

SOVIET ASSAILS 'BLOCKADE' BY U.S.; ITS TRADE MINISTER VISITS NIXON, SAYS SUMMIT TALKS ARE STILL ON



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Nikolai S. Patolichev, Soviet Foreign Trade Minister, with President Nixon yesterday

THREAT CHARGED

Attacks Are Termed 'Gross Violation'— Halt Demanded

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MOSCOW, May 11—The Soviet Union demanded today that the United States immediately end the "blockade," and bombing of North Vietnam, but gave no indication that it planned to cancel President Nixon's scheduled visit here on May 22.

A long-awaited statement this afternoon censured the United States for mining Haiphong harbor and expanding other attacks on North Viet-

namese supply lines. It accused Washington of "a gross violation of the generally recognized principle of freedom of navigation" and an "inadmissible" threat to Soviet and other shipping.

But as the statement was being issued, Soviet Foreign Ministry officials met again with White House aides making de-

Text of Soviet statement is printed on Page 18.

tailed preparations for Mr. Nixon's arrival. The call at the White House of Soviet Ambassador Anatoly F. Dobrynin and Nikolai S. Patolichev, the Minister of Foreign Trade, reinforced the expectation that the trip would proceed as scheduled.

A Favorable Sign

The Soviet statement, emerging from secret meetings of Kremlin leaders, did not preclude action later but it contained no ultimatum. American officials were known to consider it to be as mild a response as could be expected and a favorable sign for the visit.

Word is circulating among knowledgeable Soviet journalists and officials that at least two Soviet freighters have been hit during raids on Haiphong in the last three days. But the Kremlin, controlling the media to match its policy, has not reported any such event to the public.

Neutral diplomats suggested tonight that despite the crisis in Indochina, neither Washington nor Moscow wanted to bear the onus of calling off the meeting. Others asserted that the acute tensions in Indochina had made President Nixon's face-to-face meeting with the Soviet leadership more imperative than previously.

Privately, one well-placed Soviet source explained, "Nixon's playing poker, but we're not going to play poker." Another said simply, "Nixon is coming."

Unlike Czechoslovakia, which made a formal diplomatic protest to the United States and warned of possible counter-

Continued on Page 18, Column 1

measures, the Soviet Union merely demanded a halt to the American actions. The statement's key passage said:

"The Soviet Government resolutely insists that the steps taken by the United States to blockade the coast and disrupt the land communications of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam be canceled without delay, that the United States cease its acts of aggression against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and that the right to freedom of international navigation and commerce be respected."

The Soviet Union weakened its case, in the view of experts here, by coupling its demand for an end to what it called a "blockade" with its traditional demands for an end to "acts of aggression" in general.

"Washington's attempts single-handedly to impose its own rules of international navigation cannot but arouse indignation and strong censure," the Soviet statement declared. It said the American actions were "fraught with serious consequences for international peace and security."

'Necessary Support' Pledged

The Kremlin also repeated customary pledges to "render the necessary support" to North Vietnam, but it did not say how Soviet aid would be transported to Vietnam in the future.

Premier Aleksei N. Kosygin met today with Xuan Thuy, the chief North Vietnamese negotiator in Paris now on his way back to Hanoi, presumably to tell him of the Kremlin's response. Tass merely said they had met "in a cordial, comradely atmosphere in the spirit of friendship and solidarity," but gave no details.

The three-day delay in the formal Soviet response to Mr. Nixon's speech on Monday was taken as evidence of the quandary the Kremlin had, faced and of probable disagreements among the leadership over how to respond.

Western diplomats concluded that the Soviet leaders had evidently decided that they could not afford to be outflanked by Communist China, whose leaders have already had a meeting with Mr. Nixon, nor allow the Nixon visit to Moscow to collapse while the fate of the crucial nonaggression treaty with West Germany remains uncertain.

Some western diplomats believe that the Kremlin is worried about possible American-Chinese collusion and fears that cancellation of Mr. Nixon's visit would leave Washington free to develop cooperation with Peking over the next few years. Meanwhile Moscow would see its hopes for a pre-eminent superpower relationship with Washington fade.

These diplomats believe that the Soviet Union is motivated more by its competition with China than by such bilateral ex-

changes as a strategic-arms agreement, trade deals and joint space efforts that would be likely to emerge from a Presidential visit to Moscow.

Moreover, the diplomats note, certain Soviet leaders are personally committed to accommodation with the West.

For Leonid I. Brezhnev, the Communist party leader, the conjunction of the Vietnam crisis with the deadlock in Bonn yesterday over the ratification of the nonaggression treaty posed especially serious problems.

More than any other Soviet leader, Mr. Brezhnev has identified himself with the move toward accommodation with Bonn and Washington and with the softening of Soviet policies after the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Brezhnev Stands to Lose

Western diplomats reasoned that the cancellation of Mr. Nixon's visit while the treaty with Bonn was still stalled could carry the stigma of failure for this policy of accommodation and would bring a generally harder line in Soviet foreign policy. It would thus be a setback of sorts for the 65-year-old party leader.

Less than three weeks ago he was holding long and unusual meetings with Henry A. Kissinger, Mr. Nixon's national security adviser, in what was later disclosed to be an effort to revive the suspended Vietnamese peace talks in Paris and forge a compromise on strategic arms limitation — and thereby preserve the meeting in Moscow. Earlier, he had sent a personal message to Mr. Nixon saying the Kremlin was looking forward to his visit.

Mr. Brezhnev has been even more deeply involved in the easing of relations with West Germany, having overcome the deep-seated Russian hostility to the Germans since World War II. He has twice held widely publicized meetings with Chancellor Willy Brandt.

Others among the Soviet leaders, most notably the Ukrainian party secretary, Pyotr Y. Shelest, are considered by Western diplomats to be critical of the Brezhnev policy of accommodation but they evidently went along with it while it appeared to be working.

No Public Reaction

There was speculation in diplomatic circles that the crisis sharpened their opposition and that may explain the delay in Moscow's formal statement. There has been no public evidence one way or another in the last three days.

The crisis has pointed up the contrasts in the operating styles of Washington and Moscow. While American officials, including the President and Cabinet officers, hold daily press conferences or briefings not only on American actions but also on Soviet reactions, the Kremlin works in total secrecy. Soviet officials decline any comment whatsoever.