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Unless Kissinger is gaga on China then world war may be approaching

WASHINGTON — It is to be profoundly hoped that the brilliant mind of Dr. Henry Kissinger has gone just a little gaga over China.

For if that is not the case, then recent events in the subcontinent are a major landmark on the way to World War III.

This is what Dr. Kissinger is telling us. He sees the events as an upset in the balance of power—rather like the upset which took place in 1936 in the Rhineland.

The Rhineland was the first in a series of moves by Adolf Hitler to upset the power balance established after World War I. The reaction of England and France to German seizure of a zone she had solemnly renounced in two treaties was summed up in the remark of British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin: "I don't know much about foreign affairs, but I know what the average Englishman wants: He wants peace."

So, Dr. Kissinger thinks, does the average American react to what Kissinger regards as a major move by the Soviet Union to upset today's balance of power.

He thinks Moscow encouraged India to aggression at a time when China could not move and the United States would not. He fears that this "Rhineland" will be followed by others, in the Middle East, for example. He is trying to signal Moscow that an Indian invasion of West Pakistan will cause a major crisis.

In part, Kissinger blames himself for not discerning that despite her protestations to the contrary on her visit here, India's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was bent on war. In part, he blames the long agony in Indochina which has made Americans unwilling to use words or undertake deeds in order to uphold power balances.

If Kissinger is right, we are in trouble

and we ought to be worried. But is he right? Or has his natural desire to keep the road open to China so colored his view that he mistakes a local war for a world danger?

As Kissinger sees it, the President must now go off to China in the position of a man who could do nothing to stop invasion of China's ally; the Chinese will wonder whether talks with the United States have any meaning, whether our weight counts for anything, whether Moscow disposes while the United States reposes.

This is what the analogy of the Rhineland means to the man who thinks of his job as that of the watchman on the tower with the duty to sound the trumpet.

There is another view. It holds that the United States should never have placed itself in the position of securing a ruthless dictatorship in Pakistan, that by so doing we find ourselves on the wrong side of the moral issue, that India had to act as it did to preserve its own security. In this view, the Rhineland analogy is meaningless. Few people could argue—even in 1936—that Hitler had just cause.

And indeed, even if the United States had been disposed to act, how could we have acted? In 1936, the French army sat on the Rhine and watched the Germans move into shelling distance of Strasbourg. The United States has no such proximate relationship to the borders of India and Pakistan.

And so Dr. Kissinger may be taking counsel of his fears, fears too much centered on the future of his own initiative in China. But he is a thorough student of history. If he should turn out to be right in his Rhineland analogy, it would be wise to so gird ourselves that there are no Munichs to come.