

Tom Braden

Kissinger's 'State Department' puts Rogers in the shadows

WASHINGTON — The manner in which United States foreign policy is now conducted can best be described by an incident which took place at the Department of State last week.

Ray Cline, the former CIA official who is now State's director of intelligence and research, prepared an in-house memorandum reporting on foreign reaction—press and private—to Henry Kissinger's visit to Chou En-lai. The memorandum contained no policy information or advice. It was merely a report, and as routine courtesy a copy was sent to Kissinger.

The reaction was swift. All copies, Kissinger ordered, were to be destroyed. As of this date the Cline memorandum does not exist.

It is easy to get an argument between Sen. J. William Fulbright, D-Ark., who is chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and anyone from the State Department over the question of who is least informed on matters about which they think they ought to be informed. Ray Cline, for example, is one of the ablest intelligence officers in the business, an invaluable aide to President Kennedy during the Cuban missile crisis. It must gall him slightly to be told that he cannot write a memorandum.

And it galls Sen. Fulbright, who regards his powers as deriving from the Congress' constitutional responsibility to provide for the common defense, to be told that he cannot ask questions of Henry Kissinger even in secret session. Such questioning, the White House maintains, would violate the President's right to conduct the affairs of his office in confidence.

If he wishes, Fulbright can turn to the Department of State for answers to questions on foreign policy. But the fiction that foreign policy is made in the Department of State can no longer be seriously maintained here no matter that Secretary Rogers is a pleasant and intelligent man whose feelings nobody wishes to hurt.

The fact is that Kissinger has created his own state department within the executive branch and when important negotiations are being planned—as on his visit to China—the official Department of State is not informed, much less consulted. Politeness dictates an exception to this rule for William Rogers, but for William Rogers only.

The struggle for power in Washington between executive agencies and between the legislative and executive branches is nothing new. Power is what government is all about. Government officials strive for power in the same way in which private citizens struggle for money to pay the bills. But what is new about Mr. Nixon's Washington is that the struggle is so one-sided where foreign policy is concerned. The battle has been Kissinger's all the way.

In part, the Kissinger triumph is final recognition that the vast bureaucracy at State has become too unwieldy and self-centered to function. Like a house too big for the family, it devours all the time of its occupants simply to keep it in order. In part, the Kissinger power center, now so self-contained that it has its own administrative unit, is a reflection of President Nixon's personality: wary, untrusting but to the inner circle, cards close to the chest.