

Kissinger: 1-Man State Department

By Jack Anderson

For the past five years, U.S. foreign policy has been almost totally dominated by one man—Henry A. Kissinger. Inside sources, with secret documents to back up their story, have told us how he has manipulated the diplomatic strings.

Throughout the Nixon years, Kissinger steadfastly maintained to inquiring reporters that he never recommended policy to the President unless his views were solicited. He merely presented "options," he vowed, and left it to the chief to make the decisions.

It was said that President Nixon would retire to the solitude of the Lincoln sitting room or to his secluded office in the White House annex, where he would pore over his options. After much agonizing and scratching on yellow legal pads, he would emerge and announce his momentous decisions.

This is not, according to our sources, how it happened. They say Kissinger seldom failed to give the President his personal recommendations, and Mr. Nixon seldom failed to take the advice. As a former Kissinger associate put it succinctly: "Nixon agreed with Henry on the things he knew about, and he trusted Henry on the things he didn't know about."

The pattern was set early in 1969, when Mr. Nixon gave the National Security Council staff a pep talk. After a few general remarks, according to several eye-witnesses, he nodded toward Kissinger. "Henry and I are going to end the war," the

President said, with a sly smile. "We want you fellows to take care of the rest of the world."

Our sources say Mr. Nixon then launched into a furious and vulgar assault on the State Department. Foreign policy was going to be handled by the White House, he declared, and not by the "striped-pants faggots" at Foggy Bottom.

There was a collective gasp from the two dozen NSC staff members. President Nixon, with his penchant for saying the wrong thing at the wrong time, had forgotten that the majority of his audience had come to the White House from the Foreign Service.

Thereafter, Kissinger set up his own private State Department in the basement of the White House, where he directed every aspect of the decision-making machinery.

He presided over the National Security Council, which determined overall policy. He controlled the super-secret Committee of Forty, which plotted covert activities. He also headed the Washington Special Action Group, which assembled to manage crises.

The secret minutes show that Mr. Nixon seldom attended these crucial meetings, but waited for Kissinger to fill him in. The two men conferred frequently.

Sources who occasionally were called into their private meetings say Mr. Nixon and Kissinger apparently didn't engage in deep, intellectual discussions. They talked about world issues in terms of personalities,

and they were often vulgar, ripping into foreign leaders with crude, sometimes cruel remarks.

When Kissinger traveled abroad, he kept the President informed with cryptic personal messages. Only the two of them understood some of the references.

A typical message from Kissinger in the Middle East, as recalled by a source who saw it, reported: "Met with Number One. Discussed options. He agrees in principle."

Most of Kissinger's recommendations to the President were submitted formally in secret memos, which were guarded as closely as nuclear secrets. Very few of Kissinger's associates are aware such documents exist.

We, however, have seen some of them. A typical Kissinger-to-Nixon memo would be typed on White House letterhead and stamped SECRET. Kissinger would begin with terse background information, and then outline his recommendation.

At the bottom of the page were two blank lines, the left-most marked "Approve," and the other "Disapprove." Almost never, according to our sources, did Mr. Nixon initial the "Disapprove" space.

Usually, a series of "tabs" followed, on plain white paper. These took up specific issues, expressed in blunt, candid language. Each tab contained "Approve" and "disapprove" lines.

The crowning touch would come when Mr. Nixon called in his Cabinet or other associates

to brief them on his foreign policy decisions. As he spoke to them, he invariably consulted a "talking points" paper prepared, of course, by the ubiquitous Kissinger.

Kissinger's personal memos and talking papers guided Mr. Nixon on the Vietnam war, the invasion of Cambodia, the South Vietnamese invasion of Laos, and scores of other initiatives around the world.

Our sources could recall only one major issue on which Mr. Nixon vetoed Kissinger's recommendations. That was the decision to bomb Hanoi and mine Haiphong Harbor in May, 1972. In that instance, Mr. Nixon overruled all of his chief advisers, including Kissinger.

Kissinger's domination of foreign policy has continued into the Ford administration. Indeed, President Ford had scarcely been sworn in before he assured the world that Henry Kissinger would stay on.

Like Mr. Nixon before him, Mr. Ford leans heavily on Kissinger for foreign policy guidance. Our sources say, in fact, that Mr. Ford has not overruled Kissinger yet.

Footnote: Kissinger has some brilliant diplomatic achievements to his credit, including temporary peace in the Middle East, detente with the Soviet Union and rapprochement with mainland China. But there have also been a few disasters, such as the India-Pakistan war, Chile, Cyprus and the aborted "Year of Europe."

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