

Army Life Turning Point For Kissinger

By GAYLORD SHAW

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Getting drafted into the Army may have been the luckiest thing that ever happened to Henry Kissinger.

There he met a monocled lawyer and scholar who informed Kissinger, "You are unbelievably gifted."

Kissinger says, "He told me I had a good political mind. It was a thought that had never occurred to me."

The Army brought Kissinger into contact with a new life and his ambition to be Henry Alfred Kissinger, certified public accountant, faded.

INSTEAD, he was to become a student of international relations, Harvard professor, adviser to presidents and, some say, the world's second most powerful man by virtue of his control of the nation's foreign policy machinery.

As President Nixon's national security affairs assistant, Kissinger was closest to Nixon's side on the recent trip to China and will have the same position on the presidential trip to the Soviet Union later this month.

No such official visits were in view when Kissinger was drafted in 1943. Not yet 20, he worked at a shaving brush factory by day and studied accounting at the City College of New York by night.

THE ARMY shipped him to North Carolina for basic training. After a series of tests disclosed that Kissinger possessed a high IQ, he was selected to be among 3,000 bright young men who were sent for special training at colleges across the nation. Kissinger won't say what his IQ level is.

In late summer, a long slow train carried him back north to Lafayette College at Easton, Pa. He was there for eight months until the Army terminated the program under pressure from congressmen who thought the college campus was too easy a life for infantrymen.

"One of the great snafus," Kissinger now says. "A great case of negative selection."

SO HE HAD another long, slow train ride, this time to Camp Claiborne, La., once again a buck private in the infantry. There, while he and his fellow buck privates were "feeling acutely sorry for ourselves," he met Fritz Kraemer.

Kraemer, himself a private at the time although he was 35, was a lawyer and the holder of two doctorate degrees. Assigned to give indoctrination talks to infantrymen he addressed Kissinger's unit.

Kissinger was so impressed that he did "something I had never done before and have never done since"—he wrote Kraemer a brief note "telling him I appreciated his talk."

A WARM friendship quickly developed that remains strong today. By all accounts, including Kissinger's, Kraemer was to have a profound influence on the young man who wanted to be an accountant.

Kraemer, who later became a colonel, an authority on international politics and now an adviser to the Secretary of Army, says:

"Henry had the misfortune of falling into my hands when he was a 19-year-old just out of the brush factory. For years, he couldn't escape me—we were in the same dugout together."

One recent day, sitting in his Pentagon office wearing his familiar monocle, Kraemer recalled that he recognized that Kissinger was not the usual buck private.

"I WOKE the man—I told him, you are something absolutely unique, you are unbelievably gifted."

Kissinger, who still sees Kraemer often, agrees with this recollection. "He told me I had a good political mind. It was a thought that had never occurred to me."

With Kraemer doing the maneuvering, Kissinger was assigned as an interpreter on a general's staff. Together they were sent to Europe in the closing days of World War II.

It was March 3, 1945, when the Americans marched into Krefeld, a German textile center which had been devastated by Allied bombing raids.

JOCHEN WIRICHS remembers the day well, his eighth birthday. He was miserable because, when the Americans

commandeered the family's villa as headquarters for the 84th Division, the family left behind a birthday cake his mother had baked.

The lad cheered up the next day, though, when a sympathetic American returned the cake.

"It was Kissinger," says Mrs. Margarere Drink, now 54, who was Jochen's nursemaid at the time. She said she met Kissinger when she went to the villa for the cake.

"He hasn't changed all that much," she says. "I saw him on television talking to the Chinese leaders. Mensch, I said to myself, you spoke to that man yourself 27 years ago."

JOCHEN WIRICHS and Mrs. Drink are among the few Krefeld residents who remember Kissinger during his brief stay in the city. It was a confused period before zones of occupation were finally sorted out and Krefeld passed over to British control.

A gap exists in city records for that time, but Kraemer recalls that young Kissinger was put in charge of reorganizing Krefeld's government. He said Kissinger, in three days, set up a working municipal government in a large city

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EDITOR'S NOTE: World War II awakened buck private Henry A. Kissinger to the career that prepared him to be President Nixon's assistant for national security affairs. This article is the third of a four-part series.

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abandoned by the Nazis only a few days before.

"Everything was kaput when the Americans came and people were only too thankful to have some order restored," said Dr. Guido Rothhoff, Krefeld city archivist.

THE ARCHIVIST adds:

"They installed a German burgomaster who took daily orders from the military and got things going again. There was a ban on fraternization at first but it wasn't enforced very strictly. All in all, they were very decent."

When the Americans moved into the Wirichs family villa, young Jochen, his parents, their four other children and

nursemaid Margarete Drink had to move into the cellar of the family brewery next door.

But Mrs. Drink recalls that Kissinger "allowed me to visit the villa almost every day to fetch provisions for the family and I found him very sympathetic. We often got American ration packages, with real coffee."

KISSINGER says he remembers allowing German families access to the headquarters villa, although such access was forbidden by regulations.

Recently, in gratitude, Jochen Wirichs, now 35 and owner of the Rvenania brewery, sent Kissinger a case of the dark "Alt Biec" which his family

has brewed since 1838.

While in Krefeld, Kissinger showed such flair for government administration that he was soon put in charge of the district of Bergstrasse. Kraemer says the people of the region begged to keep Kissinger there. But he was later transferred as a sergeant to

the faculty of the European Command Intelligence School.

THERE HIS job was teaching Allied officers how to trace down Nazis who had vanished in the confusion following the end of the war. His salary was a lofty, for that time, \$10,000 a year.

But the Kissinger intellect

had been awakened, and he sought broader knowledge. For the second time in eight years, he crossed the Atlantic from Europe to America.

The first time, he landed in the United States as a refugee from Hitler's Germany. This time he headed for Harvard.

Next: The Road to the White House.