Kissinger's Exit Leaves Curious Questions Unanswered

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Henry Kissinger's quick trip across the news headlines as chairman of the new commission to investigate the September 11 attacks was curious. I wish the nosy media, which love to indulge in the sport of "gotcha," would apply their investigative talents to ferreting out the details behind both his appointment and his speedy resignation.

After the Senate Ethics Committee issued its legal opinion that Kissinger must comply with congressional financial disclosure requirements, Kissinger quickly resigned. Apparently he had accepted the appointment believing he could ignore the rules that apply to other government appointees.

Kissinger's plan to reveal his list of clients only to an anonymous third party, chosen by the 9/11 victims and bound to secrecy, was ridiculous. It's not just some closeted individual or even the 9/11 victims who have the right to know his conflicts of interest; it's the American public.

In light of the considerable influence Kissinger has had on U.S. public policy for so many years, where he gets his money should be a matter of public interest. Why aren't investigative reporters searching out his relationships with foreign governments that have a stake in U.S. foreign policies, his loyalties to his clients, and the financial rewards he receives?

Another question for investigative reporters is why the White House was so desperately eager to keep Kissinger as chairman of the 9/11 committee. According to Ethics Committee Chairman Senator Harry Reid, the White House was "calling and berating" the committee staff to pressure them into okaying Kissinger's personal secrecy demands.

It looks as though President Bush selected Kissinger because of his reputation for extraordinary secrecy and his remarkable ability to bamboozle the press by talking out of both sides of his mouth. The appointment couldn't have been because Kissinger supports Bush's ideology and policies, because he doesn't.

In one of the memorable highlights of George W. Bush's presidency, he repudiated the tour de force of Kissinger's career, namely, the infamous Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty signed by Richard Nixon and Leonid Brezhnev in Moscow in 1972, as part of the SALT I agreements. On December 13, 2001, President Bush gave formal notice to Russia that the United States was withdrawing from that 30-year-old ABM Treaty.

In the ABM Treaty, President Nixon signed away our right to build an anti-missile defense system because of the theory called Mutual Assured Destruction, popularly known by its acronym MAD. The ABM Treaty should have been immediately judged unconstitutional because it reneged on our government's prime duty: to "provide for the common defense."

Each of the superpowers was supposedly deterred from launching a nuclear attack on the other because of the knowledge that a launch by one side would be followed by massive retaliation that would assure the destruction of both sides. President Reagan exposed the fallacy in that theory when he asked the crucial question on March 23, 1983, "Would it not be better to save lives than to avenge them?"

John Newhouse's 1973 book "Cold Dawn: The Story of SALT" confirmed that every substantive provision of the 1972 U.S.-Soviet agreements was dictated secretly to Kissinger by the Kremlin without the knowledge of our U.S. negotiating team, was accepted by Kissinger, and was then rationalized by Kissinger to the President and Congress. Newhouse's book showed how Kissinger was personally and solely responsible for promising the Soviets that we would not build an anti-missile defense, even though the offensive- weapons provisions of the SALT I agreements guaranteed the Soviet Union superiority in numbers of missiles.

In testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Kissinger personally endorsed Newhouse and called his book "outstanding." This made Newhouse's book the authentic historic account of the Moscow agreements.

Kissinger successfully obfuscated the tremendous danger to America in the 1972 agreements, and he made the media his ally in the coverup. It was not until President Reagan (who excluded Kissinger from foreign policy influence) spoke out against the ABM Treaty that Republicans began demanding that we withdraw from it.

We thank George W. Bush for doing exactly that, and it should be a national priority to build an anti-missile defense system now.

Even though we no longer worry about Russia using its still-existing 6,000 nuclear warheads against us, the danger of attack or blackmail from other nuclear arsenals is real. China has 300 nuclear warheads deployed on ballistic missiles and 13 ICBMs targeting U.S. cities.

The list of Third World countries developing nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, plus ballistic missile delivery systems, includes North Korea, Iran and Iraq. The risk comes not only from intentional use but from accidental or unauthorized launches.

While our curiosity has not been satisfied about the details surrounding Kissinger's latest foray onto the national scene, we know enough about Kissinger's ABM Treaty to know that he shouldn't be in any position to influence U.S. policies.