
Book Review

The Price of Power is necessary reading for President Ronald Reagan

by Carol White

The Price of Power

by Seymour Hersh

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Even as he was being appointed to what he had confidentially told Israeli leaders is "the most important post in the Reagan cabinet," Henry Kissinger was preparing to jump ship. At a recent press conference, Kissinger laid it on the line—for those familiar with the signals. In anticipation of a growing peace movement, he was paving the way for a graceful shift into the John Glenn camp for the 1984 presidential race by dissociating himself from Reagan's apparent turn toward gunboat diplomacy.

Coming out of a meeting with President Reagan, he informed the press regarding his new appointment: "I think it is quite possible that a report will come out that differs with aspects of the administration foreign policy. We all have to engage in this effort with an open mind and with a willingness to adjust whatever preconceptions we may have to the briefings and to the facts to which we will be exposed."

Just as in the Nixon days, when he repeatedly tried to force the President to go to the brink of war, Kissinger is already preparing his cover story. Ironically, his comeback into power begins with Briefingate, just as Nixon's attempt to break with him ended in Watergate.

As Seymour Hersh tells it, in 1968 Kissinger was guaranteed the post of National Security adviser by Averell Harriman, with whom he has always maintained the closest social and political ties. Either he would be appointed directly by Hubert Humphrey, or Harriman would guarantee him the leaks which he could use to trade himself into the spot under Nixon.

At the time, Johnson was frantically trying to end his presidency with a peace settlement in Vietnam. Harriman was in charge of negotiations in Paris. With his help, Kissinger was able to pass on information to the Republican camp about the status of negotiations, which not only helped Nixon to shape his stance but also became a tool for influencing South Vietnamese President Thieu to resist a peace settlement. Kissinger at that time also possessed a dossier on President Nixon, which, according to Hersh, he considered passing on to the Democrats.

Sy Hersh's portrait of Kissinger is useful. Yet the nastiness is there without the depth of true evil. While Hersh makes a strong case for Kissinger's two-faced character, his own evident bias against Nixon (Hersh after all played a key role in the peace movement and the Watergating of Nixon) blinds him to the more interesting side of things.

Kissinger started his association with Nixon already in possession of a blackmail file which could be used against him. As Hersh himself documents, one of Kissinger's main activities throughout the Nixon administration was to accumulate material for these files in collaboration with J. Edgar Hoover. This entailed not only collecting the goods on Nixon and his associates, but also entrapping Nixon into the pattern of illegal surveillance which ended in Watergate. No reader of this book can come away unconvinced that the succession of security leaks which plagued Nixon was orchestrated by Kissinger.

The Kissinger presidency

Seymour Hersh presents a very ugly picture of a very ugly man. No wonder that rumor has it that he is worried about being on Kissinger's hate list. Kissinger's targets—former Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro, Pakistani Prime Minister Z. A. Bhutto, and Chilean President Salvador Allende are all dead. As Hersh's book begins, the hated Kennedys, Jack and Bobby, who threw Kissinger out of the security council in 1962 are dead; as it ends, President Nixon

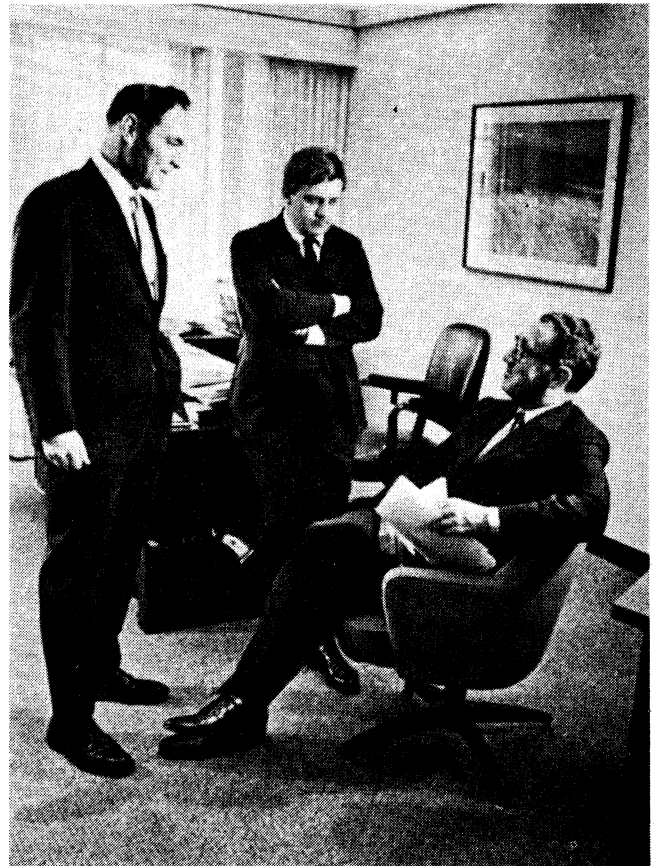
is politically dead. Hersh describes the paranoid environment surrounding the man who wiretapped his own closest associates. This is a sado-masochist who alternates between being the bully and butcher and the obsequious toady. It all rings true, and yet it is fundamentally false.

As the title of his book implies, Hersh suggests that Kissinger suppressed his own liberal better judgment in order to propitiate an irrational President Nixon. Yet the compensating merit of the book is its 698-page length: Through the accumulation of detail, a picture of Nixon comes through which belies the author's own bias. Yes, in the final analysis, command and the moral responsibilities for command decisions rested with Nixon, not Kissinger. Kissinger was able to manipulate Nixon because of Nixon's undeniable weaknesses. Yet through it all another picture of Nixon also emerges, of a man who would be a President like Eisenhower. Thus Nixon repeatedly backs Secretary of State Rogers's efforts to carry out Eisenhower's Mideast stabilization strategy, despite Kissinger's furious opposition.

Hersh virtually echoes Kissinger when he attributes Nixon's support for Rogers as mere unwillingness to face unpleasant bureaucratic infighting, lack of interest on Nixon's part in the area, and a tinge of anti-Semitism. Kissinger, of course, claimed to his NSC buddies that the United States' Mideast policy could only be understood on the basis that at one time Nixon and Rogers had had a homosexual affair. In fact, the Rogers plan fell far short of Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace policy, yet the echo is there.

Nixon came to power in a situation which was in many ways similar to the one which faced Eisenhower at the close of the disastrous Truman presidency. The country was fighting a war it could not win because its military leadership had been rendered impotent: General MacArthur had not only been prevented from defeating the North Koreans, but had been summarily dismissed from command by Truman, who was acting under pressure from Averell Harriman. According to Hersh's account, Eisenhower moved quickly to carry out the MacArthur program, offering two alternatives to the North Koreans: a generous peace settlement or the threat of nuclear escalation of the war. At the same time, he carried through the obviously necessary military measure of closing the Korean access to China by bombing the Yalu river area and the Chinese-North Korean hydroelectric facilities—moves MacArthur had been specifically prohibited from taking on the spurious basis that they would precipitate a Third World War.

Nixon, of course, was not Eisenhower, nor were the problems which he faced in honorably ending the Vietnam war quite the same. While Eisenhower faced the subversive McCarthyite movement, whose venom was directed against the Army, which was supposed to be a nest of communists, the nominally anti-communist Harriman Democrats operated as a peace movement within the government. Also, the general public supported the war in Korea, and was enraged at the ouster of MacArthur.



Henry Kissinger and minions Alexander Haig and Lawrence Eagleburger.

Ten years later the American people had lost their self-confidence. This allowed the Harriman forces to organize a vocal opposition to the war which was especially dangerous because of its wide influence among youth subject to the draft. While the 70 percent "silent majority" supported President Nixon, there was growing dismay at the incompetence of the American military and the purposelessness of the war. It was this that Kissinger played upon as Nixon began his term of office, and the material Hersh himself has amassed makes a convincing case that Nixon was by no means the evil genius behind Kissinger.

It is by no means irrelevant to learn that while America's National Security Advisor was accusing his president of being a homosexual, his deputy, Alexander Haig, was describing to all and sundry how Kissinger masturbated in his private office. Incidents such as these, described in the book, are not mere locker-room prurience, but define the contempt for government which Kissinger fostered—just as his racism was not merely the vulgarity implied by epithets like "jigaboos" and "jungle bunnies," or by discriminatory practices. As Hersh points out, Kissinger's racism was translated into the death of millions of his victims in Asia, Latin American and the Mideast and Africa.

Kissinger's infantilism was not limited to his sexual practices, although those were a standing White House joke. He

was completely preoccupied by his appearance. To this day, he cannot tolerate being looked down upon by a taller man. More to the point, he cannot face being bested. Because of his psychotic rages, President Nixon in 1971 "wondered aloud if Henry needed psychiatric care." Again, just before the 1972 elections, when Kissinger's negotiations on Vietnam fell through, President Nixon's aides Haldeman and Colson were concerned that Kissinger, who feared to face the press, was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Kissinger described his own state at that time when he wrote about President Thieu: "[O]ur own ally . . . had managed to generate in me that impotent rage by which the Vietnamese have always tormented physically stronger opponents."

Kissinger's inability to tolerate criticism was illustrated in a memorandum circulated in the White House at his insistence. It demanded that "Attacks on Henry Kissinger, direct or indirect, must cease. An attack on Kissinger is an attack on the President."

All of this is useful information for building up a psychological profile of Kissinger, and yet amazingly, Hersh leaves out its centerpiece—Kissinger's well known homosexuality. In fact, at least one diplomatic profile circulating at the time advised that he could be destabilized merely by being patted on the back or touched on the knee by a man. It also noted that his normally guttural voice could become falsetto when he had had a few drinks. Hersh describes Nixon's reference to Kissinger as a lady-killer, in front of Chou En-lai, as good-humored byplay; the incident in fact occurred at a time when Nixon had come to realize that his security adviser was operating out of his control, and very possibly against the national interest. Was the remark a not so subtle warning that Nixon too, had his own blackmail files?

Similar references to Kissinger's sexual infantilism occur in other memoirs of the period. It is impossible to believe that Kissinger's closest associates were not aware of what was common gossip everywhere else, particularly in an environment dominated by blackmail files. Not only were J. Edgar Hoover's blackmail files circulated at the NSC, but in 1969 a group of academics from Duke University operating under the rubric of parapsychology met at the NSC to report upon models which they had developed to exploit the sexual weaknesses of world leaders. Operation upon psychosexual profiles was, of course, also a well-known modus operandi for the Andropov KGB.

The truth about Watergate

Throughout Kissinger's tenure, the Nixon White House was dominated by the problem of unauthorized leaks to the press, which were used to fuel the anti-war movement. Obviously, as Nixon soon suspected, the leaks started at the top, although in the early days a case could be made that dissidents from among the liberals on Kissinger's NSC staff were at fault. It was Kissinger himself who demanded that illegal phone taps be installed on his associates' phones. This was the beginning of the illegal surveillance which featured in

Watergate. J. Edgar Hoover was more than happy to oblige Kissinger in placing these taps; only when Nixon removed direct control of the internal police unit from Kissinger did Hoover balk. Where Hoover really drew the line was in investigating the peace movement.

Then as now, the FBI refused to investigate communist influence in the peace movement despite abundant evidence that its leaders were directly connected to Soviet networks through the Pugwash conferences and related institutions. Since Kissinger had regularly attended the Soviet-dominated Pugwash conferences in the 1960s and held weekly meetings with the Pugwash crowd while he was National Security Adviser, this protection operation for the KGB is horrifying but not too surprising. It was the refusal of Hoover to move against the KGB, coupled with obvious leakiness at every level of government, which no doubt goaded Nixon to turn to the plumbers option. Even in the case of Daniel Ellsberg, Hoover had refused to act.

One of the first actions of the plumbers was to check out Kissinger's protégé Ellsberg. Ellsberg had the highest security clearance because he had not only been involved in strategic planning for the Vietnamese War, but in 1964 had spent six months on a study for the Rand corporation on military command and control of all nuclear targeting. He was given top security clearance even though he was known to be a sexual pervert and a user of LSD.

The point was not to discredit him because he leaked the Pentagon papers to the newspapers; the revelations contained in the Pentagon papers were not particularly threatening to Nixon, since they concerned the Johnson era, but Ellsberg was capable of leaking secrets which would have been (or were) extremely valuable to the KGB. Yet when Nixon demanded that he be surveilled, J. Edgar Hoover balked.

The most amazing security leaks in the Kissinger NSC were never made public. Hersh reports that Adm. Thomas Moorer, presumably on behalf of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, used the services of a fellow Mormon, Yeoman Charles E. Radford, an aide at the NSC, to steal and photocopy over 5,000 memoranda, including eyes-only communications between Kissinger and Nixon, from Kissinger's own files. This operation was only blown when Radford (who resented being passed over for promotion) made the mistake of also supplying columnist Jack Anderson, whom he knew through Mormon networks, with top security material, which Anderson published. Neither the admiral nor his yeoman ever suffered any consequences.

Kissinger watchers have also noted the former National Security Adviser's strange relationship with Air Force Gen. Brent C. Scowcroft, also a Mormon. Scowcroft was nominally Kissinger's deputy, yet Kissinger always seemed to seek approval from him. The connection is even more interesting given Scowcroft's current membership on the board of Soviet liaison Armand Hammer's Charter Oil Company.

To be continued.