



April Deadline For the President

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IN THE PRESENT poisonous political situation, it is worth thinking about how things might be next April, if President Nixon does not resign.

To begin with, the winter months can be counted on to bring the country bad news. At the moment, for instance, the North Vietnamese have more troops in South Vietnam — at least, 190,000 — than they sent south for their last big offensive.

A great winter offensive by Hanoi must be considered highly probable. The South Vietnamese government would have a good chance of repelling the offensive, but Congress has made it extremely difficult for the U.S. to help the South Vietnamese to help themselves.

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ON THE energy crisis front, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has about an even chance of achieving another miracle. If it comes, the miracle will be the Arab oil tap being turned on again fairly soon after Arab-Israeli negotiations finally begin. But this cannot happen nearly soon enough to have much effect this winter.

By next April, therefore, the anger and disenchantment in the country are likely to be deeper and more bitter than they are today. Next April is here chosen as a key moment, for a highly practical reason. The chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, Representative Peter Rodino of New Jersey, has promised a report to the House on the President's impeachment "by the early spring."

Thus April is the first time the President has to think about, when he calculates how the House will vote on a bill of impeachment. In making that calculation, moreover, he has some other factors to weigh.

The Louis Harris poll shows 59 per cent of voters inclining towards Democrats for Congress, against 36 per cent inclining towards Republicans. The Republican Senators and Representatives, particularly, will not respond amiably to the prospect of being decimated in the off-year election.

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IN THESE circumstances, President Nixon has to expect a surprising proportion of House Republicans to absent themselves when a bill of impeachment is finally voted up or down. Finally, the President may need to consider another factor.

The always-influential chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, Representative Willbur Mills of Arkansas is in fact playing with a remarkable new idea. It is nothing less than a bill of joint resolution that would free the President of any threat of prosecution or other court proceedings, if he decides to resign.

Think, then, of that calculation the President will surely have to make next spring, if he continues to refuse to resign. No such calculation by any President is ever predictable, but at least it is unwise to go on parroting the current cliché that "Nixon will never resign."