

# ...the Innocence of Dr. Kissinger

When the FBI last week revealed the existence of 17 or more telephone taps to uncover national security leaks, Dr. Henry Kissinger's aides suspected one of those taps was on Kissinger's own phone—reflecting the morbid suspicions between Kissinger's National Security Council (NSC) staff and the Haldeman-Ehrlichman palace guard.

In fact, Kissinger's White House telephone was spared an FBI tap, at least in that particular phase of the running investigations by the FBI and other federal investigators of the NSC staff, ordered by the suspicious Ehrlichman-Haldeman "Berlin Wall."

Whether Kissinger's telephone was spared in all other probes of the NSC is still not absolutely certain. In mid-1971 domestic policy chief John Ehrlichman was ordered by President Nixon to take control from the FBI of a complete new probe of leaked military and foreign policy secrets regarded by both Mr. Nixon and Kissinger as dangerous to national secu-

urity. At that point, Ehrlichman launched a second secret investigation of Kissinger's NSC—without asking Kissinger's approval.

Ehrlichman's second probe, moreover, was completed and filed without Kissinger being informed what, if anything, turned up.

In addition, there are unproved indications that members of Kissinger's staff were under occasional secret surveillance from noncivilians in the Pentagon's security apparatus.

In the public mind, these security probes of Kissinger's staff—and perhaps Kissinger himself—have falsely linked Kissinger to the Watergate scandal. In his latest statement issued Tuesday night, President Nixon sought to break this linkage.

On clear reason for this presidential statement: growing speculation that Kissinger, Mr. Nixon's prize exhibit throughout his White House tenure, might simply resign as public opinion

unfairly dragged him ever closer to the Watergate disgrace.

The relationship between the Kissinger operation, on the one hand, and the Berlin Wall of Ehrlichman and chief of staff H. R. (Bob) Haldeman on the other was always strained, distant and suspicious. As we have reported, Haldeman denied Kissinger aides normal White House perquisites, such as access to the White House mess and transportation.

Beyond that, Kissinger and his staff were regarded as virtual enemies by the crewcut bully boys manning the Haldeman-Ehrlichman offices.

The reasons are obvious. Kissinger was the only top White House aide with powerful ties outside the White House, both to Gov. Nelson Rockefeller of New York and to Eastern establishment intellectuals. The direct reason for the repeated security probes was Kissinger's deliberate selection of some Kennedy-Johnson holdovers for the NSC staff, including liberal intellectuals who had difficulty getting maximum security clearances long before Mr. Nixon became president.

Added to this was Kissinger's love of the spotlight—and the spotlight's love of him—and the fact that he, not Haldeman or Ehrlichman shared Time's 1972 Man of the Year award with Mr. Nixon.

Thus, besides a genuine desire to cork security leaks, Kissinger acquiesced in wiretaps on his own staff because he felt highly vulnerable to repeated Ehrlichman-Haldeman slurs that his staff was responsible for the leaks. Nevertheless, these security probes grew so onerous in 1971 that intimates say he considered quitting.

His dilemma now is far greater. Having lost the support of the liberal intellectuals who attack him today with indecent relish, he has no intention trying to exonerate himself by a public proclamation of innocence. That, say Kissinger intimates, would indicate a sense of guilt he does not feel.

Kissinger could and did defend his suspect liberal aides, particularly Morton Halperin, whose 9-month stint as a top Kissinger aide ended in September 1969. But he may have too much pride to publicly defend himself.

The irony is painful. Kissinger, collaborator with the President in most of what is fruitful and valuable in the Nixon administration, is being smeared with the muck of Watergate, an affair with which he had no connection. If he should now reach the point where he loses his effectiveness, or decides to quit, Watergate will have devoured its first innocent victim.