WXPost Jun 1 2 1974 Kissinger Sought Help Before Trip

By Marilyn Berger Washington Post Starf Writer

In the 72 hours before his departure for the Middle East, Henry A. Kissinger sought solace and support from aides, friends and members of Congress, trying to find a way to shore up his personal integrity against charges that he had initiated a series of wire-

The Secretary of State sonsidered resigning. He considered not joining President Nixon on the trip that is to mark the new Ameri-can relationship in the Middle East.

Interviews with his associates show that Kissinger was preoccupied and troubled, concerned about his own reputation and with what he saw as the potential impact on the foreign policy he was supposed to be con-ducting. He wanted advice and reassurance.

He spoke to many people privately. Then he went public, in the emotional out-burst of his Salzburg press conference.

"A guy can only take so much," said one of his closest confidents. "He was really upset."

The secretary's deep con-

cern with the issues of Watergate had its origin in last Thursday's Washington

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press conference. It was called mainly to discuss the Middle East, but he was questioned about his role in the wiretapping. He was even as rad whathan he was even asked whether he had retained counsel "in preparation for a defense against a possible perjury indict-ment."

ment."

That question, according to one aide, was the one that really got under his skin. "It amoved him to tears," the aide said. Describing the press conference to a friend a half-hour later, he said that more than half the questions dealt with wire-tapping. "If this keeps up," he reportedly said, "I'm going to resign."

On Saturday, Kissinger saw Mike Mansfield the majority leader of the Senate. It was at a breakfast to which Kissinger had invited.

the Montana Democrat the week before. "He was in some distress," Masfield recalled yesterday. "We discussed other matters, but then we got to the question of wiretapping."

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Said Mansfield: "He felt if made it much more difficult for him to conduct the foreign policy of the United States as the agent of the President. He indicated that it would be an impossible job to carry out that responsibility and have this other thing hanging over him... and that he might have to consider resigning." have to consider resigning.

"I told him not to even think of it," Mansfield re-called.

Nevertheless, Mansfield said that on Sunday Kissinger was so disturbed that he called the senator at home. "He expressed concern about the continuing attacks on his credibility and honesty and said he was considering not going with and honesty and said he was considering not going with the President to the Middle East because he would be under some sort of a cloud," said Mansfield. "I told him Don't you dare think that way You go; you're needed; you can be extremely helpful; the country depends on you..."

Mansfield said: "I told him to roll with the punches and do what the rest of us do with criticism: to try to add another layer of skin

By Sunday night Kissinger was still seething. Friends who saw him at a dinner party said he was cooler, colder than usual. "I thought he was less warm and funny than usual," said one friend, "He kept saying that this was an impossible situation, and repeating that

her had non-instituted her wiretapping.

That morning a story had appeared in The New York Times repeating a report that Kissinger was linked to the FBI order ending the wiretaps. The same day The Washington Post carried an editorial urging the Senate Foreign Relations Commit-tee "to recall him and to do its best to determine whether he spoke the

An aide said these articles made him feel he was being misunderstood and that he msunderstood and that he was being unfairly criticized. The aide said that since Thursday's press conference it was "pretty clear that he was upset and irritated by the line of questioning."

He was also described as very tired" following his

four weeks in the Middle East, and as being "in a highly emotional state."

When Kissinger left for Salzburg, aides were not aware that he was planning to hold a press conference. There was some discussion of a statement, but an aide said yesterday that he was probably eager to clear the air now rather than waiting a week while he was in daily meetings throughout the Middle East that would probably not permit time for a full press conference. for a full press conference.

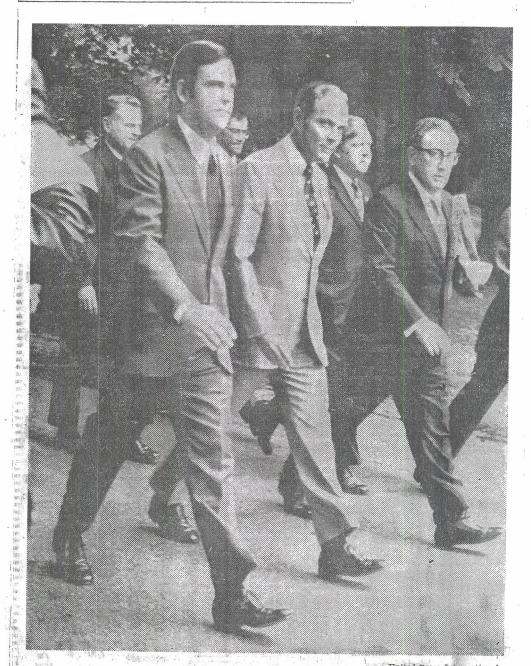
When he spoke he already had in his hands the News-week article that was head-lined, "An Ugiy Blot on Mr. Clean?" which he referred Clean?" which he referred to in his press conference. The daily news report had probably also brought him vesterday's New York Times editorial which said that Kissinger 'seems to be vulnerable to the charge of dissembling," and which added that "sooner or later this whole dismal episode must have its full airing."

Even before these articles appeared, Kissinger was de-

appeared, Kissinger was described by one confidant as feeling that he was being subjected to criticism is in no position to answer, in no position to answer. "He's very sensitive." this friend said, "and this was hitting below the belt." He added: "He was really upset by these innuendos and charges resulting from leaked information and his hands are tied behind his back. He can't talk back about secret information... He's willing to take on any-one but he thinks this is un-fair criticism . . ."

His friends agree that the criticism, in the words of

criticism. In the words of one, has hard very deeply. There is the sense that Kissinger feels—although he has never expressed it—that he has done so much for the nation, and is now being treated so shabily that he is becoming the Archim of a kind of witch limit.



Secretary Kissinger strides from the press conference where he threatened to resign.

United Press International
To his right are White House officials
Alexander Haig and Ronald Ziegler.