

Capitol Punishment

Henry's Tummy

By Art Buchwald

When the history books of this decade are written they will be referring to Henry Kissinger's trip to China as "the tummy ache heard round the world."

Using the excuse of an upset stomach, Mr. Kissinger managed to elude everyone and high-tail it off to Peking to have sweet and sour pork with Chou En-Lai.

While it was a great ploy, Mr. Kissinger's "diplomatic illness" could backfire on him. Suppose he *really* gets a stomach ache at some future time. Who is going to believe him?

Our scene opens in the medical room at the White House. Henry staggers in clutching his stomach and says, "Doctor, I have this pain right here."

The White House doctor laughs. "Good old Henry. Where are you off to this time—the Suez Canal?"

"I'm not joking, Doc. It hurts terribly."

"I know," the doctor says, "the President is sending you to talk to Castro."

Henry is now writhing on the floor. "Believe me, it

hurts. Right in the gut. You see, I had dinner with Gloria Steinem and Bella Abzug, and they served me Bon Vivant vichyssoise. Since I was out of the country at the time, I didn't know you weren't supposed to eat it."

"You really can put on an act, Henry. I wouldn't be surprised if you turned up in Albania next week."

Henry crawls out of the doctor's office on his hands and knees.

Ron Ziegler, the President's press secretary, sees him crawling down the hall.

"Hello, Mr. Kissinger," Ron says. "Can I help you?"

"Get me to a hospital."

Ron takes out his notebook. "That's a good cover story. I'll announce you were taken to a hospital this morning. I won't tell them which hospital."

"No, Ron, I don't want you to announce I was taken to a hospital. I want you to get me to a hospital."

Ron winks at him. "Is it East Berlin or Yalta?"

"Please, Ron. I'm sick. I'm going to die."

"I doubt if the press corps would buy that, Mr. Kissinger. If we announce that you've died, and then you pop up at San Clemente a week later, the newspaper guys will get awfully mad. Let me announce you're having your tonsils out. I have to go to my press briefing now. I'll see you later."

Henry is rolling on the floor as Secretary of State William Rogers comes by.

"Hello, Henry. You going to the Cabinet meeting?"

"Mr. Secretary, my stomach. I have a pain in my stomach. It's killing me."

Secretary Rogers says angrily, "Well no one has informed me about it. What are you up to this time?"

"I'm not up to anything, Mr. Secretary. Could you call an ambulance?"

"Hanoi," Rogers says. "You're cooking up something in Hanoi. I'll probably be the last one to know about it."

"I'm not going to Hanoi. I'm really sick."

"No kidding? Well I'm sorry to hear that, Henry." And Rogers smiles and walks away.

With his last ounce of strength, Henry staggers into the oval room and falls down in front of the President.

"Henry," the President says. "You don't have to prostrate yourself in front of me. I know you're loyal."

Henry is in such agony he can't speak.

"What is it, Henry?" The President says. "Would you like to go to Morocco?"

Henry shakes his head.

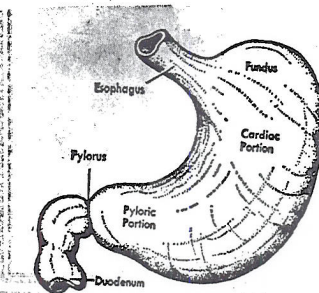
"The Vatican? You want to see the Pope?"

Henry groans.

The president gets up. "I don't have time to play games, Henry. Write me a memo telling me what you want. By the way, Mrs. Nixon said she would like you for dinner tonight. We're having meat loaf."

Henry screams and passes out, as the curtain falls.

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