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analysis

Kissinger undid both 242 and Rogers Plan with 'spite'

By Mark A. Bruzonsky
Special to the Star

WASHINGTON — Most of the unprecedented controversy concerning Henry Kissinger that has mushroomed as a result of Seymour Hersh's account of Kissinger's White House Years — The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House — has focused on domestic political affairs.

Whether Kissinger was playing a double-game, giving information to the Humphrey camp on Nixon and to the Nixon camp on the Paris peace negotiations — in each case positioning himself to become national security adviser whoever won the election — has attracted most of the headlines in this country.

Little has been written as yet about major Kissinger foreign policy manoeuvres which are really the heart and purpose behind Hersh's effort to uncover the realities behind the Kissinger myth. Only the Boston Globe has actually republished major excerpts from the book itself which is now a best seller at major bookstores throughout the United States.

Kissinger's undermining of both Secretary of State Rogers and his plan for Middle East peace is the subject of two of the book's most intriguing chapters. And in his opening sentence to this most famous of Kissinger double-dealings, Hersh sums up his view of why Kissinger decided to influence Nixon in a way which caused the Rogers Plan to be still-born. "spite," writes Hersh, "played a major role in American's foreign policy in the Middle East in 1969 and 1970."

no knowledge of Middle East

According to Hersh, from the very beginning Kissinger had a number of reasons for wanting to see a Mid East stalemate. In addition to his rivalry with Rogers at the state department, where UN Resolution 242 was of paramount importance and pressure on Israel was considered imperative, Kissinger knew he has very little knowledge about the Middle East. He further worried that any progress there would be seen as underwriting the Soviet role in the region and the Arab nationalists.

Kissinger "constantly urged the president," Hersh writes, "to discourage the state department from going ahead with any initiative that called for Israel to give up some of its occupied lands in return for a peace guarantee." "Kissinger's reasoning was global," Hersh continues, "if Israel agreed to talks, it would appear to be a victory both for the Arab radicals, who would be seen as skillful in their terrorist attacks, and for the Soviet Union, which would be seen as skillful and successful in its policy of rearming the Arab world."

Nixon himself seemed to harbour a secret bitterness toward American Jewish liberals who had always avoided supporting his political yearnings. For a time he even seemed to want to pursue what had come to be termed a "comprehensive peace" along the lines of Resolution 242. For instance, after a constructive meeting with King Hussein in the Oval Office in April 1969, Nixon told an aide, "we've got to help the King. We cannot let the American Jews dictate policy."

Knowing of Nixon's predilections to not allow the Jewish lobby to block movement toward implementation of Resolution 242, Rogers and the State Department began formulating what they expected to be the firm position of the Nixon administration.

But Kissinger was discontent — both with the State Department "interference" with his grander strategy to link the Mid East to US-Soviet rivalry as well as by Roger's attempts to get the Nixon White House behind an impossible-to-achieve Arab-Israeli peace. "He just didn't see how it was going to work," one aide later recalled. "And his attitude was: so why jump in and not be successful and make a lot of enemies in the process?"

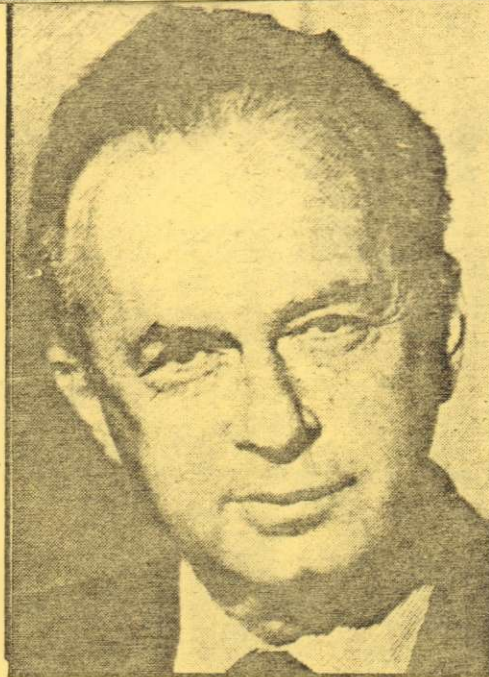
Undercutting Rogers

"That reasoning," according to Hersh's interviews and research, "had a built-in bonus for Kissinger, because the person trying to do what Kissinger considered the impossible was Rogers. But Nixon and Kissinger were not content simply to watch and wait as Rogers floundered; by the end of 1969 they were actively working behind the scenes to undercut him."

By mid-1969, with Kissinger's encour-



Nixon and Kissinger



Rabin

Israelis to step up their military attacks against Egypt in what was being termed the "war of attrition". Israeli Ambassador Yitzhak Rabin cabled home in September, "some sources have informed me that our military operations are the most encouraging breath of fresh air the American administration has enjoyed recently. A man would have to be blind, deaf and dumb not to sense how much the administration favours our military operations, and there is a growing likelihood that the United States would be interested in an escalation of our military activity with the aim of undermining Nasser's standing." Frustrated by the ongoing battles in Vietnam and with the growing anti-war movement at home, Nixon had developed a kind of satisfaction with the Israeli macho image. About a year later, after Israel had begun deep penetration raids into Egypt, Rabin quoted Nixon as follows: "If it were just a question of you and the Egyptians and the Syrians, I'd say, 'let 'em have it. Let 'em have it. Hit 'em as hard as you can.' Every time I hear of you penetrating into their territory and hitting them hard, I get a feeling of satisfaction."

By the fall of 1969 the Rogers-Sisco talks with the Soviets had broken down, "much to Kissinger's relief." Though the Israelis and the organized American Jewish community had already



Rogers

full support, decided to make his efforts more plain and clear.

It was obviously a hurried decision, for State Department aides scrambled to find a suitable public platform and decided on using a 9 December speech to an adult education forum which had been originally scheduled to hear a low-level foreign service officer.

The result in Israel was a sense of crisis coupled to a shock wave of opposition — Rogers had given the Israelis no advance warning. Though the speech had been reviewed and approved in advance by Kissinger, Hersh writes that "Kissinger had not shown the speech to the president in advance, so that when the predictable Israel protests came after it was given — the timing was left to Rogers — he could suggest to Nixon that Rogers had delivered it without clearance. Such manoeuvring would explain Kissinger's elaborate performance before his aides at the first reports on the speech and his failure to acknowledge in his memoirs that the basic Rogers proposal — if not its timing — had received his blessing."

When Ambassador Rabin informed Kissinger that he personally would be leading a campaign against the administration's efforts, Kissinger saw

stances should you attack the president," Kissinger is reported by Hersh to have told Rabin. "How you act is your affair. What you say to Rogers, or against him, is for you to decide. But advise you again: Don't attack the president."

Final act

The very next month, January 1970, Nixon and Kissinger further distanced themselves from Rogers' efforts. A presidential message was sent to an emergency meeting of American Jewish leaders meeting in Washington to protest the Rogers Plan. In that message the president not only promised to continue supplying Israel with military equipment, but he backed away from the strong language used by the State Department concerning the necessity for Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories.

"The tragedy of the Rogers Plan," Hersh writes by way of quoting a former National Security Council official who worked with Kissinger during this period, "was that it made American diplomacy look foolish to the world and it convinced the Israelis that the White House was highly subject to manipulation." Kissinger and Rogers, Hersh continues, "allowed their personality problems to completely emasculate their diplomacy across the board. We showed the Israel how to manipulate us."

Hersh goes on to detail continuing Kissinger efforts to isolate and undermine Secretary of State Rogers while beginning to aim more forcefully for that position himself. Policy disputes over Middle East strategy increasingly became important. "What had started out in 1969 as an almost routine exercise in bureaucratic gamesmanship by Henry Kissinger, operating on behalf of his president...manoeuvred relentlessly as the Nixon administration turned away from the Rogers Plan and moved toward an unnecessary and reckless great-power confrontation," Hersh concludes.

Later in 1970, after Rogers met with S. Ambassador Dobrynin concerning the Middle East situation, Kissinger decided to make a play further diminishing Rogers' role. He warned Nixon threatening to resign and Nixon sent Ehrlichman and John Mitchell to cool Kissinger down. At that meeting Kissinger presented demands which in later years Ehrlichman would find and publish:

1. Attacks on Henry Kissinger, direct or indirect, must cease. An attack on Kissinger is an attack on the president. 2. All cables with policy implications, including especially the Middle East, to be cleared in the White House... 3. All contact with Dobrynin must be cleared ahead of time. Talking points must be submitted before and a report afterwards."

In short, Kissinger had decided to make it intolerable for Rogers to remain with dignity at the helm in the State Department. He was to succeed and in the process he was to condemn the Arab and Israelis to the 1973 war and the United States to another potential face-down with the Soviet Union.

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