

Lyndon Baines Johnson (1908-1973)

Radio and Television Report to the American People on Recent Events in Russia, China, and Great Britain

broadcast from the President's office at 8:30 p.m. on October 18, 1964

My fellow Americans:

On Thursday of last week, from the Kremlin in Moscow, the Soviet Government announced a change in its leadership.

On Friday of last week, Communist China exploded a nuclear device on an isolated test site in Sinkiang.

Both of these important events make it right that your President report to you as fully and as clearly and as promptly
5 as he can. That is what I mean to do this evening.

Now, let me begin with events in Moscow. We do not know exactly what happened to Nikita Khrushchev last Thursday. We do know that he has been forced out of power by his former friends and colleagues. Five days ago he had only praise in Moscow. Today we learn only of his faults.

Yet the men at the top today are the same men that he picked for leadership. These men carried on the administration
10 of the Soviet Government when he was absent from the Soviet capital, and that was nearly half of the time that he was in power.

Mr. Khrushchev was clearly the dominant figure in making Soviet policy. After Lenin and Stalin, he is only the third man in history to have made himself the undisputed master of Communist Russia.

There were times when he was guilty of dangerous adventure. It required great American firmness and good sense--
15 first in Berlin and later in the Cuban missile crisis--to turn back his threats and actions without war.

Yet he learned from his mistakes and he was not blind to realities. In the last 2 years, his government had shown itself aware of the need for sanity in the nuclear age.

He joined in the nuclear test ban treaty. He joined in the "hot line" which can help prevent a war by accident. He agreed that space should be kept free of nuclear weapons. In these actions he demonstrated good sense and sober
20 judgment. We do not think it was these actions that led to his removal.

We cannot know for sure just what did lead to this secret decision. Our intelligence estimate is that Khrushchev learned of the decision only when for him it was too late.

There has been discontent and strain and failure--both within the Soviet Union and within the Communist bloc as a whole. All of this has been evident for all to see. These troubles are not the creation of one man. They will not end
25 with his removal.

When Lenin died in 1924, Stalin took 4 years to consolidate his power. When Stalin died in 1953, it was not Mr. Khrushchev who first emerged.

But two men now share top responsibility in the Soviet Union, and their exact relation to each other and to their colleagues is not yet very clear. They are experienced, but younger men, and perhaps less rooted in the past. They are
30 said to be realistic. We can hope that they will share with us our great objective--the prevention of nuclear war.

But what does all this mean for us in America? It means at least four things:

First, we must never forget that the men in the Kremlin remain dedicated, dangerous Communists. A time of trouble among Communists requires steady vigilance among free men--and most of all among Americans. For it is the strength of the United States that holds the balance firm against danger.

35 Second, there will be turmoil in the Communist world. It is likely that the men in the Kremlin will be concerned primarily with problems of communism. This would not be all good, because there are problems and issues that need attention between our world and theirs. But it is not all bad, because men who are busy with internal problems may not be tempted to reckless external acts.

Third, this great change will not stop the forces in Eastern Europe that are working for greater independence. Those
40 forces will continue to have our sympathy. We will not give up our hope of building new bridges to these peoples.

Fourth, our own course must continue to prove that we on our side are ready to get on with the work of peace.

The new Soviet Government has officially informed me, through Ambassador Dobrynin, day before yesterday, that it plans no change in basic foreign policy. I spoke frankly, as always, to the Soviet Ambassador. I told him that the quest for peace in America had never been more determined than it is now. I told him that we intend to bury no one, and we
45 do not intend to be buried. I reminded the Ambassador of the danger that we all faced 2 years ago in Cuba. I told him that any Soviet Government which is ready to work for peace will find us ready in America. I said to the Ambassador that I would be ready to talk to anyone, when it would help the cause of peace.

I believe that this was a good beginning, on both sides.

That same day the Chinese nuclear device was exploded at a test site near a lake called Lop Nor, in the Takla Makan
50 desert of the remote Central Asian province of Sinkiang. The building of this test site had been known to our American intelligence for several years. In recent weeks the rapid pace of work there gave us a quite clear signal that the long and bitter efforts of this regime were leading at last to a nuclear test.

At first, in the 1950's, Russia helped the Chinese. This assistance in the spread of nuclear weapons may now be regarded with some dismay in Moscow. We believe that this help was ended in 1960 as the quarrel among the
55 Communists grew sharper. Soviet technicians left suddenly, with their blueprints under their arms. And the unfinished facilities were just left there standing, and the expected supplies were cut off.

But the Red Chinese kept to their chosen purpose, even as their economic plans collapsed and the suffering of their people increased.

Our own distinguished Secretary of State, Mr. Rusk, gave timely warning as the preparations at Lop Nor advanced.
60 And when the test occurred, I at once told the world that this explosion will not turn Americans and other free peoples from their steady purpose.

No American should treat this matter lightly. Until this week, only four powers had entered the dangerous world of nuclear explosions. Whatever their differences, all four are sober and serious states, with long experience as major powers in the modern world.

65 Communist China has no such experience. Its nuclear pretensions are both expensive and cruel to its people. It fools no one when it offers to trade away its first small accumulation of nuclear power against the mighty arsenals of those who limit Communist Chinese ambitions. It shocks us by its readiness to pollute the atmosphere with fallout.

But this explosion remains a fact, sad and serious. We must not, we have not, and we will not ignore it.

I discussed the limited meaning of this event in a statement on last Friday. The world already knows

70 --that we were not surprised,

--that our defense plans take full account of this development,

--that we reaffirm our defense commitments in Asia,

--that it is a long, hard road from a first nuclear device to an effective weapons system, and

--that our strength is overwhelming now and will be kept that way.

75 But what I have in my mind tonight is a different part of the meaning of this explosion at Lop Nor.

Communist China's expensive and demanding effort tempts other states to equal folly. Nuclear spread is dangerous to all mankind.

What if there should come to be 10 nuclear powers, or maybe 20 nuclear powers?

What if we must learn to look everywhere for the restraint which our own example now sets for a few?

80 Will the human race be safe in such a day?

The lesson of Lop Nor is that we are right to recognize the danger of nuclear spread; that we must continue to work against it, and we will.

First, we will continue to support the limited test ban treaty, which has made the air cleaner. We call on the world"especially Red China--to join the nations which have signed that treaty.

85 Second, we will continue to work for an ending of all nuclear tests of every kind, by solid and verified agreement.

Third, we continue to believe that the struggle against nuclear spread is as much in the Soviet interest as in our own. We will be ready to join with them and all the world--in working to avoid it.

Fourth, the nations that do not seek national nuclear weapons can be sure that if they need our strong support against some threat of nuclear blackmail, then they will have it.

90 The two events I have discussed are large and full of meaning, and I will discuss them at some length tomorrow with the legislative leaders of both parties. They are coming here to the White House for a full and complete briefing tomorrow afternoon. Yet they do not change our basic policy. They just reinforce it.

Now let me take a minute to say that the same thing is true about another important event this week. It is the victory of another party with another leader in Great Britain.

95 The British Labor Party is the same party that held power when the Atlantic Alliance was founded; when British and American pilots flew the Berlin Airlift together; when Englishmen joined us in Korea.

It is a party of freedom, of democracy, and of good faith. Today it has the confidence of the British people. It also has ours.

They are our friends--as the Conservatives before them are our friends--and as governments of both parties have been
100 friends for generations.

We congratulate the winners. We send warm regards to the losers. The friendship of our two nations goes on. This is our way with all our trusted allies.

This has been an eventful week in the affairs of the world. It is not the first such week, nor will it be the last. For the world has changed many times in the last 20 years. Great leaders have come and gone. Old enemies have become new
105 friends. Danger has taken the place of danger.

Through this period we have steadily moved toward a more hopeful world. We have moved toward widening freedom and toward securing a more lasting peace. We will continue in this direction.

What happens in other countries is important.

But the key to peace is to be found in the strength and the good sense of the United States of America. Tonight we are
110 the strongest nation in all the world, and the world knows it. We love freedom and we will protect it and we will preserve it. Tonight, as always, America's purpose is peace for all men.

Almost 11 months ago, at a still more fateful hour, just after I had assumed the Presidency, I spoke to all of the Congress and to our people of the purpose of America. Let me close tonight by repeating what I said then:

"We must be ready to defend the national interest and to negotiate the common interest. This is the path that we shall
115 continue to pursue. Those who test our courage will find it strong, and those who seek our friendship will find it honorable. We will demonstrate anew that the strong can be just in the use of strength; and the just can be strong in the defense of justice."

Thank you--and good night to all of you.
(1952 words)

Quelle: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=26627&st=&st1=>