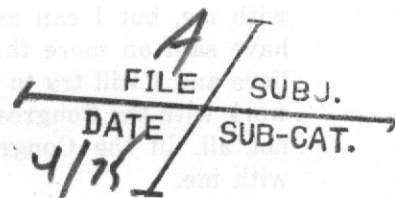


President Ford Interviewed at Convention of American Society of Newspaper Editors



Following are excerpts from the transcript of an interview with President Ford by a panel of editors and publishers at the annual convention of the American Society of Newspaper Editors at Washington on April 16.¹

President Ford: I am very, very pleased to be with you today and to have this opportunity to continue a dialogue which has been my pleasure in many parts of the country with many of you in various regional meetings during the past few months.

Those exchanges and the one which will begin shortly are exceedingly valuable to me in providing an insight into the attitudes and the concerns of the people who are your readers and my constituents.

Before answering the questions put to me by the distinguished panel, let me add, if I might, a few comments to the speech that I made to the Congress last Thursday night, and to the American people.

Let me, if I might, express in broad terms some deep beliefs that I have.

First, I firmly believe that the United States must play a very major role in world affairs in the years ahead. It is a great and difficult responsibility, but it is one, in my judgment, that our nation must continue to have.

This has been my conviction, going back to my first political campaign in the fall of 1948. It was my conviction when I took my first oath of office on January 3, 1949. For a period of better than 25 years in the Congress—as a Member of the House and part of that time as a leadership role in the minority party—it has been my conviction.

¹ For the complete transcript, see White House press release dated Apr. 16.

As long as I am President of the United States I will seek to carry on that very important responsibility of our country. I believe to be successful in this effort, this endeavor, the Congress and the President must work together.

It is my belief that if we are to be successful in the achievement of success in the area of foreign policy, the American people, to the degree that they can, must be united.

I also believe that our foreign policy, if you look at the record—at least during the period that I was honored to be a part of our government in the Congress or in the executive branch—that our foreign policy has been a successful one.

Of course, there have been some instances where we did not achieve all that we sought, in some cases because the circumstances were well beyond our control. In a few instances where we have not been as successful as we would have liked, I think we self-inflicted some problems that helped to bring that unfortunate result.

I also believe to maintain peace and to insure it, certainly in the future, the United States must remain strong militarily. We must have a broad, strong, well-led military establishment—and I include in that an intelligence system that can be extremely helpful to me and to Presidents in the future.

I believe also that we must work with friend and foe alike. We have many, many friends throughout the world. We have some potential adversaries, and we have some that are true adversaries. But if we are to achieve what we all want, we have to work with all.

It is my strong belief that we can achieve unity at home. I see no reason why the Congress and the President cannot work together. That doesn't mean that all 535

Members of the House and Senate will agree with me, but I can assure you that what I have said on more than one occasion I believe and I will try to implement, that I will work with the Congress and I know many, if not all, in the Congress will try to work with me.

If we do get this unity at home and if we do develop a closer relationship between the President and the Congress, I think we can continue a successful foreign policy in building a better world and achieving, on a more permanent basis, peace for all.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Reston [James B. Reston, member of the board and columnist, New York Times].

Q. Mr. President, two points. There is a story on the ticker this morning out of Geneva that the Cambodian Government has asked for a cease-fire and that this information has been passed to Prince Sihanouk in Peking. Could you tell us anything about that, sir?

President Ford: Mr. Reston, I just received a note from one of my staff members, Ron Nessen, indicating that we had gotten the information after I had left the White House to the effect that the Cambodian Government has communicated with Sihanouk indicating that the Cambodian Government will work with the Khmer Rouge to try and negotiate a settlement.

It is my recollection, from a quick look at that information that was given to me at the luncheon table, that Prince Sihanouk is in no position to really achieve or accomplish the results that we all want; namely, a negotiated settlement in that unfortunate situation.

I can only say from our point of view we will help in any way we can to further negotiations to end that conflict.

Q. On that same point, could I ask you whether you have been in touch with the North Vietnamese about a cease-fire in South Viet-Nam or with any other governments to try to bring that about?

President Ford: Over a period of time we have communicated with all of the signa-

tories of the Paris accords, which were signed in January of 1973. The efforts that we have made are broad and comprehensive, and when I say we have indicated our feelings to all signatories, of course that includes the North Vietnamese.

Mr. Funk [R. D. Funk, editor, Santa Monica, Calif., Outlook].

Q. Mr. President, is the United States in direct contact now, in a situation of negotiation, with the North Vietnamese for a cease-fire around Saigon?

President Ford: We are not in direct negotiations in that regard.

Q. Thank you.

Q. Mr. President, when a delegation of the American Society of Newspaper Editors was in China the last time around, there was considerable emphasis placed by the Chinese leaders, leading all the way from Premier Chou on down, that no firm relationship with the United States was possible until Taiwan, so to speak, was taken out of the picture and placed under Chinese rule. You are going back to China. Is that on your agenda?

President Ford: The relationship between the United States and the People's Republic of China, which was reopened several years ago, is predicated on the Shanghai communique. This relationship is continuing, I would say, on schedule.

I am going back to the People's Republic of China late this fall. I was there for about two weeks in June and July of 1972. I would say that no firm agenda for that forthcoming meeting has been established. So, I am not in a position to comment directly on the question that you ask.

Q. Mr. President, you have reaffirmed your confidence in the present American foreign policy, but I wonder if you could expand on that just a little bit. Are we committed to containing communism around the world? Are we committed to a heavy program of economic aid? Are we committed to a heavy program of military aid? Will we get into armed intervention in desperate cases?

President Ford: We are committed to a furtherance of a policy of détente with the Soviet Union. I think that policy is in our mutual interests. It won't solve all the problems where either we or they are involved, but it has helped to reduce tensions. It has helped in other ways where our joint cooperation could be helpful.

We do, as a country, at least while I am President, expect to continue our relationship with Western Europe, with NATO. We hope to strengthen it. We hope to eliminate some of the current problems, such as the problem between Greece and Turkey at the present time over Cyprus.

We do expect to continue working in the Middle East, which includes some economic aid, some military assistance for various countries in that area of the world.

I think we have an obligation to continue to have a presence in the Pacific, in Latin America, in Africa. It is my judgment that in each of these cases we will probably continue both economic and military assistance on a selective basis.

I am not saying this is the containment of communism. It is a furtherance of the policy of the United States aimed at our security and the maintenance of peace on a global basis.

Q. Mr. President, in response to Mr. Kirkpatrick's [Clayton Kirkpatrick, editor, Chicago Tribune] question, you mentioned our policy of détente in an affirmative way. The Chinese and Russian military aid to the North Vietnamese has been placed at approximately \$1.5 billion. My question is, doesn't that or does that violate the spirit of détente, and if so, of what purpose is détente?

President Ford: I think it is worthwhile to point out that none of the signatories to the Paris accords have sought to enforce the violations [provisions] of those accords, including, of course, the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union.

In the agreement that was signed in Paris in January of 1973, the United States, as part of its agreement with South Viet-Nam, agreed to supply replacement war materiel,

to give economic aid.

The Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, I assume, made the same commitment to North Viet-Nam.

It appears that they have maintained that commitment. Unfortunately, the United States did not carry out its commitment in the supplying of military hardware and economic aid to South Viet-Nam.

I wish we had. I think if we had, this present tragic situation in South Viet-Nam would not have occurred.

But I don't think we can blame the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China in this case. If we had done with our ally what we promised, I think this whole tragedy could have been eliminated.

Nevertheless we hope to and are working through the countries that are a part or were a part of the Paris accords to try and achieve a cease-fire, and will continue to do so.

Q. On that point, you have asked for more than \$700 million worth of military aid. There is some obvious psychological and symbolic reason for simply asking, but militarily speaking, if you could get the package through Congress and get it to South Viet-Nam, would it militarily do any good at this point?

President Ford: I am absolutely convinced if Congress made available \$722 million in military assistance in a timely way by the date that I suggested, or sometime shortly thereafter, the South Vietnamese could stabilize the military situation in Viet-Nam today.

Q. Mr. President, you keep talking about commitments and promises, and we are getting hung up on these words. In the light of this controversy, why should the Thieu-Nixon correspondence not be released?

President Ford: It is not the usual custom for correspondence between heads of state, as I understand it, to be released. I can say from my own experience, not referring to the correspondence to which you refer, that if it is expected that such correspondence

will be public, I think on some occasions, or in some instances, you would have to compromise on what you would say. I think that would be true of any correspondence that I received from any other head of state. If you are going to have a frank, free exchange, I think it has to be between the heads of states.

Now, I have personally reviewed the correspondence to which you refer between President Nixon and President Thieu, and I can assure you that there was nothing in any of those communications that was different from what was stated as our public policy. The words are virtually identical, with some variation, of course, but the intent, the commitments are identical with that which was stated as our country's policy and our country's commitment.

Q. Sir, on that question of your trip to Red China that Mr. Isaacs [Norman Isaacs, president and publisher, Wilmington, Del., News Journal] raised, it seems that down the road it has been speculated that the policy or the purpose of détente is to establish normal diplomatic relations with a country that you described last Thursday as having one-quarter of the population of the world. That would assume the establishment of an embassy in Peking, which would automatically assume the de-recognition, of some kind, of Taiwan. If that is in the cards, what kind of guarantees would you seek, what kind of quid pro quo would you seek from Peking to insure the continued existence of Taiwan?

President Ford: I honestly don't believe that I should discuss, under these circumstances, any of the agenda or any of the details of the continuation of our relations with the People's Republic of China.

We have excellent relations, as I am sure you know, with the Republic of China. We value that relationship. We are concerned, of course, and will continue to be concerned about the Republic of China's security and stability.

And it doesn't seem to me at this time in this forum that I should discuss any nego-

tiations that might take place between the United States and the People's Republic of China.

Q. It is our policy for the continued existence and guarantee of the defense of Taiwan. Is that our continuing policy?

President Ford: I said, and if I might I would more or less repeat it, we do value that relationship between the United States and the Republic of China. I think that is best indicated by the high-level delegation that I sent for the funeral services of Chiang Kai-shek.² I believe that having sent Vice President Rockefeller there, with the others that were included, is a clear indication that we consider our relationship, our cooperation, with the Republic of China a matter of very, very great importance to us.

Q. Mr. President, there have been some conflicting news stories out of Viet-Nam about the possible, if it is necessary, evacuation of not only Americans but of South Vietnamese nationals from Saigon. Is there any plan or policy about such evacuation?

President Ford: I have ordered the evacuation of all nonessential U.S. personnel in South Viet-Nam, and we are phasing down on a daily basis such U.S. personnel who have no responsibilities either for the government or for whatever other purpose they are there.

The present plan is to keep those there who have a position of responsibility, a meaningful job. I am not in the position to speculate as to how many that will be or when there might be a change in the situa-

² Vice President Rockefeller headed the U.S. delegation to the funeral of President Chiang. Other members of the delegation were Senators Barry M. Goldwater, Arizona, and Hiram L. Fong, Hawaii; Representative Roy A. Taylor, North Carolina; Anna Chennault of Washington, D.C., vice president for international affairs, Flying Tiger Lines, Inc.; Jack M. Eckerd of Clearwater, Fla., chairman of the board, Jack Eckerd Corp.; Dr. Arnold O. Beckman of Newport, Calif., president, Beckman Instruments; Walter P. McCaughy of Atlanta, Ga., former Ambassador to the Republic of China; Dr. Walter H. Judd of Washington, D.C., former Representative from Minnesota.

tion. I think it is too fluid at this moment to make any categorical comment.

Q. That is speaking about Americans, and I think we understand that. But is there any policy about the potential evacuation of South Vietnamese?

President Ford: Excuse me. In my speech last Thursday, I indicated there are a number of South Vietnamese who, over a period of almost two decades, have stood with us in various official capacities—longtime employees of the Federal Government, our government, who have been dedicated to the cause that not I, but a number of Presidents, have pursued.

I think we have an obligation to them. To the extent that I can under the law or, hopefully, if the law is clarified, I think we have a responsibility to them. But I don't think I ought to talk about an evacuation. I hope we are in a position where we can clarify or stabilize the situation and get a negotiated settlement that wouldn't put their lives in jeopardy.

Q. Mr. President, you have talked a great deal about the moral obligation of this country to provide more military arms for South Viet-Nam. But what about the moral obligation to the suffering people of that country, the moral obligation to end that war?

President Ford: Mr. Reston, the agreement which was signed, I think, by 12 nations in January of 1973 in Paris—and I was there, I saw the signing—was accomplished with the expectation that that war would end. If the agreement had been lived up to, the war would not now be going on.

We have continued in various ways to try and achieve a cease-fire, and I can assure you that we intend to continue those efforts.

But it is tragic, in my judgment, that what everybody thought was good in January of 1973 has been violated and now we are faced with a terrible catastrophe at the present time.

Q. But would we not then a year from

now, or five years from now, still have the same moral obligation you speak of?

President Ford: It is my best judgment, based on experts within the Administration, both economic and military, that if we had made available for the next three years reasonable sums of military aid and economic assistance that South Viet-Nam would have been viable, that it could have met any of its economic problems, could have met any military challenges.

This is another of the tragedies. For just a relatively small additional commitment in economic and military aid, relatively small compared to the \$150 billion that we spent, that at the last minute of the last quarter we don't make that special effort, and now we are faced with this human tragedy. It just makes me sick every day I hear about it, read about it, and see it.

United States Mourns Death of Chiang Kai-shek

Chiang Kai-shek, President of the Republic of China, died at Taipei April 5. Following is a statement by President Ford issued that day at Palm Springs, Calif.

White House press release (Palm Springs) dated April 5

I was deeply saddened at the death of the President of the Republic of China, Chiang Kai-shek. His passing marks the end of an era in Chinese history.

President Chiang was a man of firm integrity, high courage, and deep political conviction. The last surviving major Allied leader of the Second World War, he will be remembered by people from all walks of life and from every part of the world for his dignity and dedication to principles in which he believed.

Mrs. Ford joins me in behalf of all Americans in expressing our sincere condolence to Madame Chiang, to President Chiang's family, and to his countrymen in this time of sorrow.