

The Rise of Henry Kissinger

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KISSINGER: The Uses of Power. By David Landau. 270 pages. Houghton Mifflin. \$5.95.

To read David Landau's "Kissinger: The Uses of Power"—especially to read it at the present moment in the history of the war in Southeast Asia—is a depressing experience indeed. For near the end of this analysis of the mind of President Nixon's special assistant for national security affairs, by a young Harvard graduate and a former managing editor of *The Crimson*, it becomes evident from Mr. Landau's argument that far from an amicable settlement of the war, what we are more likely to see in the months ahead is reinvigorated attacks from the North and the National Liberation Front (Vietcong), and a response from the Nixon Administration that may surpass all the previous measures taken to date. For if Mr. Landau's thesis is correct, then the possibilities for peace are remote. And, as he concludes: "What means would Nixon and Kissinger turn to if all their earlier measures failed and North Vietnamese success seemed imminent? Leveling Hanoi and Haiphong? Bombing the North's irrigation dikes? Such acts would cause mass murder and enormous destruction, but they would not stop the war in the South. There would be only one alternative left: the use of tactical nuclear weapons to rout the North Vietnamese armies from positions in South Vietnam." And, as Mr. Landau has already taken pains to demonstrate, the use of tactical nuclear weapons is not at all remote from Henry Kissinger's thinking.

How does Mr. Landau know all this? He doesn't know it, of course. But the speculative case he makes is both plausible and persuasive, because first of all, he has so skillfully combined a study of Mr. Kissinger's intellectual development with an analysis of his visible record to date. Second, he has made use of such unusual source material, including information gathered from Government officials who have asked to remain unidentified (and part of that information is verbatim quotations from Mr. Kissinger's off-the-record briefings of the press). And thirdly, Mr. Landau's reliability as an analyst of Mr. Kissinger's secret diplomacy has already been confirmed: for part of this book is based on a series of articles he wrote for *The Harvard Crimson* on the negotiations Mr. Kissinger secretly undertook with the North Vietnamese in 1967; and Mr. Landau's account of these negotiations was proved to be more or less accurate by the previously withheld portion of the Pentagon Papers that was leaked to the press in June, 1972, three months after Mr. Landau had completed the version contained in this book.

What is the picture of Mr. Kissinger that emerges here, then? Briefly, it is this: As a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany and as an astute student of international relations at Harvard, he was bound not to develop into a conventional Cold Warrior of the Truman Doctrine or New Frontier stripe. "A fear that likely originated in the personal victimization he suffered during the death of the Weimar Republic" had taught him to beware of ideologies in any form; and his studies of history led

him to admire what Mr. Landau calls the "conference system" which resolved the Napoleonic wars and launched Europe on a century of relative quietude before the outbreak of World War I—a system that was, in Mr. Kissinger's own words, "the product of order and not of will."

So, by the time he mounted the stage of history as Mr. Nixon's top adviser, he had come to believe that world order depended on the rational balancing of interests of superpowers, who, as far as Mr. Kissinger was concerned, were the United States and the Soviet Union. And he regarded Vietnam as merely an issue on the agenda of negotiations between the superpowers. All he wanted at the start of the Nixon Administration was to get out of Vietnam without appearing to weaken America's credibility as a superpower.

Conclusions Drawn From the Past

But, Mr. Landau continues, Mr. Kissinger's 19th-century Metternichian worldview overlooked simply everything that had happened since World War I. So Mr. Kissinger failed to approach Vietnam realistically, and thus became a Cold Warrior in a subtler form. He failed to see that Vietnam was not just a bargaining chip in dealings with the Soviet Union. He failed to see that the North Vietnamese might not sympathize with his need to get America out without losing credibility. "In pursuit of that mirage, the United States has actually shattered much of its credibility as a rational and sensible operator on the world scene." And now that Mr. Kissinger and President Nixon have made the war their own, Mr. Landau concludes, there is no telling how far they will go to adjust it to their sense of reality.

Does Mr. Landau's analysis hold water? Are the prospects of a settlement in Vietnam really so bleak? If there is a weak link in the chain of Mr. Landau's careful reasoning, it is his analysis of Mr. Kissinger's basic mindset—for speculations about his early childhood and conclusions drawn from his early historical writings may be inadequate grounds on which to base predictions of the future. In other words, Mr. Landau's study of Mr. Kissinger's past may serve to explain his conduct to date, but it is not necessarily a guarantee that new factors won't alter the pattern of the future or that Mr. Kissinger won't arrive at a new sense of the realities of world order. At least one fervently hopes it isn't.

But the real solace to be gotten from this study—a comparatively frivolous one, to be sure, but real enough nevertheless—may lie in what David Landau represents as a product of the same Harvard department of government that produced Henry Kissinger. For if Mr. Landau can be placed in the continuum that produced Mr. Kissinger and produced, before him, such a comparatively extreme Cold Warrior as Mr. Kissinger's mentor, William Yandell (Wild Bill) Elliot, (and it would seem reasonable to construct such a continuum if only because part of Mr. Landau's book formed his undergraduate honors thesis for the department of government), then progress is being made at Harvard at least, and there seems to be hope for the advisers it may produce in the future.