

EXCURSUS 1

Raymond A. Schroth on THE NOT-YET FALL OF HENRY KISSINGER

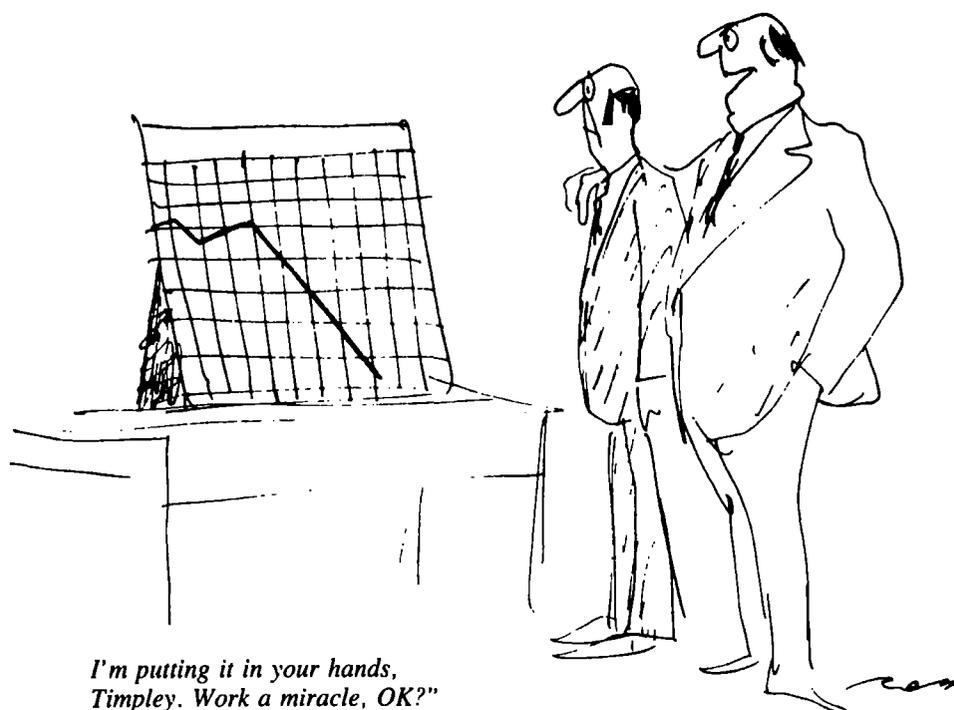
A recent Jules Feiffer cartoon depicts a pajamaed, perspiring Henry Kissinger crying out in prayer to his departed patron, Nelson Rockefeller, who, he presumes, now rests in Abraham's bosom. Kissinger prays that he will be delivered from his enemies, that he will be embraced by the next administration or—if all else fails—that they won't take away his limousine. Feiffer may be more prescient than he realizes, for either the wheels of the gods grind very slowly or Rockefeller is ensconced among them and protecting his protégé.

One of the great mysteries of contemporary American political life is how Henry Kissinger has been able to survive as a public figure in spite of major questions about his effectiveness as a public servant and almost overwhelming evidence against his integrity. Much of this evidence bulges out of Seymour Hersh's *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (Summit; 699 pp.; \$19.95), which appeared early last summer and, in January, received the prestigious general nonfiction award from the National Book Critics Circle. (The award might do something to mute Hersh's critics and put into perspective the controversy that has surrounded his work, but it will do little to effect the professed central purpose of the book: the removal of Kissinger from public life.)

The Price of Power is an extremely dense and difficult book, the product of four years of research, a thousand interviews, a painstaking critical reading of the Nixon, Kis-

singer, and many other memoirs, and a trip to Hanoi to talk with participants in the negotiations to end the Vietnam war. Hersh develops a detailed portrait of a highly educated political academic turned on by the smell of prestige. We see a hard-working, occasionally brilliant, often witty and eloquent professor, but one so obsessed with grasping at and holding onto power that all other values—honesty, privacy, generosity, and even the value of human life—fade from his view. Concludes Hersh: "In the end, as in the beginning, Nixon and Kissinger remained blind to the human costs of their actions—a further price of power."

What Hersh refers to is the following record: In what may have been the most critical mistake of their administration, Nixon and Kissinger enlarged the Vietnam war with the secret, illegal bombing of Cambodia in 1969; to intimidate the North Vietnamese into submission, they propagated the "madman theory"—that an enraged Nixon was capable of *anything*—and ordered a nuclear alert to reinforce it; they wiretapped the press and their own National Security Council staff; in response to hijackings by a PLO faction in 1970, Nixon ordered planes from the Sixth Fleet to bomb PLO camps ("Bomb the bastards..."), an order Defense Secretary Melvin Laird stalled off because of "bad weather"; furious at the thought of a Marxist government in Chile, they put in motion events that led to President Salvador Allende's death; because they thought they needed the help of President Yahya Khan of West Pakistan in negotiations in China, they went along with his genocidal war against secessionist forces in East Pakistan; and finally, mainly to impress South Vietnam's President Nguyen Van Thieu, they ordered the infamous twelve-day Christmas bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong. Nixon quotes himself as telling Admiral Thomas H. Moorer: "I don't want any more of this crap about the fact that we couldn't hit this target or that one. This is your



chance to use military power effectively to win this war, and if you don't I'll consider you responsible."

These stories—along with connected SALT negotiations and the Russian wheat deal, the China trip, the White House Plumbers, and any number of White House basement feuds—constitute the slow-reading central stuff of Hersh's account. In one sense, not that much is new; and Hersh is careful not to go beyond his documentation, admitting, for example, that for the Allende assassination plans he has no smoking gun. What he does have is a powerful chapter filled with evidence that when Allende seemed a threat to U.S. business interests, the Nixon White House thought it had the right and power to "get rid of" "that son-of-a-bitch Allende"—by preventing his election, destabilizing the Chilean economy, supporting a coup—because, as one of Hersh's informants put it, "Henry wanted it."

If we knew many of these stories before, what we gain from Hersh is a horrifying picture of the kind of men who can come to power in a democratic state. Ironically, Richard Nixon—in spite of his dangerous boozing, hysterical fist-pounding, bigoted gutter language, and mad rages—looms as a stronger character than Kissinger himself. The "advisor" so clung to the president as the source of his own power that Nixon could almost play with him the way a master plays with his dog.

A further irony: Kissinger the diplomat, who was often successful in gaining the confidence of a great variety of prominent persons, here seems incapable of an honest relationship with anyone. When a colleague or an adversary leaves the room, Kissinger tears him apart. He calls Secretary of State William Rogers a "fag," he stokes the fires of Nixon's belligerence, and presents himself to the press and liberal intellectual friends as a lonely force for compassion and restraint. At the height of the tension between them, as Kissinger is rushing around the world trying to get a Vietnam settlement (which Nixon, unknown to Kissinger, actually did not want before the 1972 election), Kissinger courts his boss by leaving an admiring election-day note on the president's pillow.

Today the Kissinger kite flies as high as ever—with his celebrity status the talisman of his public acceptance. The same week *The Price of Power* won its award, the President's National Bipartisan Commission on Central America, chaired and dominated by Kissinger, issued its final report. A few months before, the Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes had tried to influence the commission with a long letter, "Are you listening, Henry Kissinger" (*Harper's*, January, 1984), in which he called on the United States to live with "the complexity and intractability of different cultures." But no one listened. Rather, one of the most startling anecdotes in Hersh's book seems to have been partly reaffirmed. Hersh tells the story of Gabriel Valdes, Chile's foreign minister, who had the temerity to contradict Nixon at lunch. Kissinger scolded him: "You come here speaking of Latin America, but this is not important. Nothing important can come from the South. The axis of history starts in Moscow, goes to Bonn, crosses over to Washington, then goes to Tokyo. What happens in the South is of no importance." Now it seems that, in the commission's view, although nothing important may come from the South, the "axis of history" has detoured and the South has become the new battleground of East vs. West. Meanwhile, Kissinger dissents from his

own report, suggesting that increased military aid should not be contingent upon progress in human rights.

By now the cumulative impact of Kissinger's fame is the pillow that absorbs the impassioned and dispassionate attacks on his policies. The August *Vanity Fair* published a giggling account of his sixtieth birthday dinner at which his Texas hostess gushed: "Thank you, Henry, for all the beautiful things you've done for your country." And the August/September *American Heritage* has fawned over him in a "What-was-it-like-to-be-secretary of state?" interview. He has chummed with ex-world leaders at an American Enterprise Institute shindig in Vail; bought a 49.5 acre, \$470,000 home in Connecticut; served as an ABC-TV commentator following "The Day After"; flown to six countries in six days with his bipartisan commission; analyzed the death of Yuri Andropov on Cable News; and, typically, along with former President Gerald R. Ford, played himself in a one-line December appearance on the TV soap opera "Dynasty." Joan Collins says, "Henry, I haven't seen you since Portofino." Kissinger says, "That's right."

Today, according to the *Washington Post Weekly* (January 16), Kissinger can get \$20,000 for a lecture and, through his Kissinger Associates consulting firm, can charge a client \$150,000 a year for a couple of days of advice. Last May a million-dollar endowment from international financiers created a chair in his honor at Georgetown, where he already has a faculty position at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. How Georgetown can commit its own moral reputation to this "chair," considering the documented consequences of Kissinger's policies, is something I suppose Georgetown can explain.

It may be that Kissinger has survived Hersh because Hersh, in attempting the ultimate coup de grace, has tried to destroy his nemesis rather than lance him. As the London *Times Literary Supplement* notes, this "important book" is a "diatribe not against the policies but against the man." I suspect Hersh would reply that the man is practically indistinguishable from his policies, that the fundamental case against Kissinger is not just political but moral—a point made every year by Anthony Lewis in his *New York Times* "Ghosts" column, recalling the Christmas bombing of Hanoi. And Alan K. Henrikson in "The Moralist as Geopolitician" (*The Fletcher Forum*, Summer, 1981) concludes a sympathetic review of Kissinger's memoirs by saying that his "greatness" lies less in his achievements, which are questionable, than in the man himself: "If his legacy is ambiguous, it is partly because he came to know his subject better than he knew himself."

The "greatness" to which Henrikson refers is the Emersonian notion that the "great" man is one "who is what he is from nature, and who never reminds us of others." His is a uniqueness that friends and critics attribute, depending on the source, to his skills as a conceptualizer, or his mastery of the media, or his gift of flattery, or his ability to survive Nixon's disintegration, or the ability to project a distinct and identifiable personality—in George Ball's words, "the fundamental basis for becoming a cult figure."

In time, the history and political science professors will digest and analyze *The Price of Power* and teach it to their classes; fellow journalists will follow up on Hersh's leads and reinterpret his data. And Hersh, if necessary, will write another book. The press will lose interest in the "Henry the K." personality and chase another super-shuttler or start running documentary reassessments of his career on the

twentieth anniversaries of his various coups. And serious college students will wonder: What was it in the American value system of the Nixon-Reagan years that made Henry Kissinger the object of attention—even respect?

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EXCURSUS 2

Thomas Land on "MIRACLE TREE" PLANTATIONS

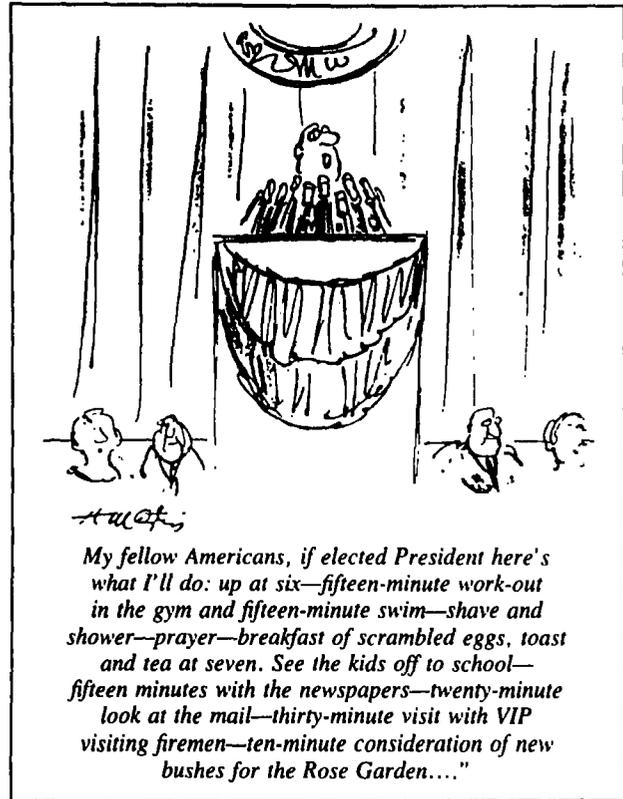
A network of seventy-two wood-burning power stations is to be erected within five years as part of a Philippine rural electrification project. Organized into cooperative enterprises, the small-capacity stations will be fueled by "slash-and-burn" farmers maintaining nearby plantations of quick-growing leguminous trees. The scheme offers an attractive new development model for many countries in the hungry belt of the globe. "If the project succeeds," says the Philippines National Electrification Administration, "it will revolutionize the Third World."

The new plantations, sited near the projected power stations in tens of thousands of acres of formerly deforested land, point the way toward reversing the destruction of the Earth's tropical forest cover, providing a lucrative but hitherto neglected source of renewable energy, creating a secure livelihood for poor farmers, and encouraging electrification and consequent technological, medical, and social development in the neglected country areas.

The program confronts an alarming international trend. According to a recent authoritative assessment made by two specialist organizations of the United Nations, the present rate of deforestation in the tropics is 11.3 million hectares a year. For every tree planted in the tropics, ten others are felled. During the past thirty years, about half of the world's forests have disappeared.

This could be the beginning of a self-perpetuating process leading to a rapid degradation of land and the conversion of the surviving tropical forest into near-desert. Many climatologists believe that a secondary effect of the destruction of the dark forest carpet might be a "shinier" globe, shifting rainfall patterns, and permanent drought affecting the great breadbasket regions of Europe and North America.

The dominant species grown in the twenty-seven thousand-acre plantations established so far in the Philippines is the self-fertilizing *Leucaena leucocephala*, brought to the islands by the Spanish from Latin America in the seventeenth century and known locally as ipil-ipil, or miracle tree. The family *Luguminosae*, to which the ipil-ipil belongs, offers agricultural planners an opportunity to stop and even reverse deforestation. Some leguminous trees grow nearly twenty meters a year, prevent soil erosion, arrest forest fires, and, in the case of one Latin American species, even provide a sap which can fuel a diesel engine without a refining process. With a high energy yield within four years, this species is an ideal timber crop for semiarid tropical slopes. Several other species are also being introduced as a buffer to avert



the danger of certain pests or diseases sweeping through the plantations.

Philippine "slash-and-burn" farmers are being recruited to tend the plantations, about one family for every ten hectares of forestland. They are offered a loan for housing as well as initial living expenses, and they can expect an eventual annual income of \$3,000 per family. They are encouraged to form farming cooperatives, selling timber to the local power plants. The power stations, in turn, will be handed over to the cooperatives under contract to sell excess energy to the national grid.

The \$350 million project has already attracted fierce competition by British, Canadian, American, French, Swedish, and Japanese suppliers of relatively small, 3-5 megawatt wood-burning electricity-generating stations. Balfour Beatty of Britain, for example, has developed standard power station layouts for a range of power outputs. Each station comprises a simple water tube boiler, with a large furnace and grate area, housed in a steel-frame building. A concrete lean-to houses a steam turbine generator as well as the electrical controls.

Expenditures for installation and first planting for the projected network of stations bring the cost of its electricity yield to \$3,500 per kilowatt. Each power plant has the potential to supply fifteen thousand rural homes with electricity at an annual saving of more than 26,000 barrels of crude oil.

Electrification may well bring increased nutrition standards to the countryside, as well as schools, clinics, and mobile medical services. The Philippines' global energy plans envisage an increase in the annual electricity generation from 4,300 megawatts in 1981 to well over 7,000 megawatts by 1987.

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