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Kissinger's triumph began in trauma

Twenty days in October

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The part called for someone taller, slimmer, more adept at reviewing Arab honor guards, more traditional in his diplomatic style, a connoisseur of couscous and Casbah conventions, a WASP. No producer had ever dreamed of Henry of Arabia!

And yet, eight short months after the Yom Kippur war—a war that left the United States at the wrong end of an Arab oil embargo and in a weakened strategic position throughout the Arab world—Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has become the hero of the Middle East. After six whirlwind trips through the area (the last as tour guide for a wounded President eager to recapture his image as a statesman), Kissinger has been hailed by the Arabs as a "superman" and "mediator of peace." Ironically, at the same time, he was being subjected to renewed criticism at home—over his controversial role in the Nixon Administration's wiretapping of public officials and newsmen—criticism that led him angrily to threaten to resign.

Against stiff odds, Kissinger, in November, 1973, launched an extraordinary diplomatic peace effort: He pushed for Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab territory, but within the context of Israeli security; encouraged the re-emergence of Arab pride, but within the context of realism and responsibility; sought to build up the stature of the moderates within the Arab world, starting with Sadat of Egypt; tried to rebuild America's strategic position in a critical part of the world, gently elbowing Russia out of her prewar pre-eminence; attempted to persuade the oil-producing Arab states to lift their embargo against the United States; and, last but not least, hoped that he would be able to inject a

After the cease-fire: Kissinger with Sadat in Cairo.

By Marvin Kalb and Bernard Kalb

By 9 P.M. on Friday, Oct. 5, 1973, Ray Cline, then head of the U. S. State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, had reviewed his latest information, and he concluded that war would break out in the Middle East the following day, or even sooner. Others at the State Department shared his alarm, but somehow, they couldn't communicate it to Henry Kissinger; no one wanted to take the responsibility for disturbing the Secretary of State at the Waldorf Towers on a Friday evening after hours. He was in New York attending a United Nations meeting.

Marvin Kalb is a diplomatic correspondent and Bernard Kalb a Washington correspondent for CBS. This article is adapted from the Kalb brothers' forthcoming book, "Kissinger."

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Actually, there had been a steady flow of intelligence for several weeks indicating that an Egyptian-Syrian attack on Israel was imminent; and yet Kissinger and most other political leaders in both Israel and the United States misread the evidence. Most of them still believed there would be no war.

The next day, Oct. 6, was a very special day. For Moslems, it was the 1,350th anniversary of the Battle of Badr, which launched Mohammed's entry into Mecca. For Jews, it was Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar. For Kissinger, it was more than simply the end of his second week in office; it was also the beginning of a 20-day baptism of fire—the start of the fourth Arab-Israeli war in one generation.

At 6 A.M., he was awakened in suite 35A at the Waldorf Towers and presented a telegram from the American Ambassador to Israel, Kenneth Keating. Keating had been summoned two hours earlier in Jerusalem to an urgent meeting with then Prime Minister Golda Meir, who told him she had just received word that Egypt and Syria were in the final hours of a countdown for war. She urged the United States to use all its influence to try to head them off, suggesting appeals to Egypt, Syria and the So-

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revolutionary goal in the Middle East—that Arab and Israeli alike could begin to believe in the possibility of a peaceful accommodation.

Within a few months, his "shuttle diplomacy" began to work. He coaxed and charmed Egypt into concluding a historic agreement with Israel, persuaded King Faisal and his friends to lift their oil embargo, and, late last month, capped a photo-finish diplomatic extravaganza—33 days of shuttling between Damascus and Jerusalem—by bringing these two old enemies into an agreement to disengage their military forces along the hot Golan front. The disengagement is scheduled to be completed next week.

The Secretary needs no experts to tell him now that a good part of the new look in Arab policy is based on the premise that he will continue to help the Egyptians and the Syrians obtain a further pull-back of Israeli troops, and that delicate diplomacy will still be needed. Nevertheless, his performance thus far has indeed been a personal tour de force, an achievement that rose from the very ashes of the October war. And those dark days did not look even remotely promising then, as a new Secretary of State moved into Foggy Bottom only to find himself confronted by what he soon perceived as a "murderously dangerous" situation—M.K; B.K.

viet Union, and she assured Keating that Israel would not launch a pre-emptive attack.

Kissinger called President Nixon, who was at Key Biscayne, with the disturbing news, and, after hearing the Secretary's report, the President told him to telephone the Foreign Ministers of Egypt and Israel to urge "restraint." Kissinger called and exhorted them to "avoid undermining . . . the cease-fire." To Israel's Abba Eban he also repeated the warning he had made many times during the previous months: "Don't pre-empt."

The Secretary of State then converted his hotel suite into a command post, and summoned his top aides. In quick order, Kissinger called Soviet Ambassador Anatoly F. Dobrynin in Washington and urged him to do what he could to prevent the outbreak of war. The Russian envoy said he would try to help. Kissinger cabled King Faisal of Saudi Arabia and King Hussein of Jordan, two of the friendlier Arab leaders, and asked them to "use their good offices." And Kissinger called U. N. Secretary General Kurt Waldheim, alerting him to the danger. The Secretary then asked for the latest intelligence. It revealed that the Egyptian and Syrian Armies had in fact swung into offensive forma-

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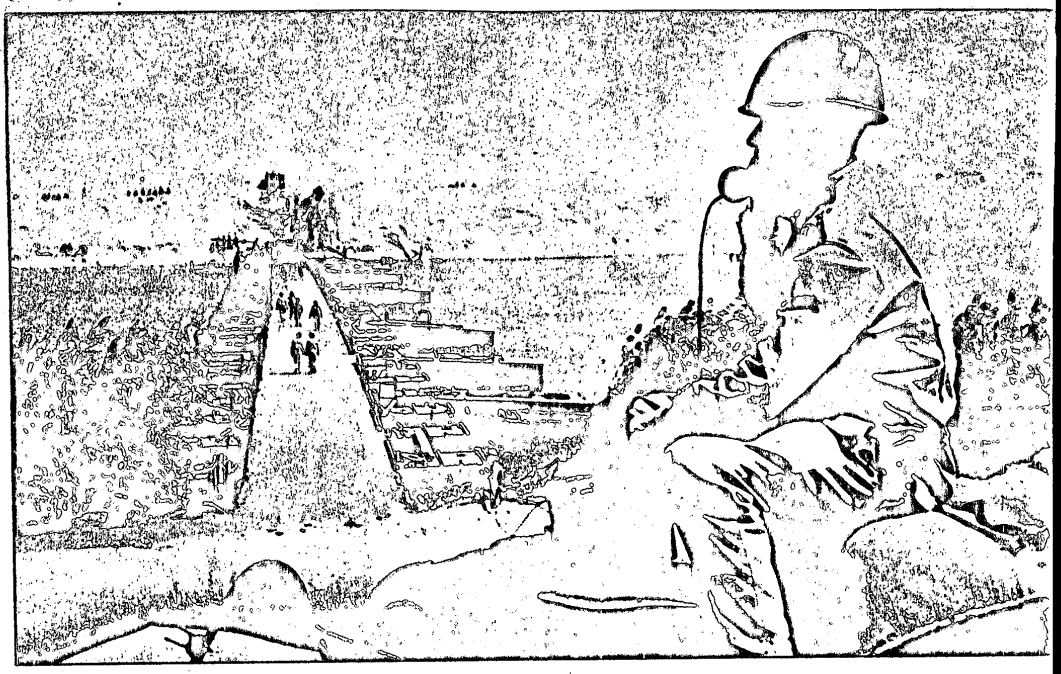

The well-coordinated Arab assault (an Egyptian bridgehead on the Suez Canal) shook Kissinger's assumption that the spirit of détente would encourage the Soviet Union to use its influence to head off the war. Instead, the Russians contributed directly to the initial Arab success by shipping massive quantities of ammunition.

tions, but that Israeli military units of both fronts had reacted to this clear-cut threat in an odd way. For the most part, they remained in static positions. Kissinger assumed, despite Mrs. Meir's messages, that Israel was really seeking to lull her Arab neighbors into a false sense of security and then, at just the right moment, planned to deal them a punishing pre-emptive blow.

At 7 A.M., there was more bad news. The Situation Room at the White House had monitored a garbled report from Israel, which was interpreted as meaning that the Jewish state planned to launch a pre-emptive strike against Egypt and Syria "in six hours." Kissinger, puzzled by the crisscrossing signals, angrily called Mordechai Shalev, Israel's Chargé d'Affaires in Washington, and warned once again against any pre-emptive action. As a double check, he instructed Keating to repeat the warning to Mrs. Meir, saying, in effect that if Israel struck first, then the United States would feel *no* moral obligation to help. Israel would be alone.

As it turned out, Keating's warning was unnecessary. Mrs. Meir at just that moment was convening her "Kitchen Cabinet," which really *met* in her kitchen. She conferred with Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Allon, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, and Minister Without Portfolio Israel Galili. She rejected the urgent pleading of her military Chief of Staff, Gen. David Elazar, who argued for a pre-emptive strike to disrupt what he now regarded as a certainty—an Arab attack. The Prime Minister decided that Israel would accept the first blows.

Her decision proved historic. By reversing 25 years of Israeli strategy—a strategy based on quick, bold surprises that invariably carried the battle to the enemy—she placed Israel on the defensive. She assumed, as did so many others, that Israel, even if attacked first, could rapidly repulse and rout the enemy. Mrs. Meir instructed Elazar to alert some units, but she refused to put the country on full alert. She refused even to call up the reserves. She didn't want to disrupt Yom Kippur; she didn't want to provoke the Arabs; she didn't want to spend $11-million, which a full alert would have cost (there had been two expensive false alarms earlier in the year); but, perhaps most important, she didn't want to go against Kissinger's injunctions.

Keating informed Kissinger about Mrs. Meir's decision. Kissinger informed Egypt's Foreign Minister Mohammed el-Zayyat and Dobrynin. Then he called Shalev one more time, apparently even then harboring some doubts about Mrs. Meir's assurances. "We took the responsibility upon ourselves," he told the Israeli diplomat, *(Continued on Page 42)*

The Soviet airlift and and alert changed Kissinger's attitude about Israel's capacity to win a quick victory. He determined to open a massive airlift of American military supplies to Israel. (Evacuating Israeli wounded in the Sinai.)

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Kissinger

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"that you will really act accordingly." Shalev repeated his earlier assurances.

At 8 A.M., Egypt and Syria attacked. The war began. Within minutes, el-Zayyat was on the phone, accusing Israel of having provoked the Arab military moves by sending her naval force against the Syrian port of Latakia. This struck Kissinger as strange. If Israel were to start a war, he was absolutely sure that it would begin with an air strike, not a naval attack. At 8:25 A.M. Shalev called. "Egyptian and Syrian forces have commenced military action against Israel," he announced solemnly. Kissinger told him about el-Zayyat's accusation. Shalev denied it.

"What are you going to do now?" Kissinger asked.

"We'll take care of ourselves," Shalev replied.

Kissinger returned to Washington by midafternoon, convinced that the Arabs had started the war. El-Zayyat's claim—that Israel had struck first—made a few converts at the Pentagon. But by evening, when W.S.A.G., the Washington Special Actions Group, reconvened in a crisis atmosphere, additional information had convinced the top United States officials that Egypt and Syria had broken the cease-fire and that Israel had merely responded. Joining the Secretary at this meeting were former Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Rush, Under Secretary of State Joseph J. Sisco, Defense Secretary James Schlesinger, C.I.A. Director William Colby and Adm. Thomas Moorer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This was the same group which, with the President, was to make most of the basic decisions throughout the war.

That evening, they ordered the commander of the U. S. Sixth Fleet to move four ships —the attack aircraft carrier Independence and three destroyers — from Athens to Crete, 500 miles from the coast of Israel. They ordered all American embassies in the Middle East area to prepare for an evacuation of dependents. They considered calling for an emergency meeting of the U. N. Security Council, but made no decision then.

On Sunday, Oct. 7, Kissinger got permission from the President to push for a Security Council meeting; but, because of Soviet reservations, the United States did not immediately appeal for a cease-fire. Kissinger, who had never been noted for his enthusiasm about the U. N., concentrated instead on the battlefield situation, which he knew would determine his diplomatic tactics. He checked the latest intelligence. Israeli reservists, he learned, had broken away from Yom Kippur religious services and rushed to assembly points all over the country and then, depending on their units, to the Golan or Suez fronts.

Now the Israelis, once considered militarily invincible, were on the defensive; the Arabs, once ridiculed as militarily incompetent, were on the attack. Syrian tanks were blasting big holes through the undermanned Israeli lines on the Golan Heights. On the southern front, there was even more dramatic news. Thousands of Egyptian troops, supported by hundreds of tanks and armored vehicles, had crossed the Suez Canal in a surprise move that caught the Israelis completely off guard, and established bridgeheads on the eastern bank for the first time since 1967. The famed Bar-Lev Line began to crack.

Overnight, this well-coordinated Arab assault on the Jewish state shook Kissinger's cherished assumption that the spirit of détente would encourage the Soviet Union to use its influence to head off the war. Instead, it turned out that the Russians not only had known about the war in advance and alerted no one to the "threat to the peace," but, in addition, they had contributed directly to the initial Arab successes by shipping massive quantities of ammunition to Cairo and Damascus in the two or three weeks immediately preceding the outbreak of hostilities. Kissinger was angry and disappointed; angry at the Russians, disappointed in himself. Years before, he had written: "The test of statesmanship is the adequacy of its evaluation *before* the event." He took another look at the prewar intelligence and concluded belatedly that the Russians must have calculated that they could have both détente and war. To what degree Watergate influenced their judgment, Kissinger could not be sure.

Although he was angry at the Russians, he realized that he needed their cooperation to contain the fighting and to establish a framework for negotiations. He talked with Dobrynin several times that day. On one occasion, he gave him a personal letter from the President to the Soviet's Leonid Brezhnev, appealing for a cease-fire and a commitment to contain the fighting. Nixon reminded the Soviet leader that they had

Syrian casualty on the road to Damascus. As the Israelis within 20 miles of the Syrian capital, the Russians be

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At 6 P.M., he met with Israeli Ambassador Simcha Dinitz at the State Department. The Israeli envoy had returned to Washington from Jerusalem with a modest arms request from Mrs. Meir—essentially, an update of her plea of the week before to expedite the delivery of the 48 Phantom jet fighters, as well as tanks and electronic equipment.

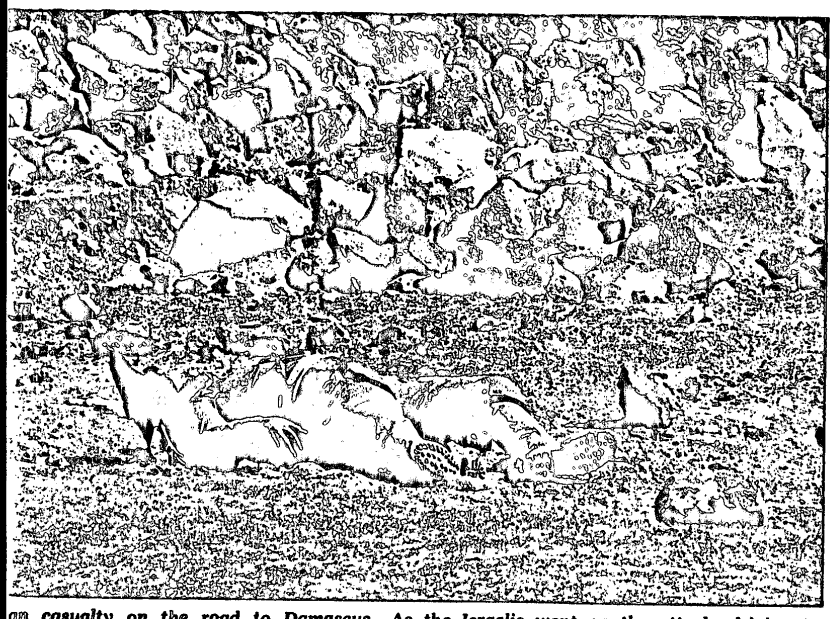
Kissinger responded sympathetically, and promised to help. But despite the initial Arab successes, Kissinger expected a quick Israeli victory —an expectation that was encouraged by Dinitz's upbeat report about the plans for Israeli counterattacks, then in the final stages of preparation—and he did not feel that it would be necessary to open a massive emergency pipeline of supplies to Israel. He did not want to be provocative. He did not want to antagonize the Russians, or the Arabs. The Administration was under heavy pressure from the oil lobby to give the Arabs a chance to recover their occupied territories or, at the very least, to take no pro-Israeli action that could goad the Arabs into imposing an oil embargo on the United States at a time of increasing energy shortages. If the Israelis were successful, as he fully expected, he did not believe that he would have to change his over-all strategy.

Early on the morning of Monday, Oct. 8, as the war picked up momentum on both fronts, Schlesinger met with his top aides and, according to reliable sources, rejected a request that Israeli planes be allowed to land in the United States to pick up ammunition and spare parts. Israel's General Elazar had predicted that morning that his forces would soon go on the offensive, but his prediction was based, in part, on the expectation of increased American supplies. When Dinitz learned about Schlesinger's rejection, he was puzzled. He called Kissinger and pointed out that Russia was not embarrassed about helping her friends; why did the United States appear to be so reluctant about helping Israel? Kissinger said he would check. After an exchange with the Pentagon, he called back and announced that permission had been granted for "a limited number of Israeli planes" to land at United States bases and pick up supplies, "provided they paint their tails," that is, paint over the identifying six-pointed Jewish star. Clearly, the Administration was trying not to offend the Arabs or the oil lobby.

At 1:15 P.M., Kissinger called Dinitz again. He had good news. He said the President had given his "approval in principle" to replace Israeli plane losses, which were running quite high.

At 5 P.M., Dinitz called Kissinger. He had just been on the phone with Mrs. Meir, who pleaded that "top priority" be placed not only on the delivery of planes and tanks already requested but also on a new shopping list, necessitated by the intensified fighting and Israel's heavy losses. Kissinger said he would consider the new list; meanwhile, he disclosed that he had been able to get two planes out of the Pentagon, no more. Tanks, he said, pre-

(Continued on Page 48)



an casualty on the road to Damascus. As the Israelis went on the attack, driving to in 20 miles of the Syrian capital, the Russians began pressing for a cease-fire.

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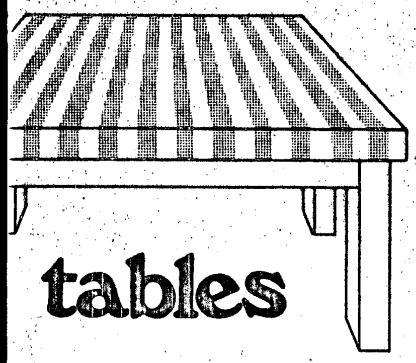

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sented an even more complicated problem. It would take "many weeks" to spring them. What about transferring the tanks from an American base in Western Europe, suggested Dinitz. Kissinger said he would check. Why was it so difficult to get the planes, asked Dinitz, if the President had given his "approval in principle?" Kissinger hinted that he was having "bureaucratic difficulties at the Pentagon." Dinitz requested a meeting with Kissinger.

At 6:40 P.M., he was ushered into Kissinger's White House office. He told the Secretary of State that Senators Henry Jackson, Walter Mondale, Birch Bayh, Charles Percy, and other Presidential aspirants had volunteered to help Israel get weapons. Dinitz, fully aware of the pressure Israel's American supporters could exert, said he didn't know how long he could hold off the public outcry that Kissinger feared could complicate his détente with the Russians. Israel needed planes and tanks, and needed them immediately. Intelligence had poured into Kissinger's office all day indicating that Israel was having a rough time. He revised his estimate that the Israelis would need no more than three days to seize the offensive and defeat the Arabs; now, he thought, they would need five days. The Secretary told Dinitz, at last, that Israel would be getting the two Phantoms within 24 hours. Two! Dinitz exclaimed. Israel needed dozens! Kissinger claimed that if it weren't for his personal intercession, Israel would not even have gotten those. The Pentagon opposed any Phantom deliveries at this stage. Kissinger implied again that he was fighting Dinitz's battles in the American bureaucracy.

In between these calls and meetings with Dinitz, Kissinger was carrying on a similar series of calls and meetings with Dobrynin. That evening, in an address at the Pacem in Terris conference, he issued an indirect warning to the Russians. "We shall resist aggressive foreign policies," he said firmly. "Détente cannot survive irresponsibility in any area, including the Middle East." Kissinger had no doubt that Dobrynin would be filing his carefully worded warning to the Kremlin that night. But the warning had no effect.

On Tuesday, Oct. 9, the Secretary received a series of disturbing reports. One cited an increase in the number of Soviet supply ships steaming toward Syrian and Egyptian ports. Another focused on a big boost in the number of Soviet warships in the Mediterranean. Still another suggested that Brezhnev had changed his mild tone. In a message to President Houari Boumediene, the militant leader of Algeria, the Soviet party chief urged the Algerian people to "use all means at their disposal and take all the required steps with a view to supporting Syria and Egypt in the difficult struggle imposed by the Israeli aggressors." Brezhnev seemed to be encouraging Algeria to join the Arab war against Israel. In Kissinger's mind, that was a far cry from urging restraint.

Kissinger and Dinitz met for the first time that day at 8:15 A.M. The Israeli diplomat was back in the Secretary's White House office, repeating his urgent demand for planes and tanks. Israel, he pleaded, had already lost at least 15 Phantoms and 45 A-4 Skyhawks, light attack bombers. That amounted to a loss of 20 per cent of all the planes Israel had ever received from the United States. The new mobile SAM-6 missile, supplied by the Russians to Egypt and Syria, had been deadly accurate. Electronic jamming equipment, similar to that used by United States fighters against other SAM missiles over North Vietnam, was desperately needed. What was holding up deliveries? Kissinger cut short the meeting, explaining that he would deal with the entire problem on an urgent basis.

At 11:45 A.M., Kissinger called Dinitz, complaining again about difficulties with the bureaucracy, implying that he was engaged in a one-man fight with the Pentagon. By this time, Kissinger had a private, secure line put into Dinitz's office at the Israeli Embassy. The Secretary asked the Ambassador to return to the White House at 6:15 that evening. In the meantime, Kissinger conferred with Nixon and that night was able to tell Dinitz that the President had approved "all" the Israeli requests. All plane and tank losses would be replaced. All electronic equipment, including jamming devices, would be furnished, and Israeli transport planes would be permitted to land at the Oceana Naval Air Station at Virginia Beach, Va., to pick up Sparrow and Sidewinder air-to-air missiles and other sophisticated hardware.

There had been increasing Congressional pressure on the Administration all day to send

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more military supplies to Israel—Jackson taking the lead—and Dinitz wondered if it was this pressure that had produced the Presidential decision.

At 8:45 P.M., Kissinger called Dinitz to say that Schlesinger would be available on Wednesday to discuss logistical details. Apparently there had been some Presidential arm-twisting.

By dawn, Wednesday, Oct. 10, American and Israeli intelligence picked up the first clear signals of a Soviet airlift into Damascus and Cairo. Its full dimensions were not yet known.

At 10:45 A.M., Kissinger called Dinitz to discuss it. Both diplomats were obviously concerned: Kissinger, because the airlift was hardly an example of Soviet "restraint"; Dinitz, because his enemies had no trouble getting help, while he, as he put it, had to spend his time

Nixon exploded at Schlesinger: 'To hell with the charters! Get the supplies there! Get moving!'

"painting Jewish stars off Israeli planes." The Secretary switched subjects. How was the war going? He was beginning to question his own rosy assumptions. On the Golan front, the Syrians had been stopped, but there was still heavy fighting. Israel was sustaining heavy tank losses, largely because Syria had been equipped with an unusually effective antitank missile, the latest in the Soviet arsenal. On the Sinai front, Dinitz said, the Egyptians had smashed or encircled the Bar-Lev Line of Israeli defense on the east bank of the canal. More than 20,000 Egyptian troops, 400 tanks and other armored vehicles had crossed the canal, and they were digging in. Again, Israeli losses were heavy, in men and matériel. Elazar's promised counteroffensive could not get rolling, and one major reason was the dwindling ordnance. What about supplies?

Kissinger called Schlesinger and asked him to organize civilian charters to carry American military aid to Israel as quickly as possible. The Defense Secretary showed little enthusiasm, but he offered no opposition. Kissinger wasn't sure, at that point, if Schlesinger intended to help.

At the Pentagon, Schlesinger was well aware that Dinitz wanted to see him to discuss military supplies for Israel. A tentative noontime date had been set. At the last minute, the Defense chief canceled the meeting. His deputy, William P. Clements Jr., a wealthy Texas drilling contractor with close ties to the oil industry, had apparently persuaded him that he needed more information about American inventories before he could provide the Israelis with an exact timetable for deliveries. No new appointment with Dinitz was set.

At the White House, Nixon and Kissinger briefed 10 Senators and 9 Congressmen. Senator Mike Mansfield, before the hour-and-a-half meeting, told reporters that the United States must not get involved in the war. "I want no more Vietnams," he said.

From Beirut, there were reports that Brezhnev was exhorting all Arab leaders to join the fight against Israel. Jordan decided to send a limited force.

That afternoon, the Administration's attention was suddenly absorbed by still another major political crisis. Spiro Agnew resigned as Vice President, pleading no contest to a charge of tax evasion in Maryland, his home state. His resignation, on top of the growing Watergate scandal, weakened the Administration even more. Its effect was to increase the pressure on Kissinger to avoid a foreign-policy disaster that could end up toppling the President.

Dinitz returned to the White House at 3:30, and it was a scene of frantic activity. Kissinger was in the Oval Office. Maj. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, Kissinger's deputy

Catherine The Great

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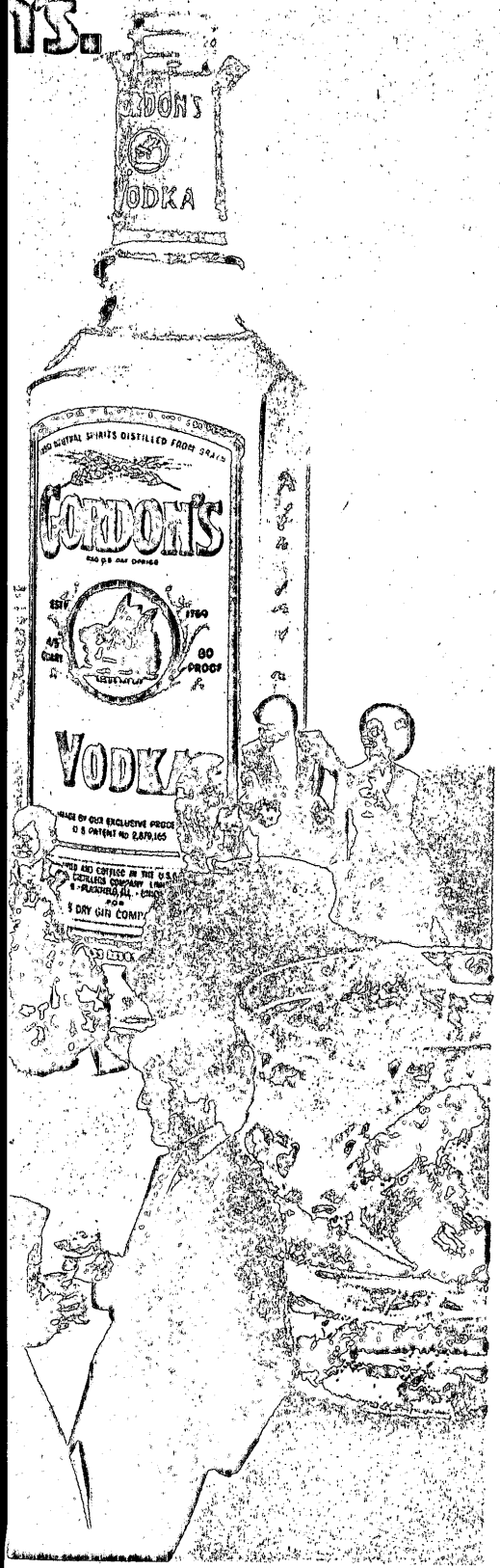

on the National Security Council, told Dinitz that the Russians had just switched tactics on a U. N. cease-fire. U. N. Ambassador John Scali reported that Moscow was now proposing an immediate end to the fighting. The Russian move was clearly an attempt to freeze the battlefield situation at a point at which the Arabs had the initiative and the Israelis had not yet been able to mount a counter-offensive. Dinitz angrily rejected the proposal. Israel, he said, would never accept a cease-fire until Syrian and Egyptian forces had been driven back to the prewar lines. He urged the United States to open an immediate airlift of supplies to Israel to match the Soviet airlift. Scowcroft promised to convey his appeal to Kissinger.

Late that afternoon, the National Security Agency, which specializes in electronic intelligence, and the C.I.A. received urgent reports from the Middle East that Russia's largest transport plane—the Antonov-22—was spearheading the Soviet airlift and that these lumbering giants were coming into Damascus and Cairo at fairly regular intervals, suggesting the airlift was becoming "massive." When these reports reached Kissinger's attention, he quickly called Dinitz. Could the Israeli Ambassador come to the White House at 8 P.M.?

The meeting that evening lasted for an hour and 15 minutes. It focused on Russia's call for a cease-fire. Dinitz repeated his opposition. "The Russians are hardly in a position to appear as the pacifists," the Israeli Ambassador stated, with some annoyance. "They are the ones who caused the war. They knew of the impending attack and didn't warn you and didn't prevent it. Now they are coaxing other Arab Governments to join the fight against Israel, and they are sending a big airlift. And, after all this, they dare to ask to freeze the situation!" Kissinger did not argue. He had been making the same points to himself. After Dinitz left, Kissinger called Dobrynin and persuaded him to delay his cease-fire call.

Late that night, Kissinger received more disturbing intelligence. The C.I.A. had learned that three Soviet airborne divisions in Eastern Europe had been put on alert. Why? Russia's clients were fighting well; better than anyone had anticipated, in fact. And direct Soviet intervention could only trigger American counteraction, which could spiral into a nuclear war. It was, as Kissinger would later put it, "a murderously dangerous situation, much worse, much more dangerous than the 1970 Jordan crisis." He called Dinitz and recommended a 7:45 meeting on Thursday morning. He did not tell him about the Soviet alert.

Dinitz's car pulled into the circular drive at the diplomatic entrance of the State Department at 7:40 A.M. The Ambassador and Chargé d'Affaires Shalev, both bleary-eyed from fatigue, hurried through the quiet lobby, past the giant, rotating globe and a few reporters too surprised to get in a question. Then, for over an hour, Dinitz and Kissinger focused on one problem—getting the Pentagon to supply Israel with planes, tanks and electronic equipment on an emergency basis.

During the night, Kissinger had reached a major decision: Russia had to be stopped—not only to save Israel, but also, in his mind, to spare the world the possibility of a big-power confrontation. The Soviet airlift and alert had changed his attitude about Israel's capacity to win a quick victory. Just as he had misjudged prewar intelligence, so too had he misjudged the will and capability of the Arabs and the duplicity of the Russians. He was now determined to open a massive airlift of American military supplies to Israel.

"We tried to talk in the first week," Kissinger later explained. "When that didn't work, we said, fine, we'll start pouring in equipment until we create a new reality."

Kissinger told Dinitz to see Schlesinger. In the afternoon, Kissinger himself again urged Schlesinger to charter 20 American transport planes to fly supplies and again Schlesinger resisted, warning of a possible oil embargo. Their argument was resolved only after Kissinger had won the President to his point of view. Nixon ordered Schlesinger to charter the 20 planes; but by the end of the day Dinitz still had heard nothing of the airlift, and Israel, meanwhile, was still suffering heavy losses.

At 6 P.M., Friday, Dinitz, accompanied by Gen. Mordechai Gur, then Israeli Defense Attaché, finally got his meeting with Pentagon leaders. Dinitz reviewed the massive Soviet contribution to the Arab cause and then lamented the "unbelievably slow response of the Americans." Schlesinger did not dispute the Ambassador's rundown,

(Continued on Page 52)

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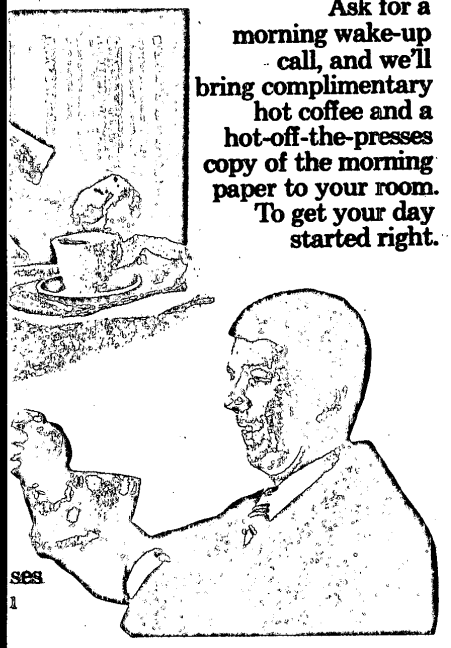

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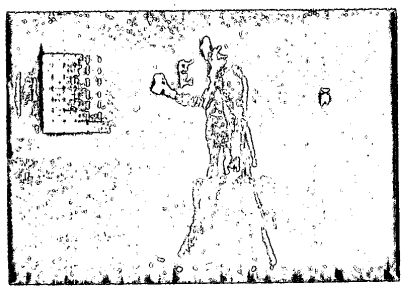

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Continued from Page 50

but he explained that "political considerations" had caused the United States to "slow down." The U. S. did not want to destroy its "position and image in the Arab world." Private airline charter companies feared Arab terrorism or reprisals and therefore refused to help Israel. Insofar as United States military transports were concerned, Schlesinger carefully emphasized that they would be permitted to carry military supplies to the Azores islands, but no further. Israel would have to make other arrangements to get the supplies from the Azores to Tel Aviv. Dinitz was flabbergasted. He said, in that case, the supplies wouldn't get to Israel "in time for this war."

Schlesinger moved on to other subjects, none more critical to Israel than the delivery of planes and tanks. Here he paused for a moment and then disclosed that the rate of delivery for Phantoms would be "one and a half per day"; but, after "a couple of days," the deliveries would be stopped so that, as Schlesinger explained, the United States could "read Arab reaction before we decide on further shipments." In any case, there would be no more than 16 Phantoms earmarked for Israel. The United States, he continued, intended to do no more than replace Israeli losses. Dinitz pointed out that Israel had already lost more than 16 Phantoms. Schlesinger did not dispute his statistics, but he explained that the United States had to "operate in low profile in order not to create an Arab reaction." Schlesinger was alluding to a possible cutoff of Arab oil, but in his comments he made no specific mention of it. "Mr. Secretary, with all due respect," Dinitz said, "you are not giving us an answer." Schlesinger stuck to his guns. The meeting with the Israeli Ambassador had turned into a confrontation. "Mr. Secretary," concluded Dinitz, "in the recent period, we have undergone two crises in the Middle East. One, the Syrian and Jordanian crisis of 1970, and the other one we are going through now. In 1970, your country needed something from us. Now we need something from you. I must humbly say that we acted differently at the time of that crisis than you do now." The meeting ended with a cold handshake.

Shortly after 11 o'clock that same night, Dinitz was ushered into Kissinger's White House office for a brief but dramatic meeting. Dinitz began by filling in the Secretary on his talk with the Pentagon chief. He placed special emphasis upon Schlesinger's insistence on shipping what would amount to one and a half planes a day for only a couple of days and then pausing to gauge Arab reaction. One and a half Phantoms a day, for a couple of days, he told Kissinger, was "a mockery to the poor." He repeated Schlesinger's statement that, in any case, no more than 16 Phantoms would be sent to Israel—even though Israeli losses in that one category alone had more than doubled the Pentagon ceiling, and Nixon had issued a specific order to replace "all" Israeli losses. Israel, he stated, needed a minimum of 32 Phantoms. "If a massive American airlift to Israel does not start immediately," Dinitz emphasized, "then I'll know that the United States is reneging . . . and we will have to draw very serious conclusions from all this."

Dinitz did not have to translate his message. Kissinger quickly understood that the Israelis would soon "go public" and that an upsurge of pro-Israeli sentiment in the United States could have a disastrous impact upon an already weakened Administration. A high State Department source later expanded on that theme: "There were enough people in the country just looking for a breach of confidence in *foreign* affairs, above and beyond Watergate. We had always told the Israelis, 'When the chips are down, we're with you.' Well, the chips were down, and it looked as though we were not with them. At least, that's what they thought. They had taken a terrible beating from the Arabs. They were the victims of aggression. No doubt about that. They held their hand, because Kissinger told them not to strike first. And after all that, we reneged. We didn't come through. That's all Jackson needed. If Dinitz had gone public with everything he knew, it could have toppled the Administration."

Kissinger promised Dinitz that he would do "everything in my power" to overcome "bureaucratic difficulties" and launch a massive American airlift. He then summoned Scowcroft into his office and, according to one knowledgeable source, asked if the Pentagon had been dragging

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its feet. Yes, Scowcroft nodded, but added that the charter problem had been and remained "real enough." Kissinger became very angry. He quickly got Schlesinger on the phone and warned that the President would "blow his top" when he learned about the delays. Kissinger described the charters as a "matter of urgent national security." "Every morning I come in and ask, 'What about the charters?' and I'm told everything is all right," Kissinger said. "But in the evening, I'm told nothing has moved. Now what

Kissinger called Alexander Haig. 'We must put the fear of God in Schlesinger and Clements,' he was quoted as saying. 'They are working against Presidential orders.'

is going on?" Schlesinger tried to refute the Secretary's charges, but Kissinger interrupted him with an order to get busy implementing the President's policy.

When Kissinger finished talking, he immediately called White House aide Alexander Haig. "We must put the fear of God in Schlesinger and Clements," he was quoted as saying. "They are working against Presidential orders." Kissinger demanded that the problem of Israeli "resupply" be solved "urgently." Haig was surprised to learn that the charter problem still had not been solved. He suggested that Scowcroft be put in personal charge of it.

Deputy Defense Secretary Clements, for his part, has denied that he was even aware of a problem with charters or that he was in any way sabotaging U. S. policy. On the contrary, he has maintained that he followed White House orders during the crisis. But a high Defense official said that because of "poor communications" between Kissinger and the Pentagon—"he was five miles away, across the river, and we couldn't read his mind"—he often did not know exactly what Kissinger was going to do next. Another Pentagon official was less charitable. "Henry tried running the Government by telephone that week," he said, "and it can't be done that way." The Pentagon defense, in short, was that Kissinger was attempting to run the war out of his vest pocket, controlling the flow of information even to the top civilian managers of the Pentagon, and that he never fully explained his tactics or strategy. The Pentagon maintained that the strain across the Potomac existed only during the first week of the war and then cooperation between the State and Defense Departments improved considerably.

Later Friday night, Kissinger asked Haig to arrange a meeting with Nixon. Kissinger reviewed the day's developments with the President, and it would have been extraordinary if he did not lay particular stress on the Pentagon's obstructionist tactics. Nixon took immediate action. He instructed Haig to order Schlesinger to send 10 C-130 transport planes, loaded with military supplies, to the Azores at once; then to fly 20 C-130's directly to Israel; and finally to facilitate a quick Israeli pickup of the cargo left in the Azores. When Kissinger informed Dinitz about the President's latest order, aimed at breaking through all bureaucratic roadblocks, the Israel envoy expressed his gratitude but asked if it was possible for all of the American planes to fly directly to Israel. He explained that Israeli pilots were needed for combat duty.

At 1:45 A.M. Saturday morning, Kissinger called again. The President, he said, had issued still another order to Schlesinger: to make absolutely certain that 10 Phantoms reached Israel by midnight Sunday. Nixon was aware of the danger of a strong Arab reaction, but he was equally aware of the danger of a Soviet miscalculation of American intentions. He felt he had to make a strong, visible show of support for Israel. Dinitz thanked Kissinger but warned that Israel needed more than 10 Phantoms. The war had cut deeply into Israel's air force.

At 10:30, the President summoned all his top advisers to an emergency meeting at the White House. Kissinger had alerted Nixon to the need for an unambiguous Presidential order launching an American airlift of supplies for Israel. Kissinger, in his dual capacity as national security adviser and Secretary of State, joined Schlesinger, Moorer, Haig, Colby and other officials. They heard the President ask one key question: Why had there been a delay

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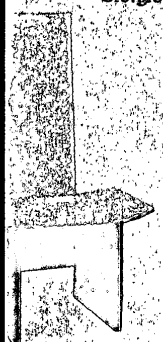

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in implementing his previous orders about supplies for Israel? Schlesinger tried to explain his difficulty in chartering civilian transport planes. "To hell with the charters," Nixon exploded, according to one eyewitness. "Get the supplies there with American military planes! Forget the Azores! Get moving! I want no further delays."

By 3:30 P.M. Dinitz was informed that a fleet of larger C-5's had just left the United States for Israel. The Ambassador cabled Mrs. Meir that "a massive American airlift" had begun. Kissinger had won what one of his aides later called the "Battle of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue."

Within a few days, as one C-5 after another rumbled into Tel Aviv, each one a signal of U. S. determination, the Kissinger strategy began to affect both the military and diplomatic sides of the war. In the dead of night on Oct. 15, Israeli commandos, their faces darkened to avoid detection, crossed over on rafts to the western bank of the Suez Canal just north of Great Bitter Lake. On Oct. 16, Israeli armored units drove an iron wedge through Egyptian lines on the east bank and then built a pontoon bridge across the canal to the west bank—to "Africa," as the Israelis called it. Hundreds of Israeli troops and dozens of tanks and other armored vehicles crossed into "Africa" in a dramatic move that turned the tide of battle on the Suez front.

This cross-canal operation had been under intensive study since the fourth day of the war, but it had been put temporarily on a back burner. Defense Minister Moshe Dayan and General Elazar, worried about a growing shortage of ammunition and equipment, had restrained General Ariel Sharon, commander of Israeli forces in the Sinai, from launching this daring mission. Only when Dinitz's cable announcing the airlift reached Mrs. Meir's desk on Saturday night did final preparations begin.

At first, the Egyptians tried to destroy the Israeli bridgehead; instead, it was widened and deepened, and Sadat began to realize that his armies on the east bank could be cut off from supplies and devastated. The Israelis, after 72 hours in "Africa," were already 40 miles west of the canal and but 50 miles east of Cairo.

The airlift, as Kissinger had expected, stimulated activity on the diplomatic front, too. On Oct. 16, Soviet Premier Aleksei N. Kosygin flew secretly into Cairo for three days of urgent consultations with Egyptian President Anwar el-Sadat. He carried a four-point "peace" proposal, obviously conceived before the Israelis crossed the canal: (1) a cease-fire in place; (2) Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 boundaries, after some minor changes; (3) an international peace conference, at which the final agreement would be negotiated and ratified; and (4) most important, a "guarantee" by the Soviet Union and the United States of the entire agreement, including the cease-fire.

From the moment Kosygin arrived in the Egyptian capital, it was clear that the Russians wanted the conflict to come to an end. Kissinger would later note that they did not press their call for a cease-fire when their allies were on the offensive and they were the only ones running an air and sea lift of supplies into the war zone; but once the United States opened its own airlift and the Israelis suddenly went on the attack, they began energetically to press for a cease-fire. During the last of Kosygin's long and occasionally bitter talks with Sadat, the reluctant Egyptian leader raised a crucially important question: What would happen if Cairo agreed to a cease-fire in place and Israel didn't, or, even worse, if Israel agreed to a cease-fire, and then massively violated it? Kosygin, according to Egyptian sources, told Sadat that the Soviet Union stood ready to help enforce the cease-fire—alone, if necessary.

In Washington, on the night of Oct. 18, Dobrynin gave Kissinger the draft of a Soviet proposal for a U.N.-sponsored cease-fire. The Secretary was puzzled by its extreme demands, including a call for a total Israeli withdrawal from "all" occupied Arab lands, including the Old City of Jerusalem. It was such an obvious "nonstarter" that Kissinger quickly rejected it.

The following morning, at 10 A.M., Dobrynin presented an invitation to the Secretary from Brezhnev asking him to fly to Moscow for "urgent consultations on the Middle East." The Soviet party chief, after considering Kosygin's report, had con-

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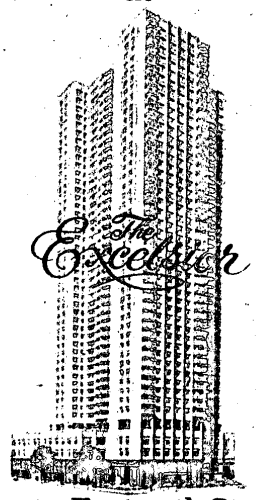

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cluded that Sadat's forces were in bad trouble, and Syrian President Hafez al-Assad's were in worse shape. In his judgment they needed an immediate cease-fire. If Kissinger had refused to accept his invitation, he would have been prepared to dispatch Gromyko to Washington. Time was critical. The Israelis were advancing on Damascus. Their big guns were little more than 20 miles away, within firing range of the outskirts of the city. In the south, the Israelis were continuing to expand their bridgehead in the very heartland of Egypt, building up their fighting force there to more than 300 tanks and 13,000 troops.

Kissinger spent very little time debating whether to snap up Brezhnev's invitation—for a number of reasons. First, he thought a rejection would probably force the Russians to go directly to the U.N. Security Council and propose a cease-fire. He believed that such a proposal would have been adopted unanimously. Next, by going to Moscow, Kissinger purchased an additional 72 hours for Israel to improve her military position; Kissinger also

The Israeli Ambassador cabled home that 'a massive American airlift' had begun. Kissinger had won the 'Battle of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.'

wanted to be in personal charge of the negotiations. Despite his assurances, less than a month old, that as Secretary of State he was going to "institutionalize policy," he could not shake his style of playing a commanding role in every negotiation, particularly in a crisis. And finally, perhaps most important, Kissinger believed, according to one close aide, "that the Russians were getting very anxious and very upset" and might even be considering "unilateral military action to stop the fighting." The Secretary considered the over-all situation "murderously dangerous," an assessment he was to repeat time and again. After checking with Nixon, he told Dobrynin that he would leave for Moscow that night.

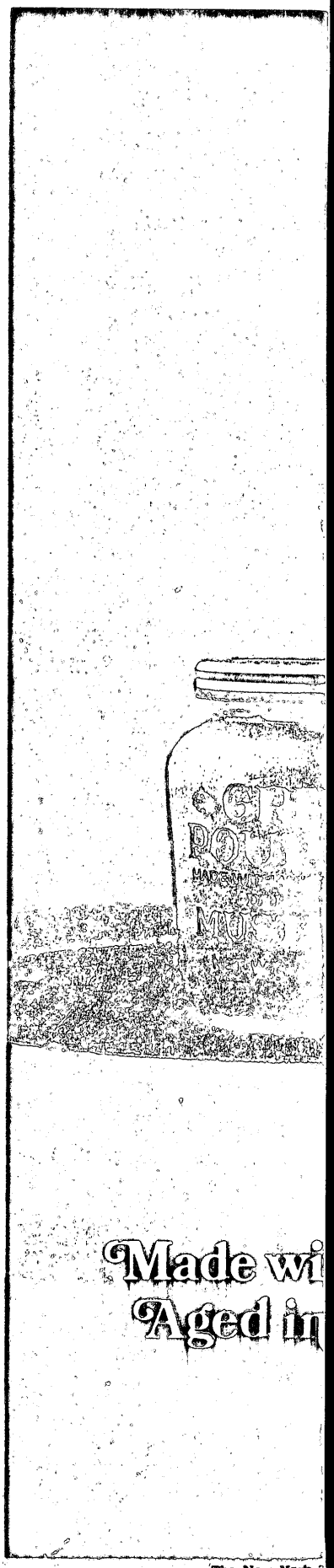
While he prepared for his journey, the President was sending a signal to Moscow—and to the Arab states, too. In a special message to Capitol Hill, Nixon asked Congress for $2.2-billion in emergency military aid for Israel. For the first time in many years, the United States proposed giving, rather than selling, this military equipment to the Jewish state. "The magnitude of the current conflict, coupled with the scale of Soviet supply activities," Nixon said, "has created needs which exceed Israel's capacity." Noting that the Middle East had become "a flash point for potential world conflict," the President added: "The United States is making every effort to bring this conflict to a very swift and honorable conclusion, measured in days, not weeks. But prudent planning also requires us to prepare for a longer struggle." The President's message seemed packaged to enhance Kissinger's bargaining position in Moscow.

Kissinger's plane landed at Vnukovo Airport, Moscow, at 7:30 P.M., Saturday, Oct. 20. While he was airborne, the Secretary received two signals. One came from the White House; the other from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The signal from the White House was highly unusual. The President flashed Kissinger what amounted to a "power of attorney" to sign any agreement in Moscow in his name. Nixon knew that Kissinger was planning to bring any agreement reached in Moscow back to Washington for Presidential perusal and approval: that was the standard operating procedure. The President, who was about to fire Archibald Cox, the first Watergate Special Prosecutor —an action that would also force the resignation of Elliot Richardson and William Ruckelshaus from the two top jobs at the Justice Department, in what became known as the Saturday Night Massacre—was either too preoccupied with his political problems to think about urgent diplomatic matters or so worried about the possibility of a world conflagration that he decided to dispense with normal diplomatic procedure and give Kissinger the power to take immediate, binding action in his name. The Secretary was surprised by the White House signal but didn't question it.

The second signal, from Riyadh, had the impact of an economic H-bomb, but Kissinger was too absorbed with the problems of war and cease-fire in the Middle-East to give it more than a passing thought. The supposedly pro-American Government of Saudi Arabia, denouncing the United States airlift of arms to Israel and the President's special aid message to Congress, slapped a punishing oil embargo on the United States. For months Faisal had warned that he would use his oil weapon in the Arab struggle against Israel; besides, he had committed himself to use this weapon in secret pre-war negotiations with Sadat. On Oct. 17, the oil-producing states had voted to reduce their production by 10 per cent. On Oct. 18, Abu Dhabi had imposed an oil embargo on the United States. On Oct. 19, Libya had acted.

On Oct. 20, it was Saudi Arabia's turn, and the following day Algeria and Kuwait followed suit. In the months ahead, the oil embargo was to have damaging impact on the American economy and way of life. It would eventually force Kissinger to accelerate his diplomatic peacemaking efforts but that weekend in Moscow, Kissinger had a more immediate aim: to exploit Russia's nervousness about the Israeli offensive.

Less than two hours after his arrival in the Soviet capital, Kissinger was escorted into Brezhnev's Kremlin office,



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and the two men began to explore ways of ending the war and salvaging the policy of détente. At the same time they kept a close check on the battlefield. Brezhnev reviewed the results of Kosygin's visit to Cairo and emphasized the need for an immediate cease-fire. He warned that the situation was extremely grave. Kissinger agreed with his grim assessment and with the need for a cease-fire; but he insisted that a cease-fire had to be linked to peace talks, or else it was sure to break down all over again. Their meeting ended well past midnight. There was no deal, but Kissinger had the impression that Brezhnev was so eager to preserve at least the spirit of détente, which in Russia had come to be identified with his rule, that he would make a major concession at their next meeting, scheduled for Sunday afternoon. It was almost 2 A.M. Sunday when Kissinger finally got a chance to call Haig at the White House to check on a couple of annoying problems. He found Haig totally preoccupied and it was only then that Kissinger learned about the Saturday Night Massacre.

On Sunday afternoon, Brezhnev and Kissinger met for four hours. In the intervening time, Israeli troops continued their advance on Damascus and their flanking operations west of the Suez Canal. The two negotiators hammered out the details of a cease-fire arrangement that would lead to direct talks between Egypt and Israel. It was, for the Secretary, an immensely satisfying result. He knew that the Israelis would not be happy about the cease-fire coming at a time when they needed only a few more days to defeat the Egyptian and Syrian Armies, but he also knew that they would appreciate the opportunity, at long last, for direct talks with Egypt. In the President's name, he sent an urgent appeal to Mrs. Meir to accept the cease-fire.

"We were hardly in a position to say no," one high Israeli official said. "We had no real choice. Here was a personal appeal from the President of the United States at a time when Israel was more dependent than ever on the United States."

Brezhnev won Sadat's agreement to direct talks with Israel—an approach Egypt had never accepted before—only after sending his additional assurance that Russia would—if necessary, alone—guarantee the observance of the cease-fire.

After reaching agreement with Brezhnev on the exact wording of the joint Soviet-American call for a cease-fire, Kissinger conferred with Gromyko and then the Ambassadors of Great Britain, France and Australia, all members of the U.N. Security Council and then sent special instructions to Ambassador Scali in New York to call for an emergency meeting of the Security Council. The council convened early Monday morning, Oct. 22, and unanimously adopted the superpower call for a cease-fire in place. Resolution 338 was to go into effect within 12 hours or, at the latest, by 6:52 P.M., Middle East time.

Kissinger left Moscow at 10 A.M. On his way back to Washington, he stopped for five hours in Jerusalem and two hours in London. His stop in Jerusalem—designed to explain the terms of the cease-fire—proved to be an emotional experience for him. The crowds at the airport cheered his arrival. Kissinger had the feeling, after talking with Israel's political and military leaders, that they were really very anxious to end the war, but they needed someone — a stranger they could trust — to end it for them. Kissinger was fulfilling the role.

His stopover in London—to brief Sir Alec Douglas-Home, then British Foreign Secretary, about the Moscow negotiations — gave Kissinger his first insight into the political significance of the Saturday Night Massacre. He picked up a couple of British newspapers, and the headlines stunned him. He had no idea, up to that moment, that Nixon was in such deep, deep trouble. The newspapers also ran headlines about the Middle East cease-fire, and he was gratified that, at a minimum, he was still able to come up with achievements in foreign policy that Americans could support—achievements that reminded the world that the United States, despite Nixon's Watergate difficulties, was still a major, influential power.

On his return flight Kissinger kept track of the cease-fire. There were violations. He had expected them. But he believed that they were manageable.

He arrived in Washington at 3 A.M. Tuesday and had hardly finished his breakfast in his White House office later that morning when there was a frantic call from the Soviet Embassy complaining that the Israelis had massively violated the cease-fire. Kissinger called Dinitz. "What the hell is going on here?" he wanted to know. Kissinger had been given the Prime Minister's word that Israel would respect the cease-fire; he had communicated that

(Continued on Page 60)

Solutions to Last Week's Puzzles

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word to the Russians. Now the Russians could suspect Kissinger of duplicity, which could have a detrimental effect on his role as a middleman. Dinitz argued that it was not Israel, but Egypt, that had broken the cease-fire. Kissinger urged Dinitz in the strongest terms to tell Mrs. Meir that the United States expected Israel to live up to the terms of the cease-fire—"scrupulously," he added.

The Secretary then checked with his own intelligence experts. They confirmed the essence of Dinitz's account but added one important fact—that the Israelis had taken full advantage of the initial Egyptian violation to extend their lines on the west bank of the canal. Apparently what happened was that the commander of the Egyptian Third Corps, trapped on the east bank of the canal opposite the Egyptian city of Suez, ignored specific cease-fire orders from Cairo and attempted to break out of Israeli encirclement. The Israelis, still smarting over Egypt's original aggression, beat back that attempt and then intensified their military pressure on both sides of the canal. On the west bank, in particular, the Israelis kept edging toward the strategic prize of Suez itself. If the city fell under Israeli control, then there would be no way for the Egyptians to resupply the Third Corps. After only a short while, the Israelis would be in a position to destroy the best fighting force in the Egyptian Army.

Kissinger resolved that he would stop the Israelis and save the Third Corps and thus guarantee a military stalemate. The Israelis would be on the west bank, the Egyptians on the east bank, and each side would have leverage over the other. From the earliest days of the war, it had never been Kissinger's policy to encourage the Israelis to win another decisive victory, such as they had won in 1967. Such a victory would not buy peace, but rather create tensions that would trigger still another war. Besides, Kissinger believed that in the current diplomatic climate, a clear-cut Israeli victory would contribute to a further isolation of Israel, and, given America's close ties to the Jewish state, encourage a new wave of anti-Americanism in the Middle East. The oil embargo might then become a permanent feature of Arab policy, rather than a tactical weapon. Finally, if Kissinger was able to gain acceptance as a go-between in the Middle East, as was his aim, he would have to demonstrate his impartiality. Saving the Third Corps would be such a test—for him and his policy.

In a series of talks with Dinitz, Kissinger cajoled, pressured, urged, implored, warned, threatened and pleaded with the Israeli envoy to understand his logic and accept his policy. At the same time, he told Dobrynin that he expected the Soviet Union to restrain the Egyptians. Stating the obvious, the Secretary said that continued violations on either side could only end up hurting both sides—and the cause of détente.

By dusk, the number of violations had gone down, but Kissinger's anxieties had gone up. He postponed a visit to China after his intelligence experts alerted him to two sudden developments. They had detected a sharp and sudden drop-off in the number of Soviet planes carrying military supplies to Egypt and Syria—from about 70 flights a day down to half a dozen. In addition, they had picked up signals from the Ukraine indicating that a number of Soviet Army and logistical units had been put on alert.

That night, Kissinger and Dobrynin worked behind the scenes to arrange a second U.N. call for a cease-fire. The Security Council met in almost continuous session.

By 1 A.M., Washington time, Wednesday, Oct. 24, the second cease-fire went into effect; but, moments before the guns were ordered silenced for the second time in 48 hours, the Israelis announced that their forces had reached the outskirts of Suez and the Third Corps was effectively surrounded. When Kissinger got the news, he was furious. This time, when he called Dinitz, his voice did not boom, as it often did; he spoke softly, very softly, and Dinitz knew he was seriously worried. He warned the Israeli diplomat that the cease-fire would have to be respected, and he urged Dinitz to allow humanitarian convoys—food, water, medical supplies—to reach the Third Corps.

Kissinger's press conference on the morning of the U.S. alert. When Marvin Kalb (front, fifth from right) asked . . .

Later Wednesday morning, after further talks with Dinitz and Dobrynin, Kissinger attended a high-level meeting at the White House, where he learned about a series of Soviet military moves. Four more divisions of Soviet airborne troops had been put on alert, bringing the total to seven divisions, or roughly 50,000 troops. Five or six Soviet transport ships had crossed into the Mediterranean, raising the Russian naval presence in that area to an unprecedented 85 ships. About a dozen Antonov-22 planes had been spotted flying toward Cairo. The analysts wondered if they might be carrying some of those airborne troops. An airborne command post had been established in southern Russia. And, finally, special military orders had been intercepted, suggesting the Russians might be preparing to intervene in the Middle East.

Kissinger and Dobrynin exchanged urgent calls. The Secretary wanted to see if Dobrynin had hardened his bargaining position. He detected no such sign.

At 3 P.M., Sadat radioed an urgent appeal to Brezhnev and Nixon to send a joint Soviet-American peace-keeping force to the Middle East, basically to police the Suez cease-fire. He accused Israel of continuing violations. Kissinger rejected his appeal. He opposed the idea of sending big-power troops to a volatile area, believing that their presence would only exacerbate existing tensions.

At 4:15 P.M., Dobrynin arrived at Kissinger's State Department office to discuss the organization of a Geneva peace conference following a cease-fire. In the course of their talk, Scali called twice from the U.N.: first, to inform the Secretary that the Security Council would be called into session that evening; and second, to say that the "nonaligned nations" had begun to echo Sadat's appeal. Kissinger immediately warned Dobrynin that the United States opposed a joint Soviet-American peace-keeping force. The Russian diplomat said that, so far as he knew, his colleague, U.N. Ambassador Yakov Malik, had no instruction to support such a force. Dobrynin left.

A little while later, at 7:05 P.M., Dobrynin called. He had unintentionally misled Kissinger, he said: Malik *did* have

Kissinger believed that a decisive Israeli victory would not buy peace, but rather create tensions that would trigger still another war.

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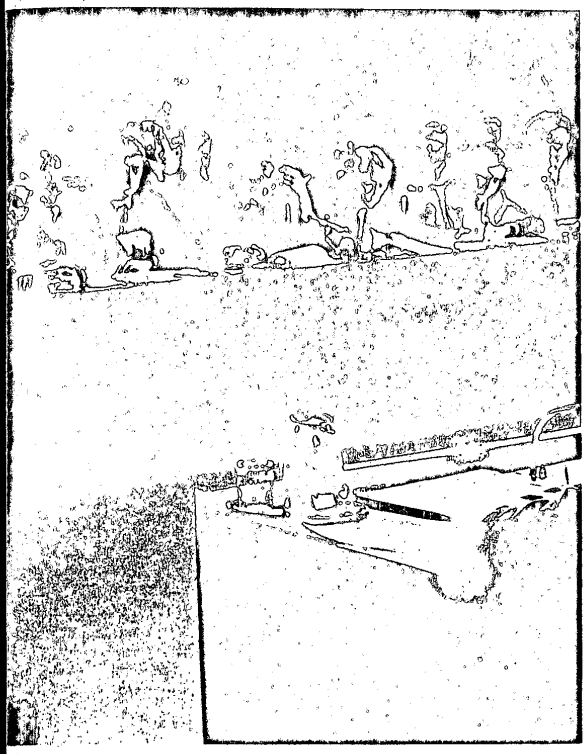

. . . if it had been called because of Watergate, he said no: "The President had no other choice as a responsible leader."

instructions to support a nonaligned nation proposal for a big-power police force. Kissinger suspected that the Russians were actively encouraging such a proposal, and, in fairly blunt language, he urged Dobrynin to tell Moscow that the United States vigorously opposed the idea.

Kissinger then informed the President that the Russians seemed to be switching signals. Nixon reiterated his personal opposition to a big-power peace-keeping force.

At 7:25 P.M., Kissinger called Dobrynin, principally to convey the President's views on the subject. The Soviet Ambassador then added a disquieting new note. He said that Malik might not wait for the nonaligned nations to introduce the proposal for a big-power force; he might introduce it himself. Dobrynin argued that the Israelis were continuing to violate the cease-fire, and that Russia and America were responsible for maintaining it. Kissinger repeated his opposition to the proposal and warned that their countries might be heading for trouble.

At 9:25 P.M., Dobrynin called Kissinger with a "very urgent" message from Brezhnev to Nixon. The message was, within hours, to bring the two superpowers into direct confrontation. Normally Dobrynin would not have read the message on the phone but, this time, he said it was "so urgent" that he would make an exception. Slowly he dictated the message to Kissinger; a secretary, listening in on an extension, took down the four-paragraph text in shorthand.

The message began with an unusually cool salutation — "Mr. President," rather than with the usual Brezhnev opener, "My dear Mr. President"— and its tone was unmistakably tough. Brezhnev denounced Israel for "brazenly challenging both the Soviet Union and the United States" and for "drastically" violating the cease-fire. Then, echoing Sadat's line, the Soviet party chief said: "Let us together . . . urgently dispatch Soviet and American contingents to Egypt." The cease-fire had to be observed "without delay." Brezhnev then dropped his diplomatic bombshell. "I will say it straight," he said, "that if you find it impossible to act together with us in this matter, we should be faced with the necessity urgently to consider the question of taking appropriate steps unilaterally. Israel cannot be allowed to get away with the violations."

Kissinger could see the hedge: "consider the question. . . ." But he suspected Brezhnev meant business. The Russian leader had extracted Sadat's agreement to a cease-fire, linked to direct talks with Israel, only on condition that the two superpowers—or Russia alone — would guarantee the cease-fire. He had received Kissinger's word that Israel would respect the cease-fire. Now, four days later, Israel had blocked access to Suez city, effectively encircled the Third Corps, and threatened to destroy the cream of the Egyptian Army and perhaps topple the Sadat regime in the process. Kissinger believed that Brezhnev could not "tolerate" another decisive Israeli victory over Egypt. Kissinger also knew that the United States could not tolerate unilateral Soviet intervention. The United States and the U.S.S.R. were on a collision course.

Ten minutes later, just to double check, Kissinger called Dobrynin and read the text of the Brezhnev note back to him. "Is it correct?" Kissinger asked. "It is correct," Dobrynin answered. The Russian added that he had to have an immediate response. The Secretary advised him respectfully not to "press" the United States.

Kissinger immediately called Nixon. The President at that time was upstairs at the White House. The Secretary gave him a complete fill-in and stated, that the United States might have to alert its military forces as one way to deter any unilateral Soviet move. The President concurred and empowered Kissinger to take charge of the American response. He added that if there were any problems, he would be available immediately.

Kissinger hastily assembled three panels of experts —at the White House, the State Department and the United Nations—and, while they quickly reviewed the accumulated intelligence, Kissinger, in his capacity as national security adviser, summoned an emergency meeting of the President's top advisers, a rump N.S.C. gathering of Schlesinger, Colby, Moorer, Haig and Scowcroft. They met at the White House at 11 P.M.

By that time, Kissinger had the opinion of the experts. There was, in their view, a "high probability" of some kind of "unilateral Soviet move." He informed the President's top advisers about the experts' opinion. Then he distributed copies of all recent Brezhnev communications, plus the latest note, and

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asked everyone present to study the package. Without exception, they concluded that the tone of the note, received that night, was "totally different" from the earlier communications — "harsh," "blunt," "leaving nothing to the imagination."

While his colleagues continued to deliberate about a proper American response, Kissinger called Dobrynin and urged him to make sure that Moscow did nothing "rash or unilateral," at least not until the United States had composed an answer to the Brezhnev note.

The U.S. answer came in two parts: military and diplomatic.

The first part was a military alert. Since the experts had concluded that there was a "high probability" that Soviet airborne troops would soon be flown to the Middle East, the Secretary quickly decided that the United States had to alert its military forces—ground, sea and air, both conventional and nuclear units. Schlesinger agreed. Both men felt that the Soviet Union had to be made aware that the United States would resist its efforts to tilt the military balance against Israel.

At 11:30 P.M., Schlesinger instructed Moorer to tell the service chiefs to alert most but not all military commands. For example, the Coast Guard, with its key air-sea rescue system, was not alerted until the following morning; and Strategic Air Command tanker planes operating over the mid-Atlantic along the United States-Israel air lanes, were not moved north to handle the possible refueling of B-52 bombers. Two hours later, at 1:30 in the morning, Schlesinger returned to the Pentagon and widened the alert. The Panama Command was included. The aircraft carrier John F. Kennedy, carrying dozens of A-4 attack jets, was dispatched toward the Mediterranean. Fifty to 60 B-52 bombers were ordered from Guam to the United States. The 15,000-troop 82nd Airborne Division, based at Fort Bragg, N. C., was added to the alert; it was told to be ready by 6 A.M., Thursday, if necessary. Finally, the entire Strategic Air Command (SAC) was put on alert; SAC was a critical signal to the Russians, because it controls nuclear strike forces.

Happy ending: After the Syrian-Israeli agreement for separation of forces last month, Kissinger gives Mrs. Meir a farewell kiss. Recalling pictures of him kissing Arab leaders, she joked: "I didn't know you kissed women."

There are five degrees of military alert, ranging from Defense Condition, or DefCon 5, which is least alarming, to Defense Condition 1, which is war. That night, during the various stages of the alert, most United States units were put on DefCon 3. In one case —the Pacific Command—that represented no change, because the Pacific Command is always on DefCon 3. SAC usually operates on DefCon 4; it was moved up one notch. The fleet of Polaris submarines, carrying nuclear-tipped missiles, ranges between DefCon 3 and 2; that night, it was put at 3. The Sixth Fleet, cruising the Mediterranean, was on DefCon 2, and it stayed at that level.

As the second part of the American answer to Brezhnev, the Secretary of State composed a Presidential response. He checked it with Schlesinger and Haig and cleared it with Nixon. In the message, the United States reaffirmed the terms of the Kissinger-Brezhnev understanding that the two superpowers would cooperate in the search for peace in the Middle East. It disputed Brezhnev's claim that Israel was "brazenly" violating the cease-fire. By late Wednesday night, in fact, there were comparatively few violations, on either side. The situation, the note said, did not warrant sending Soviet or American forces to the Middle East. The idea of one superpower taking "unilateral" action would cause great concern throughout the world. The United States could not accept such action by the Soviet Union; it could not but jeopardize the entire pattern of Soviet-American détente. The Nixon message focused instead on U.N. observer and peace-keeping forces composed of nonveto or nonnuclear members of the U.N. In this respect, the United States promised to cooperate with the Soviet Union. The note did not refer to the alert of American military forces; that was not considered necessary. "The alert itself," one official said, "was a signal which we knew they would get through their own electronic intelligence."

It is curious that, considering the seriousness Kissinger ascribed to the crisis, the Secretary never saw the President that night. Nixon, who struck a number of his close advisers as "remote," remained in his living quarters, upstairs, while his advisers conferred downstairs. Kissinger talked with the Chief Executive only once —on the phone. All other messages were relayed through Haig. The last one, at about 2 A.M., set the stage for a 7:30 A.M. meeting with the President and Haig.

Before leaving the White House, Kissinger started the process of informing America's allies. He called Lord Cromer, who was apparently in a snippy mood. The British Ambassador is said to have responded: "Why tell us, Henry? Tell your friends—the Russians." Then Kissinger sent a cable to Brussels, headquarters for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, instructing United States officials to inform all NATO allies about the alert of American forces. Because of a breakdown in the NATO communications system, it took hours before the allies actually got the word. Kissinger's final call was to Dinitz.

At 7 A.M., Kissinger turned on the television news. He was, he later said, "surprised as hell" to learn that the alert had already become public knowledge. (An Army sergeant had explained to a policeman why he was speeding; a reporter read the police blotter.) His expectation was that the American people would not learn anything about a worldwide nuclear alert for another 24 hours. By that time, either there would have been a major crisis, in which case the alert would have been justified, or the crisis would have blown over, in which case the alert would have been eased. Keeping such news from the public was not a new tactic for the Administration—or the Secretary.

By the time Kissinger got to the White House for his 7:30 A.M. meeting with the President, the C.I.A. had come up with an alarming report from Egypt — that the Russians might have landed nuclear weapons there. For several days, American reconnaissance planes had kept track of a Soviet ship carrying radioactive material and heading toward Port Said. In the early morning hours of Oct. 25, the ship docked. It was presumed by intelligence experts that the radioactive material was a nuclear warhead or, more likely, several warheads, and that they had been sent to Egypt to be tipped to SCUD missiles, which had

A soldier stopped for speeding explained to the police, a reporter read the police blotter—and the U.S. alert was public knowledge.

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reached Egypt earlier in the year. The experts had no definitive information on whether the radioactive material had actually been unloaded. The C.I.A. report tended to harden Kissinger's judgment that the Russians were going to send airborne troops to Egypt. Nuclear weapons could serve as backup protection for a sizable Soviet force. On the other hand, Kissinger could not dismiss the possibility that the Russians were moving nuclear weapons into Egypt because they believed that the Israelis had nuclear weapons and intended to use them against Egypt. In the United States Government, there was no hard intelligence that the Israelis had nuclear weapons. Kissinger immediately ordered a study of Israeli nuclear capabilities.

With the President and Haig, Kissinger reviewed the military and diplomatic situation. After a few hours, they reached several conclusions: first, that the United States would continue its efforts at the U.N. to set up a peacekeeping force that excluded the major powers (early that morning, the Security Council had considered a resolution that, while not including the major powers, did not exclude them either); second, that Israel would have to be persuaded to observe the ceasefire; third, that the American airlift of supplies to Israel would continue until all of her losses were replaced; and finally, that Kissinger would hold a news conference to explain the alert and Nixon would postpone, for at least one day, the news conference he had scheduled to explain his firing of Cox.

When America went to work that morning, it was aware from news reports that United States nuclear forces, on a worldwide basis, had been put on standby alert, apparently in a dramatic move to dissuade Russia from taking "unilateral action" in the Middle East. The news of the alert came like a bolt of lightning out of a sky darkened by Watergate suspicion and upheaval. For many people, still stunned by the Saturday Night Massacre, it was impossible not to connect the alert to Watergate. After all, only one day before, spokesmen had asserted that the number of violations was dropping and the crisis seemed to be passing. There was instant speculation on Capitol Hill, in news offices and at political party headquarters — both Republican and Democratic — that the alert must have been caused, at least to some degree, by the President's desire to deflect attention from Watergate and talk of impeachment.

Kissinger has always claimed that the Watergate connection never entered his mind as he planned and ordered the alert; that only the urgent requirements of diplomacy governed his actions. That was why his news conference so shocked him. One of the first questions focused on Watergate.

> With the benefit of hindsight, not even Kissinger has given Kissinger a straight A for crisis management.

"Mr. Secretary," the question began, "could you tell us whether the United States received a specific warning from the Soviet Union that it would send its forces unilaterally into the Middle East? Do you have intelligence that the Russians are preparing for such an action? The reason I raise these questions — as you know, there has been some line of speculation this morning that the American alert might have been prompted as much perhaps by American domestic requirements as by the real requirements of diplomacy in the Middle East. And I wonder if you could provide some additional information on that."

Kissinger answered slowly — as columnist Elizabeth Drew later put it—"in a tone" that was "more in sorrow." "Marvin," he said, "we are attempting to conduct the foreign policy of the United States with regard for what we owe not just to the electorate but to future generations. And it is a symptom of what is happening to our country that it could even be suggested that the United States would alert its forces for domestic reasons. We do not think it is wise at this moment to go into the details of the diplomatic exchanges that prompted this decision. Upon the conclusion of the present diplomatic efforts, one way or the other, we will make the record available, and we will be able to go into greater detail. And I am absolutely confident that it will be seen that the President had no other choice as a responsible national leader."

The news conference ran from noon to 1 o'clock, during which time the Secretary tried to be tough and conciliatory at the same time. Having confirmed the American alert, he warned the Russians not to send their troops into the Middle East and not to expect the United States to join them in a Big Two peace-keeping force. Such an arrangement would only "transplant the great-power rivalry into the Middle East"—to him, an "inconceivable" proposition that could lead to a nuclear clash. He said, "We possess, each of us, nuclear arsenals capable of annihilating humanity. . . ." The remarks were classic Kissinger. "We need a combination of extreme toughness, when we're challenged," he once said of the Russians, but with enough flexibility "to give them the option of going to a more responsible course" without losing face. "It's in their nature" to probe any soft spot, but the United States "must be willing to face them down when they step across the line."

The news conference was being carried live on nationwide TV and radio, and U.N. delegates paused to listen, delaying Security Council deliberations still longer. The delay gave Malik extra time to call Moscow for new instructions, which became evident almost immediately. Persuaded, no doubt, that the influence game in the Middle East was getting too expensive for the Soviet Union, Brezhnev sought a face-saving compromise at the U.N. He told Malik to stop pushing for the inclusion of the superpowers in the peace-keeping force and instead to yield to American insistence that they be specifically excluded. Malik told Scali. Scali told Kissinger. Kissinger told the President. Although there was not yet any sign that Russian airborne units had been returned to their prealert status, Kissinger interpreted Malik's message as a signal that Russia had abandoned its go-it-alone tactic. The 15-hour crisis then eased considerably. The Security Council, swayed by Kissinger's warnings and apprised of the Soviet switch, passed Resolution 340, setting up a U.N. emergency force "composed of personnel drawn from states members of the United Nations except permanent members of the Security Council." The vote

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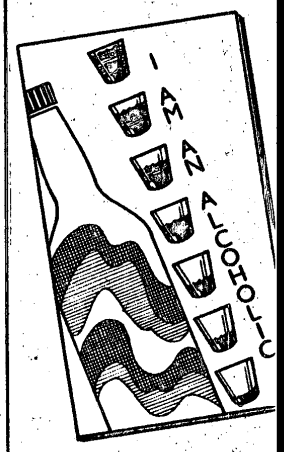

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was 14 to 0, with China abstaining.

After a frightening exercise in nuclear muscle flexing, the two superpowers returned to the twilight zone of détente. The following day, Oct. 26, Schlesinger relaxed the alert. The speed with which Washington cranked up the alert, and then cranked it down, gave rise to postmortem speculation that Kissinger, for one, had overreacted to the Soviet warning about "unilateral action." NATO allies, who had not alerted their forces, shared little of the Secretary's anxiety about Russian intervention in the Middle East, and they protested "a lack of advance consultations." They accused Kissinger of being "highhanded," and Kissinger accused them of being "craven." The Secretary also came in for criticism from sources closer to home. Schlesinger, to take only one example, publicly disputed Kissinger's version of the events. At a Pentagon news conference, the Defense chief asserted that there were "mixed reactions and different assessments of the probability" of Soviet intervention. Although Kissinger described the President's top advisers as being "unanimous" in their judgment that there was a "high probability" of a "unilateral Soviet move," Schlesinger said: "I think the probability of Soviet forces being en route was considered by some to be low." Later, when queried about the possibility that the Soviet transport planes spotted flying toward Cairo could have been carrying troops, Schlesinger added: "Nobody under those circumstances could dismiss that as a possibility, no matter how low he placed the probability."

With the benefit of hindsight, not even Kissinger has given Kissinger a straight A for crisis management on the night of Oct. 24-25. The Secretary has privately acknowledged, for one thing, that the consultation process with the allies was "inadequate" and, for another, that the global nuclear nature of the alert was too extreme. The Southern Command in Panama, for example, did not have to be alerted; nor did the Alaskan Command.

More important, he miscalculated the reaction of the American people to the sudden alert. But, unlike his critics at home and abroad, Kissinger has consistently maintained that the alert was "vital" to American security and that it was not prompted by Watergate. In his opinion, "if we had not reacted violently," the Russians would almost certainly have put their airborne troops into Egypt "to force the Israelis back to the Oct. 22 line," thus liberating the trapped Third Corps and saving the Sadat regime from humiliation and a likely coup d'état. Kissinger assumed that if the Russians had managed to establish themselves in the Middle East as the saviors of the Arabs, it would have been very difficult to get them out. Their influence over future oil shipments would have increased. The United States could have survived, but Western Europe and Japan could not have gotten along without an expanding flow of oil. At his most pessimistic, Kissinger could imagine a situation in which Soviet domination of the Middle East might lead to the communization of Western Europe and Japan in 5 to 10 years.

The alert was clearly not Kissinger's finest hour, but he has insisted that it was one of those necessary exercises in big-power politics, which firmed up the United States position in the Middle East and opened the door to a direct American role in mediating the dangerous Arab-Israeli conflict. As he saw it, the cease-fire imposed by the two superpowers produced a military stalemate. The alert produced the crisis atmosphere so necessary in the Secretary's scenario to scare the belligerents off dead center. The timing—always a crucial element—seemed right, at long last, for Kissinger, as Secretary of State, to plunge into the politics of the Middle East. As Omar Saqqaf, the Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister, had remarked the week before: "We think the man who could solve the Vietnam war . . . can easily play a good role . . . in our area." ■

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