

Henry's Two Faces

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By William Safire

WASHINGTON—Henry Kissinger is still pursuing his favorite tactic: saying one thing in public, and "passing the word" directly to the contrary in private.

Voice cracking in anguish, he tells cameras that he does not blame either Egypt or Israel for the breakdown in negotiations, that this is not the time for "recriminations."

Then, from the ambush of unquotable background, we read in an accurate dispatch in The New York Times that the Secretary "was reported to have said in private that he was disappointed with Israel for not being able or willing to take a more flexible position."

Another example: With much fanfare, the United States has announced a "reassessment" of Mideast policy which everybody with his head screwed on tightly took to mean exactly what it was meant to mean: that Israel, not having obeyed our orders, had better watch out. There could not have been a clearer or crueler implied threat.

Not so, says Henry Kissinger, wearing his public face again. Gee, reassessments come naturally; we always strike these matches in gas-filled rooms; we did not mean to frighten the Israelis.

A third example of the two-faced technique: Henry briefs a group of twenty Senators on the failure of the mission. He tolerates their fawning attentions like a lost mountain climber discovered by an overly affectionate St. Bernard, and then passes the word to the most prestigious columnist in America that "he found that the reaction was violently anti-Israel."

Senators who were in that room do not agree; indeed, many were astounded that their troubled reaction was characterized by the Secretary of State as "violently anti-Israel." In such ways does Henry—the private Henry, from the ambush—punish the Israelis for not accepting his terms, undermining their public-opinion support.

This analysis of two-facedness will be hotly denounced as an attack on the Secretary's personal honor, but the facts cannot be disputed: Mr. Kissinger likes to work on two tracks, often going in opposite directions, and the American press lets him.

Let us credit him with the noblest of intentions for his two faces: We can see how he wants to keep himself on good mediation terms with the Arabs, who are not unsophisticated at

this game, and cannot be displeased at the background savaging of the Israeli position.

Presumably, Secretary Kissinger figures he can always win back Israeli friendship, and it is useful to keep a foot in the Arab tent for future dickering. But in so doing, he fundamentally misreads the kind of policy necessary for the United States to follow in order to keep the peace in the Mideast.

With the failure of the latest round of mediation, we must stop being the evenhanded nation in the middle, honestly brokering until the final crunch, when we put our pressure where it can most easily be applied, on Israel.

As we approach Geneva—which we should be in no great hurry to do—we should position ourselves enough off-center to counter the Soviet bias toward the Arabs. We ought not to berate Arabs, or even privately blame them for the tension; we must make certain, however, that all the world knows that any force applied to Israel will be met with more than sufficient counterforce.

As Mr. Sadat announces "we have the upper hand," he must be made to understand that any war he starts would be followed by defeat, and so the best course is a gradual lessening of tension. Only a credible United States Secretary of State can make him understand that.

The diplomacy of negotiation is not the diplomacy of duplicity. To replace Mr. Kissinger's two faces, we need three faces: one new face as Secretary of State, another new face as National Security Adviser, and a third new face—perhaps an old face—for roving envoy.

The Israelis do not want supporters to call for Henry's scalp, for fear that they will be blamed for an abortive effort; in addition, Mr. Nixon privately and loyally informs friends (in refreshingly strong handwriting) that he is distressed by attacks on Henry by his former colleagues. Sorry, everybody; it's time for a new team and a fresh start.

If the route is through Geneva with nations present, we need a man whose assurances will be believed and whose public face will at least nearly match his private face. If the route is low-key two-party negotiations with the United States working the middle, an envoy is needed who will not have to bear the burden of not being Henry.

Dr. Kissinger genuinely wants peace, the highest motive of all, but he also wants to be the man revered as peacemaker. The time has come for him to make the sacrifice of the second in order to help achieve the first.