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How People Abroad

(Contributing to the following article were Los Angeles Times foreign correspondents Jack Foisie in Cairo, David F. Belnap in Buenos Aires, David Lamb in Sydney, Joe Alex Morris Jr. in Athens, Robert C. Toth in Moscow, William Tuohy in Rome, George McArthur in Saigon, Tom Lambert in London, Don Cook in Paris, William J. Coughlin in Beirut, Dial Torgerson in Nairobi and Robert S. Elegante in Seoul.)

By Al Martinez

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Los Angeles

In Cairo, where old "Nixon We Trust" banners from his June visit still flutter in the desert winds, a student munching a bean sandwich wondered, "How could a man so good and powerful be forced from office?"

In Buenos Aires, where Argentina's own presidency has changed hands four times in the past 15 months, a housewife shrugged. "When Eisenhower came here he got cheers. Nixon got a shower of eggs."

An Australian puzzled over a country that would destroy its own President. A Greek suggested that Mr. Nixon's worst mistake was getting caught. An African said he got what he deserved.

In villages and capitals, on street corners and in office buildings throughout the world the resignation of Richard Nixon was greeted by a sweep of emotions ranging from joy to outrage to indifference.

Radio Moscow, off the air for the night, broke its silence with a bulletin. French television broadcast the resignation speech live at 2 a.m. Egyptian newspapers headlined the downfall with type usually reserved for wars and other major disasters.

It was the No. 1 topic of conversation across the face of the globe — on trains that flashed through the night across the flat grain fields of the Ukraine, at camp grounds in the middle of Nairobi, on big yellow buses that rolled down Seijong boulevard in Seoul.

Chief among the reaction was admiration for a constitutional government that could topple a president and still continue to function without chaos.

"We ought to take a lesson," an Italian insisted. "We should just go down to Parliament, open the door and say 'Out!'"

Chief among the questions about the new American President was a not altogether whimsical, "Gerald who?"

Russians worried about a possible resumption of the cold war. The South Vietnamese worried about a possible resumption of the hot war.

The British characteristically assumed a lofty position. A Watergate, one man insisted, could not possibly happen in England.

Mr. Nixon's departure from the presidency elicited few regrets in London.

"Seems he had to go for lying, didn't he?" asked a male building receptionist. "He did some good things about the Vietnam war, the Russians and China — but bad things to his own country. You didn't seem able to do much with him lately."

Another Briton, decrying "the easy way he stayed on so long," voiced relief at seeing "the back of your Minister Nixon."

A government official, indulging in the British mastery of understatement, added: "As a politician, Nixon's standards were not as high as they ought to have been for the presidency."

Egyptians awoke to the news on their Moslem Sabbath.

A white-turbanned porter at the entrance to a Cairo office building shook his

head in distress at the sudden end of the reign of "the first American President to be a friend of the Arabs."

Down the street at a clothing shop, a father tried to tell his son about the scandal that brought down the Nixon administration.

"He didn't tell the truth about Watergate," the father explained.

His son sighed, "American people are not like Egyptians. We can accept a line, they can't."

Among the better-educated there was noticeable relief that Henry Kissinger would stay on as the U.S. "foreign minister." A Cairo Telex operator kept saying, "He is a man of peace."

In France, there is sympathy for Mr. Nixon. A French businessman summed it up

when he said, "I think he was a good President doing a good job, and it is stupid to force him out of office."

A garage mechanic grumbled, "All this fuss over some wiretapping. I don't understand it . . ."

But a Paris bank clerk said he was pleased that the American President fell from power:

"Nixon is a crook and right from the beginning of the Watergate affair I've been hoping that he would go. Also, I am moved by the destiny of the most powerful man in the world who now finds himself before the tribunal."

Said another Parisian: "This would not happen in France — for a President to bend before two journalists who had never been heard of before. Morality has its echo

See Nixon

in American political life."

The reaction in Greece—where the man in the street is often cynical about politics—was mixed.

Greek-American entrepreneur Tom Pappas said in a voice choked with emotion that "Nixon was a brilliant man and this was a great tragedy for our nation. I deeply regret it."

But a concierge at the Elektra Hotel in Vouliaghmeni shrugged. "It makes no difference to us who is President. American foreign policy will go right on supporting the Turks."

An Athens businessman added: "Nixon again demonstrated his bad sense of timing by resigning in the middle of the Cyprus crisis. But still, at the end, I saw him more with pity than anger."

The Lebanese were often amazed at the relative ease with which Mr. Nixon left the presidency.

"It can't be true," Beirut taxi driver Simon Haj gasped. "You need a tank to

remove a president in the Arab world."

"We've seen so many Arab regimes forced out by military coups," said a grocer, "that we're naturally surprised to see the President of the strongest nation on earth forced to resign by democratic process."

Lebanese student Asma Najjar called the resignation, "Democracy in its grandest form. Nixon sinned and his resignation proved that even a President in America is not beyond the reach of the law."

Others, however, attributed the downfall to "Zionist intrigue."

"Zionist power centers capitalized on the Watergate affair to blackmail Nixon," snapped a bookshop owner.

In Saigon, taxi drivers, salesmen, businessmen, housewives and priests reacted with fear. They believed the Communists might misinterpret the American presidential transition as instability and begin a military offensive against South Vietnam.

But there were those too in the nation whose fatalism prevailed. One lawyer couldn't care less. "We will have the war here with or without Richard Nixon," he said.

The resignation speech was heard in Kenya at 4 a.m. Black-bearded Arthur Gottschalk, who is traveling through Africa, was camping in a Nairobi park when the speech was broadcast.

He rolled over in his sleeping bag, turned on the radio, listened to the broadcast and commented, "It was a very statesman-like speech." Then he went back to sleep.

In the American Embassy in Nairobi, the search began for photographs of Gerald Ford to hang on the walls. A secretary found some and mused, "Maybe we can put them in some of the frames from the Spiro Agnew pictures we took down."

A bank teller asked an American customer: "I hear your president quit. Can you tell me why?"

"Sure," replied the American. "Do you have a couple of hours?"

A professor at the University of Nairobi called Mr. Nixon's foreign policy "quite inspiring. He was sensitive to Third World issues—Africa, Latin America and most of Asia."

But a student observed, "Nixon deserved every bit he got. So does the American system. It will shake the U.S. people into making changes in their deficient system."

The Russians, whose news on American affairs is often limited, reacted with surprise in many cases to the resignation.

"I knew the situation was serious," one man said, "but I hadn't expected him to leave office so soon."

"He quit?" another said. "I thought he had been impeached."

A half-dozen men working on a new building going up in Moscow were upset that the Nixon regime had come to an end.

"What happens now?" asked a blue-shirted plasterer in his 30s.

"Nixon was OK. He helped improve relations between our countries — which will prevent a war. But now do we go back to before?"

The now-what? attitude prevailed also in parts of South Korea where the resignation broadcast was heard at 10 a.m. Friday.

A Seoul businessman worried that the forced resignation of Mr. Nixon might somehow result in the resignation of South Korea's president, who has been under fire lately.

"If one president can be

impeached, couldn't another?" he asked, drinking to relieve his anxiety. "If one president can be forced to resign, can't another?"

The average citizen in Argentina expressed amazement that Mr. Nixon did not simply erase or destroy the tapes that eventually sealed his political doom.

Said a Buenos Aires accountant, "It just shows he's not the politician he's cracked up to be."

The story in Latin America created interest but not excitement. Espionage, intentional coverups and income tax finagling are presumed by the public to be commonplace.

Nevertheless, the more sophisticated citizens took their hats off to what one called "the honesty of the thing."

But a waiter, who had served Mr. Nixon when he visited to Buenos Aires in 1967 as a private citizen, was saddened by his fall from power.

"He was a fine man. He may have made mistakes but they were exaggerated out of all proportion. But then, he added with a sigh. "If you newsmen didn't do that, I guess you'd all die of hunger."



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