissinger is the capital's chief leaker. None of his leaks were ever directly attributed to Kissinger, a grand master of news management. During the Vietnam peace negotiations in 1972, for example, Kissinger used leaks and other forms of news management as part of his secret diplomacy. The extraordinary thing is that the most prestigious correspondents and editors allowed themselves to be used by “Henry.” Indeed, they were usually grateful for his attention.

Aside from Vietnam, nothing illustrates better Henry Kissinger's devious diplomatic techniques than the Middle East crisis of 1973-1974. As in the case of the Vietnam peace negotiations, Kissinger has provided his own scenario of these events to selected Washington writers—on a background basis—to stand as the official version. It happens that Kissinger's version does not match other credible accounts. These are the facts as reconstructed from responsible sources in Washington and elsewhere:

The Egyptian and Syrian attack on Israel on Saturday, October 6, 1973, came as a total surprise to the secretary of state even though as early as May he had in hand a detailed State Department study based on the Egyptian battle plan secretly obtained by U.S. intelligence, predicting an offensive in the early autumn. Late in September, the Syrian plan was likewise made available to the United States.

In part because Israeli intelligence services, famous for their skill, tended to minimize these reports, Kissinger, too, refused to take them seriously. Even as late as the last week of September, Washington had no thought of launching aerial reconnaissance over Egypt and Syria to determine their mili-



DAVID BURNETT — GAMMA

tary deployments. Kissinger, busy discussing a new Middle East peace plan with Arab and Israeli foreign ministers at the United Nations in New York, was convinced that in the name of détente the Soviet Union would not equip the Arabs for a new war.

This was a fatal blindness, an example of how a man in Kissinger's position can become the intellectual prisoner of his own concepts. Having gained Soviet cooperation during the secret Vietnam peace talks, he simply rejected the idea that the Russians would now help to start a conflict in the Middle East. Because Kissinger was lulled into this false sense of security, the United States was unaware that Moscow had provided the Egyptians with lethal anti-tank Sagger missiles and SAM-6 anti-aircraft missiles that were to take a terrible toll of Israeli tanks and planes.

When the war broke out, Kissinger accepted the Pentagon view that Israeli air superiority and the quality of Israel's armed forces would halt the two-pronged Arab attack in a matter of days. This, in fact, was the undisputed judgment in the U.S. Government. Kissinger's and all the other versions agree on this point.

However, by Tuesday, October 9, it became clear that the Israelis were taking frightful losses. The Israelis were expending their ammunition at a devastating rate and shortages were developing. Soon, the Israeli ambassador, Simcha Dinitz, was urging Kissinger to initiate an airlift to Israel to resupply its forces and to speed up deliveries of Phantom jet fighters in the light of mounting aircraft losses to the SAM-6's.

It is at this point that the Kissinger version is increasingly at variance with all the other accounts. Thus Kissinger claims that he informed Ambassador Dinitz that he was doing everything in his power to launch a resupply airlift, but was running into the opposition of the Pentagon bureaucracy and notably of the defense secretary, James Schlesinger, his principal administration rival.

This, however, was not the whole truth. Schlesinger favored in principle a resupply airlift flown by American military aircraft, but he was paralyzed by a White House policy directive, drafted by Kissinger, ordering a hold on such operations. The written directive was a Kissingerian masterpiece of devious diplomacy. Its thrust was that the Pentagon would be represented to the Israelis by Kissinger as the "bad guys," refusing help, while the White House and the State Department would appear as the "good guys," fighting a bureaucratic battle to aid Israel.

This directive prevailed during the crucial first week of the war. Several policy concepts were involved. For one thing, Kissinger believed he needed the

Kissinger at the White House: *The price of power was a willingness to try brinkmanship.*

“... It matters little whether Kissinger initiated or merely went along with the wiretapping. The rationale for it was absurd...”

diplomatic flexibility to cope with the Russians. He did not want to provoke them by authorizing a massive airlift and he continued to place considerable faith in the spirit of détente. Nor did he want to provoke the Arabs and court an oil embargo. This view was shared to an important degree by James Schlesinger, which may explain his acceptance of the “bad guys” role for the Pentagon.

Kissinger also developed the notion that the long-range interest of Middle East peace required a painful spasm on the battlefield. As in the case of Vietnam, he concluded that political solutions can be obtained in otherwise intractable situations only after a period of high-intensity fighting. Since Moscow took the same view, no serious attempt was made in the U.N. Security Council during the first week to push for a truce.

While the Israelis kept pressing Kissinger for assistance—and receiving the answer that the Pentagon still opposed an airlift—a parallel drama was developing in the administration, affecting U.S. relations with Britain as well as the course of the Middle East war.

Late Tuesday, October 9, the Joint Chiefs of Staff finally realized that they had no clear picture of the battlefield situation and that, therefore, they could make no valid policy recommendations. They proposed to Kissinger that an air reconnaissance mission be ordered at once to bring back aerial photographs. (There were no Samos satellites in orbit over the area.)

An initial plan to dispatch a U-2 spy plane was quickly discarded on political grounds; memories of C.I.A. overflights of 1960 are still fresh. Instead, the chiefs proposed a mission by an SR-71 Air Force reconnaissance plane, in fact superior in performance to the U-2. They suggested that the SR-71 fly from Achnacarry, a Royal Air Force base on Cyprus, if Britain agreed, or from bases in Britain. Achnacarry had been used by SR-71's in 1970 in policing the Suez Canal truce arranged by the United States.

A quick consultation with London showed that Prime Minister Heath would permit the use of the R.A.F.'s base in Cyprus if the United States could come up with a “cover story” that would stand and not be blown in a matter of days. Early in the evening of Wednesday, October 10, the State Department drafted a telegram to the London Embassy with a formal request for clearance for the SR-71. The telegram was taken to Kissinger in his

seventh-floor office suite. At once, he flew into a towering rage, denouncing the British as unworthy allies because of Heath's demands for a “cover story.” “It was a real tantrum,” an aide recalled. Kissinger threw the official who brought the telegram out of his office and ordered the cancellation of the SR-71 mission.

Because the Air Force had dispatched aerial tankers over the Atlantic from U.S. bases and deployed others, stationed in Europe, over the Mediterranean, the SR-71 could have flown directly from Eglin Air Force Base in Florida to the Middle East without depending on British facilities. It could be refueled in midair. But Kissinger, still fuming over the British, forbade the mission altogether for reasons that remain unclear.

State Department officials believe that Kissinger's anger with Britain dated back to London's cool reception of his proposal, six months earlier, for a new “Atlantic Charter.” He proved his anger by ordering the intelligence community to curtail the flow of American intelligence to the British, notwithstanding an exchange agreement in effect. (The intelligence ban has not yet been lifted.) The immediate effect was that Washington remained in the dark about the battlefield situation.

By Thursday, October 11, Kissinger, responding to Ambassador Dinitz's desperate appeals, had authorized El Al Airline Boeing 707's to land in Norfolk, Virginia, to pick up limited amounts of war materiel. El Al, short on planes, was also forced to paint over Israeli insignia; the United States still wanted to appear even-handed in the war. Kissinger also told the Israelis and the Department of Transportation that more materiel would be sent if Israel could charter planes from U.S. airlines. But the Israelis were turned down by every airline; the airlines feared Palestinian terrorist reprisals.

Friday morning, October 12, Secretary Schlesinger informed Kissinger that the only solution for the Israelis was a U.S. military airlift. A massive Soviet airlift was bringing supplies to Cairo and Damascus, and the Pentagon felt that the United States was no longer obliged to exercise restraint. The Israelis were in desperate straits.

But Kissinger still held out. He told Dinitz that it was the Pentagon that continued to block the resupply operation although, in reality, Schlesinger was already busy staging cargo aircraft and assembling weapons and ammuni-

tion for the Israelis. Later, Kissinger kept blaming Schlesinger for the delay, actually suggesting that the defense secretary was ignoring Presidential orders.

He also told Schlesinger that permission was needed from Portugal to refuel U.S. aircraft at the Lajes Air Force Base on Terceira Island in the Azores. Another Kissinger notion was that American planes should deliver their cargo at Lajes, where it would be transferred by boat to the island of Santa Maria, the Azores' commercial airport. From there, he said, the Israelis could pick up the arms with El Al airliners. The Pentagon told Kissinger that there were no boats available in the Azores and, anyway, there was no time for such a complicated operation.

At 1 A.M. on Saturday, October 13, Nixon instructed Schlesinger to launch an American airlift. Since Portugal had not yet authorized the refueling at Lajes, Schlesinger said the giant C-5 cargo jets and the C-130's could fly nonstop from the United States to Tel Aviv—carrying extra fuel and less cargo.

The Portuguese clearance came during Saturday, but bad weather delayed for a number of hours the take-off by the first planes of the airlift. At that point, Kissinger also authorized the SR-71 to fly its reconnaissance mission from Eglin to the Middle East—three days after it should have gone.

According to a version apparently inspired by Kissinger, the launching of the airlift marked *his* victory in the battle of “1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.” This, however, was quite different from the impression gathered by others involved in the week-long controversy over aid to Israel.

American assistance clearly made it possible for Israel to go to the offensive and for her forces to cross the Suez Canal into Egypt, trapping two Egyptian armies. Only then did the two superpowers try active diplomacy.

The U.N. Security Council ordered the cease-fire on October 22, but the fighting continued past October 24 as the Israelis tried to destroy the entrapped Egyptians and the Arabs fought back. Egypt's President Sadat in desperation appealed to Moscow and Washington to dispatch their own forces to enforce the truce. This led to more Kissingerian diplomatic legerdemain.

At dawn on October 25, a Thursday, Kissinger held a National Security Council meeting at the White House with Schlesinger and C.I.A. Director William E. Colby. Their decision, reportedly ratified by Nixon two hours



Kissinger confronts the press: *His indispensability was no longer an article of faith.*

later, was to order a worldwide alert of U.S. forces.

At his news conference later in the day, Kissinger told newsmen that the alert was called because "we became aware of the alerting of certain Soviet units and we were puzzled by behavior of some Soviet representatives in the discussions that took place." Pressed for a clearer explanation, he said: "Upon the conclusion of the present diplomatic effort, one way or the other, we will make the record available and we will be able to go into greater detail."

But eight months later, no further explanation had been delivered by Kissinger. White House leaks at the time made it appear that U.S. intelligence discovered that seven Soviet airborne divisions were being readied for a drop in the Middle East and that Brezhnev had sent Nixon something along the lines of an ultimatum to stop the Israelis or face a "unilateral action."

What really happened is one of Kissinger's secrets. But top intelligence officials say there was nothing to indicate that the Soviets were preparing an invasion. If anything, they said, the Russians may have been pulling together a force requested by Sadat to join with the Americans in a peace-keeping operation. When Washington turned down the idea, the Russians sent 60 paratroopers in civilian clothes to act as

observers in Egypt. The United States sent 60 of its troops to Israel on a similar mission.

State Department officials now believe that Kissinger, who often tends to panic, used the reports of Soviet military movements to scare the Israelis into observing the cease-fire. Subsequently, Kissinger ordered the department to prepare a blow-by-blow account of the events that precipitated the alert. But the project was quietly dropped when it developed that no convincing material was available.

Kissinger occasionally admits that he makes mistakes. But, as a friend of the secretary's put it recently, he looks on them the way Nietzsche did: "The errors of great men are venerable because they are more fruitful than the truth of little men."

The new mood greeted Henry Kissinger on the day he returned to Washington from his 34-day Middle Eastern tour de force on the Syrian disengagement. He was stunned that instead of being welcomed as a hero, he was subjected at his first news conference to wiretap questions! He was even asked whether he had retained counsel for possible perjury proceedings against him. This was when Kissinger lost his cool and his sense of humor, normally his greatest public assets.

Washington, of course, is a vicious

town. Once blood is smelled, political hound packs go after the potential victim. The June 6 news conference at the State Department suddenly shattered the myth of Kissinger's untouchability. Then came Salzburg. Influential people began wondering aloud whether the Middle East negotiations were all they were cracked up to be, or whether, as in the Vietnam negotiations, he hadn't been over-committing the United States and engaging in dangerous deviousness. Others started worrying about the forthcoming Moscow summit; Paul Nitze, one of the most respected defense experts, abruptly quit the SALT delegation, fearing that in the present climate Nixon and Kissinger might give away too much.

Quickly, Kissinger became the subject of harsh public polemic—on Nixon, wiretaps, Vietnam and the Middle East, and his stewardship of the State Department. For Kissinger, it was a wholly new experience. In consequence, he has become vulnerable for the first time in his meteoric career.

Henry Kissinger will, of course, be remembered for helping to engineer the détente with the Soviet Union and the opening to China. Both were historic moves and, the hope is, they will help to keep the world at peace. The judgments on his performance over Vietnam and the Middle East may be less admiring with the passage of time.

The Palestinian question remains totally unresolved, and King Faisal warned Nixon this month that there will be no lasting peace until East Jerusalem is returned to the Arabs. Still, Kissinger's efforts produced the first diplomatic breakthrough in 25 years.

For five and a half years, Kissinger symbolized the U.S. foreign policy, running it almost single-handedly under the mandate of Nixon. But there are men for all seasons, and possibly Henry Kissinger's season will soon have run its course.

Evidently, the United States will have a foreign policy after his departure, but chances are that no other man as spectacular as Kissinger in so many ways will soon emerge. He is a phenomenon, genuinely unique.

Who, then, might be the next secretary of state under Nixon or Gerald Ford? The most experienced among potential candidates—Elliot L. Richardson and Nelson Rockefeller—have Presidential ambitions for 1976, and are unlikely to wile their time away at Foggy Bottom. Kenneth Rush, the recent deputy secretary of state, or Robert S. Ingersoll, just designated as deputy secretary, may provide the transition. In Nixon's cabinet game of musical chairs, would you believe James Schlesinger or William Simon?