

A Good Man for

Washington

YOU WILL get a lot of arguments and even some sneers against a Nobel Peace Prize for Henry Kissinger, but in this corner it is an honor earned under very difficult circumstances.

The arguments against him are that he didn't end the Vietnam war, but allowed himself to be used to prolong it; that he tolerated the Christmas bombing of Vietnam last year when he was privately opposed to it and that he allowed himself again to be used by the President in the wiretapping of his own colleagues on the National Security Council.

There is something to these arguments, but not much. It is doubtful that the telephones of his colleagues would have been tapped if he had opposed it and been willing to resign rather than tolerate it. That is a strong point against him. But it is probably wrong and even ridiculous to suppose that he could have shortened the war by defying the President's policies, resigning, and taking his opposition to the country. President Nixon was riding too high at that time.

There is little doubt that Kissinger was tempted to oppose the President and get out over the past couple of years. He was severely criticized by many of his former academic colleagues at Harvard and

the Prize

elsewhere, whose respect and friendship he valued very highly. He was the object of suspicion and envy by Haldeman and Ehrlichman, among others, on "the other side of the White House," and far from being on close personal relations with the President, he was not even sure that his own telephones were not being tapped by the President's other aides.

Also, he had vowed to get out after two years in the White House, believing that nobody could give objective advice to the President after so long a time, and by the end of the first Nixon term, he was being offered more than a million dollars to write the story of his White House experience.

★ ★ ★

NEVERTHELESS, he stayed on the job, and nobody can be sure of his motives. Love of peace and power? Not wanting to leave the President, who had brought him to the pinnacle of world diplomacy, when the Administration was in trouble? Respect for the President's policies of detente with China and the Soviet Union? Probably some or all these influenced Kissinger, plus the fact that, at 50, he was too young to retreat from the spotlight, and too old to find anything else so exciting or rewarding.

Also, Kissinger had built a relationship of respect and even admiration with Le Duc Tho of North Vietnam and Chou En-lai of China, and while he never confused personal relationships with national interests, no doubt he felt that these past associations might be useful, and President Nixon obviously agreed when he made Kissinger Secretary of State.

Something has to be said here for the President about all this. Mr. Nixon chose Kissinger as his foreign policy adviser on the advice of Governor Rockefeller of New York, without really knowing Kissinger. It was the President who made the opening to China through President de Gaulle of France, not Kissinger. And it was the President who set the time table for withdrawal from Vietnam, not Kissinger.

Kissinger has been a skillful negotiator and an articulate spokesman of highly controversial Vietnam policy and it is ironic that he should get the Nobel Peace Prize just when his negotiations for detente with the Soviet Union and China seem to be in doubt, if not in trouble.

★ ★ ★

BUT THE awarding of prizes is always a controversial and ambiguous business and if somebody has to be tapped for the last year's contribution to peace, who better than Kissinger?

He even maintained what peace there was in Washington in the last year between the White House and the Congress, between the White House and the French on the devaluation of the dollar and between the White House and the Administration's critics in the press.

New York Times