



Some Kissinger Surprises in Store

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HENRY A. KISSINGER'S appointment to lead the State Department has been discussed in every possible medium and at inordinate length. Nonetheless, a small bet is hereby offered that Kissinger's secretaryship will produce major surprises.

The point is that Henry Kissinger is an habitually surprising man. There is the matter of his press relations, to begin with. In an Administration biterly and often deservedly unpopular with the press, it is always easy for any individual official to gather harvests of laudatory notices in print. Discreet disloyalty is the common method.

Kissinger has never used this method. He has instead achieved excellent press relations by the most curious combination of rational discussion, toughness, self-mockery and effectiveness in action. By the same combination, although with rather more difficulty, he has also achieved a remarkably successful behind-the-scenes relationship with key leaders in Congress.

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THE INITIAL difficulty with Congress arose, of course, from the fact that he was then performing the real functions of a secretary of state but lacked the title and the public responsibility. Now that he will be secretary in the fullest possible sense, the handicap of the formerly ambiguous situation will be automatically removed.

This by no means guarantees the immediate conversion of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to the Administra-

tion's policies. But it plainly creates a situation in which Kissinger's least noticed but far from least remarkable talent will have full play for the first time.

Kissinger has a talent for public exposition of delicate situations and complex policies that is unlike any this town has seen since time out of mind.

President Nixon perfectly understands this remarkable talent of his secretary-designate. But even the President could not exploit the Kissinger talent in anything like full measure as long as Kissinger was officially no more than a leading member of the White House staff.

Now this curious talent for public exposition will be persistently and powerfully exploited. Mr. Nixon has in fact told Republican leaders that one of his many reasons for wanting Kissinger in the secretaryship was to 'have him talk to the country about our problems.' At a guess, Secretary Kissinger regularly talking to the country about the vast problems arising from the current American place in the world will astonish, persuade electrify and horrify, all simultaneously but in differing degrees.

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ONE HAS to make one reservation, to be sure. The great Kissinger feats of public exposition to date have all concerned easy topics. The Kissinger power to persuade when people do not wish to be persuaded has yet to be tested, in fact. Yet it is bound to be tested; and this is why some pretty important figures in this town are due to be horrified. So Kissinger's final impact should be interesting to watch for.