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Interest in Nixon Visit Mounts in Poland

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WARSAW, May 17—"Is your President still coming?"

The question was put to an American tourist in the lobby of Warsaw's Bristol Hotel, as if the visitor had arrived straight from the White House.

He replied vaguely, "I suppose so," and then added: "I guess if the Russians wanted to cancel it, they would have done so already."

Polish and American officials in this city seem to share the same fatalistic attitude as they prepare for President Nixon's scheduled overnight visit here at the end of the month.

The Polish press has been reserved in its coverage of recent events in Vietnam and this is seen as a signal that the trip is on. But it is the same signal as the one coming from Moscow, and everyone here knows that if the Russians decide to cancel Mr. Nixon's visit, the Poles will follow suit.

Interest Is Mounting

Interest is mounting here, but slowly and in the absence of any encouragement from the Polish Government. A Polish source said that the Nixon itinerary would probably not be released until the day before his arrival.

Asked if there would be any publicity, the source said; "I don't think so. It would be inappropriate under the present circumstances." He was referring to the Vietnam situation. "We have nothing against Nixon as a person," he said.

On the official side, there is the prestige that will surround the event and the boost it will give toward much-needed trade ties with the United States.

"For Nixon it's a political

trip," one Polish official said. "For us it's business."

On the unofficial side, there is the excitement of a major event and the recollection among some in this city of Mr. Nixon's 1959 visit as Vice President.

He was welcomed then with diplomatic reserve at the airport and with an extraordinary outpouring of warmth on his way into the city. Films of that greeting are being shown twice daily by the American Embassy here, and hundreds come.

Earlier this week a Presidential advance party arrived at Okecie airport outside of Warsaw. The group came in a large, slope-winged cargo plane of the United States Air Force. Large throngs, including school groups routinely visiting the terminal, watched the cargo being loaded into an American Embassy truck. The cargo consisted mainly of communications equipment that will be installed in the American Embassy to provide an instant link with the White House.

Route Gets Security Check

Lines are being laid out at Wilanow, the baroque palace that will serve as Mr. Nixon's residence, and a convoy of official Polish vehicles has been moving through Warsaw streets, tracing the President's route for timing and security purposes.

The officials accompanying the advanced equipment represented the second such advance party. The first group of about two dozen officials conferred with their Polish

hosts on political as well as protocol matters.

Mr. Nixon will be arriving at midday on May 31 and will be leaving about the same time the next day.

Diplomatically, the President's visit to Warsaw reflects a subtle shift in American policy in Eastern Europe. Until now, Washington sought to differentiate widely between those nations in the bloc seeking to demonstrate independence from Moscow—Rumania is the main example—and those who remained completely within the Soviet orbit.

Poland, under the new leadership of Edward Gierek, has shown no inclination to go her own way diplomatically. Mr. Nixon's decision to pay an official visit here would seem, therefore, to acknowledge Washington's acceptance of this policy.