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Nixon Rates Kissinger Plus and Minus

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WASHINGTON, May 12—Richard M. Nixon said in a television interview broadcast tonight that Henry A. Kissinger was an intellectual giant, but he described the former Secretary of State as moody, secretive, capable of outrageous private remarks and intensely protective of official prerogatives.

The former President said that he might have named John B. Connally as Secre-

Excerpt from broadcast, page A8.

tary of State in 1973 but for an awareness that Mr. Kissinger, then Mr. Nixon's national security adviser, "couldn't tolerate" such a threat to his primacy in foreign policy.

Personal Role Is Stressed

Mr. Nixon's remarks about his closest diplomatic partner, some of them blunt and personal, occurred in the second of five planned television conversations with David Frost that mark his emergence from post-Watergate seclusion.

Chatty and anecdotal, he described Mao Tse-tung as a shriveled colossus and he appraised Leonid I. Brezhnev, the Soviet leader, as less alert than the late Nikita S. Khrushchev but as "a much safer man to have sitting there with his finger on the button."

Yet the refrain that ran throughout the telecast was Mr. Nixon's stress on his personal stewardship of big-power diplomacy while minimizing Mr. Kissinger's role and influence, as though the former President was trying to salvage a place in history at the expense of his Administration's Nobel laureate.

By Mr. Nixon's account, it was Mr. Connally, then Treasury Secretary, who persuaded him in May 1972 to bomb Hanoi and mine Haiphong harbor after Mr. Kissinger had counseled against the

tactic of a detente to induce North Vietnam to bargain in earnest for a cease-fire. In the nationally televised interview Mr. Nixon discussed his conduct of diplomacy with China and the Soviet Union and the impact of the superpowers on the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent, but he did not offer significant new insights into foreign policy.

While Mr. Nixon had seemed nervous and defensive in discussing Watergate in the first program of the series, he was evidently relaxed, expansive and in firm control of a familiar topic in the scenes presented tonight. His eyes glinted with amusement, his hands hammered and

waved, and once they modeled the globe as he spoke of positive events and experiences in his White House days. At one point he summarized detente with the Soviet Union by saying, "We have to learn to live together or we die together."

The former President spoke of persuading a timorous Mr. Kissinger to "send everything that flies," not a mere token force, in a military airlift of supplies to Israel during its war with Egypt and Syria in October 1973.

On the other hand, in discussing his selection of a successor to his first Secre-

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tary of State, William P. Rogers, Mr. Nixon said he had little choice but to give Mr. Kissinger control of both the State Department and the National Security Council staff at the White House. "I'd gone through the Rogers-Kissinger feud for four years," he said, "and I didn't want to buy another feud with another Secretary of State." He explained that Mr. Kissinger might feel that Mr. Connally would threaten "his position of being the President's major foreign policy adviser."

A spokesman for Mr. Kissinger, who remained in the Cabinet through President Gerald R. Ford's abbreviated term but was removed from the White House post in 1974, said he would have no comment on Mr. Nixon's remarks.

As edited by Mr. Frost from more than 12 hours of conversations videotaped several weeks ago in California, the dialogue provided footnotes rather than new chapters on the diplomatic trials and triumphs of Mr. Nixon's aborted Presidency, from which he resigned in August 1974. Some of his remarks served, however, to elaborate on the pragmatism with which he approached big-power diplomacy and, as the telecast made clear, his



President Nixon with John B. Connally and Henry A. Kissinger in Key Biscayne, Fla., in June of 1972

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continuing fascination with it.

He made the following additional points:

¶He said he rejected an Egyptian plea for a joint Soviet-American military force to impose a cease-fire on the Middle East in 1973 because it would have been "sheer madness" to invite potential confrontation between the superpowers in so strategic an area.

¶Describing the 1973 war as an object lesson in the value of detente, Mr. Nixon recalled that Mr. Brezhnev "hammered" him at a meeting on the question of an Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab lands and he said he had stipulated that the United States "will not let Israel go down the tube." As a consequence, Mr. Nixon said, the nuclear alert he ordered, in response to an ominous note from Mr. Brezhnev threatening unilateral intervention in the Middle East, was "a message which would get through" to Moscow. Neither Mr. Nixon nor Mr. Frost noted that the alert came shortly after the so-called Saturday night massacre of resignations and discharges in connection with Watergate and that contemporary reports suggested that Mr. Nixon had approved rather than initiated the alert.

¶In an acknowledgment that the United States had forced Israel to forgo an opportunity to destroy the Egyptian Third Army, Mr. Nixon compared his method to that of the film version of a Mafia "Godfather," saying of the Israelis, "We gave 'em an offer that they could not refuse." He contended that the imposed military restraint had been in Israel's interest—a view not shared by the Israelis—because such a Pyrrhic victory would have led to the emergence of radical Egyptian leaders wedded to Moscow and bent on "a war of revenge such as you've never seen."

¶Mr. Nixon conceded that he had remained silent in public about the "cruelty" with which Pakistan sought to put down a rebellion in 1971 in what became Bangladesh; the Pakistani policy drew India into the war, leading to independence for the eastern wing of Pakistan. He explained that he feared that India would have "gobbled up" the rest of Pakistan, disrupting then-secret overtures to China through the Pakistanis. "The Chinese were putting a lot of pressure on us to do something," he said, and tilting toward Pakistan "built up a lot of credibility with the Chinese."

¶In a rare allusion to current events, Mr. Nixon implicitly criticized President Carter's public campaign for human rights in, among other nations, the Soviet Union. He said that it would have served no particular purpose to condemn the Pakistanis in 1971 and then compared the situation with restrictions on emigration by Soviet Jews. "If I had gone out in my first year in office in 1969, or in 1970 or in 1971 and 1972, and made a big grandstand play, speaking to the B'nai B'rith or something like that to the effect that the Soviet Union is horrible for what they're doing to the Jews, the Kremlin doors would have come down and none of 'em would have gotten out," he said, adding, "My answer always is: What works?"

He seemed to relish Mr. Frost's invitation—it was in sharp contrast to the prosecutorial tone of the British inter-

viewer's questioning in the program last week on Watergate—to ruminate about the major figures abroad with whom he had dealt.

Asked to assess Mr. Brezhnev, Mr. Nixon volunteered an extended comparison with Mr. Khrushchev. "Khrushchev was boorish, crude, brilliant, ruthless, potentially rash," Mr. Nixon said, and had a terrible inferiority complex. He recalled an evidently innocent remark by President Dwight D. Eisenhower to Mr. Khrushchev about the difficulty of escaping the telephone when a President tries to vacation and said: "Khrushchev blew up, angry. He says: 'We've got telephones in the Soviet Union, too. We've got more telephones than you have.'"

In contrast, Mr. Nixon said, Mr. Brezhnev is not as quick as Mr. Khrushchev was and not as volatile but is far better mannered. He said Mr. Brezhnev had animal magnetism and an earthy manner, though "not as boorish as Khrushchev in some of the expletives that he would use."

Viewing film clips of his meeting in Peking last year with Chairman Mao and recalling their landmark encounter four years earlier, Mr. Nixon told Mr. Frost of Mr. Mao's incomparable humor. Hua Kuo-feng, the Chairman's successor, told him last year, Mr. Nixon said, of the following exchange a decade earlier between Mr. Mao and Mr. Kosygin:

"Chairman Mao told Kosygin, he said, 'Our differences are going to continue for ten thousand years.' And Kosygin said: 'Well, Mr. Chairman, after these long discussions we've had and the reassurances I've given you, don't you think you could reduce that number somewhat?' And Mao, with that devilish sense of humor he has, said, 'Well, in view of the very persuasive arguments that the Premier has made, I'll knock off a thousand years. Our disputes will continue for nine thousand years.'"

By last summer, Mr. Nixon said, Mr. Mao had become old and feeble, save for his fine, delicate hands. He said Mr. Mao had asked: "How long will peace last? One generation?" The Chairman held up one finger and Mr. Nixon said peace

might last longer. Mr. Mao raised a second finger and when Mr. Nixon said, "No, I think longer," Mr. Mao smiled, as Mr. Nixon described it, "rather ironically, skeptically."

Mr. Nixon, whose first venture to China was a widely acknowledged triumph, was asked by Mr. Frost at the outset of the telecast if the idea had been his or Mr. Kissinger's. The reply, setting something of a pattern for later references to the former Secretary of State, was that "I conceived it before I ever met" Mr. Kissinger.

His deprecating comments about Mr. Kissinger also followed a familiar pattern, praising in one breath and discounting in another. Mr. Kissinger "executed his role brilliantly," he said, calling him a genius in diplomacy. Half a dozen times, Mr. Nixon said, Mr. Kissinger came to suggest that perhaps he ought to resign. The former President said the overtures were never serious and were more likely reflections of Mr. Kissinger's tendency "to get highly elated by some piece of good news and very depressed by something that he considered to be bad news." Mr. Nixon added quickly that he did not mean Mr. Kissinger was emotionally unstable but that he could not abide rivals and bureaucratic intrigue.

On several occasions, in Mr. Nixon's account, Mr. Kissinger's distrust of Secretary Rogers prompted arguments with the President. "This was a very painful thing for me because Rogers had been my friend," Mr. Nixon said. "He was a personal friend. Henry, of course, was not a personal friend. We were, we were associates, but not personal friends. Not enemies, but not personal friends."

Remarks Critical of Nixon

Mr. Frost asked Mr. Nixon what he thought when he learned after resigning that Mr. Kissinger was wont to make occasional disparaging remarks about him. For instance, at a private diplomatic dinner in Ottawa in October 1975 at which a microphone near Mr. Kissinger was inadvertently left on, reporters overheard him describe Mr. Nixon as unpleasant, artificial and a very odd man. Mr. Nixon said that such conduct "drives my family right up the wall" but that when he invariably got a telephone call of explanation from Mr. Kissinger, he would dismiss the remarks as unimportant.

Unlike most intellectuals, Mr. Nixon said, Mr. Kissinger "was fascinated, first, by the celebrity set and, second, he liked being one himself." Mr. Nixon suggested that Mr. Kissinger was somewhat unsophisticated about being the inevitable center of attention at chic dinner parties in Georgetown. "Well, anyway," Mr. Nixon continued, "that's Henry. Henry, when he goes to these parties—and he likes parties. I despise them, because I've been to so many. I used to like them, but Henry will learn to despise them, too, after he's been through a few more."

Mr. Kissinger "likes to say outrageous things," Mr. Nixon theorized. The explanation for Mr. Kissinger's Ottawa remarks having been advanced, Mr. Nixon enjoyed a joke at his own expense. "The only problem," he said, was that Mr. Kissinger "didn't think to turn the microphone off." He added: "But, on the other hand, I didn't turn it off either in the Oval Office on occasions."