

# The Need to Pursue the Kissinger Charges

Just after he wrapped up the Vietnam settlement, Henry Kissinger gave Oriana Fallaci the dizzy interview in which he likened himself to the "cowboy . . . alone astride his horse." The same combination of exhaustion and euphoria, this time engendered by success in the Mideast, lies behind his dizzy threat to resign unless there is an end to charges about his role in wiretapping and other black deeds of the administration.

The threat is dizzy because Dr. Kissinger is not the injured party but the man whose conduct is at issue. The way to deal with the issue, moreover, is not to take on indignant airs but to step squarely into the various charges.

These charges are not, as Dr. Kissinger pretends, vague and snide innuendoes voiced by nameless sources. The allegations are quite specific. They often come in documentary form from well-known individuals. Where the sources are not identified, they are usually identifiable—at least by those of us who, having been the victims, have had to penetrate the nether world of wiretaps and bugs. My general impression is that Dr. Kissinger has been about as eager to track down the source of the charges as Mr. Nixon was to investigate the Watergate burglary.

One specific charge is that Dr. Kissinger, in conflict with testimony given during his confirmation hearings, initiated the wiretaps directed against several journalists and officials in the White House, the State Department and the Pentagon. The immediate basis of that charge is a comment by President Nixon himself. The comment is on the tape of his Feb. 28 conversation with John Dean.

That not exactly mysterious source has been reinforced from FBI material which asserts Dr. Kissinger was involved in continuing the wiretaps and finally turning them off. Dr. Kissinger has not tried to find out the origin of this material — either from those of us who have looked into the case as victims or from the office of the Special Watergate Prosecutor which has been investigating the bugging cases. If he cared to find out, he could almost surely identify the sources. For openers, he might look to William C. Sullivan, the former FBI man who served the White House in the wiretap field.

A second specific charge is that Dr. Kissinger, contrary to his testimony, knew about the actions of the plum-

bers organization which was set up by the White House to investigate leaks. One source for that statement is John Ehrlichman, the former aide to the President and boss of the plumbers, who made the statement in writing.

Another reason for believing that charge is that David Young, a former member of the Kissinger staff, worked under Ehrlichman as No. 2 man on the

Young made was played for Dr. Kissinger.

But Dr. Kissinger has turned away questions as to what he thought when the tape was played.

A third allegation against Dr. Kissinger is that he whipped up fears on the part of President Nixon and his entourage that there was a systematically organized ring which leaked in-





formation in order to undermine the administration. One sure source for that charge—and Dr. Kissinger knows a tape of an investigation that Mr. Young's plumbers organization. Mr. Young's role seems especially likely to have become known to Dr. Kissinger because it—is Mr. Ehrlichman. Another source, at least according to interviews I have had, seems to be Mr. Young.

The transcripts of the White House tapes seem to carry the charge a bit further. During the Feb. 28 conversation between the President and John Dean there are two references to something which Mr. Nixon learned from Dr. Kissinger who had it from Nelson Rockefeller who had it from Patrick Coyne, a former official of the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, who had it from J. Edgar Hoover. The "something" seems to be information that Democratic officials bugged the Republican Party, and the clear implication is that Dr. Kissinger passed on to the President information which made it seem that wiretapping was an okay thing to do.

Resolution of these charges is not easy because the main witnesses—Mr. Nixon, Mr. Ehrlichman, Mr. Young, Mr. Sullivan and Dr. Kissinger himself—are all interested parties. But it is good to know that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will re-examine the issue. It would be much better still, given the need for truly careful investigation, if the committee referred difficult questions to the staff of the Watergate Special Prosecutor.

As to what happens to Dr. Kissinger after the investigation, my guess is that he will get off relatively free. While he may well have lied, the untruths are matters of little consequence when weighed against his service to the state. If anything, he will be a better and freer man for having the truth come out. The more so if he could bring himself to exonerate those who have been innocently besmeared as objects of the bugging.

Perhaps the only reason for him to quit is the presumption—implicit in his threat to resign—that he is somehow an indispensable man. He isn't, and it's about time he recognized that 200 million Americans can stumble along without him if we have to. But for my own part, I think the resignation threat is a piece of spring silliness born of exhaustion and self-intoxication which should best be forgotten.