

Kissinger's New Assignment

By James Reston

WASHINGTON, March 6—Henry Kissinger is now quietly reorganizing his White House staff and, on instructions from the President, is preparing for an intensive period of negotiations on U.S. relations with Western Europe, Japan and the Middle East.

His assignments from the President in the last couple of years have carried him into spectacular journeys to Peking, Moscow, Paris, Saigon and Hanoi, and transformed him from a Harvard professor into a world figure, but the days of spectaculars are over for the time being, and the days of careful and patient thought about the monetary crisis, the energy crisis and the Mideast crisis are now at the top of Washington's foreign affairs agenda.

Kissinger is now preparing for these European and Middle Eastern talks—which are connected, because the Arab-Israeli conflict and the energy

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crisis affect Europe as well as the United States—as carefully as he prepared his assignments to Peking and Moscow.

He has more things to deal with now, so he has to delegate more authority. He will have a new assistant on international economic affairs, who will be appointed in the next few weeks. Helmut Sonnenfeldt will be his principal deputy for European and Soviet affairs, unless he is transferred to Treasury. Richard T. Kennedy, a retired Army colonel, will be his assistant on all National Security Council affairs, and his deputy on all questions will be Brig. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, who has replaced Maj. Gen. Alexander M. Haig, now Vice Chief of Staff of the Army.

Kissinger, of course, is merely a servant of the President, and has never pretended that he was anything else, but his job is now changing. He has established a close personal relationship with Chou En-lai in Peking and Le Duc Tho in Hanoi, and will probably have to keep in touch with both of them.

For example, the North Vietnamese have been putting arms into South Vietnam in violation of agreements Kissinger made with Le Duc Tho, and Kissinger will probably have to deal personally with this violation.

Also, somebody in the Nixon Administration has to supervise the agreements to exchange diplomatic missions between Peking and Washington, and nobody knows more about this than Kissinger. The Chinese left it to Kissinger to draft the communiqué about their last meeting in Peking and changed only three words. It was not Kissinger, but the Chinese, who suggested that China have an official mission in Washington, much to Kissinger's surprise.

Meanwhile, Kissinger has been accepted in Hanoi as the first high official from the West to visit the North Vietnamese capital, so he will have to maintain these contacts with Asia, while turning his mind to the President's new concerns in Europe, Japan and the Middle East.

All Kissinger needs in this situation is for somebody to invent the 48-hour day. He is being told by his friends that he should quit while he is ahead, that he has nowhere to go now except down. He is being hounded by the newspapers, the magazines and the book publishers to write books for millions, but he is staying on and reorganizing his staff and turning to the problems of the future.

Meanwhile, he is going off for a couple of weeks to rest, and put his mind to the new tasks the President has given him.

It will be interesting to see what he does with this new assignment. In Asia, he argued for compromise, for an end to ideology, for withdrawal from Vietnam, for accommodation with China, the Soviet Union and Japan, and for a new order and balance of power in the world.

In Europe, there are new problems of money, trade, technology and military security.

In the Middle East, there is a fundamental question: Should the United States take the lead in pressing for a compromise between Israel and the Arab states, and if it does, should Washington guarantee the security of Israel and put American soldiers on its borders?

These are the coming questions in Washington: What is U.S. policy about the dollar, about our troops in Europe, about our support of Israel and our need for oil from the Arab states, about how long we will keep over a quarter of a million men west of the Elbe, about American trade, balance of payments, deficits, unemployment, wages, prices, the balance of power abroad and the balance between the rich and the poor at home?

For the last couple of years, Kissinger has merely been asked to concentrate on China and the Soviet Union, and he has done it very well; but now he is being asked to deal with the more complicated problem of the United States, and he is withdrawing to think about it, and reorganizing his staff to deal with it.

His record with Chou En-lai in Peking and Le Duc Tho in Paris and Hanoi is pretty good, but now he has to think about Heath, Pompidou and Brandt in Europe, and Wilbur Mills and others in the Congress, and that may not be so easy, even for Kissinger.