

*Joseph Kraft*

# Probing The NSC Leaks

One of the reasons Watergate goes on and on is that the full story of that sinister group, the White House plumbers, has never been told. In recent days alone, new revelations of their work have compromised the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Thomas Moorer, and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

So all of us have to hope that the inquiry which the Senate Armed Services committee begins this week will get to the bottom of the mystery. Admiral Moorer and Dr. Kissinger, in particular, have a special interest in stepping into the issue, instead of bobbing and weaving as they have up to now.

Admiral Moorer comes into the picture because the Plumbers Unit, which was set up at the White House in 1971 to look into leaks, did in fact uncover one avenue for unauthorized distribution of secret material. That was a line of communication which passed papers generated by Dr. Kissinger at the National Security Council to Admiral Moorer at the Pentagon.

Admiral Moorer, in an appearance on the Today Show, acknowledged that he had in fact received papers through that channel in 1971. But he made it seem an insignificant event. He blamed, in what strikes me as a violation of the spirit of command responsibility, an enlisted man on the NSC staff, Yeoman 1st Class Charles Radford. And he declared, in a statement implausible to anybody who knew Washington well at the time, that "there was a free flow of information" from Dr. Kissinger to his office.

That story is now challenged in an unmistakable way. Sources in the military claim that the passing of documents to the Pentagon was not insignificant, but continued over a long period of time, and involved hundreds of papers, some of them meant only for the eyes of the President. The highest ranking military officer in the country, in other words, is being made to seem a liar, unfit for his high post.

Dr. Kissinger came into the picture because one of the operating heads of the plumbers was David Young, a former staff man on the National Security Council. In testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations committee on his nomination as Secretary of State, Dr. Kissinger was asked repeated questions about Mr. Young and his work on the plumbers. In response to one question he said:

"I have no knowledge of any such activities that David Young may have engaged in. I did not know of the 'Plumbers Group,' by that or any other name. Nor did I know that David Young was concerned with internal security matters . . . I had no contact with David Young either by telephone or in my office or in any other way after he left my staff . . ."

When stories of the passing of documents to Admiral Moorer surfaced, Dr. Kissinger was questioned by newsmen



*Dr. Henry Kissinger*

about the plumbers. He said that he stood by "my statement to the Senate Foreign Relations committee." But under questioning it developed that he had known that an investigation had uncovered the irregular line of communication to the Pentagon. He had been allowed to listen to a tape of part of the investigation — the tape of an interrogation conducted by David Young.

Dr. Kissinger at that point cut off questions, pending further investigation by the Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees. He has already appeared before the Foreign Relations committee. Though the transcript of his testimony has not been released as of this writing, it is known

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that he hedged his position still further. The blanket denials of contact with Young have now been modified. Dr. Kissinger's present position is that his office logs show no contact with Young.

Admiral Moorer and Dr. Kissinger have been asked to testify before the Senate Armed Services committee under Sen. John Stennis, (D-Miss.) But despite demands by two members—Senators Stuart Symington (D-Mo.) and Harold Hughes (D-Iowa)—it is not clear whether other officials, including Mr. Young, will be called, nor whether the hearings will be public.

The strange thing is that the demands for a full airing should have to come from the outside. Admiral

Moorer and Dr. Kissinger have the biggest interest in a complete plumbing of the plumbers. Their reputations are at stake, and their present standing is so high that they could far better absorb a few lumps now than risk a slow, painful, involuntary deflation over the weeks and months to come.

Logically, in other words, Admiral Moorer and Dr. Kissinger should be pounding tables and insisting at the top of their lungs on a thorough public accounting. Failure to do that only builds the suspicion that they are part of a larger cover-up—the cover-up arranged by a President who now brandishes his cudgel in the dark and hits his own men.