



Kissinger's Motives Again Misunderstood

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TAKE ANY deeply somber event that ought to constitute a storm warning. In Washington today, you can be certain that the event will then be thoroughly, even willfully misunderstood. This rule has been proven once again by the recent resignation of Paul H. Nitze from the U.S. team negotiating strategic arms limitation with the Soviets.

In his resignation statement, this brilliant veteran of the public service referred to the paralyzing influence of the Watergate mess. Nitze did so, however, in guarded, carefully general terms. Hence all and sundry instantaneously concluded that this was another "protest" resignation.

In reality, however, Paul Nitze resigned solely because he now expects President Nixon to make a new SALT agreement in Moscow that will be dangerously favorable to the Soviets.

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THE REFERENCE to the Watergate mess in Paul Nitze's resignation therefore needs to be explained. Rightly or wrongly — and almost certainly rightly, alas! — Nitze is further convinced that the President wants to go dangerously too far in Moscow for two linked domestic-political reasons.

On the one hand, a squashy SALT agreement can hardly be attacked by the anti-Nixon leaders in U.S. politics today. On the other hand, even a dangerous SALT agreement will give President Nixon "something to show" for his coming

visit to Moscow, and will therefore let him pose as a peace-bringer.

The ironies of all this are considerable. Yet they are the least part of the grim lesson taught by Paul Nitze's resignation. It is known that the man to whom he spoke his piece before resigning was Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. So the question here is why the Secretary should allow the President to play games with this country's long term security for domestic political reasons.

The answer is that the Secretary is doing nothing of the sort, at least in the well-informed opinion of Paul Nitze. That was the reason for the guarded language of Nitze's resignation statement.

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IF YOU EXAMINE Kissinger's motives, however, you again find that they are both deeply somber and totally misunderstood. In brief, the spectacle of seeming-weakness in Washington has always proved an irresistible temptation to the Kremlin. Whenever this country has looked weak, in other words, the Kremlin has always moved with great brutality to exploit the supposed advantage.

Kissinger, therefore, fears the consequences of the spectacle of Washington in the Watergate summer, with a U.S. government all but paralyzed.

In sum, Kissinger and Paul Nitze disagree on a subtle issue: whether it is a greater risk to break off SALT, or to accept a squashy agreement in order not to break off SALT.