

Excerpts From Transcript of Correspondents'

Interview With Nixon at White House

Following are excerpts from a transcript of a televised interview with President Nixon from the White House Monday night as recorded by The New York Times. Network correspondents participating were Eric Sevareid of the Columbia Broadcasting System, Howard K. Smith of the American Broadcasting Company, John Chancellor of the National Broadcasting Company and Nancy Dickerson of the Public Broadcasting System.

MR. CHANCELLOR: Sir, you've lived here in the White House and had this responsibility now for two years, and I wonder, Mr. President, how you have changed. We heard some talk, and read in the papers during the last campaign about the old Nixon, but all the historical evidence we have indicates that the Presidency changes men—and I wonder what changes in yourself you have observed.

MR. NIXON: The changes, Mr. Chancellor, are primarily not physical. Physically, as you've probably noticed from the doctors' report—which, incidentally, a President is required to have once a year, and probably that's a good thing—there have been no significant changes there.

So the job must agree with me.

The changes more are in an understanding of the job. When you come into office, the Presidency, one has ideas as to what he can accomplish, and he believes he can accomplish a great deal, even though he may have a Congress that is not part of his own party.

Hopes and Performance

And then, after he gets in, he finds that what he had hoped, in terms of achieving goals, will not be as great as the actual performance turns out to be.

So I would say that in terms of how I have changed, it is in realizing that while we must set high goals and always seek them, that we must not become impatient and we must plow forward, recognizing that in the end we're going to make some progress, if not all the progress that we hoped.

I would say, in other words, at this time, I'm not disappointed in the record of the last two years in terms of some of the things that we accomplished. But I have great hopes for the next two years.

Because I think I know better how to do the job. I think I know better how to deal with the Congress. I think I know better how to work with the Cabinet. This is perhaps how I have changed.

I know more. I'm better, more experienced. I hope I do better.

MR. SEVAREID: Mr. President, to be specific about the last two years, what do you now think of as your primary achievements, specifically, and what is your primary failure or mistake?

MR. NIXON: Mr. Sevareid, the primary achievement is, I think, in the field of foreign policy. We have not yet ended the war in Vietnam—I had hoped we would have by this time. But we now see the end of Americans' combat role in Vietnam in sight.

The fact, for example, that when we came in American casualties in the last year of the previous Administration were 14,500. The casualties this year are 4,200. That's still much too high. I will not be satisfied until I do not have to write any letter at all to the next of kin of somebody killed in Vietnam.

But we are on the way out and we're on the way out in a way that will bring a just peace, the kind of a peace that will discourage that kind of aggression in the future and will build, I hope, the foundation for a generation of peace. That's our major achievement in, I think, the foreign policy field.

Now in the disappointment side, I think the greatest disappointment, legislatively, was the failure to get welfare reform. I believe this would have done more than anything else to deal with the problems of poverty in this country, the problems that many of our cities have and our states have, the problems of minority groups who have particular difficulties insofar as welfare is concerned.

And then finally, if I could add one other. I would not like to limit it to just one. I think the greatest disappointment was in terms of the tragedies of Kent State, of Jackson State and of the University of Wisconsin.

It is true that over the past two years we've seen the war wind down, we have seen our cities not as inflamed as they were previously, we have seen the amount of violence going down some. But during this Administration, to have had three such tragedies as that left a very deep impression upon me.

And I trust that as we continue to have success in foreign policy, as we continue to solve the problems that people are interested in, that this kind of violence will begin to recede even more.

Confidence in the Economy

MISS DICKERSON: Mr. President, I'd like to ask you about one of your specific problems, namely the economy. Now, despite the initiatives that you've taken in the past few weeks, there is still widespread pessimism about unemployment. In fact, in places like California there's a near panic psychology about joblessness. And your own economic advisers say that the basic trouble is a lack of confidence in the economy. What do you plan to do to restore people's confidence in the economy before things get any worse than they now are?

MR. NIXON: Well, first, I believe that that confidence is being restored. Confidence is something that is a very intangible factor, as you know. It's how people feel at a particular moment, and people who may be very confident one month may have lack of confidence the next month.

But let's look at some of the facts.

First, we find that insofar as our efforts to control inflation are concerned, that while the progress has not been as fast as we would have liked that the Wholesale Price Index is half of what it was a year ago, the retail Consumer Price Index is turning down not as much as we would like but turning down. We are beginning to make real progress in fighting inflation.

Now, second, in terms of the unem-

ployment front, here we find that the rate of unemployment for this year will be approximately 4.9 per cent. That is too high even though we could perhaps point to the fact that over the past 20 years there'd been only three peacetime years in which unemployment was less than 5 per cent—the years were '55, '56, '57. But on that score let me say that I take no comfort in that statistic.

Impact of Unemployment

I know what unemployment does to somebody. I've seen an unemployed man come into my father's store. I've seen the look in his eye when he can't pay the bill. I've seen the look in his children's eyes when he can't pay that bill.

And so, I want a program which not only will turn down the inflation, which we are now beginning to succeed, but one which will expand the economy, and this gets to the specifics that you've asked for.

What we're going to do first is to have an expansionary budget. It will be a budget in deficit as will be the budget in 1971. It will not be an inflationary budget because it will not exceed the full employment revenues.

We also, according to Dr. Arthur Burns, will have an expansionary monetary policy, and that will, of course, be a monetary policy adequate to meet the needs of an expanding economy.

Now, in addition to that, we are going to have a program that we will present to the Congress, a program that I believe in terms of Government reform will be the most significant reform that we have had perhaps in a century—and I think that this program will also have an indirect effect in restoring confidence in the economy.

If I can make a prediction—I made one last year and many people took me to task about it, about the fact that the stock market might go up, and right afterwards it went down. But it did go up, and I made that prediction not because I was expecting people to buy stocks and urging them to do so without consulting a broker whose judgment would be better than mine but because I had faith in the long-term prospects of the American economy.

Expansion Is Predicted

And this is the prediction: 1971 is going to be a year of an expanding economy in which inflation, the rise—the rise in inflation is going to continue to go down; in which unemployment, which is presently too high, will finally come under control and begin to recede.

1971 in essence will be a good year, and 1972 will be a very good year.

Now, having made that prediction, I will say that the purpose of this Administration will be to have an activist economic policy designed to control inflation, but at the same time to expand the economy so that we can reduce unemployment, and to have what this country has not had for 20 years, and that is a situation where we can have full employment in peacetime without the cost of war and without the cost of excessive inflation.

MR. SEVAREID: Mr. President, if I may, you described what you want to happen with your new economy program in the new year. But what's going to be in it? You've sounded as though—there's no mention—there's going to be nothing about controls of prices or wages, or anything of the sort. Is that what we're foreseeing from what you just said?

MR. NIXON: Mr. Severeid, I do not plan to ask for wage controls or price controls. And I've noted, incidentally, that all of you—the four commentators here—have commented upon controls in one way or another.

I know Mr. Smith, for example, has talked about the possibility of wage and price guidelines or a wage-price board. And Dr. Arthur Burns has hinted that possibly that might be something we should turn to.

I have considered all those options. I have decided that none of them at this time would work. And, consequently, I feel that the best course is to proceed, as I have suggested, with an expansionary budgetary policy, but one that will not exceed full-employment revenues. And, at the same time, with a monetary policy that will be adequate to fuel a growing economy.

I believe this will reduce unemployment, and also I believe it will do so at a time that inflation will continue to come down.

Now there's still the wage-price push, and that's what you're referring to.

Unemployment Level

MR. CHANCELLOR: Mr. Nixon, your budget is going to be a full employment budget—I understand that is going to be true. In this, which will be deficit spending, in the very good year of 1972 which you've said you hope will happen, will you get unemployment down to 4 per cent, which most people call full employment, which you've just referred to? Will it get down that far?

MR. NIXON: That certainly will be our goal, Mr. Chancellor. I'm not going to indicate what the number actually will be, because even though I'm willing to predict on football games and also the stock market, to say what the unemployment number is going to be a year and a half from now, of course, would be completely irresponsible.

But our goal is full employment by the end of 1972.

If I could come back, Mr. Severeid, to another point that you raised, I also should point out that we do not plan, despite the speculation that you have heard about, I do not plan to ask for new taxes.

I had considered the possibility of a value-added tax as a substitution for some of our other taxes, and looking to the future, we may very well move into that direction.

But this year I do not think it is realistic to propose a new tax—either new taxes or tax reform.

Because I'm going to give the Congress—particularly the Ways and Means Committee of the House and the Finance Committee of the Senate—a very full plate in other areas requiring their attention, including, for example, welfare reform that I will submit again and including also a new health program

which will go to those committees and including also a new what we will call revenue sharing, going far beyond anything that we have suggested to date.

MR. SMITH: In your last news conference, you said that you opposed forced integration in the suburbs. Well, if a suburban community should use zoning and land-use authority to block housing developments for minority groups, and in fact there are cases where it's happened, would you or would you not apply the Federal Fair Housing Law to prevent them?

Integration in Suburbs

MR. NIXON: Well, Mr. Smith, what we are talking about here, first, is carrying out the law. And then, second, going beyond the law. I also said in a news conference, as you will remember, that I was pledged to carry out the law, this law and every other law, and that I would carry it out.

And the law, as you know, does require that there can be no urban renewal funds, that there can be no Federal housing funds in any community that has a policy which is discriminatory insofar as fair housing is concerned.

But now, the law does not now require, or, in my opinion, allow the Federal Government to have forced integration of suburbs. Now there's argument on this point. I realize, for example, and I do listen to some of your commentaries, and I read them all. I know Mr. Chancellor has very strong feelings on this.

But I believe that that is the best course. We're going to carry out the law. We are going to open up opportunities for all Americans to move into housing—any housing that they're able to afford.

But on the other hand, for the Federal Government to go further than the law, to force integration in the suburbs, I think is unrealistic. I think it would be counterproductive, and not in the interest of better race relations.

Chilean Government Cited

MR. SEVAREID: Mr. President, if we could turn to some foreign problems for a while, for many years the leaders of your party held the Democratic Administrations to blame for the loss to Communism of East Europe and of China. Do you feel that what's happening in Chile now in any way bears upon your responsibility?

MR. NIXON: Well, what happened in Chile is not something that we welcomed, although, Mr. Severeid, as you note, we were very careful to point out that that was the decision of the people of Chile, and that, therefore, we accepted that decision and that our programs with Chile—we still recognize the government, we still have our People-to-People program, we still have our Peace Corps program—those programs would continue as long as Chile's foreign policy was not antagonistic to our interests.

Now, as far as what happened in Chile is concerned, we can only say that for the United States to have intervened, intervened in a free election and to have turned it around, I think would have had repercussions all over Latin America that would have been far worse than what has happened in Chile.

And I would say, finally, just as I've told the Chilean Ambassador when he paid his farewell call on me, I told him to tell the new president that as far as the United States was concerned that we recognized the right of any country to have internal policies and an internal government different from what we might approve of.

What we were interested in was their policy toward us in the foreign policy field. So I haven't given up on Chile or on the Chilean people and we're going to keep our contact with them.

MR. CHANCELLOR: Mr. President, let me ask you a question about Vietnam, as though nobody was going to ask you tonight.

MR. NIXON: I didn't expect that.

MR. CHANCELLOR: I—last month you sent a number of bombers into North Vietnam, and we were told that they bombed missile sites and anti-aircraft installations because the North Vietnamese had fired on an American reconnaissance plane.

But then a few days later, sir, we learned that apparently that opportunity was used to make very heavy bombing raids on supply lines and the Moogia Pass and in the passes from North Vietnam into Laos.

Now, I'm confused. Because of all the talk about the understanding with North Vietnam, with the new criteria on the bombing, you seem to have put on, and the fact that what many people got out of this one series of raids was that we quite enlarged the reasons for our going north to bomb.

MR. NIXON: Mr. Chancellor, I have no desire to resume the bombing of North Vietnam. We do not want to go back to the bombing of the strategic

targets in North Vietnam, and we do not want, even, to bomb military targets unless it becomes necessary to do so and, this is the key point, to protect American forces.

Now, with regard to the understanding, let's see what it is. First, there was an understanding. President Johnson said so. Dean Rusk said so. Clark Clifford said so. Mr. Harriman said so. There was an understanding that after the bombing halt, that unarmed reconnaissance planes could fly over North Vietnam with impunity.

We had to insist on that because otherwise we would have no intelligence with regard to what they were planning on an attack. So when they fire on those planes, I've given instructions that we will take out the SAM site or whatever it is that has fired upon them. We will continue to do so. And if they say there is no understanding in that respect, then there are no restraints whatever on us. And so we must have that in mind.

Now the other understanding is one that I have laid down. It is a new one. It is a new one which goes along with our Vietnamization program and our withdrawal program.

End of Combat Role Foreseen

I pointed out a moment ago what has happened in Vietnam—the fact that our casualties are a third of what they were two years ago, the fact that we have 265,000 out of Vietnam now and that we now can see the end of the American combat role in Vietnam. We can see that coming.

We must realize, however, as Secretary Rogers pointed out in his news conference at the State Department a few days ago, that in May of this year, most American combat forces—ground combat forces—will have been withdrawn from Vietnam. But there will still be 280,000 there left to withdraw.

Now the President of the United States as Commander in Chief owes a responsibility to those men to see that they are not subjected to an overwhelming attack from the North. That's why we must continue reconnaissance. And that is why, also, if the enemy at a time we are trying to de-escalate, at a time we are withdrawing, starts to build up its infiltration, starts moving troops and supplies through the Moogia Pass and the other passes, then I as Commander in Chief will have to order bombing strikes on those key areas.

That was one of the reasons for this strike. And it will be done again if they continue to threaten our remaining forces in Vietnam. But only on those military targets, and only if necessary.



C. B. S. News

CITES ADMINISTRATION'S RECORD: President Nixon talking with Nancy Dickerson of Public Broadcasting and John Chancellor of N.B.C. last night.

MR. SMITH: You talked about the situation through May of '71. I hate to ask a hypothetical question but people do ask them.

MR. NIXON: Everybody else does.

MR. SMITH: And one of your own military advisers put it to me, not to get an answer from me because I don't know, just to tell me what was on his mind. Suppose, say, in 1972, our role is virtually eliminated, we're passive, we have few troops there, then the North Vietnamese attack and begin to come into control of the country. What is our policy then? Do we stand aside?

Explains Withdrawal Policy

MR. NIXON: Well, Mr. Smith, our Vietnamization policy has been very carefully drawn up, and we are withdrawing in a measured way on the basis that the South Vietnamese will be able to defend themselves as we withdraw. And, it's working. For example, did you realize, I'm sure you do because I think it was reported on your network, all of our naval forces now—combat forces—have been removed. The South Vietnamese Navy has taken over. And so it will be in these other areas.

When the time comes in 1972 that you speak of, it is possible, of course, that at that time North Vietnam might launch an attack. But I am convinced that at that time, based on the training program of the South Vietnamese, based on the watershed that occurred when they jelled and became a fighting, confident unit after the Cambodian intervention, I am convinced that they will be able to hold their own and defend themselves in 1972.

Now that doesn't answer your hypothetical question, but I'm simply not going to borrow trouble by saying that I expect them to fail. I don't think they will.

Era of Negotiation

MISS DICKERSON: Mr. President, I'd like to ask you an over-all question about our relations with the Communists. When you took office, you said this was going to be an era of negotiation, not confrontation. But, in reality, haven't we returned to something of a Cold War situation in regard to our relations with the Soviets; and how were our relations affected by their duplicity during the Middle East crisis when they helped rebuild the missile sites?

MR. NIXON: Well, Miss Dickerson, when we talk about an era of negotiation rather than confrontation, we must remember that negotiation means exactly that. It means that you have two parties that have very great differences with regard to their vital interests and the negotiation process will sometimes be very, very extended.

It doesn't mean that we're going to—negotiation does not necessarily mean agreement. Now let's be quite specific. Mr. Kosygin in his statement just a couple of days ago to the Japanese newspaperman, as you know, complained about our policy in Vietnam—as he has previously—he complained about our policy in the Mideast.

We, of course, have been concerned about their movements in the Caribbean. We have been concerned by what you mentioned—their own activities in the Mideast and, of course, we have been concerned about their continuing harassment from time to time of the Berlin access routes.

Nevertheless, on the plus side, let's see what has happened. Over the past two years, the United States and the Soviet Union have been negotiating. We've been negotiating, for example, on arms control. Those negotiations will begin again in Helsinki in March.

Now I am optimistic that we will reach an agreement eventually. I do not suggest now that we're going to have a comprehensive agreement because there is a basic disagreement with regard to what strategic weapons, what that definition is.

But we are now willing to move to a noncomprehensive agreement; we're going to be able to discuss that with the Soviet in the next round at Helsinki. I'm not predicting that we're going to have an agreement next month or two months from now to three months from now. But in terms of arms control we have some overwhelming forces that are going to bring about an agreement eventually, and it's simply this—the Soviet Union and the United States have a common interest in avoiding the escalating burden of arms.

You know that they've even cut down on their SS-9 and big missile deployment lately and development. And, second, the Soviet Union and the United States have an overwhelming common interest in avoiding nuclear competition which could lead to nuclear destruction.

So in this field I think we're going to make some progress.

In the Mideast, it's true we're far apart, but we are having discussions. On Berlin, we're far apart, but we are negotiating. And, finally, with regard to the rhetoric—and the rhetoric in international affairs does make a difference.

The rhetoric, while it has been firm, has generally been noninflammatory on our part and on theirs. So I am not without the confidence that I had at the beginning. I always realized that our differences were very great, that it was going to take time. But the United States and the Soviet Union owe it to their own people and the people of the world, as the superpowers, to negotiate rather than to confront.

MR. SEVAREID: Mr. President, we have no formal alliance with the State of Israel, but isn't it really a fact that we are now so deeply committed morally to the Israelis that if they were in unmistakable danger of defeat, wouldn't we have to intervene?

MR. NIXON: Mr. Sevaraid, to speculate on that question would not really be in the interests of peace in that area as I see them at this point.

Let's look how far we've come. We've had a cease-fire for five months—no killing. And for three or four years before that there were killings every day in that part of the world.

Second, as you know, the Israelis have gone back to the Jarring talks and also the other side will be there. That doesn't mean that the prospect for an early agreement is very great. It does mean, however, that there is some chance that there will be discussion.

And third, it seems to me that we must take into account the fact that the people in that part of the world, the people of Israel, the people in the countries that are Israel's neighbors, that they are overwhelmingly on the side of peace—they want peace. Their leaders are going to have to reflect it.

I think that we are at a critical time in the Mideast—a critical time over the next few months when we may get these talks off dead center, make some progress toward a live-and-let-live attitude, not progress that's going to bring a situation where the Israelis and their neighbors are going to like each other. That isn't ever going to happen perhaps, but where they will live with each other, where they won't be fighting each other.

Now, to speculate about what's going to happen in the event that Israel is going to go down the tube would only tend to inflame the situation with Israel's neighbors, and I won't do it.

MR. CHANCELLOR: Sir, can I take you to Cuba? Last October, just before we all left with you on your European trip, one of your aides here spoke about the potential of a grave threat in Cuba if the Russians introduced what apparently was a submarine missile base—a tender to serve nuclear submarines. Can you tell us what's going on there? Apparently there's a tender there. Will we react if the tender services a submarine in the harbor, or what happens? Can you tell us about that?

MR. NIXON: Well, I can tell you everything our intelligence tells us, and we think it's very good in that area because, as you know, we have surveillance from the air, which in this case is foolproof, we believe.

First, let's look at what the understanding is.

President Kennedy worked out an understanding in 1962 that the Russians would not put any offensive missiles into Cuba. That understanding was expanded on October 11, this year, by the Russians when they said that it would include a military base in Cuba and a military naval base. They, in effect, said that they would not put a military naval base into Cuba on October the 11th.*

Now, in the event that nuclear submarines were serviced either in Cuba or from Cuba, that would be a violation of the understanding. That has not happened yet. We are watching the situation

* SEE NY TIMES, 18 FEB 71,
JAMES ARONSON, THIS FILE

closely. The Soviet Union is aware of the fact that we are watching closely. We expect them to abide by the understanding. I believe they will.

Doubts Caribbean Crisis

I don't believe that they want a crisis in the Caribbean and I don't believe that one is going to occur, particularly since the understanding has been clearly laid out and has been so clearly relied on by us, as I stated here today.

MISS DICKERSON: Mr. President, could we switch from foreign affairs for a moment to some other areas? I'd like to ask you a question that involves whether this Government really is going to be able to govern in the future. It involves how you cut up the money, how you slice the pie. Now the cities are crying—the mayors say they can't run them, they don't have enough money to pay their teachers or their firemen. The state governors say that states are near bankruptcy. How soon are you going to be able to reverse the flow of money and power and responsibility from Washington back to the states and the cities, that you said you wanted to do?

MR. NIXON: Miss Dickerson, if we get cooperation from the next Congress we're going to begin to make a breakthrough in that area in this historic next Congress—the 92d. That will be the major thrust of my State of the Union Message. How we can take this great Government of ours—and it is a great Government—but how we can give the people of this country an opportunity to make decisions with what that Government should be and what it does and what kind of activities it should engage in.

That is why, when I referred to revenue-sharing a moment ago in answering Mr. Seavareid. I pointed out that we were going to have a program that went far beyond any proposal that we have made to this date, and it is one that will be, I believe, widely supported by the governors, by the mayors and, I trust, by the Congress.

Because, you know, we tried to make a breakthrough when I submitted this in August of last year. The Congress didn't have hearings on it. This time we expect to get hearings, and this is one area where Mr. Connally can help.

Congressional Relations

MR. SMITH: Now a great deal depends on your getting Congress to act. Now, a liberal Republican Senator has recently said to me that he has rarely been called to confer with you. A liberal Congressman said he has trouble seeing you. I compare this with your predecessor as having Congressmen and Senators in droves and in small groups here every week of his Administration.

Do you think that you've nursed your Congressional relations well enough?

NIXON: Well, now, Mr. Smith, on— with regard to how many droves of Congressmen and Senators have been down there, I think you will find—the record, I think, is going to be put out in the next two or three days, because, you know, every—at the end of two years, people ask for these statistics—I've seen more Congressmen and Senators than any of my predecessors saw. For a good reason: I didn't have a majority. You see—it wasn't my—I—in the case, for example, of President Johnson, he could call the leaders down, and they could get the program through.

In the case of President Kennedy, he could do the same thing. In the case of President Eisenhower, whereas he had a Republican Congress only in his first two years, in the last six years, he had a Vice Pre—I mean, he was then, the Majority Leader Johnson and Sam Rayburn, and they could deliver the Democratic vote. I do not have that situation. You do not have that kind of leadership on the Democratic side, or for that matter, on the Republican side in the United States Senate. No fault of the leaders but because they are a group of individualists.

But to come more precisely to your question, there is nothing that I'm going to devote more of my time to than in the field of revenue sharing and this field of welfare reform, which will be in the Ways and Means Committee of the House and in the Finance Committee of the Senate—nothing that the new Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. Connally, is going to devote more of his time to than getting that through.

Now, I notice, incidentally, because I was interested in your reactions to the Connally appointment, that some wondered, what good is it going to do? They were thinking that it had to do with Texas politics in '72.

Let me be quite candid. We need, I need, this country needs John Connally as Secretary of the Treasury. And in this Cabinet. Because he is persuasive. He is strong. And he will be effective in helping us get through the Democratic Congress the kind of measures that we need in this domestic field, that we haven't been able to get through over the past two years.

I am confident he will do that.

The 1972 Ticket

MR. CHANCELLOR: Mr. President, I feel impelled to break in here and ask a few questions about the ticket in '72, because you've heard as many rumors as we have I'm sure that John Connally is being groomed to be your Vice-Presidential running mate. And I know you're not going to talk to us about that, sir, at this stage, but would you absolutely now rule out any Democrat running with you in '72. Could you go that far?

MR. NIXON: I'm not even going to comment as to what my own plans are, Mr. Chancellor. You, of course, knew that when you asked the question, but it was proper to ask it because all of our listeners, viewers, would have said these people are being soft on Nixon. You'd lose your jobs if you'd started doing that. Actually let me say that this is public service time. I know there's an interest in politics, and as a President I'm the leader of my party. That's one of my jobs, and in a campaign I try to lead my party.

But this is a noncampaign year, and now I'm going to wear my hat as President of the United States, and that's where I'll be on this program and on other programs for the balance of '71.