

The Nixon-Kissinger Bond

First of five articles

ONE OF THE BEST of the gathering bundle of Kissinger stories tells of the lady who meets him at a party and asks unbelievably, "Are you the real Henry Kissinger?" And the answer comes back, "So I am told."

There must be times when he must pinch himself to make sure that the reality isn't all a dream story, and that this immense advisory power of his won't dissolve into a puff of smoke.

THE NIXON-KISSINGER partnership — for that is what it is — stands almost by itself in American history. It is a very unlikely partnership. Each has come to it starting at a different point and by a different road. Their convergence in their present roles is one of the great events of our time, possibly of profound meaning for world history.

Seen from this angle, Richard Nixon's story is one of preparation not only for power for a great role in history. His prime passion was to gain the presidency. This once gained, his passion aimed beyond it, to achieve for America a place in the global power structure that would at least arrest the erosion of American power.

Kissinger started his path in Weimar, Germany, growing up as a Jewish boy in a Nazi climate, the son of a lowly school-teacher. He was subject to the everyday humiliations, but they didn't remain to rankle within him. The family came to America in 1938 when he was 15. They lived a typical refugee life in New York, with Henry going to high school and also working in a factory to help the family income.

In 1942, at 19, he was drafted, and in a military camp met another private — Fritz Kraemer — who became his Army friend and intellectual mentor. He went to Ger-

many with the 84th Division (to which, as it happens, I was attached as a war correspondent), served brilliantly in military government and, at the end of the war, he continued briefly as civilian instructor in a command intelligence school.

But he felt he was learning nothing, came back to the United States, enrolled at Harvard, flashed through it with a roll of thunder and lightning and in a decade had become a leading thinker on nuclear weapons and global politics.

The improbable paths of the two men converged in 1968. They were both largely without illusions. Kissinger had helped Nelson Rockefeller with his abortive campaign for the presidency, had a poor opinion of Mr. Nixon and had said so. But Mr. Nixon didn't bruise easily. He had a messy war on his hands, a seething internal situation and cold relations with the other Great Powers. He gambled and took Kissinger. Thus it happened that the Quaker boy from Whittier, who knew power, went partners with the Jewish boy from Nazi Germany, who knew ideas and was looking for a power base.

IT WASN'T ONLY the brilliance of the man which attracted Nixon: it was his sensitive and exact feel for history and his detachment about power. Kissinger in turn found a Nixon drastically different from what he had expected. The two men were attuned not only to power but to each other.

It was a necessary partnership. Give me a place to stand, Archimedes had said, and I will move the world. Kissinger needed a place to stand. Nixon had the place, but he needed a direction and a philosophy to back it up. Each man had prepared himself for a role which only the other could enable him to fulfill. That is why I call them necessary partners.