

Caustic Comment

Europe Reaction on Nixon

A storm of intense reaction to President Nixon's latest Watergate disclosures is sweeping Europe, where the American political crisis has suddenly eclipsed all other issues in public debate.

In virtually every European capital, Mr. Nixon's plight has been treated with banner headlines. Radio and television have been blanketed with special Watergate programming. Even the talk shows are now getting calls from listeners who want to discuss Watergate.

Many Europeans are taking the affair seriously for the first time, after regarding it from the outset as no more than a domestic American squabble of little consequence.

In London, where gamblers customarily can legally bet on anything, the bookmakers have stopped taking bets at any odds against the survival of Mr. Nixon as president. Only last week it was even money that the president would finish out his term of office.

In Rome, a public official said: "It is an interesting switch in the mentality of America. Before, no one dreamed of expecting that politicians would be completely honest. Now, with Watergate, they are suddenly supposed to be lily white."

Newspaper comment has been the most caustic in memory. In Paris, *Le Monde* said in an editorial: "There is something pathetic in what must be called the uncontrollable agony of President Nixon . . . the most recent restatement of Monday, which is evidently not the last, is at the same time overwhelming and pitiful."

The *Guardian*, normally one of Britain's moderate newspapers, said yesterday

in a banner headline: "Nixon is dead — but he won't lie down." The story below said in its first paragraph: "He is displaying a masochistic determination to stay until the bitter end."

In an editorial, the same newspaper said: "Better a mediocrity than a crook, adding, "The tapes have shown him to be both a liar and a crook."

The *Times* of London, calling for the president's resignation, said: "Mr. Nixon is finished. There can no longer be any doubt about that after his extraordinary statement on Monday night." The paper added that the president had "finally removed any lingering doubt about his guilt."

The *Daily Telegraph*, perhaps Britain's most conservative paper, editorialized that Mr. Nixon could no longer hope to maintain a viable presidency. "The sordid clique which he brought into the White House and with which he talked in a sleazy and obscenely vulgar style entirely absent from his talks and contacts with others seems to have corroded part of his character," the paper said.

In Germany, the conservative Hamburg daily *Die Welt* took the unusual step, at least for a German newspaper, of running the text of one of the tape recordings involving a discussion between President Nixon and his former chief aide, H. R. Haldeman, about limiting the FBI when it was looking into Watergate matters.

Despite their almost exclusive preoccupation with internal problems, two of Portugal's leading newspapers featured stories and pictures of Mr. Nixon on their front pages. One of them, *Diario de Noticias*, spoke of the president's historic confessions.

The only major newspaper in Italy still supporting

President Nixon openly is the organ of the neo-fascist Italian social movement, the most right-wing of the parliamentary parties.

The left-wing *Paese Sera* commented: "Today America knows, beyond any doubt, that its 37th President has been a fraud." The paper characterized the President's announced decision not to resign as "a final act of arrogance."

In Switzerland both the 24 Heures of Lausanne and *La Tribune de Geneve* said the Watergate crisis had proven the strength of the American system. "The strength of the system has been demonstrated by the weakness of

the man who is supposed to incarnate it," wrote *La Tribune*.

L'Aurore, a conservative French daily, called President Nixon "an inveterate gambler who does not leave the table when he is frantic." It continued: "Even when he is in the process of losing his shirt and his honor, even if he drags down his family, his entourage and an entire country in his fall, the gambler stays riveted to his game."

Another leading conservative paper, *Le Figaro*, was virtually alone among leading publications in maintaining its support of the President. "How can one put in balance what is, in sum, only the smudge of an election campaign with the work of a President who can be proud of having made peace with Mao and Brezhnev, who brought Europe to heel and who avoided the worst in the Middle East?" the paper asked. "Judged in its true perspective, the Watergate dossier does not hold."

New York Times