



Photo by Gary Cameron

Dressed to Kill

Power is the ultimate aphrodisiac.
Henry Kissinger, 1973

ALTHOUGH HIS WIFE, NANCY, WAS inducted into the International Best Dressed Hall of Fame in 1982, Henry Kissinger is unlikely to ever join her on the list of sartorial superstars. But the former Secretary of State had little difficulty impressing the ladies in his own heyday: In a poll of Playboy bunnies taken in 1972, Kissinger was voted the man they'd most like to go out on a date with.

The frumpily-attired diplomat was spared tuxedo rental expenses when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize the following year, having opted to skip attending the awards ceremony. The co-winner, however—North Vietnamese diplomat Le Duc Tho—declined to accept the award altogether.

Le Duc Tho protested that the prize—given in recognition of the two men having jointly negotiated an end to the Vietnam War in 1968—was a bit premature, since the war in question was not yet over. (It would, in fact, drag on for another four long, bloody years.)

Some spoilsports couldn't help pointing out a further irony: The Nobel Peace Prize, founded by Alfred Nobel on a fortune built on the mass production of explosives, was being bestowed on a man who had gleefully supervised the bombing of millions of innocent civilians in South East Asia.

Although the bombing was only the first of many Kissinger-led humanitarian disasters, it was responsible for catapulting the formerly obscure, mediocre academic into the international spotlight. In reality, however, not only did Kissinger fail to end the war, he personally sabotaged the peace talks.

At Kissinger's prompting, Richard Nixon's presidential campaign staff secretly advised the South Vietnamese government that it would get better terms if it waited until after Nixon was reelected—stealing the credit from Nixon's challenger, Hubert Humphrey. (LBJ—not one known to frown at underhanded tactics—called the plot 'treason.')

In the intervening years before a lasting peace agreement was signed (on virtually identical terms) in 1973, no less than 20,763 Americans and over 600,000 Asians lost their lives, all of them even more pointlessly than those killed prior to 1968. And arguably, the chief beneficiary of all this senseless slaughter was its architect: Henry Kissinger.

After the election, Kissinger—as Nixon's national security advisor—secretly launched a massive, illegal bombing campaign in neighboring Laos and Cambodia, killing 950,000 civilians. And if that wasn't enough, the resulting famine brought to power the formerly marginal Pol Pot, who killed and starved another 1,700,000 of his own people.

Kissinger aided and encouraged Pakistan's genocide of 500,000 Bangladeshi separatists during the 1971 civil war, provided illegal aid and arms to Turkey for its 1974 invasion of Cyprus, approved arming insurgents in mineral-rich Angola during the 27-year long civil war (which claimed another half million lives), and recruited the Kurds to take up arms against Iraq's Saddam Hussein—before abandoning 182,000 of them to die after Hussein, with U.S. approval, cut a deal with the Shah of Iran in 1975.

As a principal architect of the 1973 coup in Chile, which overthrew the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende, Kissinger is in large part responsible for the sixteen years of repression and torture which followed under the fascist Augusto Pinochet.

In 1975, Kissinger and President Gerald Ford met with Indonesian dictator Suharto, giving him a green light to invade newly-independent East Timor. The very next day, the Indonesian army invaded the oil-rich island with U.S.-supplied weaponry. The subsequent occupation claimed 200,000 lives, fully a third of the country's people.

Kissinger also played an active role in encouraging the seven-year long 'Dirty War' in Argentina against opponents of the 1976 military coup, during which thousands of civilians were 'disappeared.' And in the 1980s Iran-Iraq War—in which over a million people died—the U.S. supported both sides, with Kissinger cynically observing, "too bad they can't both lose."

Kissinger's unceasing support for conflict and genocide likely brought him little regret. In a classified 1974 memo, he championed depopulation as "the highest priority of U.S. foreign policy towards the Third World." The report proposed mandatory mass sterilizations and birth control in Africa and elsewhere—not to prevent starvation but to reduce population in order to ensure a continuing supply of natural resources for American corporations and the military.

Now in his 90s, Kissinger still enjoys international prestige as a consultant on foreign policy, and is highly sought after on the lucrative public speaking circuit. His consulting firm counsels major corporations in negotiations with foreign governments, despite innumerable conflicts of interest.

It is said that Gore Vidal once happened upon Kissinger in the Sistine Chapel, gazing thoughtfully at the portion of Michelangelo's *The Last Judgement* depicting Hell.

The quick-witted Vidal reportedly turned to his companion and wryly commented, "Look, he's apartment hunting!"