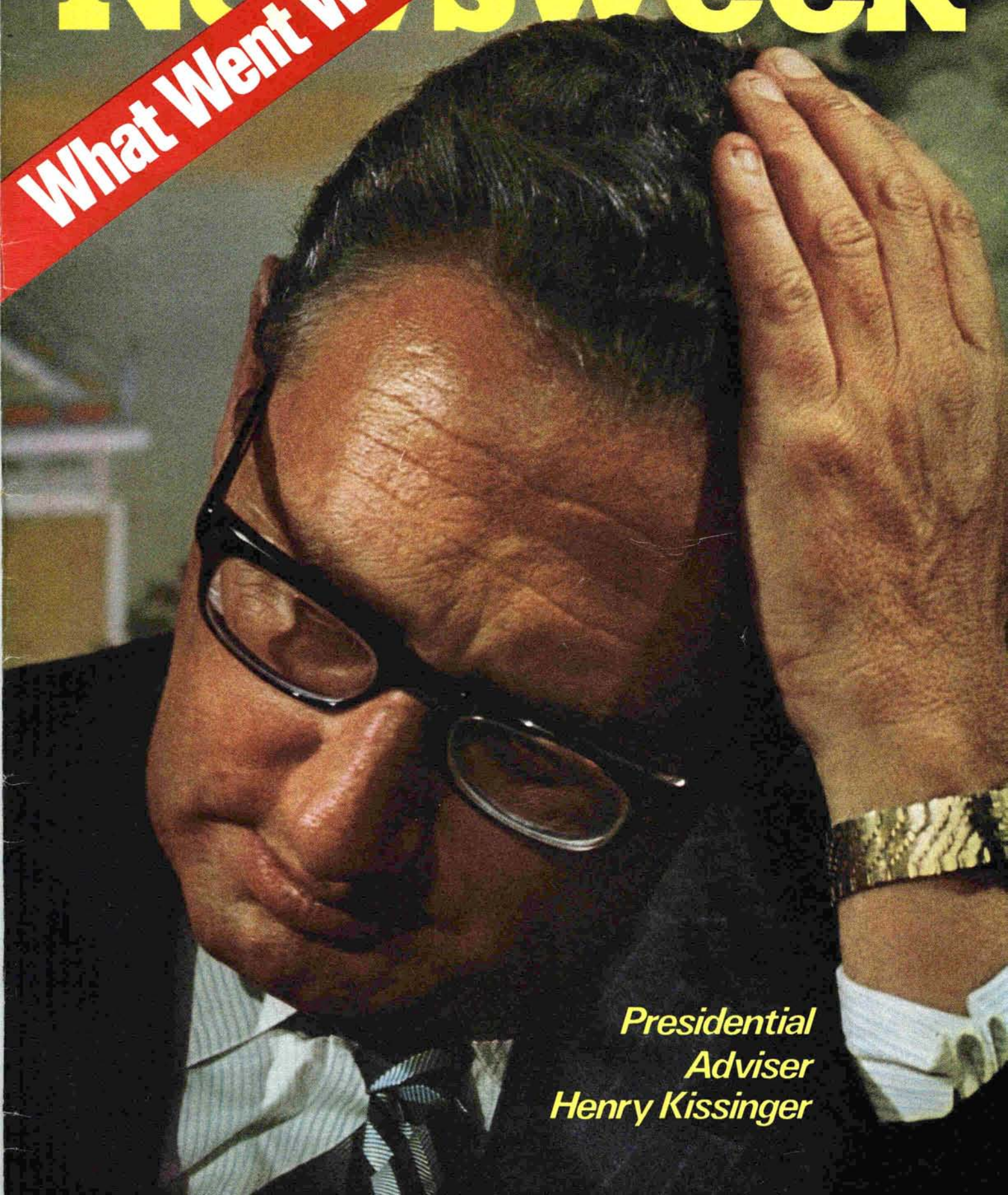


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Newsweek

What Went Wrong?



*Presidential
Adviser
Henry Kissinger*

but when Le Duc Tho meets Kissinger at a villa outside Paris, Hanoi indicates virtual acceptance of all American terms. Not only do the Communists agree to a cease-fire and return of all U.S. POW's, but, for the first time in the four-year history of negotiations, they accept the concept of the separation of a military settlement from a political accord. No longer, in effect, is Hanoi insisting on the establishment of a coalition government and on the immediate ouster of South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu. Two days later, Mr. Nixon tells Hanoi that the agreement is essentially complete, but asks for certain clarifications. After one more marathon session, Kissinger returns to Washington, leaving members of his staff to refine the English and Vietnamese language drafts of the accord. The agreement seems all but sealed.

Oct. 18: After a one-day stopover in Paris, Kissinger heads off to Saigon with the draft agreement in his briefcase. So confident is the White House at this point that Mr. Nixon cables word to the North Vietnamese that Kissinger may fly direct-

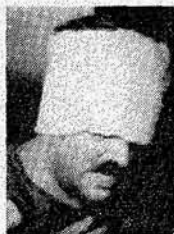
ly from Saigon to Hanoi for the initialing of the accord. But when Kissinger arrives in South Vietnam, he has second thoughts—and the trouble begins. There are intelligence reports of an imminent Communist land-grab offensive before a cease-fire. In an interview with *Newsweek* Senior Editor Arnaud de Borchgrave, North Vietnam's Prime Minister Pham Van Dong makes disturbing references to a coalition government. Most important, however, Kissinger finds that President Thieu will not go along with the peace settlement unless he is given time—and some moral support—to help shore up his domestic political base. After consultations with Mr. Nixon, Kissinger requests the reopening of negotiations with the North Vietnamese.

Oct. 26: Within hours after the Hanoi broadcast, Kissinger appears at a White House news conference to confirm the North Vietnamese version of the draft accord and to announce that "peace is at hand." Only minor problems remain, he insists, problems that can easily be ironed out in "one more negotiating session, lasting no more than three or four days." He says later his message was aimed at both Vietnams: "We didn't want to sign it—but we didn't want to lose it. We chose to play it hard. We wanted to tell Hanoi there was no reason to worry, and to tell Saigon that there was no reason to dig in its heels because the decision for peace was irrevocable."

convicted that "Hanoi has made a significant decision for peace."

Dec. 4: The "final session" begins in Paris and the mood—and substance—of the talks change dramatically. According to U.S. sources, the North Vietnamese reject all the progress made in the November sessions and it takes three days of hard bargaining just to nail down those matters again. By the weekend, though, Kissinger feels the agreement is so close that he sends his assistant, Gen. Alexander Haig, to Washington with orders to be ready to fly out to Saigon within the next 48 hours. But from then on, things only get worse. There are two more days of tough negotiating. As the differences multiply between the two sides, Kissinger cables the White House to hold up Haig. Finally, with the North Vietnamese reopening issues faster than the negotiators can settle them, Kissinger reproaches Hanoi for stalling and heads back to Washington.

Dec. 16: After a hectic series of consultations with officials at the State Department, the Defense Department and the



Capt. Barrows



Capt. Wilson



U.S. fliers on display in Hanoi: A whole new batch of POW's



Capt. Certain



Maj. Alexander



Capt. Simpson

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Oct. 23: The main concern in Washington now is how to handle Hanoi. Within

Nov. 20: Both sides return to Paris. For three days the negotiations go smoothly. Agreement is reached on the principles covering international supervision and on South Vietnamese demands that the importance of the Demilitarized Zone be affirmed in the final accord, including the phrase "it shall be respected." Then, suddenly, progress ceases. According to U.S. officials, Hanoi seems to be stalling for time: with the American elections over and with pressure on Mr. Nixon to get the POW's home by Christmas—or Inauguration Day at the latest—Hanoi feels it can afford to sit back and balk at Thieu's demands. According to the North Vietnamese, however, the Americans come back to the bargaining table with a threat that there will be "a resumption of hostilities" if the Communists do not agree to Washington's terms. Still, as he returns to Washington, Kissinger remains

Central Intelligence Agency—and several hours with Mr. Nixon himself—Kissinger appears before an unusual weekend press briefing at the White House to blast the North Vietnamese for making "frivolous" demands in Paris and to announce that the two sides have not reached an agreement that "the President considers just and fair." In the meantime, Mr. Nixon has been reviewing military options with Deputy Defense Secretary Kenneth Rush and chairman of the Joint Chiefs Adm. Thomas Moorer at Camp David and with the Joint Chiefs as a whole at the White House. One day after the Kissinger briefing, the President orders the bombers to go north.

There was little doubt that the President had ordered the bombing to punish Hanoi, but from the beginning the Ad-
(Continued on Page 12)