

Heat in The Kitchen

By Anthony Lewis

BOSTON, March 5—Secretary of State Kissinger's executive assistant, Lawrence S. Eagleburger, has taken strong exception to criticism of Mr. Kissinger in this column. In a letter published on this page yesterday, he attacked two January columns as, among other things, unfair, offensive, distasteful and painful.

In recent months Mr. Kissinger has come under increasing criticism especially from members of Congress who feel he has misled them. The response has been to dismiss the critics as unmannerly, almost unpatriotic. When Senators offered criticism, the White House treated it as *lèse majesté* and said the nation should unite behind the Secretary.

Mr. Eagleburger said it was proper to examine "the objective results of his foreign policy." But these articles, he said, attacked Mr. Kissinger's "motivation."

Parlor psychoanalysis of officials would be fair game for protest. But that is not involved. What Mr. Eagleburger calls "motivation" is a scrutiny of Mr. Kissinger's premises, ideas, values, methods. To rule out examination of those fundamental aspects of a man holding so much power would be dangerous and profoundly undemocratic.

Henry Kissinger has a unique role in the United States Government, a more dominant one than George Marshall or Dean Acheson or John Foster Dulles. He is the only man ever to hold two of the country's four top national security jobs: Secretary of State and Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. In that position he can speak for the whole executive branch when he goes to Cairo or Moscow.

If it were not for Congress, he could in fact speak for the entire Government. Many foreign leaders have had the impression that he does, and he plainly would prefer life without Congress. He has often shown a disinclination to play by the democratic rules, as in his attempt to ignore the statute and binding contracts that forbade arms aid to Turkey after the invasion of Cyprus.

Given Mr. Kissinger's extraordinary power and his will to use it, his values and methods are central to any serious discussion of United States foreign policy today.

As to Mr. Eagleburger's particulars: He said one column charged that Mr. Kissinger had "publicly lied about his role" on American food aid. What the column actually did was to show how he overawed a television interviewer who said that much U.S. food was sent abroad for political reasons. Mr. Kissinger effectively silenced him by saying "the vast majority—the considerable majority of our food aid goes for humanitarian purposes." The column then gave the facts on aid distribution in detail; only a summary is possible here.

In the last fiscal year only 37 per cent of the main U.S. food program was budgeted for countries officially listed as especially hungry and poor. Congress became so outraged at the political use of food that it passed a law requiring 70 per cent of the aid to go to the most needy countries. Mr. Kissinger tried to negotiate a way around that with Senators. But in the end, greatly increasing total aid was the only way to keep his promises of food to such clients as Chile and South Vietnam.

The other column in question criticized Mr. Kissinger's policy in Indochina, especially Cambodia. Mr. Eagleburger said it "ignored the facts." "It is a fact," he said, "that Henry Kissinger played a major role in ending American combat involvement in Vietnam and the return of our P.O.W.'s." Quite true. But the column dealt with the continuing war in Indochina—a war, fed by U.S. aid, that the Kissinger policy has not stopped and has no prospect of stopping.

The question is one of values. To Mr. Kissinger, continuing death and destruction in Cambodia are necessary because the only alternative is the fall of the Government to which he is pledged. He thinks that would damage the credibility critical to a particular world order that is weightier in his scale than humane values.

Cambodia is not the only example of this scale of values. When Pakistani soldiers were slaughtering Bengalis, Mr. Kissinger ordered officials to tilt toward Pakistan. When genocide occurred in Burundi, there was no meaningful gesture of U.S. disapproval. When the U.S. Ambassador in Chile, David H. Popper, cabled that he had raised with its leaders the question of torture and repression, Mr. Kissinger wrote across the cable: "Tell Popper to cut out the political science lectures."

But Cambodia is the clearest test of what Mr. Eagleburger calls "the objective results of his foreign policy."

When Mr. Kissinger took office in 1969, Cambodia was an exceptionally tranquil country despite the Vietnamese Communists' use of Eastern border areas. In 1969 American planes began bombing Cambodia, secretly. In 1970 a coup installed Lon Nol, provoking civil war. American troops invaded. Massive U.S. involvement in Cambodia began. Mr. Kissinger was a principal author of all that policy, pushing it against Congressional resistance.

The "objective results" are not in doubt. From a demiparadise where the poorest family lived well from its garden, Cambodia has become a charred wasteland of starving refugees. That has happened, and will go on happening if Henry Kissinger has his way, because the feared loss of American credibility matters more in his universe than the ruin of a harmless people.