

Charles McCabe Himself

Henry the Kiss

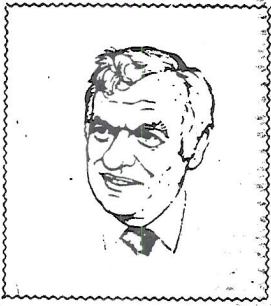
IT IS HARD to believe that the most bloodthirsty statesman of our time, the unspeakable Mr. Henry Kissinger, was once offered and accepted the Nobel Peace Prize.

It might be argued that the Nobel Peace Prize and Henry Kissinger were made for each other. The Nobel prizes, peace and otherwise, were founded by the man who invented dynamite, the greatest destroyer to be invented before Yankee know-how spawned the Atom Bomb.

Like many of the scientists involved with work on the big bomb, Alfred Nobel was a guilt-ridden man in his later years. His prizes were a \$9 million dollar exercise in not only exculpation, but in public relations, by a person who had been one of the most hated men of his time.

Nobel founded peace prizes, and others. John D. Rockefeller, a contemporary who had been almost as hated in his time, gave away dimes to small children, while photographers took due notice.

The Kissinger prize in 1973 was the most cynical manipulation of the Nobel name in the history of the awards. It celebrated, for one thing, an infamous lie — the end of the Indochina war. In the midst of a raging war, the Swedish Royal Academy of Science, which administers the prizes, gave them to the chieftains of the opposing sides — Kissinger and North Vietnam's Le Duc Tho — for *negotiating an end to the Vietnamese war*.



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THE WAY we got out of the Vietnam war was simply to walk away from it while it was still raging, and with Nixonian unctiousness pronounce the words peace and victory. This course had been advanced a few years before, with tongue slightly in cheek, by Vermont's Senator George Aiken. "Just say we won, and move the troops out." The Nixon White House did exactly that thing and had the gall to call it "peace with honor."

The award to Kissinger and Tho produced a world-wide shock. Two distinguished members of the Nobel Peace Prize committee resigned, the first resignations in Nobel prize history. These two were Helge Rognlid, chairman of Norway's Liberal Party, and Einar Hovdhaugen, a former member of the Centrist Party.

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THO HAD the decency to turn down the monstrous joke of a prize. He would not accept the prize, he said, because "peace has not really been established in South Vietnam . . . In these circumstances, it is impossible for me to accept the prize."

No such scruples bothered Henry the Kiss. Our statesman took the tainted loot, made all the appropriate *moues* for the telly, and continued to shinny his way to the top of the polls. A masterly and thoroughly Kissinger-like performance.

But this was not the end. The White House United Press reporter, Helen Thomas, in her new book *Dateline: White House* relates a revealing postscript to the peace prize story.

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TWO YEARS after the meaningless Kissinger-Tho peace pact had been signed, and following the actual and final fall of Indochina, Kissinger had a meeting with Miss Thomas. "As Kissinger told me in 1975," she relates, "he had considered returning the Nobel Prize."

There is the quintessential Kissinger, nimbly hopping around on both sides of the streets. Having milked the peace prize for all it was worth in his role as savior of Southeast Asia, he now seeks another constituency. He would join those who knew how hollow his performance had been in 1973, by putting it out now that he had almost accepted the Peace Prize against his will.

As the obituarists like to say: We shall never see his like again.