

Kissinger: 'I Wasn't Brought Up to Have A Lot of Leisure'

By Robert C. Toth

Washington

THAT'S SOME MIND," said the Miami television repairman of Henry A. Kissinger whose picture happened to appear on the set he was adjusting.

He had come from Cuba, the repairman said, and had "all the books on Kissinger at home — you know, for my kids to read." He glanced again at the set, tapped his head and repeated: "That's some mind."

Kissinger is not exactly a folk hero, but recognition of his brilliance extends beyond the corridors of power. The year-end Gallup Poll found him the fourth most admired (by Americans) in the world. Even his irretrievable critics accept the extraordinary quality of his mind as "given" before going on to compare him to Machiavelli or Dr. Strange-love.

They also charge him, as do some of his admirers, with being determined to the point of ruthlessness, egotistical to the point of arrogance, a bully with bureaucrats, but a charmer with his bosses, and ultimately, that he is "amoral."

Professional Behavior

There are numerous anecdotes about Kissinger's refusal to discuss the larger right or wrong of America in Vietnam, at least when injected into geopolitics. He gets impatient and considers it irrelevant in that context.

Truth should be sought at divinity schools, he would hold, not in relations of nations. "The commitment of 500,000 Americans has settled the importance of Vietnam," he wrote before becoming President Nixon's assistant for national security affairs in 1969.

"Precisely because we are here not only to liquidate one war but because we have a larger responsibility to try to create what we hope is to be a more lasting peace," he said in 1970, "what we do in Vietnam has to be measured in terms larger than Vietnam itself."

The harshest criticisms of Kissinger — a refugee from Nazi Germany who has become a master in the art and practice of realpolitik — are largely directed at his professional behavior.

In private he can be almost shy. He is admittedly insecure in personal relations. "I have a first rate

mind but a third rate intuition about people," he said. Obviously he is not a shrinking violet, but neither is he pretentious.

It is part of his crenellated personality that his dry humor is sardonic in private, sharp and witty in public. It is almost always directed at himself. He has stopped using jokes about his accent and syntax ("I give the verbs at the end and you put them where they belong") but he still quips disarmingly about his self-perceived flaws, perhaps to "confound his opponents with complete frankness," as he once wrote about Otto Von Bismark.

Marital Trouble

He told his last class at Harvard, which was applauding the news of his Washington appointment, that "this is good for my megalomania." When John N. Mitchell, former attorney general, called Kissinger an "egotistical mania," Kissinger went one better. "It took me 18 years at Harvard to justify my paranoia," he said, "in Washington I did it in 18 months."

He appears supremely self-confident in public. In private he worries his fingernails compulsively. A bachelor, now 49, he shows up at many cocktail parties, yet (like President Nixon) is bored by their "appalling banter." He is chronically seen with starlets but has admitted that "some of

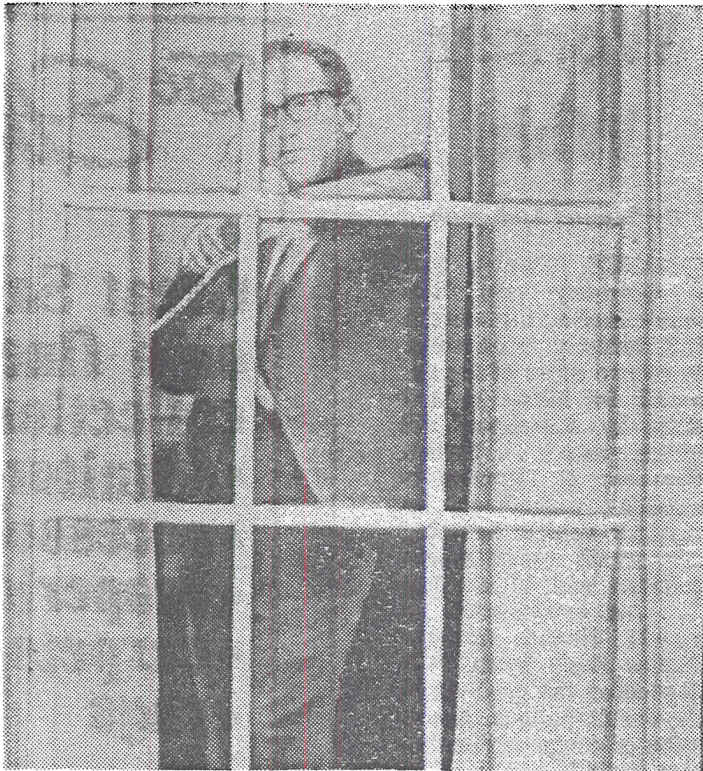
them aren't even pretty."

No one can doubt that his failed marriage (after 15 years and two charming, bright children) has left deep scars. He takes virtually all his meals in the White House, including breakfast, except when he dines or parties out. But he is never known to complain about being lonely.

He works exhaustively, often 12 and 14 hours a day. "I was not brought up to have a lot of leisure," he said. The "absence of responsibility is harder to bear" than the usually hectic days in the White House.

Kissinger can be skeptical, even cynical, about

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AP Wirephoto

KISSINGER AT A WHITE HOUSE WINDOW

Man. His approach to foreign affairs is non-ideological and his sights are unabashedly on America's self-interest. Bismark, he wrote, held that "a sentimental policy knows no reciprocity;" nations should make no sacrifice whose only reward is a good conscience.

The effects of Kissinger's early life (seven to 15 years old) as a Jewish youth in rabidly anti-Semitic Germany may have been over-emphasized. "The political persecutions of my childhood are not what control my life," Kissinger said. "I was not consciously unhappy. I was not so acutely aware of what was going on."

But as the Vietnam war is settled, his personality is only background to his achievements. "Almost any statement about Vietnam is likely to be true," he once wrote; "unfortunately, truth does not guarantee relevance."

What is relevant about Henry A. Kissinger is that he has contributed more than any other individual to the ethical respectability of the Nixon Administration and, thereby, to its massive reelection. As Kissinger wrote of Bismark's revolution: "(it) appeared in the guise of conservatism . . . it triumphed domestically through the vastness of its successes abroad."

Kissinger has played the key role, outside President Nixon himself, in all of the foreign policy successes of the Administration. He has been associated with none of its domestic failures.

This takes nothing from

Mr. Nixon. He gets ultimate credit for the successes, as he would get ultimate blame if the efforts had failed. There were hints in Mr. Nixon's pre-election statements of the courses he later followed. These obviously paralleled Kissinger's views.

Credit for Success

For example, in 1967, Mr. Nixon wrote that the United States "must come urgently to grips with the reality of China," and even suggested a "dialogue with mainland China" — although only after non-Communist Asian states were made much stronger. Kissinger was the foreign policy adviser and speechwriter for New York Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller in May, 1968, when Rockefeller proposed opening "a dialogue with Communist China."

At the same time, Rockefeller proposed friendly relations with the Soviet Union with the aim of achieving a Vietnam settlement "in the wide context of world relations." He suggested that Soviet cooperation in Vietnam and restraint in other areas peripheral to Soviet-American vital interests, would earn "most favored nation" trading status, cultural exchanges, and a slowdown in the arms race.

Mr. Nixon several months later spoke of opening a new "era of negotiations" with the Soviets and he proposed that the Vietnam war negotiations should include other nations and issues "to accommodate as many as possible of the powers and interests involved." The road to peace in Vietnam lay through Moscow, Mr. Nixon held.

But it was Kissinger who laid out in detail, with 90 per cent accuracy, the strategy followed and the terms of the settlement now reached on Vietnam. He can fairly

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be called its chief architect. Unquestionably, he was its chief negotiator, just as he was chief negotiator of the opening to China and the rapprochement with the Soviet Union, including the crucial nuclear arms agreement.

His views first appeared in a Rockefeller speech of May, 1968, calling for "de-Americanization" of the war and new U.S. tactics to cut casualties that would make the conflict, in effect, less objectionable to the American people.

Kissinger went into far greater detail in a remarkably foresighted article written in late 1968, which began with the premise that, however bad the judgment that led to U.S. involvement, it could not be lessened by "incompetence" in ending the conflict.

"Ending the war honorably is essential for the peace of the world. Any other solution may unloose forces that would complicate prospects

Did he oppose carpet-bombing of the North?

of international order," he concluded in words that have, in essence, since come from President Nixon.

Did he then oppose Mr. Nixon's armed U.S. intrusion into Cambodia in 1970 that aborted ambassadorial level talks between Washington and Peking?

Did he oppose the mining and bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong in April, 1972, after which he gave only one-in-ten odds for the Moscow summit to go ahead?

And most recently, did he oppose Mr. Nixon's October 22 decision to try to get "more precise" terms from Hanoi in the peace agreement? Did he oppose the seemingly petulant decision to carpet-bomb Hanoi and Haiphong when the Communists balked at the tougher terms and drew back from a settlement in December?

No one knows for certain Kissinger's views on these moves. Publicly he fully backed them. Privately, he has left conflicting impressions of his positions. But while he must have had doubts, his earlier writings suggest that he admired Mr. Nixon for making the hard decisions.

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