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And How Do We Explain Watergate to the Russians?

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WASHINGTON — Two events this week underlined the gravity of the Watergate scandal as a threat to the national image, to public confidence in government and to President Nixon's place in history.

They were, in order, the President's fourth annual foreign policy report — a 32-page summary on "Shaping a Durable Peace" — and Henry Kissinger's departure for Moscow to prepare for Soviet Chairman Leonid Brezhnev's June visit to the United States.

Nixon's ponderous report, recounting the Peking and Moscow summit achievements of 1972 and pointing up the tasks still ahead, may be to some just a "boiler-plate" document for ready reference. But in its way, it also dramatizes the scale of the "throwaway" inherent in the Watergate affair and its later White House cover-up.

Not even his critics will deny Richard Nixon and his national security mentor, Kissinger, credit for a year of stunning success in foreign affairs. But there are still major problems to be dealt with in the rest of Nixon's second term—in foreign areas as well as domestic areas.

And, as Nixon emphasized in his report on 1972, no President can tackle them alone.

"Shaping a peaceful world requires, first of all, an America that stays strong an America that stays involved," he wrote.

"But the United States alone cannot realize this goal. Our friends and adversaries alike must share in the enterprise of peace.

"The President and the administration alone cannot pursue this goal. We need the cooperation of the Congress and the support of the American people."

None of the grand goals and achievements of the "first four years" and the risk of tarnishing them obviously ever crossed the minds of the characters who authorized and executed the break-in at Democratic National Headquarters in the Watergate Building and who later staged a near-successful coverup of that and other political espionage.

Lost to them were such thoughts as those given the country by the President this week:

"We have cleared away vestiges of the past. We have erased or moderated hostilities. And we are strengthening partnerships.

... If America is to provide the leadership that only it can, Americans must identify with new visions and purposes."

Or his closing promises:

"Where peace is newly planted, we shall work to make it thrive.

"Where bridges have been built, we shall work to make them stronger.

"Where friendships have endured, we shall work to

make them grow.

"During the next four years — with the help of others — we shall continue building an international structure which could silence the sounds of war for the remainder of this century."

The President, as he has frequently, also tied his hopes to the observance of the Nation's 200th birthday in 1976.