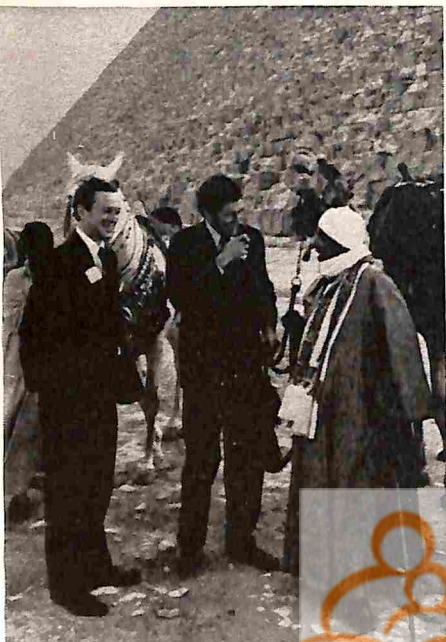


A LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Jerrold L. Schecter, now TIME's diplomatic editor, was a Nieman fellow at Harvard ten years ago when he first met Henry Kissinger. Schecter took Kissinger's seminar on defense policy, and their paths have crossed many times since in such faraway places as Shanghai and Cairo. Before accompanying his former professor to Moscow this week, Schecter filed much of the material for our cover story on the peripatetic Secretary's brand of diplomacy.

Schecter finds that the Secretary of State still bears a close personal resemblance to the Cambridge academic. "His ego is enormous, but his charm and grace are even greater. He likes to hear gossip about himself, he is complex, difficult and the best show in town." One element of the Kissinger act is to deflate formality. On President Nixon's trip to China, Kissinger brought on board the plane Vice Foreign Minister Chiao Kuan-hua. In the press section, Kissinger told his guest: "That's Jerry Schecter of TIME. He's my favorite fiction writer."



MULLIKEN & SCHECTER NEAR CAIRO

Though a plum assignment for journalists, traveling with Kissinger is also a grind. State Department Correspondent John Mulliken, who has gone on three major journeys with the Secretary of State since September and contributed to this week's cover story, notes that a day of shuttle diplomacy often starts at 4 a.m. That is the hour that baggage must be ready for X-ray examination by the Secret Service. On board the plane, Kissinger routinely briefs correspondents but rarely allows himself to be quoted directly. "Of course," says Mulliken, "no one is fooled by the titles that are used in dispatches—a 'high U.S. official' or 'senior officials.' But that way Kissinger is protected during sensitive negotiations." The newsmen sometimes feel frustrated at their inability to check out facts with other sources at 30,000 ft. During the Aswan-Jerusalem shuttle last January, Mulliken and his colleagues raised the cry: "Free the Kissinger 14!"

In fact, Mulliken says, the correspondents revel in their bondage. Kissinger is usually candid and understands the role of the press. "To ask Kissinger to go on a trip without the press would be like asking Bob Dylan to perform without The Band," says Mulliken. In Kissinger's case, the star manages to entertain those providing the background music. In his German accent, he will start a discussion this way: "Never have I known so many secrets. Never have I had such influence on world events. Yet no one has tried to seduce me with beautiful women." After a suitable dramatic pause: "It kills me."

Ralph P. Davidson

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