

SOVIET IS SILENT ON SUB SALVAGING

MAR 20 1975

Ministry Declines Comment

—No Reports in Media

NYTimes

By JAMES F. CLARITY

Special to The New York Times

MOSCOW, March 19—The Foreign Ministry declined to comment today on the report that part of a Soviet submarine had been recovered from the Pacific Ocean by an American diving unit.

Responding to a request for comment, a ministry spokesman gave no indication whether the lack of comment was to be temporary or whether it meant that the Soviet Government had decided to react with permanent silence, as it often does in sensitive situations.

There was no mention of the report today in the Soviet press, on radio or on television. It was assumed by Western diplomats, however, that the Kremlin leadership, including Leonid I. Brezhnev, the Communist party leader, were aware of the report. Mr. Brezhnev has been in Budapest in recent days attending the congress of the Hungarian Communist party.

It is believed that the Soviet Union never publicly acknowledged that it had lost a submarine in the Pacific in 1968. This is in keeping with general Soviet policy that tends to repress publication of news about disasters and accidents, especially if they involve defense forces or equipment.

Sometimes, however, reports and rumors spread so wildly in the capital that the Government permits dissemination of tightly censored reports with a minimum of details. Reports reaching on foreign broadcasts add to pressure on the Government to confirm or deny stories likely to interest Soviet citizens.

The report of the recovery of part of the Soviet submarine last summer appeared to present the Government with a particularly complicated decision on publicity. This is because the situation involves not only an admission that Soviet military personnel were lost. There is also the involvement of the Central Intelligence Agency, a favorite Soviet propaganda target, and the overall question of the effect the submarine report might have on relations with Washington.

Secret Indictment In Hughes Break-In Reported on Coast

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Special to The New York Times

LOS ANGELES, March 18—A county grand jury investigating the burglary of Howard Hughes's headquarters here in 1974 returned a secret indictment Tuesday, sources close to the investigation reported.

The indictment was returned before Superior Court Judge William L. Ritzi after the grand jury concluded its five-week inquiry, the sources said.

It was believed that only one person was indicted but his identity and the nature of the charge could not be learned.

The bizarre safe-racking, in which a four-man team took the billionaire's confidential files, has been under investigation by the grand jury since Feb. 13 under tight security.

The burglars, who looted the Hughes headquarters in a pre-dawn burglary last June 5 that lasted four hours, unsuccessfully attempted to extort \$1 million from Mr. Hughes's Summa Corporation for the return of the files, according to a Hughes security agent.

Law enforcement officials, who declined to be identified, say that the stolen files contained documents relating to a covert relationship between the Central Intelligence Agency and the Summa Corporation, Mr. Hughes's chief holding company. The New York Times has learned that the relationship involved a project to recover a sunken Soviet submarine and that the project was partly successful.

The Times reported on March 14 that documents taken in the Hughes burglary disclosed relations between the C.I.A. and Mr. Hughes's Summa Corporation. On Feb. 8, The Los Angeles Times reported on the C.I.A.-Summa contract to raise the submarine and said that "confidential files on the operation are believed to have been among the documents stolen" in the burglary.

The Hughes organization refused to buy back the purloined files, sources within the organization assert, on the ground that the burglars would probably photocopy the files before returning them and seek to extort additional money.

The New York Times learned last month that a Canoga Park automobile salesman, Donald R. Woolbright, said that he had access to the stolen files and sought help in selling them to a publication outside the United States. Mr. Woolbright, who had an extensive police record for burglary arrests, sold his home in Canoga Park last Oct. 29 and disappeared with his wife and son.