

4-Star Diplomat in White House

NYTimes

Alexander Meigs Haig Jr. MAY 5 1973

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 4 — Before taking off on another delicate trouble-shooting mission to Vietnam early in January, Gen. Alexander Meigs Haig Jr. posed for pictures with President Nixon outside the Nixon home in Key Biscayne, Fla. As the men turned back toward the house, the President suddenly reached over and fingered the four bright stars on the general's shoulder. The gesture perhaps best symbolized the affection and the pride that the President has for the 47-year-old career military officer whom he chose today as his White House chief of staff.

Man
in the
News

It was only a little more than four years ago that Alexander Haig, a bright young colonel, first set foot in the White House as a senior military adviser to Henry A. Kissinger, the President's principal adviser on national security affairs.

It was little more than a paper-shuffling job — or so most of those who did not know Alexander Haig well because at the time.

Before leaving the White House in early January to become Army Vice Chief of Staff, he had become second only to Mr. Kissinger as the President's most trusted diplomatic trouble shooter.

He played a key role in the Vietnam war strategy and the negotiations that led to the Jan. 27 cease-fire accord. It was he who made a dozen or more sensitive fact-finding missions to Southeast Asia and who delivered the text of the cease-fire agreement to South Vietnam's President Nguyen Van Thieu.

A Recent Trip

And it was to General Haig that the President turned once again only a few weeks ago for still another mission to Southeast Asia, this time with emphasis on the deteriorating situation in Cambodia.

On this mission, he was

entrusted with two diplomatic chores: Persuading President Lon Nol of Cambodia to get his brother, Lon Non, out of politics, and persuading Marshal Lon Nol to bring opposition leaders into the Government. General Haig succeeded in doing both.

In his new job in the White House, he will be cast in something of a different trouble-shooting role, moving into the void left in the top command by the resignations of H. R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman in the wake of charges of White House involvement in the Watergate case.

Joseph A. Califano Jr., once a top White House aide to President Johnson, believes that General Haig, "is just what the White House needs at this point." It was Mr. Califano, under whom Mr. Haig worked at the Pentagon in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, who suggested that the young colonel be hired by Mr. Kissinger in 1969.

'He'll Be Superb'

"He'll be superb in the new job," Mr. Califano said today. "He'll get decisions made, orders implemented and papers flowing into the President's office. He'll work 20 hours a day, and he knows how to get along with people."

General Haig is generally viewed as one of the new breed of Army officers—the men who are well versed not just in the military but in the diplomatic as well.

He is tall and handsome and soft-spoken, but at the same time speaks with conviction. He is considered a conservative on domestic issues but has never been directly involved in jolitical parties.

The son of a Philadelphia lawyer who died when the boy was just 10, Alexander Haig saved up money for college by delivering newspapers, working in the Post Office and serving as a floor-walker in a ladies department store.

After a year at the University of Notre Dame, he won a wartime appointment to West

Point, from which he was graduated in 1947. Years later, he earned a master's degree in International relations.

The year he graduated from West Point, the following words appeared under his name in the yearbook:

"As ever, unchanged, he has with a gay sincerity that has won him an abundance of loyal friends . . . strong convictions and even stronger ambitions mingled with a deep understanding of his fellow soldier should form a 'warrior's chariot' to carry Alex to the top."

He is one of the few four-star generals who never commanded a division. He was an infantry battalion commander and later commanded an infantry brigade in Vietnam in the mid-1960's, winning a battlefield promotion to colonel for leading troops in action near An Loc.

Skipped a Rank

General Haig won two promotions—first to brigadier general, then to major general—while serving on the Kissinger staff. And, just this year, he skipped one rank to become a full general. In choosing him as Army Vice Chief of Staff, President Nixon passed over 240 generals.

He is married to the former Patricia Cox, the daughter of one of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur's staff officers. They have three children.

At West Point, he played football, basketball and handball. He still plays tennis and handball when he has time after the 14-hour to 18-hour days he spends at work.

He once told a friend that during the years he worked on national security affairs at the White House, it was not unusual for Mr. Kissinger to come by about 7 P.M., announce that he was going out for the evening, leave a patch of work that he expected to be done that evening. Much later, Mr. Kissinger would return, the work would be done and the day was ended.