

16 October 1975

Announcer: Secretary of State Kissinger inadvertently revealed some of his personal opinions about former President Nixon when Kissinger was in Canada recently, and none of those opinions was particularly flattering, as Robert Krulwich reports:

4 OCT Krulwich: Henry Kissinger told a dinner companion two nights ago that Richard Nixon was an odd, artificial and unpleasant man. The secretary was chatting over a formal six-course dinner served in Ottawa, Canada, by the External Affairs Minister there, Alan McKechen (phon)*. What the Secretary did not know was that the microphones on the table top were turned on and the sound was being broadcast to another room where reporters were waiting for after-dinner speeches. Reporters realized after a while that they were getting an inadvertent exclusive and, according to a Canadian wire service, some of them plugged in their tape recorders and recorded Dr. Kissinger's chitchat. And there are rumors here in Washington this evening that the recordings may be sold for broadcast in America.

Nixon barely governed during the months of the Watergate crisis, Kissinger told his dinner companions, and he was a very artificial man, Kissinger explained, in the sense that when he met somebody he thought it out very carefully so that nothing was spontaneous. He didn't enjoy people, and people sensed that, and that made them uncomfortable. "What I have never understood," Kissinger said, "was how he became a politician. He really dislikes people. He hated to meet new people." And then, talking either of Patricia Nixon or of Jacqueline Onassis, (the transcripts are fuzzy on this) Kissinger thinks that one or the other is ~~sexy~~ "sexy," and later he says of Mrs. Onassis: "Jackie is a hard woman who knows what she wants."

Kissinger was not aware that the conversation was being listened to until this morning, when the story was played on page one under a banner headline in the Washington Post. State Department spokesman Robert Anderson would not deny that the conversation took place, and those remarks were made. He said that Kissinger expressed "surprise" when he saw the story. Asked if Kissinger expressed anything else, Anderson said "no, surprise was his only emotion." Meanwhile in Ottawa the host of the dinner, External Affairs Minister McKechen, told the House of Commons today that he was "quite personally mortified" ~~amaz~~ by the whole thing, and he called reporters who broke the story "worthy of contempt." One question that's unanswered at this hour is why the story wasn't reported earlier by more journalists. Twenty-four hours after he had his tape, Toronto Star bureau chief Bruce Garvey broke the silence by publishing in Washington, D.C. I tried, but was unable to learn why other reporters stayed mute for so long, and why the story was broken first in the U.S. In Washington, for Pacifica Radio, this is Robert Krulwich reporting.

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NYT 17 Oct 75: "According to an Administration official, Mr. Kissinger telephoned Mr. Nixon late this morning [16 Oct] ... to offer apologies for any embarrassment he might have caused his former chief."

* MacEachen