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NSC BRIEFING

15 September 1959
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WORLD REACTION TO SOVIET MOON SHOT

- I. Soviet commentators have linked the USSR's successful moon shot with the maiden voyage of the atomic icebreaker "Lenin" and described both as "great Soviet peace achievements" on the eve of Khrushchev's visit.
 - A. Pravda has crowed that the "unprecedented successes of the land of socialism are no accident" but rather "a manifestation of the undoubted superiority of the socialist system."
 - B. The newspaper also reported that the latest Soviet rocket has "shaken" some Americans who see it as a "good augury" of Khrushchev's visit and "the best possible argument that human reason can and must prevail in international relations."
 - C. TASS has quoted a Soviet scientist as expressing the hope that Khrushchev's visit will pave the way for Soviet-American cooperation in space exploration.
 - D. Soviet scientists on 14 September said that there would be no territorial claims on the moon arising from the landing of their cosmic rocket.
- II. Communist China's reaction to the event as seen in Peiping newspapers from 13-15 September claimed that the achievement is the "pride not only of the Soviet people, but also of the socialist camp as a whole," and Chou En-lai has sent Khrushchev a congratulatory telegram to this effect.

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- A. Chiefs of state of North Vietnam, North Korea, and Outer Mongolia have also sent congratulatory telegrams.
- III. Western European press comment has heavily stressed the event's political significance.
 - A. Moscow's timing, said the West German paper, Der Mittag of Dusseldorf, was "like laying a pistol on the table before conversations begin."
 - B. Nevertheless, no fears have yet been expressed that the United States would be impressed into making concessions.
 - C. On the contrary, a British paper suggested that Khrushchev would be in a stronger position to offer concessions.
- IV. In Latin America the fragmentary comment seen so far focuses mainly on the magnitude of scientific achievement.
 - A. As an exception to this general reaction the Chilean Foreign Minister in a 15 September press conference is quoted saying scientific advances are good for peace because fear unites.
 - B. And in Cuba, Fidel Castro's pro-Communist aide, "Che" Guevara has argued that Cuba is in danger of being a target of nuclear weapons because of the US naval base at Guantanamo. Without mentioning Russia by name, he said, "If they can hit the moon, they can surely hit us."
- V. In Asia and Africa there has been little reaction noted to date.

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- A. The UAR press reports the moon shot as a laudable achievement, but suggests the timing reveals a political motive, coming as it does just prior to Khrushchev's visit, and "regrets" the use of science to achieve political ends.
- B. Japanese reaction thus far has been limited to scientific circles which congratulate the USSR on its achievement, particularly the preciseness of calculations needed to hit the moon. They call for cooperation between US and USSR in space technology.
- C. Nehru's reaction has been widely quoted by the press. He ^{FIRST} ~~last~~ said that it was great news and later added that "In old astrology the moon used to affect all human destiny. Now, obviously things are revised. The poor moon is being pursued. I hope the moon will survive."

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