

Kissinger's Kissinger

NYTimes

DEC 31 1971

Alexander Meigs Haig Jr.

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 30 — The most interesting aspect of the White House advance party that is on its way to China to complete the preparations for President Nixon's journey may be the fact that the delegation is led by someone other than the President's assistant for national security affairs, Man Henry A. Kissinger. The man in the charge is the News next best thing—"Kissinger's Kissinger," as he was described here today. He is Brig. Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., a button-down, Ivy League-style career Army officer who is, above all, loyal to the next man up in the chain of command.

General Haig, at age 47, is the arch type of the military-political staff man who considers his ability to operate—and to advance his own career—to be inversely proportional to the amount of public notice he attracts. The general's success can be measured in two ways.

A colonel when he entered the White House, he made brigadier general within nine months. After barely two years he is on the selection list for promotion to major general.

Still Virtually Unknown

"Selection boards pay attention to commendation letters from the White House," a senior Pentagon official explained. Then too, the official added, senior military men eager to advance their views in policy circles "recognize who a guy works for, and Al Haig works for Henry Kissinger."

In the Defense Department there is already talk about the prospect that General Haig might one day become Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Even more significant — Until Mr. Nixon thrust General Haig into public focus as head of the advance team — is that passion for anonymity. In three years General Haig has risen from being virtually unknown senior military adviser to the National Security Council to become a virtually unknown deputy assistant to the President for national security.

Almost unnoticed, he has emerged as the one member



Associated Press

His loyalty pays off

of Mr. Kissinger's staff of 120 with any clout of his own. At least twice the President has sent General Haig to Southeast Asia to gather military and political information, and it is believed that he made several other unannounced trips to South Vietnam and Cambodia, catching even the State Department unaware.

More often, however, General Haig, slouching slightly, sits for 14 hours or more seven days a week at his desk outside Mr. Kissinger's office. He was on duty on the Saturday in November when the Atomic Energy Commission detonated a nuclear warhead under Amchitka Island in Alaska. It was he who telephoned the President—in Florida with Mr. Kissinger—to assure him that the test had been successful.

Thrives Under Pressure

Mr. Kissinger's demands on his staff have been such as to drive a number of them, feeling tired and unappreciated, back into private research positions. None have been under more pressure than General Haig, who alone sees what Mr. Kissinger sees and who must take drafts of option papers and security memoranda, with Mr. Kissinger's criticism scrawled on the margins, back to the authors for improvement.

The sheer volume of effort involved is reflected by the production under Mr. Kissinger of roughly 140 classified

national security study memorandums, and the sweeping scope is attested by titles such as "Laos Peace Initiatives," "Uranium Enrichment Defense Needs" and "Vietnam Riot Control."

Some former Kissinger aides believe General Haig has thrived under pressure by "not disagreeing on issues." Joseph A. Califano, for whom he worked at the Defense Department under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson and who urged Mr. Kissinger to hire him in 1969, recalls him as the "ultimate professional" dedicated solely to "doing the job and doing it right."

Even critics acknowledge General Haig's abilities as Mr. Kissinger's chief of staff. "Henry is just a dreadful administrator," one said. "He's preoccupied with policy. But Haig is enormously effective at keeping the machinery moving."

Whatever their reasons, Mr. Nixon and Mr. Kissinger have developed sufficient respect for General Haig that, on occasion, he fills in for his boss in briefings of the President.

A West Pointer

Alexander M. Haig Jr., who was born in Philadelphia on Dec. 2, 1924 lost his father, a lawyer, before he was 10. He attended Notre Dame for a year before winning a wartime appointment to West Point, from which he graduated in 1947. As a junior aide to Gen. of the Army Douglas MacArthur in occupied Japan, he met and married Patricia Fox, daughter of a senior Army officer.

Their three children—Alexander, 19 and a sophomore at Georgetown University; Brian, 18 and a plebe at West Point, and Barbara, 15 and in high school here—do not see as much of the general as they used to. Nor does he get many opportunities, aside from an occasional tennis or handball match, to relax. Rarely can he count on being sure of using theater or concert tickets.

Nonetheless, his wife, preparing to spend New Year's Eve half a world away from her husband, had no doubt that he was fascinated with his grueling job.

"I don't think any man can resist being at the center of things," she said.