

Moon Landing
~~*James A. ...*~~
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This month our nation and the world observes an important anniversary in the progress of mankind.

It is five years since Neil Armstrong stepped out of the Apollo 11 spacecraft, the Eagle, on to the surface of the moon and dramatically and astutely observed, "That's one small step for a man -- one giant leap for mankind."

At the time of the moon landing, on July 20, 1969, I was in the Soviet Union. While there was television and general press coverage of the event in Romania, Poland, ^{Moscow} and many other nearby countries, nothing was being reported in Russia.

When the landing was taking place, I was holding open house in my room at the National Hotel. A U. S. Marine from the American Embassy was relaying progress of the flight to me by telephone -- and I was passing it on to guests from a number of countries who were overflowing from my room into the hotel hall.

The next morning, when I met with editors of Pravda and Izvestia, I frankly asked why there had been no coverage of this historic event. One of the editors stepped back into the newsroom and came out with a Reuter's story on the moon ~~landing~~. He indicated that it would be in the next morning's paper. And he kept his word.

I also met that day with Alexei Kosygin, chairman of the Council of Ministers. He immediately congratulated me on our space achievement and asked that I convey his congratulations to the Apollo crew.

So I called from the Kremlin to the American Embassy -- and on to the space center in Houston, Texas, where Mr. Kosygin's congratulations were relayed on to Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin on the moon and to Mike Collins in the space satellite.

I will never forget the tremendous impact this event had on Moscow and the Soviet Union generally -- once the news had been conveyed that Americans were on the moon. It did more, in my judgment, for world peace than all the diplomacy we had pursued for years. Russia knew that she was well ahead of the United States in space, perhaps as much as five years. But they saw us catch them, then pass them.

And they said to themselves, "Those crazy Americans. They never plan anything. But not only have they caught up with us, they have passed us by. A country that can do this is a country to be feared -- or at least respected." It conveyed to their military leaders that the United States was a tremendous power and that caution was necessary in dealing with us.

(more)

The moon landing was but the dramatic apex of an enormous program of space research which, in addition to exploring the unknown, has had practical applications in our daily lives undreamed of in Jules Vern's wildest imaginations.

Our space program has stimulated research into extremely high and low temperature physics, miniaturized electronic components, advanced computer techniques. It has affected the manner in which we construct highways, the clothes that we wear, health aids, such as the heart pacer, our communications system, our weather forecasting.

Just the availability of advance meteorological information means savings of millions of dollars to farmers and others whose livelihood depends on the weather all over the world.

The earth resources technology satellite, which I supported when I was chairman of the Space Council, is providing essential information to assist us in achieving an adequate food supply for the world's people.

Through extensive photographing on a scale never before possible, we can tell what crop is being raised in a particular area, the age of the crop, whether it is healthy or diseased, what the yield will be. We can detect schools of fish in the ocean.

In the important area of peace, our space program has given us the capability to monitor nuclear explosions in the atmosphere, on the earth and in the water.

And one of the seldom cited benefits of the space effort is the insight we have gained into how to organize an attack on huge and seemingly even impossible problems. It has taught us the importance of planning.

You may remember that John Kennedy told us that within the decade of the 1960's we shall have a man on the moon and bring him back safely. A time frame was set, with a specific objective to be achieved. And then government, private industry, our universities joined together in a mutual effort to fulfill those goals.

This same kind of planning we can and must apply in attacking many other problems which plague mankind.

So, despite the criticisms the space program receives from time to time, I firmly believe that it has been a Godsend to the American people. I am confident, too, that it will bring untold benefits in the years ahead -- as we expand our world beyond our own universe and into outer space.



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