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Transcript of President Nixon's Address

(Reprinted from yesterday's late editions.)

Following is a transcript of President Nixon's address to a joint session of Congress last night on his return from his visit to the Soviet Union, as recorded by The New York Times:

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, members of the Congress, our distinguished guests, my fellow Americans:

Your welcome in this great chamber tonight has a very special meaning to Mrs. Nixon and to me. We feel very fortunate to have traveled abroad so often, representing the United States of America.

But we both agree, after each journey, that the best part of any trip abroad is coming home to America again.

During the past 13 days we have flown more than 16,000 miles and we visited four countries. And everywhere we went—to Austria, the Soviet Union, Iran, Poland—we could feel the quickening pace of change in old international relationship and the people's genuine desire for friendship with the American people.

Everywhere new hopes are rising for a world no longer shadowed by fear and want and war. And as Americans, we can be proud that we now have an historic opportunity to play a great role in helping to achieve man's oldest dream, a world in which all nations can enjoy the blessings of peace.

On this journey we saw many memorable sights, but one picture will always remain indelible in our memory—the flag of the United States of America flying high in the spring breeze above Moscow's ancient Kremlin fortress.

To millions of Americans for the past quarter century the Kremlin has stood for implacable hostility toward all that we cherish, and to millions of Russians the American flag has long been held up as a symbol of evil. No one would have believed even a short time ago that these two apparently irreconcilable symbols would be seen together as we saw them for those few days.

'Beginning of Process' for Peace

Now this does not mean that we bring back from Moscow the promise of instant peace, but we do bring the beginning of a process that can lead to a lasting peace.

And that's why I've taken the extraordinary action of requesting this special joint session of the Congress; because we have before us an extraordinary opportunity.

I have not come here this evening to make new announcements in a dramatic setting. This summit has already made its news. It has barely begun, however, to make its mark on our world.

And I ask you to join me tonight, while events are fresh, while the iron is hot, in starting to consider how we can help to make that mark what we want it to be. The foundation has been laid for a new relationship between the two most powerful nations in the world.

And now it is up to us—to all of us here in this chamber, to all of us across America—to join with other nations in building a new house upon that foundation; one that can be a home for the hopes of mankind and a shelter against the storms of conflict.

As a preliminary, therefore, to requesting your concurrence in some of the agreements we reached and your approval of funds to carry out others, and also as a keynote for the unity in which this Government and this nation must go forward from here, I am rendering this immediate report to the Congress on the results of the Moscow summit.

The pattern of U. S.-Soviet summit diplomacy in the cold war era is well known to all those in this chamber. One

meeting after another produced a brief euphoric mood—the spirit of Geneva, the spirit of Camp David, the spirit of Vienna, the spirit of Glassboro—but without producing significant progress on the really difficult issues.

A Working Summit

And so early in this Administration I stated that the prospect of concrete results, not atmospherics, would be our criterion for meetings at the highest level. And I also announced our intention to pursue negotiations with the Soviet Union across a broad front of related issues, with the purpose of creating a momentum of achievement in which progress in one area could contribute to progress in others.

This is the basis on which we prepared for and conducted last week's talks. This was a working summit. We sought to establish not a superficial spirit of Moscow but a solid record of progress on solving the difficult issues which for so long had divided our two nations and also have divided the world.

Reviewing the number and the scope of agreements that emerged, I think we've accomplished that goal. Recognizing the responsibility of the advanced industrial nations to set an example in combating mankind's enemies, the United States and the Soviet Union have agreed to cooperate in efforts to reduce pollution and enhance environmental quality. We have agreed to work together in the field of medical science and public health—particularly in the conquest of cancer and heart disease. Recognizing that the quest for useful knowledge transcends differences between ideologies and social systems, we have agreed to expand United States and Soviet cooperation in many areas of science and technology. We have joined in plans for an exciting new adventure—a new adventure in the cooperative exploration of space which will begin subject to Congressional approval of funding with a joint orbital mission of an Apollo vehicle and a Soviet spacecraft in 1975.

By forming habits of cooperation and strengthening institutional ties in areas of peaceful enterprise, these four agreements to which I have referred will create on both sides a steadily growing vested interest in the maintenance of good relations between our two countries.

Negotiation Group Set Up

Expanded United States-Soviet trade will also yield advantages to both of our nations. When the two largest economies in the world start trading with each other on a much larger scale, living standards in both nations will rise, and the stake which both have in peace will increase.

Progress in this area is proceeding on schedule. At the summit, we established a joint commercial commission which will complete the negotiations for a comprehensive trade agreement between the United States and the U.S.S.R. And we expect the final terms of this agreement to be settled later this year.

Two further accords which were reached last week have a much more direct bearing on the search for peace and security in the world.

One is the agreement between the American and Soviet navies aimed at significantly reducing the chances of dangerous incidents between our ships and aircraft at sea.

And second and most important, there is the treaty and the related executive agreement which will limit for the first time both offensive and defensive strategic nuclear weapons in the arsenals of the United States and the Soviet Union.

Three-fifths of all the people alive in the world today have spent their whole lifetimes under the shadow of a nuclear war which could be touched off by the arms race among the great powers.

Last Friday in Moscow we witnessed the beginning of the end of that era, which began in 1945. We took the first step toward a new era of mutually agreed restraint in arms limitation between the two principal nuclear powers.

With this step we have enhanced the security of both nations. We have begun to check the wasteful and dangerous spiral of nuclear arms which has dominated relations between our two countries for a generation.

Reduce the Causes of Fear

We have begun to reduce the level of fear by reducing the causes of fear for our two peoples and for all peoples in the world.

The ABM treaty will be submitted promptly for the Senate's advice and consent for ratification, and the interim agreement limiting certain offensive weapons will be submitted to both Houses for a concurrence, because we can undertake agreements as important as these only on a basis of full partnership between the executive and legislative branches of our Government.

I ask from this Congress—and I ask from the nation—the fullest scrutiny of these accords. I am confident such examination will underscore the truth of what I told the Soviet people on television just a few nights ago—that this is an agreement in the interest of both nations. From the standpoint of the United States when we consider what the strategic balance would have looked like later in the seventies if there had been no arms limitation, it is clear that the agreements forestall a major spiraling of the arms race, one which would have worked to our disadvantage since we have no current building programs for the categories of weapons which have been frozen and since no new building program could have produced any new weapons in those categories during the period of the freeze.

'Sufficient' for U.S. Security

My colleagues in the Congress, I have studied the strategic balance in great detail with my senior advisers for more than three years. And I can assure you, the members of the Congress and the American people tonight, that the present and planned strategic forces of the United States are without question sufficient for the maintenance of our security and the protection of our vital interests.

No power on earth is stronger than the United States of America today. And none will be stronger than the United States of America in the future.

This is the only national defense posture which can ever be acceptable to the United States and this is the posture I ask the Senate and the Congress to protect by approving the arms-limitation agreements to which I have referred.

And this is the posture which with the responsible cooperation of the Congress I will take all necessary steps to maintain in our future defense programs.

In addition to the talks which led to the specific agreements I have listed, I also had full, very frank and extensive discussions with General Secretary Brezhnev and his colleagues about several parts of the world where American and Soviet interests have come in conflict.

With regard to the reduction of tensions in Europe, we recorded our intention of proceeding later this year

to Congress on Meetings in Moscow

with multilateral consultations looking toward a conference on security and cooperation in all of Europe.

We have also jointly agreed to move forward with negotiations on mutual and balanced force reductions in central Europe.

Engages Hopes of All Americans

The problem of ending the Vietnam war, which engages the hopes of all Americans, was one of the most extensively discussed subjects on our agenda.

It would only jeopardize the search for peace if I were to review here all that was said on that subject.

I will simply say this: each side obviously has its own point of view and its own approach to this very difficult issue. But at the same time, both the United States and the Soviet Union share an overriding desire to achieve a more stable peace in the world.

I emphasize to you once again this Administration has no higher goal, a goal that I know all of you share, than bringing the Vietnam war to an early and honorable end. We are ending the war in Vietnam, but we shall end it in a way which will not betray our friends, risk the lives of the courageous Americans still serving in Vietnam, break faith with those held prisoners by the enemy, or stain the honor of the United States of America.

Another area where we had very full, frank and extensive discussions was the Middle East. I reiterated the American people's commitment to the survival of the state of Israel and of a settlement just to all the countries in the area. Both sides stated in the communiqué their intention to support the Jarring peace mission and other appropriate efforts to achieve this objective.

The final achievement of the Moscow conference was the signing of a landmark declaration entitled "Basic Principles of Mutual Relations Between the United States and the U.S.S.R."

As these 12 basic principles are put into practice, they can provide a solid framework for the future development of better American-Soviet relations.

They begin with the recognition that two nuclear nations, each of which has the power to destroy humanity, have no alternative but to coexist peacefully because in a nuclear war there would be no winners—only losers.

The basic principles commit both sides to avoid direct military confrontation and to exercise constructive leadership and restraint with respect to smaller conflicts in other parts of the world which could drag the major powers into war.

Spheres of Influence Disavowed

They disavow any intention to create spheres of influence or to conspire against the interests of any other nation, a point I would underscore by saying once again tonight that America values its ties with all nations, from our oldest allies in Europe and Asia—as I emphasized by my visit to Iran—to our good friends in the third world and to our new relationship with the People's Republic of China.

The improvement of relations depends not only, of course, on words, but far more on actions. The principles to which we agreed in Moscow are like a road map. Now that the map has been laid out, it is up to each country to follow it. The United States intends to adhere to these principles.

The leaders of the Soviet Union have indicated a similar intention. However, we must remember that Soviet ideology still proclaims hostility to some of America's most basic values.

The Soviet leaders remain committed to that ideology. Like the nation they lead, they are and they will continue to

be totally dedicated competitors of the United States of America.

As we shape our policies for the period ahead, therefore, we must maintain our defenses at an adequate level until there is mutual agreement to limit forces. The time-tested policies of vigilance and firmness which have brought us to this summit are the ones that can safely carry us forward to further progress in reaching agreements to reduce the danger of war.

Our successes in the strategic arms talks and in the Berlin negotiations which opened the road to Moscow came about because over the past three years we have consistently refused proposals for unilaterally abandoning the ABM, unilaterally pulling back our forces from Europe and drastically cutting the defense budget.

And the Congress deserves the appreciation of the American people for having the courage to vote such proposals down and to maintain the strength America needs to protect its interests.

As we continue the strategic arms talks seeking a permanent offensive-weapons treaty, we must bear the lessons of the earlier talks well in mind.

By the same token, we must stand steadfastly with our NATO partners if negotiations leading to a new détente and a mutual reduction of forces in Europe are to be productive.

Maintaining the strength, integrity and steadfastness of our free world alliances is the foundation on which all of our other initiatives for peace and security in the world must rest.

Not Let Down Our Friends

As we seek better relations with those who have been our adversaries, we will not let down our friends and allies around the world.

And in this period we must keep our economy vigorous and competitive, if the opening for greater East-West trade is to mean anything at all and if we do not wish to be shouldered aside in world markets by the growing potential of the economies of Japan, Western Europe, the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China.

For America to continue its role of helping to build a more peaceful world we must keep American No. 1 economically in the world.

And we must maintain our own momentum of domestic innovation and growth and reform if the opportunities for joint action with the Soviets are to fulfill their promises.

As we seek agreements to build peace abroad, we must keep America moving forward at home.

Most importantly, if the new age we seek is ever to become a reality, we must keep America strong in spirit, a nation proud of its greatness as a free society, confident of its mission in the world.

Let us be committed to our way of life, as wholeheartedly as the Communist leaders, with whom we seek a new relationship, are committed to their system.

Let us always be proud to show in our words and actions what we know in our hearts that we believe in America.

These are just some of the challenges of peace. They are in some ways even more difficult than the challenges of war. But we are equal to them. And as we meet them we will be able to go forward and explore the sweeping possibilities for peace which this season of summits has now opened up for the world.

For decades, America has been locked in hostile confrontation with the two great Communist powers—the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of

China. We were engaged with the one at many points; and almost totally isolated from the other. But our relationships with both had reached a deadly impasse.

All three countries were victims of the kind of bondage about which George Washington long ago warned in these words: "The nation which indulges toward an habitual hatred is a slave to its own animosity."

Sees End of Confrontations

But now, in the brief space of four months, these journeys to Peking and Moscow, have begun to free us from perpetual confrontation. We have moved toward better understanding, mutual respect, point-by-point settlement of differences with both of the major Communist powers.

Now this one series of meetings has not rendered an imperfect world suddenly perfect. There still are deep philosophical differences. There still are parts of the world in which age-old hatreds persist. The threat of war has not been eliminated—it has been reduced.

We are making progress toward a world in which leaders of nations will settle their differences by negotiation, not by force, and in which they learn to live with their differences so that their sons will not have to die for those differences.

It is particularly fitting that this trip aimed at building such a world have concluded in Poland. No country in the world has suffered more from war than Poland, and no country has more to gain from peace. The faces of the people who gave us such a heartwarming welcome in Warsaw yesterday and then again this morning and this afternoon told an eloquent story of suffering from war in the past and of hope for peace in the future.

A Great National Journey

One could see it in their faces.

It made me more determined than ever that America must do all in its power to help that hope for peace come true for all people in the world.

As we continue that effort, our unity of purpose and action will be all important. For the summits of 1972 have not belonged just to one person or to one party or to one branch of our Government alone.

Rather, they are part of a great national journey for peace. Every American can claim a share in the credit for the success of that journey so far, and every American has a major stake in the success for the future.

An unparalleled opportunity has been placed in America's hands. Never has there been a time when hope was more justified or when complacency was more dangerous.

We have made a good beginning. And because we have begun, history now lays upon us a special obligation to see it through. We can seize this moment or we can lose it. We can make good this opportunity to build a new structure of peace in the world, or we can let it slip away.

Together, therefore, let us seize the moment so that our children and the world's children can live free of the fears and free of the hatreds that have been the lot of mankind through the centuries.

And then the historians of some future age will write of the year 1972, not that this was the year America went up to the summit and then down to the depths of the valley again; but that this was the year when America helped to lead the world up out of the lowlands of constant war and on to the high plateau of lasting peace.