

# Connections

## Briefing

"We have the following announcement to make this morning, which is embargoed for 12 noon, EST: The President again met for three hours today with the members of the special task force on the alleged apparition. As announced yesterday, these are the Reverend Billy Graham, Dr. Henry Kissinger and General of the Air Force Warren Z. Angst. At about 6:30 P.M., EST today, Dr. Kissinger will leave for Rome for consultations with His Holiness. You will be kept up-to-date as to Dr. Kissinger's schedule after that."

Q. Last night a flaming red sky in the north could be seen from every part of the United States. Also last night, millions of Americans saw the mile-high figure of the angel with the sword in his right hand on all three networks. Do you feel that the term "alleged apparition" is still the proper language for this?

A. I'm not authorized to change the language of the announcement.

Q. How long will Dr. Kissinger stay in Rome?

A. I am not in a position to indicate to you at this time the length of that meeting.

Q. Is it true that nuclear bombing against the angel has been discussed?

A. The special task force has discussed a number of contingency plans.

Q. Does the presence of General Angst on the task force indicate that military measures are under consideration?

A. I'm not prepared to engage in speculation.

Q. It has been reported from Rome that the Pope feels that a national act of repentance may be in order. Can you comment on this?

A. I regret that irresponsible press reports have confused the public since the beginning of these events. I am not in a position to reveal the contents of the Pope's message to the President at this time.

Q. Is a national act of repentance under consideration?

A. Well, Jack, you all have the statement of nonculpability issued here at the Florida White House two days ago.

Q. Nonculpability is not quite the same as repentance, is it? Indeed, it could be construed as amounting to the opposite.

A. I cannot comment on that.

Q. Why is Dr. Kissinger going to Rome?

A. For the purpose, Chuck, of continuing consulta-

tion with the Pope and with Vatican experts on these matters.

Q. Can you give us any indication of the President's reaction to the Pope's message?

A. No, I am not prepared to do that.

Q. It has been suggested that Dr. Kissinger's going to Rome violates the constitutional separation of Church and State. Can you comment on this?

A. Yes, Barbara. This question has been fully discussed and decided negatively. I should add that the Reverend Graham was in full agreement with the decision.

Q. Has there been further consideration of the possibility that the apparition has been caused by the Soviet Union or another foreign power? Terrestrial power, I mean.

A. All possibilities are being continuously reviewed by the President and by the special task force. At this time there is no indication of anything along the lines of your question.

Q. Is it true that the President has had second thoughts about the morality or the wisdom of the American policies in Indochina?

A. There has been an awful lot of speculation along these lines, and of course a lot of media bias. I am not prepared to address that speculation, as I have not been prepared to address any speculation relating to the alleged apparition, even if it is right or if it is wrong.

Q. Is it correct that the President spent two hours in seclusion with Billy Graham yesterday?

A. No. They were watching the Miami game with Bob Hope. *(Laughter)* I fail to see the humor of this.

Q. Is the White House aware of the possibility that the apparition may spell the end of the world?

A. It seems to me that the use of alarmist language is counterproductive in this situation.

Q. Is Dr. Kissinger to meet with Monsignor Pazzo of the Commission on the Devil?

A. I am not prepared to provide you with that information.

Q. Will the President have a message to the national service of contrition to be held at Washington Cathedral this evening?

A. George, there are no plans for that at the present time.

Q. Is General Angst leaving for Thule Air Base in Greenland?

A. I cannot give you information as to General Angst's schedule at this time.

Q. There is not a wire embargo on your announcement?

A. There is a wire embargo until 12 noon. Just move it on the wire at about one minute of 12.

Peter Berger