

Nixon Diplomacy Near Crisis

By Murrey Marder

Washington Post Staff Writer

President Nixon's hopes for conducting effective and dramatic summit diplomacy this summer are being seriously challenged by the cries for impeachment echoing around him.

The cascading erosion of support for the President is deeply troubling the Nixon administration's diplomatic strategists. They had projected two or more summit-type presidential journeys during the summer to display his undiminished capacity to travel the high road of state while impeachment charges were grinding through the Congress.

That intended international scenario is now heavily clouded by the profound public and congressional rebound over publication of the edited White House tape transcripts.

"I'd say it is a bit dicey" now, a high administration official acknowledged with rueful understatement at week's end in characterizing the outlook for multiple summities.

No change, or even discussion of change, in the President's projected travel plans

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is known to be under official consideration. There is, however, a growing feeling of frustration among administration strategists that any of their plans may be overtaken, by escalation of the domestic ferment.

With domestic dissent enveloping the White House, President Nixon is in a doubly unprecedented situation. While American attention has been fixed on his fate, a tide of spectacular governmental change has been roll-

ing across the international horizon.

President Nixon is the only major Western leader who has been in office more than 2½ months. Since the end of February, power has changed hands peacefully in Britain, in West Germany, in France; Portugal has had a military coup; Canada's parliament has been dissolved for new elections; so have the Icelandic and Australian parliaments.

Valery Giscard d'Estaing, candidate for president in the final round of France's elections on May 18 to provide a successor to that nation's Gaullist regimes, expostulated in an interview last Thursday:

"Who would ever have dreamed of the upheaval that has taken place in Europe? [French] President

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his resignation, "Brandt was still the most powerful and brilliant statesman of continental Europe. His fall concerns the whole of Europe. Now, none of the big countries of the continent can boast solid and secure leadership."

Similar dismay reverberated through Communist ranks. The Yugoslavian newspaper Borba said with chagrin, "Brandt's departure from the chancellorship could well turn out to be an irreplaceable loss for the FRG [West Germany], for Europe and for world peace."

Diplomatic forecasters have been so jarred by unexpected developments in recent weeks that few will now venture any projections with much confidence.

Analysts in the United States are still trying to sort out the causes for what might appear on the surface to be "a domino effect" of falling governments, but which actually involves many totally unrelated events.

Some American experts see no pattern in the government turnovers. Others see several common themes, but they do not apply equally to all the countries involved.

The most common denomi-

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Pompidou is gone. Mr. Heath (Britain's former Conservative Party prime minister) is out of office, (West German) Chancellor Brandt has left the stage. In just a few weeks the whole European scene has changed."

It could take months to sort out the multiple realignment of relationships among the new leaders in Western Europe and their impact on East-West relations, on the future of the European Common Market and total Western European links, and the repercussions on the North American-Western European Atlantic Alliance.

This is a transitional period that calls out for clear, confident, unified leadership in the United States, every American diplomat recognizes. Instead, despite all formal disclaimers, government insiders describe the White House operations at this critical period as "extremely disorganized," and overwhelmingly preoccupied with the impeachment challenge to the President.

From a purely international viewpoint, according to high American officials, there is no discernible diplomatic barrier to President Nixon's scheduled trip to

the Soviet Union in late June for a second Moscow summit meeting with Soviet leader Leonid I. Brezhnev.

But no authority can verify what may happen in the United States by June.

An earlier, possible presidential trip to Egypt and other Middle East nations also has been projected for many weeks. This trip has been tied to the success of Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger's negotiations to

achieve a disengagement of Israeli-Syrian military forces.

Some diplomats had feared that the Soviet Union, through its considerable leverage with Syria, might block disengagement, partly to forestall President Nixon from going to Egypt on a trip that would be at the expense of Soviet prestige, celebrating Egypt's rapprochement with the United States.

Kissinger, however, is now expected to be able to return to Washington with success on his Israeli-Syrian shuttle diplomacy, according to administration sources. This is expected to signify that the Soviet Union will not raise any impediment to a presidential trip to Egypt, a decision indicating a Kremlin desire to avoid casting any shadow on broader Soviet-U.S. detente objectives.

A possible third summit

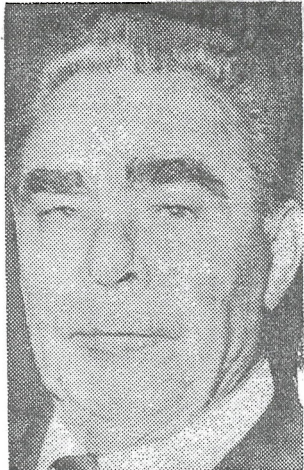
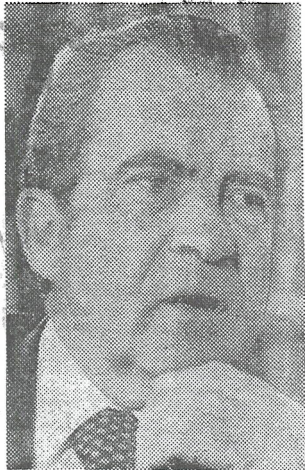
trip by President Nixon this summer to an East-West European security conference at heads-of-government level, however, now appears more dubious, irrespective of American developments.

The governmental turnovers in Western Europe may further delay or compound negotiations in Geneva to set the stage for such a conference. The Soviet Union and its Communist allies are highly concerned that the resignation of West German Chancellor Willy Brandt, the champion of European detente, and his expected replacement by hard-bargaining Helmut Schmidt, who is more demanding on terms of East-West relations, will slow the development of European detente. Many Europeans and Americans concur, although Schmidt is very highly regarded by U.S. officials for his commit-

ment to the Atlantic Alliance.

All Europe has been shaken by the departure of Brandt, most of all. He and President Nixon were the Western pillars of East-West detente. Now the shadows fall heavily across Mr. Nixon's fate.

The Milan newspaper Corriere Della Sera said last week that even though Brandt was "a worn and tired man" who was slipping politically before the disclosure of an East German spy in his chancellery brought



PRESIDENT NIXON SOVIET LEADER BREZHNEV
 ... no diplomatic barrier to their second summit.

nator for upheaval has been inflation, many specialists agree. Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau calls it the worldwide "scrouge of inflation," suddenly intensified last winter by the three-and four-fold leap of oil prices. Inflation punctured the bubble of the German and European "economic miracle" as well as the economies of most other nations of the world.

Disenchantment with the ability of national leaders to solve problems, and disillusionment with the credibility of government are rated as major contributing factors in the growing gap between rulers and ruled.

So is the impact of the media through ever-speedier communication of information around the globe. "Knowledge breeds discontent," said one senior administration official. "For just one example, certainly for President Nixon, the knowledge of these tapes has caused his insecurity," he said.

Sociologists, more than diplomats, can cite numerous other ingredients of discontent, including rising

economic expectations, the erosion of traditional patterns of value and social behavior, mobility of peoples and so on.

In Marxist terminology, what is unfolding is the long-advertised "crisis of capitalism." Western diplomatic strategists, and specialists of many unaligned nations, by no means generally share that assessment of doom. On the contrary, they cite as strength the eras, the absence of democratic changes of government, the swings to dictators or demagogues, the continuing Western tendency toward centrism, rather than extreme solutions.

The temptation undoubtedly exists for Soviet exploitation of Western disorder, U.S. experts concede. They expect the Soviet Union and its allies to take advantage of opportunities, but not at the cost of jeopardizing detente, because, as one senior official said, "They need detente more than we do; it has given them more benefits than us."

Others disagree that the

dividends for detente are so lopsided. In either event, the prevailing wisdom in official Washington is to pursue detente strategy as vigorously as possible, despite the impeachment proceedings.

Spreading demands in Congress for the resignation of President Nixon, at least so far, have not reached the point of overwhelming opposition to a summit meeting in Moscow while impeachment action is pending, on grounds that President Nixon will be too weakened to negotiate effectively.

Instead, Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) told reporters last week that there will be no

massive Senate opposition to summitry this summer.

"... He is the President," said Mansfield, and "there is very little opposition as far as I can see to his holding a summit meeting and possibly going to the Middle East. You can be assured there will be no organized political opposition as far as the Senate is concerned to his undertakings in the area of foreign policy."

What troubles U.S. strategic planners the most, however, is not the challenge from the foreign policy front, but from the domestic front. They cannot calculate how high the tide of resignation cries will rise, nor what its impact will be on the President, for they are almost equally in the dark about the ultimate decision-maker in the White House.