

Books of The Times

The Orchestration of Diplomacy

By FLORA LEWIS

KISSINGER. By Marvin Kalb and Bernard Kalb, 577 pages. Little, Brown. \$12.50.

There is no doubt that Secretary of State Kissinger has become a global superstar, with the kind of international attraction rivaled only by a combination of Charles A. Lindbergh, the Prince of Wales and Marilyn Monroe in their prime. So it is natural that he has become the subject of articles and now a full biography, although his career is far from complete and the results of his work uncertain. He is a personality, he is always in the middle of the news. He is a story.

And the Kalb brothers, both CBS correspondents who have covered Mr. Kissinger and the events that swirl around him, have written it. They have told us a little about his childhood and background, a lot about his crisis diplomacy and how he has orchestrated it. They are first-rate reporters and their book is a report from the front, with the jokes, the gasps, the whimpers of life in the trenches of statesmanship.

But, as inevitably with reports from the front, it is from a single vantage point and the meaning of the struggle is all but lost in the flash and thunder. Here is a useful compendium of what Mr. Kissinger has been doing since he went to Washington and points around the globe. Here essentially is the Kissinger eye-view, or at least the view the Secretary has chosen to present at this time, of what was happening during those endless hours of secret exchanges with the mighty of this world. This is not to say that the Kalbs have written a sycophantic book. The warts are there; the ego, the passion for secrecy, the contempt for the bureaucracy, the somewhat childish delight in splash and spectacle. Mr. Kissinger himself enjoys disclosing them from time to time, and, as the book shows, sometimes uses self-deprecation as the other blade of the diplomatic weapon of flattery that he wields with such total skill.

Lone Cowboy at High Noon

Even as a portrait, however, the picture is incomplete. It doesn't add insight to the traits that have been so widely displayed. That is admittedly difficult. Mr. Kissinger talks a good deal but tells little about himself. In the famous interview with Oriana Falacci, the Italian writer, quoted in the book for its passage on his vision of himself as a lone cowboy riding into town at high noon, there is another even more revealing passage.

Complaining that she had never interviewed anyone who "defended themselves as strenuously as you from attempts to penetrate their personality," Miss Falacci asked, "Are you shy, by any chance, Dr. Kissinger?" He answered yes, and no. He said both the mysterious, tormented image of him and the merry one were untrue. I'm neither the one nor the other. I'm . . . No, I won't tell you what I am. I'll never tell anyone."

Certainly, he hasn't told the Kalbs and they haven't attempted to explain him, or to place him clearly in his surroundings. Though there are accounts of his various dealings with former President Richard M. Nixon, there is no illumination of the most fascinating personal question about the Kissinger stewardship of American foreign policy, which is just how he and Mr. Nixon interacted, how their strange symbiosis actually functioned. It is noted that Mr. Kissinger is "a political chameleon," it is recorded that he approved of the 1972 Christmas bombing of North Vietnam and deliberately spread rumors that he opposed it and had been overruled by the President. But the way they really influenced each other isn't made any clearer. This is of greater importance now that the Secretary of State reports to a new President, one who has no pretensions to expertise in foreign affairs and will presumably give Mr. Kissinger still more latitude.

Much more important, however, is the lack of perspective, of fundamental analysis of Mr. Kissinger's policies not through

his own assumptions but from the outside, measured against the views of the others involved and against the consequences. In the dazzle of his personality and the whoosh of his jet, there are vital questions left unasked, let alone unanswered.

There is the question of the value of his tactic of intense secrecy. Mr. Kissinger believes it is the best way to run diplomacy, but for all the proclaimed pluses there are a number of tangible if less well-advertised minuses. It was secrecy that led Mr. Kissinger to misjudge the reaction of President Nguyen Van Thieu to the October, 1972, Vietnam agreement, which was never signed. Secrecy and speed also brought the American negotiator to accept what he later acknowledged was a faulty agreement, because not enough people were allowed to contribute their knowledge. The pact failed even to mention the demilitarized zone between North Vietnam and South Vietnam, a crucial point for Saigon. Later, Mr. Kissinger insisted that this was the problem that brought the collapse of subsequent negotiations, and that it took the bombing to overcome it. But throughout the whole period, the North Vietnamese were saying publicly that they always accepted the DMZ as defined in the 1954 Geneva agreement, and that is just how it was put when the Vietnam accords were finally signed in January, 1973.

Effects of Secrecy

It was secrecy that led to the year of harsh dispute with Europe in what was supposed to have been the year of renewed attention to allied amity. Virtuoso secret diplomacy has to forgo the carefully weighted information the huge State Department staff could otherwise provide, and which would have averted the disputes. American diplomats can't warn Washington of how foreign Governments will react to United States policy when they aren't told what United States policy really is.

Again and again, we are told that Mr. Kissinger "misjudged" or "miscalculated" other Governments' positions, including the Soviet position in the 1973 Middle East war. The information was there, but it didn't get through to him. The question begs to be asked whether his diplomacy was really advanced or hampered by the insistence on secrecy within the Government.

The question of the value of secrecy between the Government and the people also needs to be asked. How durable are policies made without adequate public explanation and understanding? This isn't to say diplomats should operate in the proverbial goldfish bowl, but that isn't the alternative to a lack of direct, honest public guidance at each vital stage of foreign-policy decision. The Kalbs quote Mr. Kissinger himself as saying, "No foreign policy—no matter how ingenious—has any chance of success if it is born in the minds of a few and carried in the hearts of none."

Beyond tactics, there is the question of Mr. Kissinger's strategy to be analyzed and assessed. It is a strategy of focusing on big-power balance and achieving a status quo world, the Congress of Vienna strategy described in Mr. Kissinger's most self-revealing book, "A World Restored."

But can the big powers really manage to keep little ones from pursuing their own immediate interests and embroil whom they may? Should they, or should they try to take the interests of others more into account? Can the volatile late 20th-century world be kept at status quo, even for the 30 years that the 18th-century Congress of Vienna achieved? Or does an effort to keep the lesser powers in their place mean that change, when it comes, will be all the more violent?

"Kissinger" is one part of the raw material, handily put together. That serves a purpose. But there is still a need for a broader, deeper, longer view of the personality, the role, the ideas and the effect of this extraordinary man with so much responsibility for a dangerous world.