

From the archives

A Modern Metternich: Henry Kissinger, imperialism's intellectual servant

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This past weekend, the US media celebrated the 100th birthday of Henry Kissinger, one of the leading architects of US imperialist policy, who in 1969-76 was the architect of the foreign policy of the administration of Richard Nixon, and then his successor, Gerald Ford.

At the Congress of Vienna following the final defeat of Napoleon in 1815, the reactionary forces of Europe assembled to plot the suppression of the popular movements that were active throughout Europe. The ambition of the Congress was to eradicate the consequences of the French Revolution and suppress social classes whose consciousness had been aroused by the principles of the Jacobins.

Dynasties despised by the bourgeoisie and the nascent proletariat were restored to shaky thrones; political police were set on the trail of radicals; literature was subject to rigorous censure.

The architect of the counterrevolution was Prince Klemens von Metternich. As the closest adviser of the Hapsburg monarch and the leading diplomat of the Austrian empire, he devoted all his considerable energies to the reestablishment of the world that had been thrust beneath the revolutionary guillotine.

From the palace in Vienna, the vigilant Metternich kept a troubled guard over a Europe secretly seething with revolution. With soldiers and police at his disposal—and in collaboration with unpopular governments—Metternich fought every expression of radicalism: in Italy, France, Germany, Spain and, of course, in Austria.

But—strangely enough, for a man who was such an effective counter-revolutionary—Metternich never believed that he could forever hold the floodgates against the movement of masses. After he was swept from power by the 1848 revolutions, he explained his lifework: “I claim to have recognized the situation, but also the impossibility to erect a new structure in our Empire ... and for this reason all my care was directed to conserving that which existed.”

Nearly 125 years have passed since the overthrow of Metternich. But today, at the right hand of Nixon, stands a pudgy man who not only admires the clever Prince but also seeks to reenact his historical role. Like the Prince, he fancies himself as the guardian of order against the menace of revolution. The man is Henry A. Kissinger.

A hardened intellectual reactionary

Of late, Nixon's principal adviser on foreign affairs has received a great deal of publicity. Kissinger's secret mission to China last spring excited the bourgeois press which is always on the lookout for instant great-men rather than for fundamental social processes. Especially during the past month, Kissinger has been very much on the minds of all sorts of pundits. The major national news magazines, *Time* and *Newsweek*, placed him on their covers during the same week.

We would hesitate to agree that Kissinger is quite as brilliant as the bourgeois press now proclaims him to be. However, we would not deny that he merits some attention: for in a government of hardened reactionaries, Kissinger stands out as a hardened intellectual reactionary. Long before he came into political prominence, Kissinger revealed himself as a man whose hatred of revolution was the axis upon which all his thoughts and activities revolved.

As both a scholar and a presidential adviser, one problem has absorbed Kissinger: The problem of withstanding the forces of revolutionary change. His great passion in life—unless the rumors about his Hollywood playmates happen to be true—is the struggle for the stabilization of the world order.

Like most reactionaries with a philosophical bent, Kissinger is deeply pessimistic about the system he zealously defends. He shares with Metternich the belief that the revolutionary tide may well prove to be irresistible.

But this pessimism only drives him to defend capitalism with every ounce of energy he possesses. His admirers in the government have often noted Kissinger's 18-hour-a-day devotion to duty.

Henry Kissinger actually began his academic career with a doctoral dissertation on the career of Prince Metternich. Eventually, it was published as a book entitled *A World Restored*. In this hefty book, the Harvard scholar gave the key to his later political activities.

Describing the motives that determined Metternich's policies, Kissinger wrote: “...it is the task of the conservative not to defeat but to forestall revolution; that a society which cannot prevent a revolution, the disintegration of whose values has been demonstrated by the fact of revolution, will not be able to defeat it by conservative means; that order once shattered can be restored only by the experience of chaos.”

A life devoted to the ruling class

In other words, Kissinger admits that the defense of order requires a fascist bloodletting. It should be clear that Kissinger wrote his book on Metternich to draw analogies appropriate to the twentieth century.

As 1793 was to Metternich the death knell of the feudal order, so is 1917 to Kissinger the death knell of capitalism.

Discussing the responsibilities of a conservative statesman confronted with revolutionary movements, Kissinger declared it is his function: "To represent his country abroad, to cover its weaknesses, to delay the inevitable as long as possible."

After completing his historical study of Metternich, Kissinger remained at Harvard. But having drawn from the past in order to develop his reactionary political philosophy, he sought to apply it to the present.

Following the example of a large section of the academic community, Kissinger dedicated his intellectual resources to the American government. He began writing articles and books on foreign affairs, and within time gained the ears of Eisenhower, Rockefeller, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon.

Although he changed the field of his scholarship from nineteenth century Europe to issues of cold war diplomacy, Kissinger's basic attitude remained the same: the forces of order must arm themselves against revolution. In the *Necessity For Choice*, written in 1961, Kissinger stated: "No more urgent task confronts the free world than to separate itself from nostalgia from the period of its invulnerability and to face the stark reality of a revolutionary period."

Kissinger delivered this warning without any great confidence in the capitalist system. In the same book, he wrote:

"There is no doubt that the Western world is in deep trouble. It has not been able to articulate either a philosophy or program adequate to our time. It has failed to identify itself with the revolutionary period through which we are living. It has not had the vision or willingness to carry through a sustained program to bring a sense of direction to a world in turmoil."

It is not a faith in the durability of capitalism that drives Kissinger but rather a hatred of the working class. The man who fled Nazism at the age of 15 and whose relatives perished in gas chambers learned nothing from the experiences of his youth. He has termed communism "a monstrous historical joke" and has spoken with malicious spite of "communist blackmail." He was once heard to remark that "Nixon will save us from the hard hats."

A superficial and petty man

For all his academic coating, Henry Kissinger is a superficial and petty man. His elevation to the White House staff has brought out in sharp relief his fascination with the tinsel of wealth. Kissinger delights in expensive luncheons at the posh Sans-Souci Restaurant, one of Jackie Kennedy's favorite haunts. And it is said that he is pleased that suddenly the press is advertising him as a "secret swinger."

A Harvard colleague once told a reporter that "Henry doesn't really believe anybody likes him." As if to compensate for this well-earned complex, Kissinger can be found around town with pretty little things who need all the publicity they can get. He counts among his friends actresses Samantha Eggar, Jill St. John, Judy Brown, Marlo Thomas and starlet Angel Tompkins who had dinner with Kissinger and later commented: "He's a total wit!"

For some intellectual challenge, Kissinger dates Rockefeller aide Nancy Maginnes and women's libbist Gloria Steinem. Kissinger's wife walked out on him several years ago.

While his new-found fame has given him a chance to give full expression to his hollow taste, he has always been a slavish follower of the social guidelines set by the ruling class. As a young man, he became the protege of a wealthy man by the name of Fritz Kraemer (whom he met

during the war) who directed him to Harvard with the remark: "Henry, gentlemen do not go to the College of the City of New York."

As a matter of fact, Kissinger's orientation has always been toward entering into the service of the ruling class. He once discussed his youth: "I worked in a shaving brush factory during the days so I could go to school at nights to prepare for what was then the height of my ambition—becoming an accountant."

So, it can be said that as a boy, Henry Kissinger dreamt of counting rich men's money. As he matured, he turned his attention toward defending it.

Now that he is in the prime of life, defending wealth has become a task that he undertakes with fanatical zeal. He even has sharp words for liberals who fail to rally to the defense of capitalism with unhesitating obedience.

After some liberals criticized Nixon's invasion of Cambodia, Kissinger said: "What the hell's an Establishment for if not to support the President when he's in trouble."

The decision of Nixon to visit China has been cited in the press as proof of Kissinger's genius. But there is really very little evidence that he is a man of great vision. In his books, it is said, Kissinger encouraged fundamental changes in American nuclear policy.

For example, he counseled Eisenhower to switch from a policy of "nuclear superiority" to one of "nuclear sufficiency." And he advised Kennedy to reform the standing policy of "massive retaliation" to one of "flexible response."

These are the only examples of Kissinger's "originality." But it should be said in his behalf that the crisis of world capitalism allows little room for maneuvering.

A revolutionary period

It is from this fact that we may draw the decisive differences rather than the apparent parallels between the historical roles of Kissinger and Metternich. The Prince held sway during a period when the revolutionary classes were still in the process of formation.

In many sections of Europe, industrialization had barely challenged the feudal foundations of society. Metternich could dazzle the world with his diplomatic agility because his class still had considerable bounce. But by 1848, his intellect played on a rather narrow stage and Metternich's final political crisis lasted hardly more than a few days.

Though he may treasure his memory, Kissinger has come into office with conditions far more mature than the old Prince faced. There is no question but that the revolutionary class has formed itself. It is impossible that Kissinger will be able to keep his finger in the dike of revolution for 33 years.

After all, Metternich fell 55 years after the bourgeois revolutionist Robespierre mobilized France against the feudal order. And that is precisely the number of years that have passed since 1917.



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