



A Closer Look at Kissinger's Threat

— Joseph Alsop

"DO WE REALLY want the responsibility of hounding from office the most admired public servant in the United States?" This is now a serious question, which a good many politicians, thinkers and above all, key persons in the press and media ought to begin asking themselves.

It is a serious question, in turn, simply because the eventual resignation of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger is a far stronger possibility than anyone seems to imagine. His threat to resign has been called "petulant." He has been accused of being unable to "take it." There has been a lot more nonsense of the same sort.

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BUT TO BEGIN with, it is neither petulant nor over-sensitive to insist you must resign unless your name is promptly cleared, when you have been publicly accused to "dissembling" and even "perjury." These were the accusations levelled at Kissinger by certain elements in your friendly media — who will have the major responsibility if the U.S. eventually needs a new secretary of state.

None of the factors in Kissinger's personal situation appear to be dimly understood in Washington. First of all, he is not where he is today from love of power, or from desire to make a great name, or from other similar motives. If simple ambition had been Kissinger's guiding star, he would have quit long ago, when the quitting was good.

One of the two men he consulted on the

problem in 1973 was David K. E. Bruce, now the leader of our liaison mission in Peking. Ambassador Bruce very strongly urged Kissinger to leave in the general glow of universal adulation that would then have surrounded him.

The other close friend he consulted instead gave greater weight to the simple present U.S. government without Kissinger did not bear thinking about. On this ground, Kissinger was told it was his plain duty to stay. He stayed, from duty and against his better judgment.

In the present circumstances, Kissinger cannot expect to depart from Washington in the same glow of general adulation. The hounds are already baying on his traces. But he would be ludicrously modest, if he did not foresee that his departure would be regarded as a major catastrophe by every one for whom he has the faintest respect.

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FINALLY one must consider one last unknown factor of really decisive significance. As Kissinger has said, to intimates quite frankly, he long ago resolved to resign his office if he found himself beginning to be dragged into the Watergate quagmire.

The secretary of state did not take this resolution from vanity, or from apprehensiveness. He took this resolution solely — and quite rightly — because he concluded that he could not continue to do his job at the State Department with the hounds on his traces, and all serious dialogue drowned by the hounds' loud baying.