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U.S. Calls on U.S.S.R. Not To Test 50-Megaton Nuclear Bomb

White House Statement

White House press release dated October 17

It is reported that the Soviet Union plans to explode a giant nuclear bomb—the equivalent to 50 million tons of TNT.

We call upon the Soviet Union to reconsider this decision, if in fact it has been made. We know about high-yield weapons. Since 1957 the United States has had the technical know-how and materials to produce bombs in the 50-100 megaton range and higher. But we also know that such weapons are not essential to our military needs. Furthermore, full-scale tests are not necessary to develop 50-megaton bombs. Such an explosion could only serve some unconfessed political purpose.

We believe the peoples throughout the world will join us in asking the Soviet Union not to proceed with a test which can serve no legitimate purpose and which adds a mass of additional radioactive fallout to that which has been unleashed in recent weeks.

We hope very much that we can move toward a test ban treaty just as promptly as possible.

Situation in Southeast Asia

Q. Would you give us an appraisal, sir, of the situation in southeast Asia, in Viet-Nam and Laos, and the effect that this is having on Thailand and Cambodia and the other neighboring countries?

A. The security of southeast Asia as a region is a matter of the greatest importance, and the most immediate concerns there at the moment are, of course, Laos and Viet-Nam. I believe that today Prince Souvanna Phouma [of Laos] may be meeting with the King at Luang Prabang to begin discussions on the constitution of a government.

The agreement among the three princes that Souvanna Phouma might be recommended as the Prime Minister is only the beginning of what could be a difficult negotiation, because the object would be to get a government which would be in fact neutral, and in fact independent, and would be able to lead Laos in that direction.

It is too early yet to say whether these negotiations can be successful. Meanwhile, the work in Geneva goes ahead. But the work at Geneva will

heard anything to the effect you think it will take place?

A. No, we have had no assurances from the Soviet Union on that matter. Indeed, the information which we have comes from Mr. Khrushchev's speech, and, quite frankly, I have not had an official transcript of that portion of the speech in front of me yet. I have a copy of a broadcast in English to the United Kingdom, with which I think you are all familiar.

I will not elaborate unduly on the statement made at the White House last evening about this megaton explosion. But we are quite sure that it will cause people all over the world to think a great deal about this event. It stands against a background of two Soviet votes for an unpoliced moratorium. One possibility, since the statement we have suggests that they might be concluding this series of tests by the end of October—and, as I say, we have no information other than that—one possibility is that they might conclude this series of tests, then support another unpoliced moratorium until they are ready for another series of tests. That would not be a very productive enterprise, I should think.

These problems help to explain why we believe that the path to a ban on nuclear tests lies through a treaty, a treaty such as that tabled by the United States and United Kingdom at Geneva this year,² a treaty which will give assurance to all of those who are directly interested that secret preparations are not going forward, that tests, if conducted, will be ascertained, and that violations will be the other signatories from obligations under the treaty.

We hope that the Soviet Union, if it has made a decision to conduct such an explosion, will think again about it. Such an explosion is not necessary from a technical point of view. The tests which have been conducted already in the ranges which have been used are fully adequate for any technical or scientific purpose.

Just why the Soviet Union would wish to detonate a 50-megaton explosion is something about which we can all speculate. But if they have in mind a demonstration, we hope that they will think very hard about all that it will demonstrate and not just a particular point that they wish to establish.

²For text, see BULLETIN of June 5, 1961, p. 870.

be strongly influenced by what happens in these negotiations in Laos about a government.

As you know, General [Maxwell D.] Taylor is in Viet-Nam to review that situation for the President and the departments of Government concerned.

Although the armed forces of south Viet-Nam have improved considerably in strength and in initiative and in equipment and training, there has been a significant upsurge in guerrilla activity, guerrilla activity which has been supported by cadres and by supplies moving in from the north, some of it directly, some of it by way of Laos.

Of course, the threats to the security of Laos and Viet-Nam are matters of great concern to other countries in that area, such as Thailand, Cambodia, and indeed others. We are looking forward to General Taylor's report with the greatest possible interest. When we get it, we will consider what can be done to steady that situation in that part of the world.

U.S. Policy on Aid to Yugoslavia

Q. Will you state the objectives of our economic aid to Yugoslavia and whether it continues to serve those objectives?

A. First let me review the situation briefly. Yugoslavia is a Communist country and has been since World War II. And no one in any of the administrations which have considered this matter has overlooked this fact.

A more important fact, however, is that in 1948 Yugoslavia broke away from the Soviet bloc and since that time has been not only independent of the Soviet bloc but also a divisive influence on world communism and a source of considerable dissension within the Communist bloc.

It has been a policy of three administrations to support Yugoslavia's determination to maintain its independence. As a part of our efforts to help Yugoslavia preserve that independence, we have furnished substantial economic and military assistance, including military grant aid from 1951 through 1957. There is no doubt that our aid did serve to strengthen Yugoslavia's efforts to maintain its independence. These developments have not been without effect on the Soviet bloc.

You may recall that last December, in the famous declaration issued by the Communist parties at the time of the Communist summit, there were some very severe criticisms of Yugoslavia

contained in that declaration, and you will observe that Yugoslav policies have again been criticized in the 22d Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which is now taking place.

I think some of the criticism which this policy is now receiving stems to a certain degree from public disappointment that our aid to Yugoslavia has not led to full Yugoslav agreement with the foreign policy of the United States. But, as the President has stated, our aid programs are not designed to purchase agreement with us. In our view countries are entitled to national sovereignty and independence, and the basic purpose of our aid is to strengthen the efforts of recipient countries to maintain their national sovereignty and independence.

Some of the disappointment in this country has come from the Belgrade meeting.^a We do not believe that that Belgrade meeting indicated that Yugoslavia was in the process of losing its independence, even though some things were said there that we ourselves did not particularly approve. So that is the basis of our policy.

Q. Mr. Secretary, could you spell out what we regard as our remaining rights in East Berlin and specifically whether or not we regard the continued circulation of Allied personnel into East Berlin as a vital right?

A. We have quadripartite rights with respect to East Berlin, which we are not abandoning, and these are matters which will be subject to conversations with all the powers interested. We expect to have our personnel go into East Berlin as necessary, under our existing quadripartite rights, and we expect the Soviet Union to recognize those rights and protect them.

Hope for Agreement on New U.N. Secretary-General

Q. Mr. Secretary, it has been some 4 weeks now that we have been arguing over a successor to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Do you foresee more haggling over this, or do you think it has to come to a head fairly soon?

A. We do think that this ought to come to a head promptly. The time that has been spent thus far has been used to find out whether there was a basis for agreement, general agreement. Because if such were possible, it would be in the broad

^a For background, see *ibid.*, Oct. 2, 1961, p. 539.

sense better that basis.

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Q. What administration spheric tests.

A. That is commented. his position I would not

Q. Mr. Secretary, than any oth discuss both with the Ru some of your so, what the world?

A. I think refer to some Press Club the type of bounced last

^a *ibid.*, July: