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The troubles of Kissinger

By James McCartney
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WASHINGTON — Henry Kissinger is tense and perhaps even morose as he prepares to leave tonight for a new effort to break the deadlock in Middle East peace negotiations.

He sees the outlook for peace in the Middle East as precarious.

He is just as concerned about disintegrating U.S. power from one end of the Mediterranean to the other, from Turkey to Portugal.

He sees no immediate way out of the Greek-Turk confrontation on Cyprus, unless a recalcitrant Congress can be persuaded to change its mind about the arms aid cutoff to the Turks.

He clearly is feeling the pressures of unsolved problems in his relations with Congress.

As matters stand, Kissinger is getting along better with the Russians and Chinese, the Egyptians and the Israelis and even the French, than he is with the Democratically controlled Congress.

The Kissinger of today is not the totally self-confident Kissinger of two years ago, before he inherited the full mantle of foreign policy leadership of the world's most powerful nation.

You couldn't say he's shaken.

But to watch him and to hear him talk earnestly about the world's problems is to see a man on the defensive.

He will admit error, but rarely changes position.

His immediate problem is Middle East peace.

He believes his Middle East mission, expected to last about 10 days in its first

phase, could go either way — succeed or fail.

He plans stops in Israel, Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia and says he wants to "look these leaders in the eye."

But as one top State Department official has put it, "this is our last run" on an effort to work out a new military disengagement agreement between Egypt and Israel on the Sinai Desert.

If a new agreement can't be reached by March, Kissinger plans to cease what he has called his "step-by-step" approach and try a radically different one.

That might mean a return to the Geneva peace talks, which opened last winter, but quickly disintegrated.

But Kissinger doesn't want to go back to Geneva if he can help it, because the conference could be torn apart immediately over the issue of seating the Palestine Liberation Organization of Yassir Arafat.

Israel has said it will not sit down with Arafat, and the U.S. has supported the Israelis.

But Kissinger sees the Middle East problem as only the most urgent of a complex array of world problems, many interrelated, that have thrown up the most serious challenge to American diplomacy since the days following World War II.

He has his own vision of what he is trying to accomplish.

Kissinger sees the development of the Marshall Plan, and the subsequent North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO), as the fundamental building blocks of the post-war world. It is a military alliance.

He sees his job as building an economic alliance of comparable importance, an

alliance of the world's industrial nations, including the U.S., Europe and Japan. press conferences, he never has managed to make this vision clear publicly.

Although he has given many speeches in recent months and staged many Everybody knew what the Marshall Plan was following World War II. But there is no

clearly presented Kissinger Plan. to the public.

This may be the root of Kissinger's most serious problems with Congress and the press.

cept of what he is trying to do.

But there can be no question about a fundamental aspect of Kissinger's approach to world politics.

He has been so busy playing the role of fireman on the world stage, seeking to prevent disaster in South-east Asia or the Middle East, or on Cyprus, that there is no clear overall con-

He continues to see the U.S. as the dominant leader of a great coalition of non-communist nations, pulling most of the strings and accepting much of the responsibility for world order.