

## TV: A Timely Interview

By JOHN J. O'CONNOR

After Henry A. Kissinger's extraordinary press conference in Austria on Tuesday, ABC News has the benefit of fortuitous timing with "Kissinger: An Action Biography," an hour-long special that will be presented tomorrow at 9:30 P.M. Near the end of the program, in an interview conducted by Howard K. Smith and Ted Koppel, the Secretary of State briefly makes the same basic points about the wiretapping controversy that he made at length in the press conference.

He states that President Nixon "ordered the institution of a system" of wiretaps to plug national security leaks, and that "I was ordered, as part of the system to supply names." In the interview, recorded just before he left for Austria, Mr. Kissinger did not threaten to resign over the matter. The program does note that the controversy has come to "haunt" the Kissinger career.

In the TV interview, Mr. Kissinger stresses that the President was "reinstating"

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a White House security practice dating back to the Administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt. He says he had satisfied himself that the "system" was legal and followed proper procedures.

On other matters, the Secretary says that if he felt foreign policy were being manipulated for "partisan political purposes" on the domestic front, "I would resign." And in response to one of the program's interviews with H. R. Haldeman, who strongly implies that Mr. Kissinger knew more about Watergate from regular staff meetings than the public generally assumes, the Secretary bluntly says, "Watergate was not discussed at any of the staff meetings."

In addition to the interview, the "Action Biography" includes straight biography, beginning with photographs of Mr. Kissinger's childhood in Germany and a close-up account of some typically busy days on his schedule, in Washington and abroad.

The result is a fascinating portrait of a fascinating subject. If the program sometimes verges on falling into the public-relations trap of viewing Mr. Kissinger as something of an indispensable superman, the problem is understandable. As Mr. Smith notes, "He is undoubtedly not as good as his legend, but the approximation is startling."

When the Secretary expresses surprise at his new role of "cult hero," the program observes that the development may have been "unexpected but not entirely

unplanned." It carefully traces his career, including his United States Army experience in postwar Germany, where the former Jewish refugee may have begun developing his talent "to put aside personal feelings for pragmatic results."

Anatoly F. Dobrynin, the Soviet Ambassador in Washington, is seen being openly charmed by Mr. Kissinger at one of their weekly lunches. In Cairo, Anwar el-Sadat, the Egyptian President, remarks of the Secretary: "After two hours, I found that I could trust this man."

The program finds Mr. Kissinger's adroit cultivating of the press "impressive," his bipartisan courtship of Congressional leaders "breath-taking." Joseph Kraft, the columnist, describes him as "a one-man show, the only Toscanini in town."

The enthusiasm for the Kissinger performance is not unanimous. One of the more notable and restrained observers is Morton H. Halperin, a former member of the staff of the National Security Council who is currently suing Mr. Kissinger in a phone-tapping case. Mr. Halperin comments on a "certain paranoia" that he feels has been threaded through much of the Kissinger career.

According to some polls, Mr. Kissinger has become the most admired man in America. Tomorrow night's ABC News portrait valuably captures the complexity of this "magician." The program was co-produced by Mr. Koppel with Stan Opotowsky.