



# Foreign Policy No Impeachment Key

**Joseph Kraft**

**A** CURRENT White House conceit is that if President Nixon walked across the Red Sea on his coming visit to the Middle East, the press would cite the miracle as proof he couldn't swim. Discount the paranoia about the press and that story asserts a measure of truth.

The truth is that foreign policy is not playing a big role in the impeachment proceedings. Despite the diversionary tactics of the President and his lawyers, the House Judiciary Committee is finally beginning to show determination to make a judgment on the merits.

Abundant evidence shows how little foreign policy now weighs in the impeachment process. The disengagement arranged between Israel and Syria last week, for example, was a tremendous achievement. Everybody acknowledged it — and gave all the credit to Henry Kissinger.

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**E**VEN THE coming visit to the Soviet Union is being discounted within the administration as a "no-win summit." The reasoning is that the best Mr. Nixon can get is an agreement advancing arms control.

Such an accord would, of course, evoke widespread praise. But Mr. Nixon's chief hope in beating the impeachment rap lies with the conservative Southern Democrats and Western Republicans in the Senate. That is the group in Congress most apt to be turned off by an arms control agreement with Russia.

Foreign policy, to be sure, is not the

only card the President has to play against impeachment. There is also the fight being waged by his special Watergate counsel, James St. Clair, in the courts and Congress. Like any good defense lawyer, St. Clair is trying to tie up the case against his client in procedural conflicts. Last week it became apparent that abundant difficulties hedged the matter of the Watergate tapes which are now being sought by both the Watergate special prosecutor and the House Judiciary Committee.

Without exactly saying so, St. Clair has linked the two requests. Subpoenas for the tapes by the Watergate special prosecutor are now before the courts. St. Clair is well placed to make the argument that, as an employee of the executive branch, the special prosecutor cannot go against the orders of the President.

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**T**HE COMMITTEE has been extremely slow to take the offensive against St. Clair. Chairman Peter Rodino and chief counsel John Doar have tended to give the President the benefit of all procedural doubts.

The committee seems to have reacted with excessive caution to the evidence of the Watergate coverup. But the punctilious forbearance fostered by Rodino and Doar is being worn down by Mr. Nixon's continued defiance. More and more there is emerging the question how many times does the President have to streak before the Congress says he has no clothes?