



# Henry Kissinger Meets the Press

**Joseph Alsop**

**I**T IS A TIME to stop being mealy-mouthed. If the U.S. government loses the invaluable services of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, the enormous, Watergate-induced self importance of the American press will be to blame.

If the U.S. dollar — your dollar and my dollar — loses a lot of its value on the world markets you can thank your friendly media.

The plain fact is that we now have in Washington, a triple standard. You have to begin right there to understand the resulting orgies of hypocrisy. And the first part of this triple standard for public judgment of public men concerns the political role of the press, or media.

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**I**T IS THE smarriest kind of hyperisry to pretend that the press was not directly responsible for Kissinger's decision to resign his office unless his name could be promptly and decisively cleared. On last Thursday, he had just returned from one of the greatest and most totally exhausting diplomatic feats in rather more than a century.

His reception was a savage and disgusting press conference, during which he was treated like a common criminal. At one point, one of his interrogators even suggested that he might well be indicted for perjury.

The climax came Monday evening when the "New York Times" printed an editorial accusing Kissinger of "dissembling" in tones majestically combining self-righteousness and pecksniffery. Telegraphed to Salzburg, the editorial promptly triggered Kissinger's press conference

and resignation statement on Tuesday.

Those are the plain facts. What has happened cannot be comprehended without those facts. Yet I have seen no account of Kissinger's threat to resign that has set forth the facts either fully or forthrightly.

This is the first part of the prevailing triple standard in Washington. As to the other part that justifies the word, "triple" it is simple enough. Kissinger has in fact been accused of "dissembling," and has even heard the word "perjury" hurled at him, because of a crucial national security matter involving less than a score of wire taps. Under the law, such wiretaps are entirely permissible for national security purposes.

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**O**NE WONDERS, then, why it was so shocking for a servant of the Nixon Administration to worry about national security to the extent of knowingly approving under a score of wiretaps. After all, national security wiretaps were very much more numerous in the Truman, Kennedy and Johnson Administrations.

So we come back to the Watergate-induced self-importance of the American press that was noted at the outset. Noting this is not meant to detract for one moment from the great achievement of exposing the crimes and squalors that now go by the name of Watergate.

Yet it seems this success has now led to a new and dangerous situation. Some people have now openly begun to follow the rule: "I'll be judge, I'll be jury" said cunning Old Fury; "I'll try the whole cause, and condemn you to death."