

The Complex Of Henry Qualities Kissinger

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N.Y. Times Service

Washington

Robert Silver, a good editor in New York, finds himself one night at a Washington dinner party. He is standing across the room staring almost rudely at what seems to be a very nondescript, middle-aged Jewish man with eyeglasses and wavy hair, named Henry Kissinger. Kissinger is deep in conversation with this astonishingly beautiful girl, and the girl is looking at him transfixed.

"How can this be?" wonders Silver. How does this Kissinger do it?

Completely bewildered and a little bit jealous of whatever it is this Kissinger has, Silver defies all sorts of good breeding and taste to ask the girl, when he corners her alone, what Kissinger said to her to make her eyes so glittery.

"It is very interesting," the girl reports (at Washington dinner parties there are no private conversations). "Henry really has quite a line. He is very witty and he can talk about any subject brilliantly, but after a while he gets down to the point."



Professor

"I am just an immigrant Harvard professor," he says. "Yet here I find myself in this grand home, among these grand people, talking to a very beautiful girl. I know it is not me; it is my job at the White House. If it were not for the fact that I am the President's closest adviser, I would not be in this grand place with these grand people. No . . . (a long, thoughtful, sad pause) . . . I would be just a professor of history, dining by myself, in some lonely hotel room."

Nothing about Henry Kissinger is more engaging than his gift for getting down to the truth of the matter. Not many people have the gift and certainly nobody else in the Nixon Administration seems to have it.

That alone makes Henry Kissinger one of Washington's extraordinary men; his job as director of the National Security Council also makes him powerful. The combination produces a good deal of awe and admiration for Henry, and without the slightest bashfulness he enjoys it.

There is no reliable way of telling how truly powerful Kissinger is. We are insulated from what goes on in the White House by the strictest kind of security, and the essentials of the relationship between Kissinger and President Nixon may never fully be known.

Mistake

But what information does leak out, from former Kissinger staff people and others who are willing to talk about it, leads you to believe that Mr. Nixon and Kissinger spend many hours together discussing things and nobody should make the mistake of thinking that Kissinger concerns himself solely with foreign affairs.

President Kennedy and his successors have tended to include foreign policy and most major domestic policies in the realm of "national security." With a trusted presidential adviser as National Security Council director, a President may enjoy the convenience and personal security of having near him in the west wing of the White House the man he considers most sensitive to all the political implications of foreign policy.

"All matters connected with foreign policy go through this office," is the blunt way Kissinger puts it. In Washington, it is not exactly polite to say that foreign policy has become too important for the diplomats; so many diplomatic

types are of the old, wealthy pillar of Eastern society families, and they don't like to hear it. But Henry Kissinger can be what seems almost brutal in his incisive, uncluttered honesty, about how things really are. That is what most of those who know him call his brilliance. It has set him apart since he was a young man.

We are told President Nixon feels he needs a mind of that kind near him. He needs a mind that can present the problems of the day with the penalties of failure and the implications if a certain action is taken or not.

Choices

He wants these problems put before him in the form of clearly stated choices for decision, with fairness given to differing points of view. Kissinger has that kind of mind.

"My job in this office," he says, "is not to be chief formulator of policy. My job is to make sure that the proper ranges of choices is available to the President. . . ."

"Of course he asks my opinion and those of you who know me know that excessive reticence is not one of my difficulties."

Kissinger, when asked, will agree that his confidence has undergone a massive buildup since he moved into the White House. "Especially my social confidence," he says.

It guarantees the success of a Washington dinner party if the host or hostess can somehow entice Kissinger to accept an invitation. Where he goes, go photographers, and if they catch him in the vicinity of any pretty girl, or with one of his attractive dates, you will see the unlikely and unforgettable Kissinger face displayed the next morning in The Washington Post's gossipy Style section.

They talk freely about Kissinger's "swinging sex life" in the articles about him, and show-business girls make themselves available to Henry for publicity's sake. "Which would you prefer, since something should be said about it?" I asked. "Your 'sex life' or your social life?"

Kissinger chuckled an amused chuckle — delighted in the acknowledgment that he, Dr. Henry Kissinger, whom every brilliant man knows is a towering mind, may also be a gifted lover.

"I will tell you," he said,

and here it is well to imagine the German accent that sometimes turns w's into soft v's and gargles a few r's and softens his u's and o's.

"I work up to 18 hours a day here. When I go out I want to go out to enjoy myself. When I am out on the Coast at the White House in San Clemente, I have more free time. I enjoy the company of these girls. They are beautiful and I find some of them interesting. There isn't any more to it than that."

Lucky

The people who genuinely wish Kissinger well are mostly those who have had something directly to do with furthering his endlessly lucky career. These people look at him with great kindness and affection; they put up with his annoying faults because they are sure they are not dealing with merely a brilliant man. They feel very deep down that they are dealing with the difficulties of genius.

Heinz Albert Kissinger is Henry's real name, the one he grew up with in the German village of Furth. He was born on May 27, 1923. His father, Louis, was a gentle, soft-hearted teacher in a girls' high school and his mother, Paula, was a middle-class German-Jewish housewife.

Every year from the time of Kissinger's birth, the Nazis gained new ground in Germany. By the time he was in his middle school years, there was already enough wild-eyed anti-Semitism around that

Henry got into fights because he was a Jew.

Then his father was dismissed from his job. And Henry was expelled from his regular Gymnasium and made to go to an all-Jewish school.

Henry's older friends cannot erase from their minds all the disgusting and perverted images that having lived an adult life under Nazism calls up. They therefore insist that the key to Kissinger's character lies in the cruel and humiliating loss of freedom he suffered while he was growing up.

"That part of my childhood is not a key to anything," Kissinger says emphatically. "I was not consciously unhappy. I was not so acutely aware of what was going on. For children, those things are not that serious. It is fashionable now to explain everything psychoanalytically, but let me tell you, the political persecutions of my childhood are not what control my life."

Crucial

Much more crucial, as far as Kissinger himself is concerned, is some magnificent and consistent good luck. The Kissingers left Germany in 1938, just before it was probably too late. It was Mama Kissinger who at last took the decisive action and got the family out to an aunt of hers in London. Then the Kissingers sailed as immigrants to New York.

Henry was enrolled in high school at night, and to earn extra money for the family he worked as a deli-

ivery boy and also in a shaving-brush factory in Manhattan. His job was squeezing acid out of the brush bristles.

It wasn't the work or the hours that bothered him, but his accent. "I was terribly self-conscious about it," he says. "I finally lost my self-consciousness over it, I'd say, about 1957 or so" — which is the year his best-selling "Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy," was published.

Being drafted was also lucky for Kissinger. In the regular testing program he was discovered to have an I.Q. high enough (he refuses to say how high) to include him in a special group of draftees whom the Army had decided to cultivate just in case, sometime later in the war, their minds could be made good use of. It was a stroke of astoundingly foresighted planning for the Army. Therefore, six months after 3000 or so highly intelligent young men were sent to college to hone their minds, the Army washed out the whole program.

But one day, a few months later, while Buck Private Kissinger was feeling especially sorry for himself, a jeep roared up to the command tent of his infantry company, training in Louisiana. Kissinger has been heard to tell the story something like this:

"Out of this jeep driven by a lieutenant strides a private. He has an incredible air of authority. He yells in a terrible voice, 'Who is in command here?' Out comes a lieutenant colonel and confronts this incredible buck private. 'I am in charge here, private,' the lieutenant colonel said. He was shaking a little. The private yelled out, 'Sir, I am sent by the general and I am going to speak to your company about why we are in this war.'"

Scene

The improbable scene, perhaps dramatically sharpened by memory, is accurate enough. It was not uncommon for ordinary soldiers to make such inspirational talks to their fellow troops during World War II. And Dr. Fritz Kraemer, who was the private, and who was also a 35-year-old lawyer with two Ph.D.s who had fled his native Prussia, was one of the best.

Kissinger wrote Kraemer a note, one of many Dr. Kraemer received from fans among the troops who had heard him speak, but he was struck by its discipline and simplicity "Dear Pvt. Kraemer," it said. "I heard you speak yesterday. This is how it should be done. Can I help you somehow? Pvt. Kissinger."

Kraemer took the young man immediately under his wing and he used every trick he knew to get Kissinger made an interpreter in case the 84th Division should be sent to Germany. And it was. Thanks to Kraemer, Kissinger be-

came the interpreter for the general.

When the division took the city of Krefeld, it found the city government had vanished along with the fleeing Nazi troops. Something had to be set up urgently to provide for the city's nearly 200,000 people.

Kraemer suggested, in his matchlessly persuasive way, that since this young Kissinger spoke German and had an extraordinary intelligence besides, he should be put in charge of reorganizing Krefeld's government.

"I could only marvel," Kraemer recalls, "at the way this 19- or 20-year-old did the job. In just two or three days, the government was again working in a splendid fashion."

Ability

The ability of Private Kissinger was so clear that within a year he was administering the county of Bergstrasse.

By then Kissinger had a sergeant's stripes and Kraemer (at that point a lieutenant) managed to get him on the faculty of the European Command Intelligence School, where they were teaching officers how to root out Nazis who had gone underground.



Chinese officials greet Henry Kissinger at Peking airport

All of them wrote back that they would be glad to accept him the following year, but the September class was impossible because enrollment had already closed.

"But to its credit," recalls Dr. Kissinger. "Harvard agreed to take me even though its enrollment was closed, too. That is how I got to Harvard."

Kissinger flourished in the intellectual soil of Harvard. When one of the most prestige - soaked jobs in the realm of foreign policy study, the managing editorship of Foreign Affairs, opened up in 1956, Kissinger was recommended wholeheartedly for the job by three men who seldom ever agreed on anything else: McGeorge Bundy, Arthur Schlesinger and Professor William Yandel Elliott.

Project

Instead of the managing editor's job, Kissinger took on the project that produced the nuclear weapons book. He worked with single - minded concentration on it. He lived with his wife in a New York apartment, and when he came home at night he forbade her to talk to him because it would interrupt his train of thought.

It was the right book at the right time. It hit when everybody was just starting to think about a world where others besides the Americans had atomic bombs to threaten people with.

Kissinger followed up with other books and articles dealing with strategy and foreign policy.

He also went to work for the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. In an interview with Kissinger, Governor Rockefeller was favorably impressed and so was Kissinger. They agreed that Kissinger would advise the Governor on foreign - policy matters on a consulting basis while he remained to teach at Harvard.

Role

When Rockefeller made his futile attempt to get the Republican nomination for President in 1968, he took a position on Vietnam that perfectly suited his face and his character. It was at the same time both pleasant and deceptive. Defending this position was left mostly to Henry Kissinger.

Kissinger has taken on a somewhat similar role for President Nixon, to whom he was highly recommended by Rockefeller. Kissinger is the Administration spokesman who turns up to

meet the press privately and off the record after actions like the Cambodian invasion and other public-relations disasters.

He talks to the newsmen candidly, with humor and without seeming to give them a lot of double-talk. He is sympathetic and understanding of the business of a newspaper having "to print something." What he says in these press briefings, and how he says it, seems always to make unvarnished good sense.

So far, the harshest criticism of Kissinger comes from precisely where Kraemer said it would: the left and the right. It was the left that was angry with him at first. These people somehow had expected the United States, with a presumed liberal like Henry Kissinger at the elbow of the President, to withdraw right away from Vietnam.

They were disappointed, and soon began to recall how they had known all along that Kissinger was really just a cryptofascist and a power-crazed Dr. Strangelove, right down to the evil Prussian accent.

The attacks from the right began only after it was disclosed last summer that Kissinger had made a secret trip to Peking to seal the necessary understanding before President Nixon announced his visit to the Peoples Republic of China.

"I have received many amazing letters," Kissinger says. "It has been my first real exposure to the right-wing extremists. They sound very much like the left-wing extremists, only their vocabulary is not as good."

Some of Dr. Kissinger's old colleagues and acquaintances, free from the passion of topical debate, ask themselves, and each other, "What is it that Henry wants?"

Does he want to be known as the most significant German-Jewish immigrant to America since Einstein? Does he want a share of one of those symbolic relationships of history — to be remembered as Nixon's Kissinger? Does he truly have an epic vision of history?

"I believe," Kissinger says, "in the tragic element of history. I believe there is the tragedy of a man who works very hard and never gets what he wants. And then I believe there is the even more bitter tragedy of a man who finally gets what he wants and finds out that he doesn't want it."

Sergeant Kissinger was teaching colonels and higher ranks, and he was so good that when the war ended the Army hired him as a civilian teacher at the school at a salary of \$10,000 a year.

Kissinger came home in May of 1946 and applied for September entrance to most of the good colleges.