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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

Peace Without Conquest

President Lyndon B. Johnson • April 7, 1965

Address at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland (broadcast nationally)

BACKGROUND

After the French were defeated in 1954, Vietnam was divided into a communist North and a non-communist South, and the United States sent money and advisers to help South Vietnam resist communist guerrillas, the Vietcong, who were supplied by the North. In August 1964, after reported attacks on American ships, Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution allowing the president to use force, and in early 1965 Johnson began bombing North Vietnam and sent the first U.S. combat troops. With students and others beginning to protest, Johnson used this speech to explain why America was fighting, to offer "unconditional discussions" toward peace, and to propose a billion-dollar development plan for Southeast Asia.

Key Vocabulary

Word	What it means
infirmities	weaknesses
unparalleled	having no equal; greater than any other
pledge	a solemn promise
futile	useless; having no chance of success
unconditional	without requirements set in advance
irony	a situation that turns out the opposite of what one would expect
REA	the Rural Electrification Administration, a New Deal agency that brought electricity to farms

The Address (Excerpt)

Excerpt; omitted text is marked with an ellipsis (…). Johnson's section headings are omitted. "Peking" (¶16) is the older English spelling of Beijing, the capital of Communist China. The quotation in ¶22 is from the Book of Job, and "choose life" (¶52) echoes Deuteronomy 30:19.

[1] I have come here to review once again with my own people the views of the American Government.

[2] Tonight Americans and Asians are dying for a world where each people may choose its own path to change.

[3] This is the principle for which our ancestors fought in the valleys of Pennsylvania. It is the principle for which our sons fight tonight in the jungles of Viet-Nam.

[4] Viet-Nam is far away from this quiet campus. We have no territory there, nor do we seek any. The war is dirty and brutal and difficult. And some 400 young men, born into an America that is bursting with opportunity and promise, have ended their lives on Viet-Nam's steaming soil.

[5] Why must we take this painful road?

[6] Why must this Nation hazard its ease, and its interest, and its power for the sake of a people so far away?

[7] **We fight because we must fight if we are to live in a world where every country can shape its own destiny.** And only in such a world will our own freedom be finally secure.

[8] This kind of world will never be built by bombs or bullets. Yet the infirmities of man are such that force must often precede reason, and the waste of war, the works of peace.

[9] We wish that this were not so. But we must deal with the world as it is, if it is ever to be as we wish.

[10] … The world as it is in Asia is not a serene or peaceful place.

[11] The first reality is that North Viet-Nam has attacked the independent nation of South Viet-Nam. Its object is total conquest.

[12] Of course, some of the people of South Viet-Nam are participating in attack on their own government. But trained men and supplies, orders and arms, flow in a constant stream from north to south.

[13] This support is the heartbeat of the war.

[14] And it is a war of unparalleled brutality. Simple farmers are the targets of assassination and kidnapping. Women and children are strangled in the night because their men are loyal to their government. And helpless villages are ravaged by sneak attacks. Large-scale raids are conducted on towns, and terror strikes in the heart of cities.

[15] The confused nature of this conflict cannot mask the fact that it is the new face of an old enemy.

[16] Over this war—and all Asia—is another reality: the deepening shadow of Communist China. The rulers in Hanoi are urged on by Peking. This is a regime which has destroyed freedom in Tibet, which has attacked India, and has been condemned by the United Nations for aggression in Korea. It is a nation which is helping the forces of violence in almost every continent. The contest in Viet-Nam is part of a wider pattern of aggressive purposes.

[17] … Why are these realities our concern? Why are we in South Viet-Nam?

[18] **We are there because we have a promise to keep.** Since 1954 every American President has offered support to the people of South Viet-Nam. We have helped to build, and we have helped to defend. Thus, over many years, we have made a national pledge to help South Viet-Nam defend its independence.

[19] And I intend to keep that promise.

[20] To dishonor that pledge, to abandon this small and brave nation to its enemies, and to the terror that must follow, would be an unforgivable wrong.

[21] We are also there to strengthen world order. Around the globe, from Berlin to Thailand, are people whose well-being rests, in part, on the belief that they can count on us if they are attacked. To leave Viet-Nam to its fate would shake the confidence of all these people in the value of an American commitment and in the value of America's word. The result would be increased unrest and instability, and even wider war.

[22] We are also there because there are great stakes in the balance. Let no one think for a moment that retreat from Viet-Nam would bring an end to conflict. The battle would be renewed in one country and then another. The central lesson of our time is that the appetite of aggression is never satisfied. To withdraw from one battlefield means only to prepare for the next. We

must say in southeast Asia—as we did in Europe—in the words of the Bible: "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further." …

[23] … **Our objective is the independence of South Viet-Nam, and its freedom from attack.** We want nothing for ourselves—only that the people of South Viet-Nam be allowed to guide their own country in their own way.

[24] We will do everything necessary to reach that objective. And we will do only what is absolutely necessary.

[25] In recent months attacks on South Viet-Nam were stepped up. Thus, it became necessary for us to increase our response and to make attacks by air. This is not a change of purpose. It is a change in what we believe that purpose requires.

[26] We do this in order to slow down aggression.

[27] We do this to increase the confidence of the brave people of South Viet-Nam who have bravely borne this brutal battle for so many years with so many casualties.

[28] And we do this to convince the leaders of North Viet-Nam—and all who seek to share their conquest—of a very simple fact: We will not be defeated. We will not grow tired.

[29] We will not withdraw, either openly or under the cloak of a meaningless agreement.

[30] We know that air attacks alone will not accomplish all of these purposes. But it is our best and prayerful judgment that they are a necessary part of the surest road to peace. …

[31] … Such peace demands an independent South Viet-Nam—securely guaranteed and able to shape its own relationships to all others—free from outside interference—tied to no alliance—a military base for no other country.

[32] These are the essentials of any final settlement. …

[33] … We have stated this position over and over again, fifty times and more, to friend and foe alike. And **we remain ready, with this purpose, for unconditional discussions**.

[34] … This war, like most wars, is filled with terrible irony. For what do the people of North Viet-Nam want? They want what their neighbors also desire: food

for their hunger; health for their bodies; a chance to learn; progress for their country; and an end to the bondage of material misery. And they would find all these things far more readily in peaceful association with others than in the endless course of battle.

[35] … These countries of southeast Asia are homes for millions of impoverished people. Each day these people rise at dawn and struggle through until the night to wrestle existence from the soil. They are often wracked by disease, plagued by hunger, and death comes at the early age of 40.

[36] Stability and peace do not come easily in such a land. Neither independence nor human dignity will ever be won, though, by arms alone. It also requires the work of peace. The American people have helped generously in times past in these works. Now there must be a much more massive effort to improve the life of man in that conflict-torn corner of our world. …

[37] … For our part I will ask the Congress to join in a billion dollar American investment in this effort as soon as it is underway. …

[38] … But we will always oppose the effort of one nation to conquer another nation.

[39] We will do this because our own security is at stake.

[40] But there is more to it than that. For our generation has a dream. It is a very old dream. But we have the power and now we have the opportunity to make that dream come true.

[41] For centuries nations have struggled among each other. But we dream of a world where disputes are settled by law and reason. And we will try to make it so.

[42] For most of history men have hated and killed one another in battle. But we dream of an end to war. And we will try to make it so.

[43] For all existence most men have lived in poverty, threatened by hunger. But we dream of a world where all are fed and charged with hope. And we will help to make it so. …

[44] … We often say how impressive power is. But I do not find it impressive at all. The guns and the bombs, the rockets and the warships, are all symbols of human failure. They are necessary symbols. They protect what we cherish. But they are witness to human folly.

[45] A dam built across a great river is impressive.

[46] … A rich harvest in a hungry land is impressive.

[47] The sight of healthy children in a classroom is impressive.

[48] These—not mighty arms—are the achievements which the American Nation believes to be impressive.

[49] And, if we are steadfast, the time may come when all other nations will also find it so. …

[50] … This generation of the world must choose: destroy or build, kill or aid, hate or understand.

[51] We can do all these things on a scale never dreamed of before.

[52] Well, we will choose life. In so doing we will prevail over the enemies within man, and over the natural enemies of all mankind.

Guiding Questions

Answer in complete sentences. Cite the paragraph number [ ] where you found your evidence.

1. What principle does Johnson say Americans and Asians are dying for? How does he connect it to the American Revolution? [2, 3]

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2. How does Johnson describe the war and the role of North Vietnam and Communist China? [10–16]

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3. Give the three reasons Johnson offers for why the United States is in Vietnam. [17–22]

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4. What is America's stated objective, and why does Johnson say air attacks are necessary? [23–30]

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5. What does Johnson offer in the hope of peace? What kind of help does he propose for Southeast Asia? [31–37]

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6. Johnson says the weapons of war are "symbols of human failure." What does he find truly impressive, and why? [44–49]

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