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FACE THE NATION

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MR. AGRONSKY: Mr. Vice President, General Harold Johnson, the Army Chief of Staff, said recently that the Vietnam war would last ten years or more. What do you think?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I think it is very difficult to make any safe prediction as to the duration of any war, and particularly the war in Vietnam with all of its complexities and all of its uncertainties and all of the strange and unknown factors of guerrilla warfare. I think what is more important is for the American people to know, as the President put it, that we will yet face some loss, it will be costly, and the agony of this struggle may well continue for some time. In other words, to steel ourselves to the task and to approach it with will and at the same time with confidence.

ANNOUNCER: From CBS Washington, in color, FACE THE NATION, a spontaneous and unrehearsed news interview, with the Vice President of the United States, Hubert Humphrey.

Mr. Humphrey will be questioned by CBS News White House Correspondent Robert Pierpoint, James Reston, Associate Editor of the New York Times, and CBS News Correspondent Martin Agronsky.

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MR. AGRONSKY: Mr. Vice President, you make it clear you foresee a long war in Vietnam. Do you think that the current turmoil in Communist China presents us any opportunities to shorten the war?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Mr. Agronsky, I think it is very difficult for those of us in this country, looking at the scene in China through whatever vistas we have or whatever portholes, so to speak, that we have, to really know what is going on. The most that we know is the fragmentary reports that come from Hong Kong or from Tokyo. To get a clear picture of what is going on in China today is almost an impossibility for us, despite all the efforts that are made through many sources, intelligence sources. There is no doubt but what a great struggle is under way in China. We know that. Undoubtedly that -- or possibly that struggle was precipitated over a fundamental argument on policy as well as, may I say, party control. When you have a one-party system it does not mean that there

is no rivalry within the party, as we have seen in every Communist country. Bitter rivalries rise within the political structure.

As to your question, I do not believe that the present struggle in China will at least in the immediate future affect Vietnam one way or another. It may have this effect if the leaders in Hanoi are willing to permit it to happen, namely, to give Hanoi a little more independence of action than it has had in the past. I would hope that the effect might well be that the Soviet Union could use some of its good offices, if it so desires, to bring Hanoi to the conference table so that we could begin, at least have the beginnings of negotiations towards peace.

MR. RESTON: Let's assume this is wrong. Supposing peace were to break out. Are we ready?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, if this is the most serious problem, Mr. Reston, that will confront this Nation, I will be perfectly grateful. I hope that we are always ready for peace. I think I understand the thrust of your question, namely, what would happen to our economy; have we really thought through kind of a peace we want; what are we willing to settle for in Vietnam. We have given a great deal

of thought to these matters. The most important thing is to get the beginnings of a dialogue or a conversation that leads to peace. And how that takes place is not as important as the fact that it does take place. It could begin with very quiet, obscure diplomacy. It could take place in the confines of the United Nations or the International Control Commission or through some helpful third party. But our position must be unequivocally clear in the world today, namely, that we are prepared to follow any honorable route to peace and to use any reasonable forum for the attainment of discussions that lead to peace.

MR. PIERPOINT: Mr. Vice President, is there anywhere in the world today any kind of dialogue between ourselves and the North Vietnamese?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I believe that the Secretary of State has answered that question several times in this manner and I have no reason to doubt the sincerity or the authenticity of his remark, namely, that there is no lack of contact with the Viet Cong or North Vietnam. By this I am sure what he is indicating is that there are many interested parties that can represent both of the -- all the forces in Vietnam that are in constant discussion or in

continuous discussion.

We have had our discussions, as you know, with people in the Eastern European countries that have indicated that they had some contact in Hanoi. I know that, speaking for myself when I represented our country on a visit to India, I spoke to the President of India, asked for his help in exercising his good offices. We have spoken with Mr. Kosygin. I was present at the time when Mr. Rusk and myself had a long discussion with Mr. Kosygin of the Soviet Union about the possibilities of opening some negotiations on the Vietnamese question. So there is no lack of contact. I would hope, however, that we would not lose our patience now and become frustrated because the contacts have not borne fruit. I think that we must have the same will in the pursuit of peace that we have talked about in terms of carrying on under this difficult, costly, agonizing struggle in Vietnam.

MR. RESTON: Mr. Vice President, what are you really saying there? Are you saying that there is no limit to what we will do to achieve our political and military ends in Vietnam?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, I am not in position to say what the -- what all of the ramifications are

of American policy. These policies develop and they grow and they change with circumstances. I am saying that we do have certain objectives and we seek to pursue those objectives. We are really fighting a limited war, to prevent what we believe to be a major war. The President has put it quite well when he has said that the question before the American people is whether we have the resolve and the purpose and the determination to seek limited goals, even though we have massive power, in other words, to control the use of that massive power for limited objectives. This is the real test of the Nation's character. We are not seeking to destroy North Vietnam. We are not seeking to occupy North Vietnam. And, above all, we surely do want to avoid, if at all humanly possible, the extension and the expansion of this conflict to areas beyond where it is now. Therefore, we seek to bring about a cessation of hostilities, to protect the territorial integrity of South Vietnam, to permit the peoples of Vietnam, North and South, to exercise self-determination in a peaceful manner, through the processes of orderly elections. We seek to prevent the success of aggression, but not merely to prevent the success of aggression but primarily to permit people to build their own

society in their own way. And this of course means that the political developments in a nation or in an area such as Southeast Asia are every bit as important and maybe even more important than the military developments. The struggle that faces us in the months ahead, and I think the most difficult struggle, will be the struggle of -- they put it in the words of pacification or rural development; I think it is better to say the development of political institutions, viable political institutions that command the respect of the people, that can provide some orderly progress towards peace.

MR. AGRONSKY: Mr. Vice President, despite what our intent may be, Senator Fulbright, the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in a book that will be published tomorrow, as you know, points out that all of our bombing, all of our efforts to induce Hanoi to come to the conference table have failed, that is, the use of force to bring them to the negotiation table has failed, that an alternative must be provided. Have we sought in any way to provide that alternative? He feels that we have not.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I am sure that you

know of my high regard for Senator Fulbright. I want to make it quite clear, I think he is one of the truly gifted and talented men in our Congress. I respect his mind, his intellect. I respect him as a man of high public purpose and public service. But men who have respect for one another can disagree and I do find myself in disagreement on this matter with my friend, Senator Fulbright. I am not at all unhappy, may I say, that he poses these issues because I think the American people have to think through their course of action.

MR. AGRONSKY: You don't feel that in this sense that it has been demonstrated that our policy of forcing them in effect to the conference table had been mistaken?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, wars are not easily won and struggles with guerrilla forces that are highly motivated, such as the Viet Cong, Communist-oriented, Communist-disciplines -- not all Communists but Communist-controlled -- those forces do not give up easily. This is really a test of will in many ways, gentlemen, and I believe that it is about time that we understood that not only does the enemy, namely the North Vietnamese and the V.C. have brave

men and strong men. But they have a strong will. The Communists always have. They are a determined group. And if free men are going to survive in a world where they are contested by the forces of Communist totalitarianism and Communist discipline, then free men must be able to freely come to an equal perseverance and will. We have had to have that in Berlin. We have had to have that in the struggle in Western Europe. We have had to have it in many other areas of the world and I hope we will have it there.

I am not one of those that believes that this struggle will continue forever and forever. I think it may very well either phase out, so to speak, almost unnoticed for a while, withdrawal of main-line units, of North Vietnam, of the slowing down of action of the V.C. Or it may very well come to the conference table. But let me answer specifically Mr. Fulbright's charge. We have used, we are continuing to use other means than sheer force to bring this struggle to an end. We are willing to use the good offices of the Holy Father, the Pope. We have been willing to use the good offices of the International Control Commission. We have asked for a reconvening of the Geneva Conference. We are

willing to go to the United Nations. We have given U Thant sort of a go-ahead, to try to find if he could get some response from Hanoi so that we had something to work with.

So, gentlemen, it isn't a matter of just the use of force. Force is only one element and, may I say, it may not be the most significant element. But we must continue to use every diplomatic force, every diplomatic technique we have as well.

MR. PIERPOINT: Mr. Vice President, I believe you were indicating in some of what you said just now that this war might end through gradual de-escalation. Some of our experts do believe that.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It is a possibility.

MR. PIERPOINT: There has been this week a statement by South Vietnam's new Ambassador to Washington, Bui Diem, that the South Vietnamese have indications that the infiltration across the border from the North is now in fact deescalating.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is correct.

MR. PIERPOINT: I believe that President Johnson has indicated that if that happened we would also deescalate. Are we going to deescalate, and if so, in what manner?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: One thing I am sure of,

that the discussion of strategy and tactics in a major operation such as the war in Vietnam is not necessarily desirable on a public forum. I have been of the view that -- and I don't recall that I have said it publicly before -- but I have been of the view that quiet diplomacy, carefully thought out moves without too much fanfare and publicity might be more effective than just parading out every week a new plan and a new strategy and a new design for the attainment of peace. After all, there is face, as they say, not only in the East but in the West. There are men of pride and men of power involved. And if you really want peace, since you are not seeking an all-out victory in the sense of smashing and destroying a whole nation, as we did in World War II, if our objectives are limited and if our purposes are clearly defined, as they are, then it seems to me that the approach of a more quiet and subtle, almost unnoticed diplomatic effort may be more successful than grandiose schemes.

MR. PIERPOINT: May I ask you, then, since I am kind of cut off from that line of questioning by your answer, is there being consideration given to Senator Mansfield's proposal that the North be

cut off by a fence of some kind, a physical fence across the -- around the line of demarcation between North and South, to prevent further infiltration?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, I think it would be helpful if we noted that it wasn't so much a fence as it was a barrier in which all modern devices that we know, to prevent infiltration by personnel and equipment --

MR. PIERPOINT: A fence of men and of military mines --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Electronic devices, et cetera. All of these matters --

MR. RESTON: Well, sir --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, sir, excuse me?

MR. RESTON: That would take a million men, wouldn't it?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I shall come to that. All of these matters are being given consideration. I am sure that you would like to know that and that our people would like to know that. Senator Mansfield is a very responsible man and he is the majority leader of the United States Senate. In this instance I know that he wouldn't claim for a moment that he was speaking for the administration.

But he is speaking for many concerned Americans. And Senator Mansfield's voice and his proposals always command respect and attention. And I think it can be said here, and it should be known, that matters such as proposals such as Senator Mansfield has outlined have been studied, are being studied. What will come of it, I can't say. But it is a constructive, thoughtful proposal. Now, as to whether or not it is too costly, as to whether or not it would be effective or ineffective, that will have to be determined after careful study -- which takes me to Mr. Reston's question.

I don't believe that it would take a million men. I am not trying to say that this is what we ought to have or not have. I do know that it would be costly. I do know that the terrain that is being discussed is very rugged, at least after you have moved in some thirty miles or so. There are military men who tell me that the objective which is sought by this barrier, namely to prevent the infiltration of men and materiel, to have a sort of zone through which you can observe and prevent massive infiltration, that this can be accomplished without the barrier, that it can be accomplished by surveillance, by mining the area,

through aerial mining, through cross-fire of certain emplacement of guns and artillery, that all this can be done.

I am not a military expert. I have been in on these discussions, however. And, to get back to your point, all of this is under careful observation and consideration.

MR. RESTON: Could I ask you, sir, why do we draw such a distinction between a three-day New Year's pause and a seven-day?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, as you know, the government of South Vietnam has asked for an extension of the pause or the truce over the Vietnamese New Year period. And we are prepared to follow that initiative. In this instance it was the initiative of Prime Minister Ky who asked the government of North Vietnam to extend it. There has been no response, again, from Hanoi.

MR. RESTON: I thought it was the other way around, that Hanoi asked for seven days and Ky offered to negotiate it?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Ky offered to extend it even further.

MR. RESTON: Yes.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: He offered to extend it

even further, feeling that amount of time, if seven days was desirable, then why not go further, in other words, an effort to deescalate this struggle.

MR. AGRONSKY: Well, why not go further, why don't we try to --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I wish I could find out.

MR. PIERPOINT: Why don't we discuss it with the Viet Cong? Is Ky willing to do that?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think what Mr. Ky is saying is what many of the rest of us feel and believe, despite some comments to the contrary, that the Viet Cong is not an independent instrumentality. I hope that we have lived long enough in this post-war world to know what is a Communist front and who really controls it. Now I have heard some people say that they didn't think the National Liberation Front was a Communist -- that it was Hanoi-controlled. But let me assure you, very few feel that way, it is Hanoi-controlled.

MR. AGRONSKY: Mr. Vice President, there are many more things we would like to ask you and we will resume the questioning in a moment.

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MR. AGRONSKY: Mr. Vice President, as you know,

there is a growing concern in the country about the Russian building of an antiballistic missile system in the vicinity of both Moscow and Leningrad. And the President indicated in his State of the Union Message that we were not going to follow suit, that this would pull a trigger on a really destructive armaments race. Have we had any response from the Russians as yet on the President's remarks in his State of the Union Message?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: The Department of State has indicated only recently that we had no reason to believe that the Soviet Union was not interested, which is the State Department's way of saying that there has been interest expressed. And of course discussions are under way here in Washington with the Soviet Ambassador, Mr. Dobrynin, and I think we could expect that such discussions would be under way in Moscow. We are deeply concerned about this and we hope and pray that the Soviet leaders are, too.

MR. AGRONSKY: But beyond hoping and praying do we have any reason to believe that we can be hopeful, that they will not go ahead?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Mr. Agronsky, it is very

difficult to express sure hopes. It is, however, very possible and desirable that we express the hope and we will pursue this course of seeking to stop this new dimension of the arms race because it is costly. I think it is dangerous. I doubt that it will give us any more security.

Mr. Reston, I read your column this morning. I think you are right, it gives us more power and it gives the Soviets more power but not necessarily more security. And we are not primarily interested in building mountains of power. What the world ought to be seeking is a way to de-escalate the arms race. In fact, the best security that the world could have is a balanced systematic arms control program rather than an arms expansion program. And President Johnson believes that and we shall pursue that objective.

MR. RESTON: On that point you made an interesting comment a couple of weeks ago in which you, if I remember it correctly, you were saying that you were troubled about what would happen when we tried to move from a war budget to a reconstruction budget, and you wondered whether the Congress would go along.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, sir.

MR. RESTON: Well, now, what are you doing in the administration to create that transpormation over to a reconstruction budget?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It is my view that the actions of the 89th Congress were in a large measure designed to take advantage of the day that we can move from a war budget into a peacetime budget. The measures of the 89th Congress not only were designed to correct and in a sense moderate old grievances but rather to look ahead. They provided -- those measures provided a storehouse of new tools that will be needed for the days ahead. The authorizations are there. The plans are there. The programming is there. And once we can start to bring down the defense budget because of the war in Vietnam, if we can get a deescalation of the war, less cost, or a cessation of hostilities, we will have the legislative proposals not only in our minds but literally in the law books, to move ahead with the massive attack on the problems of our cities, aid to education, aid to our poor, and so on.

MR. PIERPOINT: Mr. Vice President, do you think that the Congress is willing to pass President Johnson's income tax increase?

MR. AGRONSKY: The surtax.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: The so-called surtax?

MR. PIERPOINT: Yes, the so-called surtax.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Which is one that I am afraid many people do not quite understand. It is but an extra charge on taxable income. I believe that the Congress will pass this measure if, by the time that the date for that measure to become effective, the economy necessitates it. I think now that it is necessary.

Now, what is the purpose of this tax? First of all, to help the economy in balance by seeing to it that inflationary forces do not gnaw into and eat into the purchasing power of the income of people and to destroy the value of the dollar. Secondly, it has as its purpose the sharing of the burdens of the war in Vietnam. And I tell you, gentlemen, I think the American people have a little built about this. They really haven't had to share too much except those who have given their loved ones in this struggle. Thirdly, it provides some measure of funds to carry out the programs of domestic reform and of social advancement that we have had in the Great Society programs. And, fourthly, it is a sound pattern of fiscal policy, not relying entirely upon the Federal Reserve System,

the management of credit and of interest rates to keep the economy in balance but fiscal policy as well.

MR. PIERPOINT: But you sound as if you are indicating the President meant that as an iffy proposal, that is if the economy needed it by June, let's say, is that correct?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I say the President feels, rightly so, that the economy needs it now. But I think, Mr. Pierpoint, that you have been around this town long enough to know we don't pass tax bills now. It takes a bit of time before the hearings are completed and the House of Representatives acts and then the Senate hearings are completed and the Senate acts. What I am saying is that it is a prudent measure, needed now, as we see it, needed now. But for those that are worried that it may be deflationary, and there are some expressions along this line, its effective date is July 1. And if per chance the economy were in a down-hill run, which I doubt that it will be, I expect it to be going up, then the effective date could be changed or the tax bill could go back. I expect it to pass. I think it is needed.

MR. AGRONSKY: Do you feel that Senator Long,

Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, reflects a responsible view in the Senate? He succeeded you in the whip post. He told us on this program last week that he would be against this completely and that he didn't think it could pass.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, the Senator has his own view. And, once again, he is one of the able Senators of that body and he occupies a powerful position. But the House initiates tax legislation. I have reason to believe that the House committee will give it not only serious consideration but favorable consideration, including the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, Mr. Mills. And when it comes to the Senate, as I said a moment ago, if the economy still shows the need for that tax bill, and I think it will, I have a feeling that it will pass the United States Senate. Mr. Long is a man of definite views and, thank goodness, because we need men who do their own thinking.

MR. AGRONSKY: Well, Mr. Vice President, I am really to tell you that our time is up.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I am sorry, too.

MR. AGRONSKY: Thank you very much for being here to FACE THE NATION. A word about next Week's guest in a moment.

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ANNOUNCER: Today on FACE THE NATION, Vice President Hubert Humphrey was interviewed by CBS News White House Correspondent Robert Pierpoint, and James Reston, Associate Editor of The New York Times. CBS News Correspondent Martin Agronsky led the questioning.

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