

September 23, 1949

Statement by President Truman in Response to First Soviet Nuclear Test

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Summary:

Shortly after the first Soviet nuclear bomb test on August 29, 1949, United States spy planes detected evidence of radioactivity from the blast. In this statement, President Truman revealed to the public for the first time that the Soviet Union had built and successfully detonated a nuclear bomb.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan
Transcript - English

ATOMIC EXPLOSION OCCURS IN THE U.S.S.R.

Statement by the President

*Released to the press
by the White House September 23*

I believe the American people, to the fullest extent consistent with national security, are entitled to be informed of all developments in the field of atomic energy. That is my reason for making public the following information.

We have evidence that within recent weeks an atomic explosion occurred in the U. S. S. R.

Ever since atomic energy was first released by man, the eventual development of this new force by other nations was to be expected. This probability has always been taken into account by us.

Nearly four years ago I pointed out that "Scientific opinion appears to be practically unanimous that the essential theoretical knowledge upon which the discovery is based is already widely known. There is also substantial agreement that foreign research can come abreast of our present theoretical knowledge in time." And, in the Three-Nation Declaration of the President of the United States and the Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom and of Canada, dated November 15, 1945, it was emphasized that no single nation could in fact have a monopoly of atomic weapons.

This recent development emphasizes once again, if indeed such emphasis were needed, the necessity for that truly effective enforceable international control of atomic energy which this Government and the large majority of the members of the United Nations support.

For other materials on atomic energy see following articles in this issue: Tripartite Discussions on Atomic Energy, page 508; and AEC Reactor Safeguard Committee Visits U.K., page 507.

Statement by Secretary Acheson

*Released to the press by the U.S. delegation
to the United Nations September 23*

I want to emphasize the four basic matters which were brought out in the President's release this morning. Those are: The President has stated the fact that there has been an atomic explosion in the Soviet Union. In the second place, the President has stated that we have been fully aware that sooner or later this development would occur and that in our thinking it has been taken into account. That is an important fact to remember. In the third place, the President has recalled what so many people have forgotten, that in every statement made by him and by the two Prime Ministers as well as by all the commissions and bodies which have studied this matter it has always been clearly pointed out that this situation would develop. And finally, the President has stated that this event makes no change in our policy.

This Nation, from the very beginning of the development of atomic power, has been determined to do everything in its power to proceed toward a truly effective international control of atomic energy. It would be deluding ourselves to get something on paper that is not really effective. The President's statement underlines the importance of having an effective method of control.

We are continuing our most earnest efforts in the organization of the world toward peace. That, of course, is the whole purpose and reason for the great efforts which we have made here in the United Nations, in the Rio treaty, in the North Atlantic Treaty, in the military assistance bill, and in the Marshall Plan. The entire foreign policy of this government is directed toward the organization and preservation of peace. It is only through the success of those efforts that we will avoid the increased hardships and perils of war.

Statement by the President

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