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The Leaking of Secret Documents

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HIGH policy differences are widely supposed to have prompted the leak of secret documents on the Indo-Pakistani crisis to Jack Anderson. But most of the evidence suggests that the true cause is a bureaucratic row aimed at getting the President's chief assistant for National Security Affairs, Henry Kissinger.

The most striking evidence is like the evidence of the dog that didn't bark in the Sherlock Holmes story. The fact is that no enduring policy issue of high importance is involved in the leaks.

The fight over East Bengal is largely a one-shot affair. Hardly anything that happens on the subcontinent is central to international politics.

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A SECOND BIT of evidence involves Anderson himself. No one who aimed to change a line of international policy would single out Anderson as the agent for effecting that result through the leak of secret information.

Anderson's specialty — and it is an important specialty — is putting the journalistic arm on wrong-doers. By no mere accident the chief fruit of his disclosures was not something that effected policy. The chief consequence was to impugn the integrity of Kissinger.

As a third bit of evidence, there is the state of relations among senior officials and principal agencies of the foreign affairs community in the Nixon Administration. Relations are marked by paranoia, jealousy and hatred.

The chief target for most of the venom is Kissinger, and some of the fault is his. He has been unnecessarily unkind in comments about some of the senior officials of the most prestigious departments.

The office of Secretary of Defense is perhaps the chief victim. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird is going to be stepping down soon with practically nothing to his credit.

His general reputation for trickiness has caused the cognoscenti, rightly or wrongly, to establish him as the short-odds favorite for almost all leaks regarding national security these days.

The uniformed military come a close second in the odds. Many of them do not like the way the White House is winding down the war in Vietnam. Almost all are opposed to the arms control agreement which the White House is now negotiating with the Russians. And the uniformed military are in the habit of leaking classified information to serve their own interests.

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AS FOR the State Department, Kissinger has taken over the whole realm of foreign policy. This assumption of the State Department's traditional role is bitterly resented by many of the department's leading officials.

Thus, there is every reason to figure bureaucratic rivalry as the key element in the background of the Anderson papers.

For once there is a case for a Presidential crackdown. Mr. Nixon's interest — and that of the country — is to find the source of the leaks and fire them fast.