

Washington merry-go-round

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WITH LES WHITTEN

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WASHINGTON — While Secretary of State Henry Kissinger is promoting peace in the Middle East, according to sources familiar with his grand design, he is also preparing for continued hostility.

At best, he believes he may be able to keep the Arabs and Israelis apart until the next round of negotiations. A final settlement, he knows, will have to come out of Geneva. He has given up trying to prevent a revival of the Geneva conference, where both the Soviet Union and the Palestine Liberation Organization will be represented.

Kissinger believes that the Soviets want to continue the tension in the Middle East, albeit without open warfare which could bring a dangerous confrontation with the United States. For tension keeps the Arabs dependent upon Soviet support.

If permanent peace should come to the Middle East, the Arabs would have less need of Soviet arms and could gradually loosen their ties with Moscow. Only Arab fear of Israel's military power, the Kremlin recognizes, permits the Soviets to keep their foothold in the Middle East.

Kissinger, therefore, expects the Soviets to obstruct any settlement that could bring lasting peace between the Arabs and Israelis. This is the reason he has tried to keep the negotiations away from Geneva, where the Soviets have a voice.

This is no longer possible, Kissinger realizes, so peace in the Middle East will remain tenuous. The astute secretary of state has been moving, meanwhile, to protect American interests in the area.

He has been guided more by geography than ideology. The United States, for example, has a big stake in the rich oil fields around the Persian Gulf. Consequently, he has sought to strengthen U.S. ties with the Persian Gulf states from Iran to Oman. He is trying to bolster the military power of Iran, in particular, as the protector of the Persian Gulf. But he is also doing all in his power to help all the Arab oil sheikhs to put down radical, Communist-inspired movements.

Pakistan is strategically located at the top of the Arabian Sea, commanding the approaches to the Persian Gulf. This is one reason, say our sources, for Kissinger's famous tilt toward Pakistan. He has quietly encouraged Iran and other oil potentates to provide Pakistan with over \$1 billion in military aid. Now Kissinger has also lifted the U.S. embargo, which will permit the United States to ship arms directly to Pakistan.

Also crucial to U.S. interests in the Middle East, Kissinger contends, is Turkey which sits astride the Soviet passageway from the Black Sea to the

Mediterranean Sea. This explains his careful but unsuccessful attempts to tilt toward Turkey. In the secretary's view; Turkey is an essential ally which Congress has alienated by cutting off military aide.

In private, Kissinger has complained that he is bound by geopolitics in choosing the allies that will be best for the United States. He has to give second place, he has said, to the degree of democracy in those countries and to their ethnic constituencies in the United States.

SECRET AGENT? CIA defector Phillip Agee has identified a former Paris associate, named Sal Ferrera, as a probable undercover CIA agent. We have now learned that the same Ferrera was once on the staff of Washington's underground newspaper, "Quicksilver Times."

It would have made a perfect cover for CIA work. For as an underground reporter, Ferrera had access to the radical leaders, ghetto militants, Latin American leftists and other revolutionaries who came to Washington.

Subsequently, Ferrera moved to Paris where he became associated with an attractive woman named Leslie Donegan. Agee charged that she loaned him a bugged typewriter. It contained a hidden electronic device, which made it possible for the CIA to locate his hideout in Paris. Agee says he is "almost" sure that Ferrera was also a CIA spy.

Ferrera denied to us that he has ever worked for the CIA. But his former associates in Washington's colorful underground press community believe that Agee's suspicions about Ferrera may be right.

They recall, for example, that he lived in a fashionable apartment and was always better fixed for cash than his comrades in the "Quicksilver Times" commune.

"He wasn't living out of a sleeping bag or an orange crate," said one former friend, Patti Heck. Another acquaintance, lawyer Douglas Smith, agreed: "Sal's lifestyle was inconsistent with his professed political views. He lived in a nice apartment, a new building where you had to be announced to get in."

Ferrera also had a fascination for electronic equipment and knew how to use it, they said. Ms. Heck told us she expected "sooner or later somebody was going to turn up" as an infiltrator, but she hates to think it was her friend Ferrera.

"When I saw the Agee book," she said sadly, "I cried. I didn't want to believe it. I really liked him."