

World Reaction to Nixon's Taping Is Divided

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Will heads of government who visit the White House weigh their words more carefully since the disclosure at the Senate Watergate hearings that President Nixon has been taping conversations since early 1971?

Unofficial foreign reactions have ranged from nonchalant acceptance to shocked distaste and disappointment.

When the next foreign dignitary visits President Nixon, joked a West German official, he should take his own portable "Paraday cage," set it up on the White House lawn, and invite the President in for a private talk.

A Paraday cage is a small, metal-walled room immune to bugging from outside because of an electric current running through the walls.

Despite his effort to be humorous, this official, like many other West Germans, was shocked at the news that Mr. Nixon had his conversations in the White House secretly recorded.

"It is something that you would expect to happen in Moscow," he noted.

The West German press has strongly condemned the bugging.

Commenting on the "wall spies," the conservative and respected Frankfurter Allgemeine stated:

"All Americans and all foreigners who in recent years believed they had a confidential talk with the master of the White House must now feel duped."

"This," the paper added, "will impair the reputation of U.S. world power and its supreme office."

Canadian reaction has been one of profound distaste, but not of shock or surprise.

Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau has decided—at least in public—to play down the matter.

In response to questions in the House of Commons, Trudeau said that he "had no knowledge then and none now" that his private talks with Mr. Nixon in Washing-

ton in 1971 were recorded. He said he would continue to assume that such conversations "are private and privileged."

The tone of Canadian press comment has been more snide than shocked.

The Toronto Star, Canada's largest newspaper, commented:

"Let not history fail to record that the bugging in the Oval Office could have been ordered by only one person—the man who had sworn to safeguard the laws of the land, the upholder of the Constitution, the guardian of civil rights, the President of the United States."

Soviet media have maintained silence over the bugging disclosures—and no one could be found in Moscow who would comment.

Foreigners living in Moscow, however, frequently express the belief that their offices, apartments and phones are bugged.

The fact that all his conversations with President Nixon in the White House last February, and earlier,

were tape-recorded has come as a complete surprise to British Prime Minister Edward Heath.

Sources close to him say he is not particularly worried now that he does know unofficially.

In Downing Street some telephone calls may be recorded for security reasons. But when official visitors come to No. 10 for confidential talks no recordings are made.

Sir Burke Trend, Cabinet secretary, may take notes which are later transcribed into a written report, which is filed for future reference.

Among Arab heads of state, Kings Hussein of Jordan and Faisal of Saudi Arabia have visited the White House since the bugging was reportedly begun by President Nixon. Neither had any reaction.

The disclosure might produce more shock in Saudi Arabia than elsewhere. Hospitality and the immunity of the guest, whether or not he is a close friend, are solid and sacred traditions

in the older and more conservative Arab societies.

A guest being received by a monarch would likely not be taped. It is Arab custom, if a record of an audience, conference, or interview is wanted, for a secretary or an aide to take notes openly.

At the United Nations, secrecy is a diplomatic art that representatives of foreign countries cherish. But few have any illusions that secrecy is always respected.

This perhaps explains the degree of cynical acceptance among U.N. diplomats of the taping of conversations at the White House.

Was he surprised about these disclosures, a Scandinavian diplomat at the U.N. was asked.

"No, not really," he replied. "I expect it. Maybe because I have lived in Moscow and feel, as a foreigner, I was likely to be recorded. I won't say I enjoy it, but in the Orwellian type of society we are entering we may regret it, but it is the way it is."

As widespread as the

practice may be, diplomats were agreed that all parties should at least be apprised of being taped before consultations or private conversations began.

Does U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim tape-record conversations with guests to his 38th-floor office?

"Certainly not," came the frosty answer from U.N. spokesman William C. Powell.

One delegate suggested the press might be overreacting.

"Everybody knows one is on record anyway. On a delicate point I wonder if the choice of words used would be influenced by any recording of that kind."

The real danger as diplomats saw it was that the forthrightness that might accompany a "between ourselves" session now may be drastically diminished and the confidence and trust so essential in diplomacy be replaced by a more formal and cautious approach.