

Nixon's Second Summit

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The announcement by President Nixon yesterday that he will visit Moscow next May for intensive negotiations on a broad range of issues indicates that he has won the gamble he took last summer when he disclosed his planned visit to Peking. That step raised the risk of an angry reaction by Moscow to what it might interpret as a Chinese-American coalition directed against the Soviet Union. However, the U.S.S.R. has been playing it cool, as witness the recent four-power agreement on Berlin, the indications of progress at the Helsinki SALT negotiations and now Moscow's receptivity to Mr. Nixon's projected trip.

At his news conference yesterday, the President insisted there was no relationship between his Peking and Moscow journeys. The diplomatic reasons for such a denial are evident, but the intimate tie between the two meetings can hardly be doubted. Mr. Brezhnev scored a domestic political coup with his announcement that Mr. Nixon will be coming to Russia. Implicitly, that news suggested to Soviet citizens that their fears of a Chinese-American anti-Soviet alliance have been proved groundless, no doubt as a result of skillful Soviet diplomacy.

That Mao and his colleagues will be equally happy about this latest turn of events would seem improbable. However, the fact that the President will be in Moscow after he visits Peking may conceivably increase Chinese interest in making concrete progress toward normalizing Sino-American relations. It is perhaps not entirely accidental that the Moscow trip has been announced shortly before Dr. Kissinger's scheduled second flight to China.

The numerous Democrats who would like to run against Mr. Nixon in November 1972 will undoubtedly see the President's trips as purely political ploys designed to get him re-elected. Presumably not even Mr. Nixon would deny that thoughts of political advantage in 1972 do occasionally enter his mind. Nevertheless it would be wrong to look at the two rounds of summit diplomatic meetings now scheduled for the next seven months from purely parochial, partisan points of view.

What has happened is that new possibilities have been raised for a substantial improvement in United States relations with the other two great world military powers, the Chinese People's Republic and the Soviet Union. There is no guarantee, unfortunately, that these possibilities will be realized. But, as he journeys to Peking and Moscow in the cause of world peace and international security, Mr. Nixon will need the support of all Americans regardless of party and irrespective of differences on domestic issues.