

A Hot Time for Kissinger

By Mary McCrory
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The news out of Henry Kissinger's homecoming press conference is that nothing is sacred.

The secretary of State entered the parley expecting, with some reason, to be asked how he did it — in the Middle East. Instead he was asked if he did it — the wiretapping of his subordinates.

**Analysis
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What, the secretary's wild eyes and grim jaw asked plainly, did I do to deserve this? He is accustomed to standing ovations, magazine covers, bouquets and kisses. What have we come to?

The stage for the triumphal return was set by a respectful aide who announced that immediately after the news conference the secretary would receive a delegation from Israel who would present a scroll of gratitude on behalf of the liberated war prisoners.

Nothing in his recent or remote past prepared him for the gross ingratitude displayed by several correspondents. Most present call him "Henry," and many had accompanied him on the shuttle. Before he floated in, tanned aglowing, there was chat of the Damascus Hotel and the swimming - pool in Jerusalem.

The first two questioners were clubby. The first hoped the secretary would not mind that his query was not about the Middle East, and the second explained why he was asking his, which was about the Soviet role in the Middle East.

But the third jolted the secretary's laurel leaves. It concerned a deposition from John Ehrlichman and an affidavit from Charles Colson, who last week had pleaded guilty in Watergate which is

so far from the Suez canal. One can only imagine the feelings of a man who has been consorting with world personalities to have the name of Charles Colson flung at him.

The secretary said he would deal with the Colson account—and then did. It related to a helicopter ride during which Kissinger allegedly was informed of the

transfer of David Young from his staff to the "plumbers" unit, of which the secretary has sworn he knew nothing.

The ride only took half an hour. "It is therefore improbable," the secretary said in one of those familiar quantitative replies, "that on this occasion, very complicated matters were discussed."

The flight had taken place, he said, in one of those retreats into globalism that figure in so many Watergate replies, "the day the presidential announcement of the trip to China was made."

It also followed a lengthy dinner.

The talk turned to comfortable cosmic subjects for a while, then changed abruptly, thanks to the House Judiciary Committee, which has completely ignored the Golan Heights in its deliberation of White House wiretapping.

The secretary's answer to the question of whether he and General Alexander Haig had arranged the bugging of certain members of their staff was that he had tried to serve the government for years "in an honorable manner."

Another time statistic was brought forth. He had testified for four hours before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

A young upstart got up and put another teeth-rattler to him. Had he retained counsel? Practically everyone in the Nixon administration has, but the miracle worker bridled at the mention. He would answer no further questions on this subject.

But it turned out he would. Clark Mollenhoff who has the build of a tank and the voice of a hog-caller rode down all the other complaints of "Mr. Secretary" and roared at him:

"What you have engaged in here is a pattern of evasion and failure to recollect . . . we have seen over a period of weeks. I wonder why you cannot answer the direct question: Did you have any direct role in initiating wiretaps on your subordinates?"

Kissinger, distraught, escalated the number of hours he had testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to nine.

"You still haven't answered," Mollenhoff belatedly. "Did you go to John Mitchell?"

The secretary faltered, stumbled, repeated himself he had supplied, his office had supplied . . . the names

"Did you make a recommendation?" asked Mollenhoff, who worked briefly in the White House and knows its ways.

"No direct recommendation," Kissinger rejoined lamely. "I think this is a press conference, and not a cross-examination."

He was wrong. It was a cross-examination, and it could even be the first of several for the outraged idol.

No wonder he and his principal aides are so anxious to be off to the Middle East. It may be dangerous, but at least there will be nobody zipping you with a Colson affidavit, no Mollenhoff exploding at your feet. The Golan Heights must look like Acapulco to them. Over there, nobody worries about David Young or the Fourth Amendment. Over there, what's a little bugging between friends?



HENRY KISSINGER FIELDING A QUESTION AT THE CONFERENCE
'I think this is a press conference, and not a cross-examination'