

The advance man strikes again

The book of Kissinger grows longer and more obscure each month. His missions are now almost routine, and the wall of secrecy dropped around them grows more formidable each time as the White House retreats from what it considers a hostile and unappreciative world.

What was he doing in Moscow? It is certain that he went there to make sure that the summit was on track. Kissinger himself cautions that we should not suggest any deal was made concerning the Vietnam war. But he does not deny that the strains between the U.S. and the Soviet Union had grown to the point where both nations wanted reassurance that they could actually sit down and talk in Moscow with at least some hope of benefit. Kissinger is emphatic that this was achieved in his 15 hours or so of talks with Communist party chief Leonid Brezhnev. What else was discussed, agreed upon, achieved remains a mystery. Certainly, the resumption of the peace talks was hashed over in Moscow. But there were some other summit details that Kissinger went to straighten out much as he did with China. He says as much, without specifying them. They no doubt have to do with such things as an arms limitation agreement, trade, the Middle East.

The Kissinger Moscow mission grew out of a private correspondence conducted between Nixon and Brezhnev. How many letters, how frequent and how detailed they are remains a very dark secret. There is the impression around Washington that the exchange occurs at least monthly. In any event, the two leaders agreed in these letters that it would be wise for Kissinger to come to Moscow secretly for the pre-summit negotiations. Instrumental in arranging all this was Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin, who plotted the details of the four days with Kissinger in

Washington, then flew to Moscow with him to be on hand for the discussions.

By now Kissinger is a consummate actor in the special theater he has constructed. He drove off into the dusk Wednesday evening from the White House, accompanied by members of his staff. His first stop was the Georgetown salon of socialite Polly Wisner on P Street. To all outward appearances, it was to be another typical Kissinger evening of wit, occasional profundity and general warmth among Washington's important after-dark people. He behaved just as usual, says Mrs. Wisner. Not remote, not preoccupied. But after his casual goodnight to his hostess, he climbed into the black White House limousine and sped directly to Andrews Air Force Base. One of the President's large jets was waiting (not the *Spirit of '76*), and off they roared into the darkness, heading for Moscow. There would be one refueling stop. With Kissinger were four members of his young staff: Helmut Sonnenfeldt, Peter Rodman, John Negroponce and Winston Lord.

The plane settled down at an airport near Moscow customarily used for domestic flights and far from Sheremetyevo, where international flights ordinarily terminate. At the airport to greet Kissinger was First Deputy Foreign Minister Vasily Kuznetsov. It was a warm but not effusive greeting. Secrecy muffled any great displays. The party boarded a fleet of waiting limousines and off they went for Lenin Hills, where Kissinger's guest house was located. This is an area of the city near the University of Moscow. It is a very comfortable dwelling, surrounded by a wall and an apple orchard. That evening Kissinger met there with Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko for two hours.

For the next three days Kissinger met with Brezhnev for about five hours each day. They met

in another villa near Kissinger's guest house. This place had a large sloping lawn in front and an orchard to one side. From the windows of the place the Americans could look out across the Moscow River and over Moscow itself. It was an impressive sight.

Like the first Chinese mission to Peking, this mission had the highest security. Not until he had been there for four days and was nearly ready to leave was the American embassy in Moscow told of Kissinger's presence. Dobrynin had arranged for a fleet of courier cars that shuttled the Kissinger staff members to and from the airport where the air force plane that had brought them served as a communications center, transmitting and receiving messages from Washington.

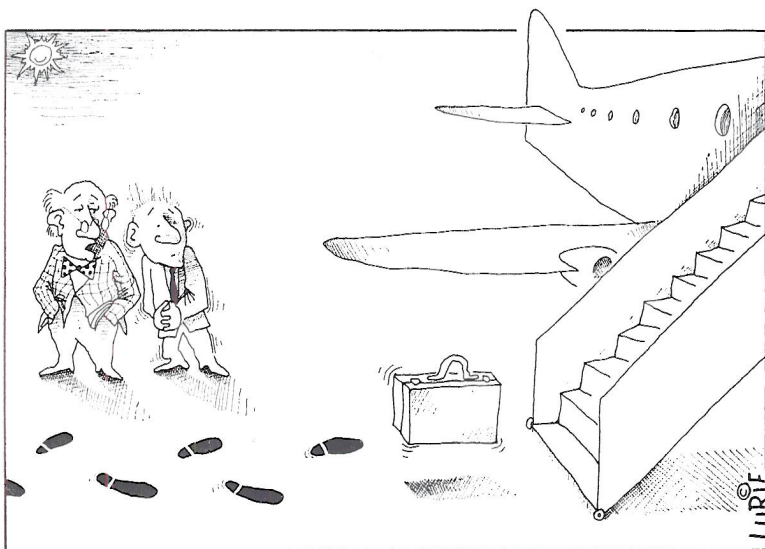
At night Kissinger and his men stayed within their villa, working on the messages to the President and making reports. They did have some spare time, however, and the Russians furnished them with Soviet movies. They were free of any propaganda, just entertainment. One was about a diamond thief who persistently goofed his grand plots.

The mood of the sessions was cordial. There was no shouting, nor any irreconcilable differences, at least about the arrangements. Brezhnev was tough, but that was expected. He was also impeccably polite and personally gracious. Indeed, as in China, there were genuinely warm moments when the two men walked on the lawn of the meeting villa and looked out over Moscow. Then Brezhnev talked in personal, human terms, and there is every indication that the two men were able to find common philosophical ground.

On the last day of the visit Kissinger spent six hours with Gromyko. He also got a tour of the Kremlin and a chance to look over the apartment the President will occupy while he is in Moscow. At the same time, he was taken on a little side excursion to view the former apartment of the czar. To avoid detection in their brief tour through Moscow, the Americans rode in limousines with curtains on the windows.

On Monday Kissinger left the way he had arrived, spirited to the airport in a closed car, hurried onboard and then off for America to make a rendezvous at Camp David late Monday afternoon. Having reported fully to the President, Kissinger was back in Washington Tuesday morning.

Even for Henry, it was a pretty good performance. So long as we must conduct our diplomacy in this bizarre manner, it is plain that he is the man for the job. No one else has his combination of physical endurance, scholarship, aplomb and the knack of getting along with the wide variety of human types in positions of power in the world today. Add to that his talents as a survivor in the bureaucratic jungles of the Nixon administration and you can't help but admire the man.



"It's Henry again"