

Historical Documents

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2. Address by Richard M. Nixon to the Bohemian Club¹

San Francisco, July 29, 1967.

My fellow Bohemians and our guests: In my years of making speeches, I have never appeared on an occasion where more of the audience was behind me!

After four months of travel to four continents, I can't tell you how good it is to be back at Bohemia. It is dangerous to be dogmatic about any issue in the world today. But of this one thing I am sure—it's much more pleasant to get stoned in Bohemia than in Caracas.

It was Mr. Hoover's custom on this occasion to put into perspective some of the great issues of the day. In that tradition, I would like to discuss American foreign policy.

I do not intend to dwell on current issues like Vietnam and the Mid-East which are the subject of such constant attention in the daily press. Rather, I suggest we do what we Americans seldom have the time and patience to do: Let us take the long view. Let us evaluate the great forces at work in the world and see what America's role should be if we are to realize our destiny of preserving peace and freedom in the world in this last third of the twentieth century.

One striking impression stands out after months of travel to major countries: We live in a new world. Never in human history have more changes taken place in the world in one generation.

It is a world of new leaders. True, De Gaulle, Mao Tse-tung and Chiang Kai-shek are still with us; but Churchill, Adenauer, Stalin, Khrushchev, Nehru, Sukarno—the other giants of the post-war period have all left the world stage.

It is a world of new people. One-half of the people now living in the world were born since World War II. This presents at once a problem and an opportunity for peace. Because, as one Asian Prime Minister puts it, the new generation has neither the old fears nor the old guilts of the old generation.

It is a world of new ideas. Communism, Marxism, Socialism, anti-colonialism—the great ideas which stirred men to revolution after [Page 3] World War II have lost their pulling power. As the Shah of Iran says—"the new generation is not imprisoned by any ism." The young people in all countries on both sides of the Iron Curtain are groping for a new cause—a new religion. If any idea "turns them on" it is a new sense of pragmatism—"what will work."

Because we live in a new world, many of the old institutions are obsolete and inadequate. The UN, NATO, foreign aid, USIA were set up to deal with the world of twenty years ago. A quick trip around the world will show how different the problems are today.

Twenty years ago Western Europe was weak economically and dependent on the United States. It was united by a common fear of the threat of Communist aggression. Today Western Europe is strong economically and economic independence has inevitably led to more political independence. The winds of détente have blown so strongly from East to West that except for Germany most Europeans no longer fear the threat from the East. The consequences of this change are enormous as far as NATO is concerned. As Harold Macmillan puts it, "Alliances are kept together by fear, not by love." Even without De Gaulle, the European Alliance would be in deep trouble.

Let us look at the Communist world. Twenty years ago the Soviet Union dominated a monolithic Communist empire. Today, the Soviet Union and Communist China are in a bitter struggle for leadership of the Communist world. Eastern Europe turns West, though we must recognize that the differences in Eastern Europe still cause less trouble to the Soviet Union than the differences in Western Europe cause to the United States. The Soviet economic system is turning away from the enforced equality of Marxism to the incentives of capitalism.

Let us look at Latin America:

Twenty years ago Castro was a nobody. Cuba and all the other Latin republics were considered to be solidly, permanently, and docilely on the side of the United States. Today Castro has the strongest military force in the Western Hemisphere next to the United States and he is exporting revolution all over the continent. But even if Castro did not exist, Latin America would have to be considered a major trouble spot. Despite the Alliance for Progress, Latin America is barely holding its own in the race between production and population. As it continues to fall further behind the rest of the world, it becomes a tinder box for revolution.

Let us turn to Africa:

Just ten years ago Ethiopia and Liberia were the only independent countries in Black Africa. Today there are thirty independent countries in Black Africa. Fifteen of these countries have populations less than the State of Maryland, and each has a vote in the UN Assembly equal to [Page 4] that of the United States. There were twelve coups in Black Africa in the last year. No one of the thirty countries has a representative government by our standards and the prospects that any will have such a government in a generation or even a half-century are remote.

Ironically, non-Communist Asia, except for Vietnam, is the area which has experienced the most hopeful change. Japan has recovered from the devastation of World War II to the point that its one hundred million people produce as much as Communist China's seven hundred

million. Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand are all dramatic economic success stories.

There are grey areas:

As General Romulo might put it, the Philippines suffer from too much American style democracy. Indonesia is recovering from too much Sukarno. India suffers from too many people and a host of other problems too numerous to enumerate. But over-all, it can be said without fear of contradiction that the prospects for progress in non-Communist Asia are better than those in Communist Asia.

Let us look at the balance of power in the world:

Twenty years ago the United States had a monopoly on the atomic bomb and our military superiority was unquestioned. Even five years ago our advantage was still decisive. Today the Soviet Union may be ahead of us in megaton capacity and will have missile parity with the United States by 1970. Communist China within five years will have a significant deliverable nuclear capability.

Finally, let us look at American prestige:

Twenty years ago, after our great World War II victory, we were respected throughout the world. Today, hardly a day goes by when our flag is not spit upon, a library burned, an embassy stoned some place in the world. In fact, you don't have to leave the United States to find examples.

This is a gloomy picture; but there is a much brighter side as well.

Communism is losing the ideological battle with freedom in Asia, Africa, Latin America as well as in Europe. In Africa, the Communist appeal was against colonialism. Now that the colonialists are gone, they must base their case on being for Communism. But African tribalism and rebellious individualism are simply incompatible with the rigid discipline a Communist system imposes.

In Latin America, the utter failure of Communism in Cuba has drastically weakened the appeal of the Communist ideology in the rest of Latin America.

In Asia, the remarkable success of private enterprise oriented economies in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia and Thailand, as contrasted [[Page 5](#)] to the failure of Communism in China and the failure of socialism in Burma and Indonesia, makes it possible to state unequivocally that the only way for the Communists to win in Vietnam, or anywhere else in Asia, is by force and terror; they will never win by persuasion.

All over the world, whether from East Germany to West, from Communist China to free China, from Communist Cuba to the free American republics, the traffic is all one way—from Communism to freedom.

Let us reappraise U.S. policy in the light of the new world in which we live.

In Western Europe we must recognize that clearly apart from De Gaulle's actions the new economic independence of European countries and the lack of fear of Soviet aggression have contributed to a situation where it is not possible to keep the old alliance together on its former basis.

Yet, whatever changes may have occurred as far as the Soviet threat is concerned, one factor has not changed: A major reason for setting up the alliance was to provide a military, political and economic home for the most powerful people in Europe—the Germans. If the alliance is allowed to continue to disintegrate, Germany, denied the right to develop nuclear weapons, will be left defenseless in the heart of Europe and the Soviet Union, holding the pawn of East Germany, will have a tempting diplomatic target.

The highest priority American foreign policy objective must be to set up a new alliance, multilateral, if possible, bilateral, if necessary, which will keep Germany solidly on the Western side.

Let us look at the third world—Africa, Asia, Latin America. We reach one inescapable conclusion—foreign aid needs a complete overhaul.

More money alone is not the answer. Latin America is a case in point. Nine billion dollars has been spent on the Alliance for Progress in the last six years with these results: The growth rate in Latin America was less than in the previous five years. The growth rate in Latin America was less than that of non-Communist Asia and of Communist Eastern Europe. Latin America will become a permanent international depressed area unless revolutionary changes are made in its economic, educational and governmental institutions.

Krieger of Argentina, probably the ablest of Latin America's economic ministers, puts the case this way: "You Americans should be more blunt in attaching conditions to your aid programs. Of course, the recipients aren't going to like it. But the United States does us no favor when you aid an unsound economic and social institution. All you do is to help perpetuate a system that should be changed."

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In that spirit, let us use our aid programs to work toward such objectives as the following:

The Latin American educational system is the most obsolete and inadequate in the world in terms of preparing students for contributions to a modern industrial state. It must be modernized and brought into the twentieth century.

In Latin America, Africa, as well as in countries like India, there should be more emphasis on agriculture, less on industrialization.

In every area of the world private, rather than government, enterprise should be encouraged, not because we are trying to impose our ideas but because one works and the other doesn't.

The United States should use its aid programs to reward our friends and discourage our enemies. Before the recent Mid-East crisis, the fact that the U.S. had continued its aid programs to countries like the U.A.R., Algeria and Guinea when their leaders never missed a chance to condemn the United States in world forums had the effect of discouraging our friends, confusing the neutrals and bringing contempt from our enemies.

I would like to illustrate my last point with an example. Four of the most dramatic economic success stories are Thailand, Iran, Taiwan and Mexico.

Thailand has a limited monarchy.

Iran has a strong monarchy.

Taiwan has a strong President with an oligarchy.

Mexico has one-party government.

Not one of these countries has a representative democracy by Western standards. But it happens that in each case their system has worked for them.

It is time for us to recognize that much as we like our own political system, American style democracy is not necessarily the best form of government for people in Asia, Africa and Latin America with entirely different backgrounds.

Let us turn now to the most fundamental question—why continue foreign aid at all? We must recognize that frustration over Vietnam, disillusionment with our European allies who, despite our immense post-World War II aid to them, more often than not refused to cooperate with us in our foreign policy objectives, and the shocking mismanagement and waste in many of the aid programs have all combined to create a new spirit of isolationism in the United States which is becoming stronger in both political parties.

But, let us take a longer view. With the advance of transportation and communications so vividly described by other Lakeside speakers, [Page 7] the world by the end of this century will be a great city. As the world becomes smaller, the differences between rich and poor will appear much larger. The three billion people living in the less advanced areas of the world will not tolerate permanent second class economic status. For example, at that time the people of the United States will have a per capita income ten times as large as that of our closest friends and neighbors in Latin America. The time to defuse this potentially explosive situation is now.

Let us turn now to subject A, the Soviet Union.

This Spring a great debate raged in the chanceries of Europe and among foreign policy experts in the United States as to how much Soviet policy had changed under its new leaders. Some Soviet experts on both sides of the Atlantic saw the new Soviet leaders turning 180 degrees from past policies and seeking permanent peace with the United States and Europe as well as using their influence to end the war in Vietnam.

The record of the Soviets in the Middle East war has caused a sober reassessment of this point of view. At a time that they were talking peace and détente in Europe, the Soviet leaders were spending 4 billion dollars arming Nasser and his colleagues. They encouraged the Arab leaders in their aggressive actions. They blocked diplomatic moves to avoid the war. They supported a cease-fire only when it became necessary for them to do so to save their Arab clients from further losses.

Then came the Glassboro conference. Kosygin was a gentleman. He did not bang his shoe on the table at the United Nations. Many hoped that the Soviet leaders had learned their lesson and the spirit of Hollybush swept over the land. But it soon became apparent that, while the music was different, the words were the same.

More revealing have been the actions of the Soviet leaders since Glassboro. Kosygin stopped to see Castro on his way back to Moscow. The Soviet Union is sending millions of dollars in arms to build the shattered Arab armies. The Soviet Union is still providing 100 per cent of the oil and 85 per cent of all sophisticated military equipment for the armies of North Vietnam. The Soviet line against West Germany has perceptively hardened. The Soviet Union continues to build both offensive and defensive missiles.

This does not mean that the Soviet leaders have not changed. But what we must recognize is that the change is one of the head and not of the heart—of necessity, not choice.

These are some of the facts which forced the change: Communist China is a threat in the East; the Soviet Union needs friends in the West. The military and economic strength of Western Europe thwarted their progressive designs on that area. They faced increased demand for consumer [Page 8] goods from the Russian people. They looked down the nuclear gunbarrel in the Cuban confrontation.

The Soviet leaders today have three major foreign policy objectives:

They are still Communists and they are committed to the goal of a Communist world; they are battling the Chinese for leadership of that world. They want to achieve that goal without war. At the same time they want more economic progress at home. They will work with us only when doing so serves one or more of these three objectives.

In the light of this analysis, the policy America should follow becomes clear.

Militarily, we must recognize that we have not had a world war for twenty years because of America's clear military superiority. That superiority is now threatened, both because of Soviet progress in missile development and because of an attitude in U.S. policy circles that nuclear parity with the Soviets is enough. Because the primary Soviet goal is still victory rather than peace, we must never let the day come in a confrontation like Cuba and the Mid-East where they, rather than we, have military superiority. The cost of maintaining that superiority, including the development of an ABM capability, is a necessary investment in peace.

Economically, we should have a policy which encourages more trade with the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries. We must recognize, however, that to them trade is a political weapon. I believe in building bridges but we should build only our end of the bridge. For example, there should be no extension of long term credits or trade in strategic items with any nation, including the Soviet Union, which aids the enemy in North Vietnam.

Diplomatically we should have discussions with the Soviet leaders at all levels to reduce the possibility of miscalculation and to explore the areas where bilateral agreements would reduce tensions. But we must always remember in such negotiations that our goal is different from theirs: We seek peace as an end in itself. They seek victory with peace being at this time a means toward that end.

In sum, we can live in peace with the Soviet Union but until they give up their goal for world conquest it will be for them a peace of necessity and not of choice.

As we enter this last third of the twentieth century the hopes of the world rest with America. Whether peace and freedom survive in the world depends on American leadership.

Never has a nation had more advantages to lead. Our economic superiority is enormous; our military superiority can be whatever we [Page 9] choose to make it. Most important, it happens that we are on the right side—the side of freedom and peace and progress against the forces of totalitarianism, reaction and war.

There is only one area where there is any question—that is whether America has the national character and moral stamina to see us through this long and difficult struggle.

In this context, the tragic events in Detroit take on a new meaning. This was more than just another Negro riot. The looters were white as well as black. We are reaping the whirlwind for a decade of growing disrespect for law, decency and principle in America.

Without sanctimonious moralizing, let's look at some hard facts. Our judges have gone too far in weakening the peace forces as against the criminal forces in this country. Our opinion-makers have gone too far in promoting the doctrine that when a law is broken—blame

society, not the criminal. Our teachers, preachers and politicians have gone too far in advocating the idea that each individual should determine what laws are good and what laws are bad and that he then should obey the law he likes and disobey the law he dislikes.

In the aftermath of these tragic events everyone will have a solution. Some will say we need more laws. Others will say we need more law enforcement. Others will say we need more money for cities, housing, education and welfare. Each of these approaches deserves consideration and some should be adopted.

But in the final analysis there could be no progress without respect for law. There will be no respect for law in a nation whose people lack character. We need a national crusade to build American character in home, church and school. Above all, we need examples of character from our great men.

We in Bohemia were privileged to know such a man.

I could describe Herbert Hoover as a great statesman. I could describe him as a great businessman. I could describe him as a great humanitarian. But, above all, he will be remembered as a man of great character.

No leader in our history was more viciously vilified. Deserted by his friends, maligned by his enemies, he triumphed over adversity. In the twilight of his life he stood tall above his detractors. His triumph was a triumph of character. We can be thankful that he was one of those rare men who lived to hear the overwhelmingly favorable verdict of history on his career.

Two thousand years ago when these great trees were saplings—the poet Sophocles wrote, “One must wait until the evening to see how splendid the day has been.”

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Herbert Hoover’s life was eloquent proof of those words.

And as we near the evening of another Bohemian Encampment, we, too, can look back and say, “How splendid the day has been.”

1. Source: The Richard Nixon Library, Nixon Papers. Unclassified; Off-the-Record; Not for Publication. Printed by permission of the Richard Nixon Library and Birthplace, Yorba Linda, California. The speech was delivered in the Bohemian Grove, on the shore of a small lake near San Francisco, site of the annual retreat of the Bohemian men’s club. Nixon notes in his memoirs that former President Herbert Hoover had regularly delivered the featured Lakeside address at the retreat, and after Hoover’s death in 1964, Nixon was invited to deliver the 1967 address in Hoover’s honor. (*RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, p. 284)↵