

Moscow Tells Ford of Hopes On Relations

By Peter Osnos

Washington Post Foreign Service

MOSCOW, Aug. 10—The Soviet leadership sent a warm message of congratulations to President Ford today and expressed "confidence" that relations between the United States and the Soviet Union will continue to improve.

The message was signed by Nikolai Podgorny, who as chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet is the ceremonial chief of state. The telegram, as released by Tass, the Soviet news agency, said:

"Major changes in the direction of improving Soviet-American relations have been achieved as a result of the mutual efforts of our countries. We note with deep satisfaction your statement of Aug. 9 about your intention to work for the good of peace.

"We express confidence that relations between the U.S.S.R. and the United States will receive further constructive development in the coming years for the benefit of our peoples, in the interest of strengthening universal peace and international security."

The friendly tone of the message was in keeping with the Soviet approach to the change in Washington. Gerald Ford himself is little known here, but Moscow has evidently decided that in the short term, at least, no changes are likely in the American pursuit of detente.

The presence of Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger in the Cabinet and the expressions of bipartisan support for continuing the Nixon administration's foreign policy have apparently persuaded the Kremlin leaders that they can carry on

the dialogue with Washington as they have for the past two years.

That belief was doubtless strengthened today in a message from Mr. Ford to Soviet Communist Party leader Leonid Brezhnev. In Brezhnev's absence from Moscow on vacation the message was delivered by Ambassador Walter J. Stoessel to Andrei Kirilenko, a Politburo member who functions as an unofficial deputy to the Soviet leader.

Stoessel and Kirilenko met for about 20 minutes of what Tass described as "businesslike and constructive" talk. The contents of the presidential message were not disclosed, but Mr. Ford's statements in Washington over the past two days have made the general outlines of his policy clear.

Considering the extent to which detente has been portrayed here as the cornerstone of Soviet foreign policy, the Kremlin leadership could hardly do otherwise but welcome Mr. Ford cordially. Given the uncertainties of the moment in Washington, however, the Soviets could have chosen to feature the substantial problems that remain in Soviet-American relations. Instead, they have been emphasizing the wide support among American political figures for closer Moscow-Washington ties.

President Ford was introduced to the Soviet public today in brief page-one newspaper biographies and a commentary in *Pravda* from Washington correspondent Boris Strelnikov, who noted Mr. Ford's "wide political and statesmanly experience."

Strelnikov quotes Mr. Ford as telling a *Pravda* correspondent a year ago, when the new President was minority leader of the House, that the summit talks "play an important role in easing tensions."

On a special television broadcast tonight, a film of President Ford taking the oath of office was shown. In an accompanying commentary, Leonid Zamyatin, the director general of Tass, who serves as the official Soviet spokesman, again stressed the positive, continuing aspects of Soviet-American relations and observed that agreements between the two countries are signed by governments, not individuals. Zamyatin said Ford had told him in Washington in May that he is an "optimist" about detente.

The Soviets had a more difficult time explaining Richard Nixon's resignation. Although the term "Watergate" was used, Zamyatin and commentator Valentin Zorin said only that Mr. Nixon faced pressure from a Democratic-controlled Congress in an election year. They said that the economic situation in the United States was "complicated" and alluded to "emotionalism" in the American media. But the Soviets did not mention the Nixon role in the cover-up or the criminal charges against presidential aides.

This was the first time that the Soviet spokesmen have made any effort to give a reason for Mr. Nixon's resignation.