

Soviet Portrays a Weakened Nixon Under Pressure to Quit Presidency

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MOSCOW, Nov. 9—Millions of Soviet newspaper readers today were given the sharpest and most negative view of President Nixon yet to appear in the Soviet press—a picture of a President whose resignation is being demanded, whose honesty is questioned and whose power is curtailed.

Delayed reports from Washington printed in Pravda and Izvestia, the main Communist party and Government dailies, suggested increasing Soviet doubts that Mr. Nixon can survive the domestic political crisis over the Watergate affair.

Beginning on Oct. 17, in commentaries on the resignation of Vice President Agnew that showed the Administration in a generally unfavorable light, the Soviet press has shifted its treatment of the White House. For months before, it had reported only snippets of the Watergate affair from time to time, giving slight hints that President Nixon might be affected.

Only Reflecting Events

Soviet insiders privately explained in the last few days that the shift in news coverage only reflects political events in Washington. They insist that it is wrong to read the new slant of Soviet coverage as evidence that the leadership wants to see Mr. Nixon leave office.

On the contrary, they continue to criticize his adversaries and worry that Washington cannot endure a protracted struggle over the Presidency. They privately state preference for Mr. Nixon over his possible successors largely because of the agreements he has reached with the Soviet Union.

But they do not deny that the changed press treatment over the last three weeks reflect a reappraisal of Mr. Nixon's chance of survival.

Western diplomats also see a deliberate effort by Soviet leaders to begin preparing the public for a possible change in Washington, and an effort to detach the Kremlin somewhat from its close association with Mr. Nixon, should the worst happen.

Soviet press is depicting the United States as on the defensive—both in conflict with its European allies and, as a headline in Izvestia put it tonight, facing a "winter of discontent" as a result of oil shortages.

Normally, the Soviet press is extremely circumspect about direct personal criticism of a foreign chief of state. But Tass, the official press agency, found a way to bring to Soviet readers' attention the calls in the United States for Mr. Nixon's resignation. It quoted the President.

Quote U. S. Publications

In reporting on his address about the oil shortages, Mr. Nixon was quoted as having noted the call by several American publications for his resignation, and that the Watergate affair had given birth to "doubt about the honesty of the President of the United States."

The Tass report, printed by Pravda and Izvestia, also quoted Mr. Nixon as saying he had not the slightest intention of leaving his post and intended to do everything in his power to remove doubts about his honesty in the coming months.

Even though these were Mr. Nixon's words, it was by far the most critical passage about him to appear in the Soviet press since he took office in 1969.

This report was coupled with a Tass dispatch from Washing-

ton that Congress had overridden Mr. Nixon's veto of the bill limiting Presidential war-making powers.

The effect of these articles was to give millions of Soviet readers a picture of a President very weakened, seriously on the defensive, beyond what ordinary Soviet citizens could have imagined — beyond even what the Government thought—only a few weeks ago.

Moreover, the effect of a long commentary on the American fuel situation in Izvestia by its senior Washington correspondent, Stanislav Kondrashov, was to suggest that the country was reeling under the impact of the

Arab oil embargo. Other Soviet press reports have reported on fuel problems in Japan and Western Europe, but there has been nothing so extensive as this report on America.

At the same time, the Soviet press late tonight had given not a line of coverage to the reported Middle East compromise worked out by Secretary of State Kissinger, an indication to some diplomats that Moscow was unhappy at having been left largely on the sidelines in this effort.

Soviet Middle East coverage continued to highlight Egyptian complaints of cease-fire violations by Israel.