

Tass Criticizes President; 2 Ships Hit, China Says

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No Mention Made of Trip

By HEDRICK SMITH
Special to The New York Times

MOSCOW, May 9—Tass, the Soviet press agency, today criticized President Nixon's decision to mine North Vietnamese ports as a violation of international law, but gave no indication whether the move would force the cancellation of Mr. Nixon's scheduled trip to Moscow in two weeks.

The initial Soviet reaction came in the form of a dispatch from Washington summarizing Mr. Nixon's speech last night on new measures against North Vietnam.

Pravda, the authoritative Communist party newspaper, carried the Tass dispatch without any other commentary to signal Moscow's intentions.

American embassy officials said late tonight that a 20-man White House team, which arrived Sunday evening to begin final preparations for the Nixon visit, was still planning to hold its first meeting with Soviet officials tomorrow morning.

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Statement Accuses U.S.

By Reuters

PEKING, May 9 — China charged today that United States ships and planes attacked Chinese freighters in North Vietnamese waters over the weekend.

A Foreign Ministry statement said that Chinese crew members and Vietnamese civilians were wounded when the ships Hong Chi 152 and Hong Chi 160 were shelled by United States warships on Saturday and bombed and strafed by American planes on Sunday and again yesterday.

The freighters, which were said to have been badly damaged, were anchored off Hon Ngu island in North Vietnam's Nghean Province at the time, the ministry said.

Although the Foreign Ministry made what it said was a "strong protest" and reserved the right to demand compensation, observers here said the statement was unusually muted for such an occasion. Since President Nixon visited Peking

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ing—probably the first real test of the Kremlin's attitude since the new measures were announced.

The Tass report branded the port-mining and other measures announced by Mr. Nixon as "overt acts of aggression" in violation of "norms of international law." It was taken as a preliminary response while the Kremlin weighed alternatives.

The President's announcement came as the Soviet Union and its leadership marked a two-day holiday celebrating the 27th Anniversary of the Allies' victory over Nazi Germany. The holiday perhaps added to the traditional Soviet reluctance to respond quickly in public to major new foreign policy developments.

Diplomatic circles were mindful that the first Soviet reaction might not necessarily indicate how the Kremlin would finally deal with Washington's challenge. They recalled that in May, 1960, Premier Nikita Krushchev delayed for nearly two weeks before cancelling President Eisenhower's planned visit to Moscow after the American U-2 spy plane was brought down.

They noted that the Kremlin might want to confer with Hanoi before taking any major course of action and also might want to wait until the vote in Bonn on ratification of non-aggression treaties with Moscow and Poland.

The Tass dispatch from Washington, presumed to have been carefully screened at a high level before its release, reported Mr. Nixon's speech matter-of-factly, citing not only the military measures but also his statement that "these actions are not directed against any other nation."

It related his offer for a complete halt to "all acts of

force throughout Indochina" and American withdrawal from Vietnam within four months of an internationally supervised cease-fire and release of American war prisoners. It cited his assurances that he wanted to end the war but said his latest actions "point to the contrary," an unusually mild Soviet comment.

Helsinki Talks Held

Special to The New York Times

HELSINKI, Finland, May 9—President Nixon's decision to mine North Vietnamese posts was not mentioned when United States and Soviet negotiators met today for an hour at the talks on limitation of strategic arms, a conference source said.

It was the second formal meeting since the two delegations received revised instructions intended to break the deadlock over the inclusion of submarine missiles in an agreement on offensive weapons.

The source said that working groups would continue to meet tomorrow and Thursday. No date for the next formal meeting was fixed.

The official's remarks were apparently intended to make clear that Vietnam developments had had no effect on the talks here.

CHINA SAYS U.S. ATTACKED SHIPS

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last February, the official Chinese news media have toned down condemnation of United States policy in Indochina.

The statement said the attacks constituted "a grave provocation against the Chinese people." It went on:

"The Chinese Government and people express great indignation at this and lodge a strong protest with the United States Government.

"The United States Government must immediately stop its acts of provocation of attacking Chinese merchant ships and prevent the recurrence of similar incidents. Otherwise it must bear the full responsibility of all the grave consequences arising therefrom.

"The Chinese Government reserves the lawful right to demand compensation for its losses."

No Comment on Mining

Although Peking did not specifically condemn the resumption last month of American bombing of North Vietnam, observers and diplomats here felt that it would view gravely Mr. Nixon's announcement yesterday that he had ordered the harbors mined.

So far, however, there has been no official reaction. Nor has the Vietnamese trade delegation now in Peking commented.

U.S. 'Unaware' of Attacks

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 9—The Defense Department said today that it was unaware of the alleged attacks on Chinese freighters. A Pentagon spokesman said that the only possibility was that the vessels had been caught in the middle of a United States air strike on a North Vietnamese coastal installation, but that "we certainly did not target any Chinese ships."

Officials said that China's protest was "surprisingly mild" in its language. They noted that the incidents were said to have occurred before Mr. Nixon's announcements yesterday.

Although the State Department would not confirm it, it was understood that the United States gave China information of the contents of Mr. Nixon's speech several hours in advance through the diplomatic link they maintain in their Paris embassies.