

Compare with column as carried by NYTimes 28 Dec 72, filed POWs. There are many deletions in Chronicle version, beginning with the first sentence, "The late Harry S. Truman, who was anything but a cry-baby like the present incumbent of the White House" Places where deletions are made by Chronicle marked in red.

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Play It Again, Washington

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 N.Y. Times Service

New York

MR. NIXON, like any President, usually gets all the better of it in his dealings with the press. Columnists and editorial pages may carp, complain, analyze and dispute, but Presidents can almost invariably dominate headlines and news stories.

That proposition was never better demonstrated than in the recent duplicitious administration handling of the "news" from the Paris peace negotiations. No matter how liberal, eastern, establishment, and dovish the press may be, Mr. Nixon and Dr. Kissinger played on it as if it were an organ, and struck most of the chords they wanted to hear.

They were able to do this for two primary reasons. The first was that, on a matter of high national security such as peace negotiations, they were able to hold any factual information that existed very tightly among a tiny handful of officials; the second was that the tradition and ethic of the American press award a high priority to information deriving from official sources — particularly "confidential" information coming from "the highest levels of the government."

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THEREFORE, with the exception of Kissinger's two famous news conferences, virtually every item of information given out about the negotiations from October to the present has come from highly placed anonymous sources. Since these anonymous men could provide the "news," reporters had to seek access to them; once granted such access, they had to agree to the sources' anonymity; and even when that anonymity proved to have been a cloak under which the public was misled, it still had to be honored if the reporters wanted further access to the same officials.

Anonymity for sources means that, if they are less than scrupulous, or if they have a purpose of their own, they can say what they will without later having to take responsibility for it. Thus, from October until Kissinger's second news conference, the anonymous sources were orchestrated beautifully to promise that peace was indeed at hand.

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BUT NOW THAT KISSINGER has publicly conceded that peace is not at hand and has charged the North Vietnamese with being "totally" at fault, many of the same anonymous sources are being quoted to confirm the charge.

Still, the White House version of events — that the North Vietnamese are at fault in the resumption of bombing — provides the basic viewpoint from which the news is written.

Even Kissinger's two on-the-record news conferences make the point: No matter how much the analysts in the inside pages may have questioned, first, that peace was at hand, and second, that Hanoi was at fault when peace disappeared, all these critics put together have not been able to catch up to or overcome the impact of Kissinger's own words on television and in the headlines. Thus, for most Americans, the "news" becomes about what the White House says it is.

