INTERVIEWEE: PAUL C. WARNKE (TAPE #2)

INTERVIEWER: DOROTHY PIERCE

January 15, 1969

P: Mr. Warnke, this is our second interview; and today is January 15, Wednesday, 1969. We are in your offices, and it's just a little before three p.m. in the afternoon.

We had concluded our first discussion talking about Military Assistance Program. I'd like to pick up with that point and ask you more or less a concluding question of your assessment on this program as to what you think the future is for military assistance and foreign aid.

W: I think if you take military assistance as meaning just some degree of subsidization of military equipment for foreign countries that the future is quite dim. I think that you've got two basic problems. One is that foreign aid has become a highly unpopular subject with the American public. Another one is that when you're dealing with foreign aid at the present time, you necessarily are dealing with the lesser developed countries; so that the normal supporters of foreign aid are the normal opponents of military aid to countries whose economies are lesser developed. So that much of the support that you would anticipate receiving is, in fact, opposition. Now from that standpoint I would anticipate that within the next several years we will find that military assistance in the traditional sense, that is the actually furnishing of hardware either on subsidized credit terms or a grant basis, will be restricted to the instances in which there is a current military situation involving the

security of the United States.

You see, the way we stand now, military assistance is basically concentrated in four countries. You've got Korea; you've got Turkey; you've got Greece; you've got Taiwan. In each of those situations we have a direct American interest in the defensive capabilities of the country.

Now the parts of our program that receive major criticism at the present time involve military aid to such countries as Ethiopia and to countries in Latin America. I think I've explained earlier that our military assistance in Ethiopia is basically the payment of rental for an intelligence installation.

Latin America is basically not directed toward an American security interest in the sense of our fearing that the security of these nations is endangered by external attack, or that this would in any sense jeopardize our security. Instead, the purpose of our military assistance is, quite frankly, to maintain American influence in those countries. Military assistance has been important in that regard because the countries unfortunately are dominated by military regimes. Therefore it becomes more important that, since there is going to be some military influence on them from the outside, that it be our military influence rather than somebody else's.

But when you use that as a rationalization for a military assistance program, you immediately invite the criticism that what your military assistance program does is to preserve military dictatorships. Now that doesn't happen to be the fact, because the military dictatorships obviously would be able to exist whether they received any

military assistance from us or not. But nonetheless it does involve us with regimes which are unpopular with the American public. As a consequence, every time you have something like a coup in Panama or a coup in Peru or a coup in Argentina or a reversion by the Brazilian government to a military dictatorship and a turn away from parliamentary democracy, you add fuel to the fire, and you give ammunition to those who oppose military assistance.

So I would anticipate that within the next several years you will have phased out on our military grant aid programs and the soft credit terms on sales of military equipment to most of the lesser developed countries. I would think that, in view of the continued importance of NATO to the national security of the United States, that you will have some grant aid programs for Greece and Turkey. Certainly unless the North Koreans decide that they want to wear white hats instead of black hats, you're going to have military assistance programs to South Korea. I think certainly that as long as the Generalisimo survives that we're going to have some sort of a military assistance program in Taiwan. I think over a period of time whether or not that continues depends upon the activities and, perhaps even more, the pronouncements of Communist China.

Then, of course, we have certain programs which are not at present time legislative encompassed within military assistance. They're the ones where we're involved in shooting wars, and that's South Viet Nam, Thailand, and Laos. In those instances, military assistance has been transferred from the Foreign Assistance Act to the Department of Defense budget. I think that's appropriate because I don't think the military

assistance should be used to finance wars. That's not its purpose. Now those programs, of course--and their duration and magnitude--will depend upon what happens in Southeast Asia. If hopefully we end up with a satisfactory political settlement in Paris, then you would be able to phase those down, and I would imagine that there would be a good chance that they would be transferred to regular military assistance programs of much smaller magnitude, and would belong more in the category of Korea.

P: Mr. Warnke, one of your responsibilities is as advisor to the Secretary of Defense on Viet Nam. There are so many things to ask really on this. What are your views on the course and the strategy of the war and the cost to the U.S. with our own resources and our relations abroad?

W: Well, I would suppose that I should respond to that question on the assumption that this is going to be tightly held--is that correct?

P: Yes, it is.

W: And that it only gets revealed to those people to whom I authorize its revelation?

P: Yes.

W: Let's also take into account the fact that I am five days before leaving office. So as a consequence I can speak, I think, without in any way reflecting adversely on the views of any of my colleagues; and without intending at least in any way to be critical.

I have regarded our Viet Nam policy as constituting a massive mistake by the United States--an understandable mistake, but nonetheless a miscalculation. Now, it's easy to say that in hindsight. It was not easy to say it before the fact, and I'm quite confident that I would have

participated in making the same mistake that was made. But I think that we should learn from our mistakes, and that we ought also to face up to a mistake when one has been made. The mistake, I think, came in two parts. One was conceptual and one was tactical.

I'd say that the conceptual mistake was that we reasoned--as we always tend to--from analogy; and analogy is very treacherous in foreign policy. I've said before that to some extent in foreign policy we emulate Captain Queeg. You'll remember in the Caine Mutiny that all he could do was to hark back to his experience with the cheese--where earlier there had been a theft of cheese. He had found out then that somebody had copied a key, and therefore anytime anything else disappeared from the wardroom, as did the frozen strawberries, he immediately assumed that somebody had duplicated the key.

Now in the case of Viet Nam, I've always had the feeling that we reasoned from the analogy of our experience in post-World War II Europe. We looked at Communist China as though it were Russia; we looked at SEATO as though it were NATO; and we looked at South Viet Nam as though it were West Germany. And the analogy just turned out not to be apposite. In the first place, I think experience has shown that Communist China does not have the same apprehensions as Russia had about being surrounded, and about wanting to create friendly buffer states. The Communist Chinese have not really dominated North Korea even to the extent that Russia continues to dominate Eastern Europe. Despite the apprehensions of the North Vietnamese they have not in fact been submerged by China. And despite the well-founded apprehensions of the Nationalist Chinese on Taiwan, there really has never been any sort of a determined effort even to take

over the offshore islands. I think what it reflects is that China is so big and so amorphous and so impossible to conquer that they don't entertain quite the really disproportionate fears that Russia entertained, and to some extent still entertains.

The other mistake in the analogy, looking at it from the conceptual point of view, was that we had in South Viet Nam a sufficient social and political structure so that reasonable amounts of American assistance would enable us to create a viable permanent functioning government. Now that again turned out to be incorrect. There had never been a country of South Viet Nam. What it had been was the more agricultural and the less developed part of just a portion of the French Indochinese empire, so that we were working with less than we thought we were working against a threat which was less than we thought the threat was. And as a consequence, in my opinion, in terms of American security interests we invested more money than the objective was worth.

Now having made that miscalculation of course, it's awfully difficult to change course. It's awfully difficult at some point to say: "Enough is enough; the auction has now reached the point at which I am not going to raise my bid anymore." So in this particular instance I think that we have in fact devoted more of our resources than the prize was worth, because you have to recognize that our objective was a very limited objective.

Now, to me, the vice of the criticism of our effort in Viet Nam has been that it has been directed towards our intentions, rather than towards our, I would suppose, evaluation of its actual importance. Our intentions have been laudable. We haven't wanted anything in the

way of bases, further territory. I've had a number of people, including some college students, including some Congressmen, say, "Just what is our strategic interest in South Viet Nam." I'd say, "The strategic interest is limited to the present war. Those bases aren't worth anything to us except as bases from which we can fight the war in South Viet Nam. We would have no intent to ever use them in any kind of an aggressive campaign, and we don't apprehend any sort of a threat emanating from that particular region for which those bases would be of any strategic importance of us."

Similarly I've had college students and some Congressmen ask me, "What's our interest in the natural resources of Viet Nam?" And there is one school of thought, which I think is represented by some of the left wing press, that says that really what we're doing in Viet Nam is protecting American business interests--that we've got some kind of an interest unspecified in the rubber or in the minerals or in something else. Now if that were our objective, we're damned fools, because obviously you could never recoup the amount of money that we have spent with respect to Viet Nam.

So our objective, it seems to me, was totally unexceptionable. We believed in what we announced that we were trying to do; and that was to preserve the independence of a small country against external aggression. But, in my opinion, it was a miscalculation, because there was not something there that you could identify as a small independent nation in that sense. All that they've ever really had have been city governments that did not have the apparatus which could be extended into the countryside to exercise control and provide services to the people in the country.

But then, tactically, it seems to me that the trouble with our policy in Viet Nam has been that we guessed wrong with respect to what the North Vietnamese reaction would be. We anticipated that they would respond like reasonable people. We anticipated that they would respond, if you will, the way the Russians respond--that when it becomes apparent to the Soviet Union that we will exact a price which is disproportionate to the goal that they're seeking to achieve, then they change their goal. They don't worry about saving face. They did an about-face in the Cuban missile crisis because it was apparent to them that it was going to cost them too much, and that having missiles in Cuba was not worth facing the risk of a nuclear exchange with the United States of America. The Russians in the various Berlin crises have responded the same way.

There was thus reason to believe, again reasoning from experience and from analogy, that the North Vietnamese would react in that fashion too. They were smaller. They were infinitely less strong than Russia; therefore when faced with the fact that the United States really meant it and was going to exert its power, they should have responded differently than they did. So, as a consequence, following the Tonkin Gulf episodes when we began first of all a reprisal bombing of North Viet Nam, that should have been enough. It should have persuaded them to cease and desist from their effort to take over South Viet Nam.

But what we could not understand was the importance that they set on that goal, and the amount of hardship and loss that they were willing to endure in order to achieve that goal. So, as a consequence, we had constantly to raise the ante, and eventually--as I say in my opinion

and it's certainly an opinion with which my colleagues would differ--we raised the ante too high. We were betting on this particular episode more than we should have.

Then let's look at it in terms of where we go from here. My ex post facto conclusion that it was a miscalculation doesn't mean that at this point we just abandon the game, and accept the fact that we have lost over thirty thousand American lives [and] a very substantial number of billion dollars, in a game that was not worth it, because I think something cam be salvaged out of it and something should be salvaged out of it.

Having done what we've done, Viet Nam has now assumed an importance that it did not have ab initio. It's more important now for us to achieve something in the way of the original American objective than it was when we first started, because a total American failure and a palpable American failure in Indochina at the present time could impact adversely on our ability to do those things that in my opinion we ought to continue to do.

In the first place, the American public is not used to failure. If this were to be regarded as a failure, then there would be a tendency again to reason from analogy and to find in every other world situation another potential Viet Nam. Now I think that would be calamatous. Because I think that what we have to recognize is that a power of the size of the United States, and with an influence as pervasive as that of the United States--we're bound to make mistakes and it's better to make mistakes than it is not to engage in world affairs.

After all, if you again reason from analogy and experience--which

I've just said you should not do--then you have to look at the example of the other powers that have dominated the world really in the world's interest. For example, the experience of the United Kingdom. Great Britain over a period of years, I would say, exerted on the whole a benign influence. It prevented more misery than it caused--which is really about all you can expect a world power to do. Nonetheless, she obviously made some very serious mistakes. But at least she did not let herself become discouraged until she had, for reasons beyond her control, to give up her empire, and then found that she could no longer support on an economic basis her continued involvement in world affairs.

But what would concern me would be that a palpable acknowledged failure in South Viet Nam would prevent us from doing those things in the Middle East, for example, or would prevent us from continuing to do those things in Europe that are important to our national security and to world peace and progress. So that what I would hope is that something satisfactory can be worked out at a political level in Paris.

I say at a political level because it, to me at least, seems apparent that from the military standpoint you aren't ever going to be able to achieve any kind of a meaningful objective. By that I mean that despite the fact that we never lose any military engagements, we don't have any military way of bringing the conflict to a conclusion.

Now that's because, certainly, of self-imposed limitations. It's because of the fact that the enemy forces, if they get the hell beat out of them in South Viet Nam, can always retreat across the borders into either Cambodia, where they get a total sanctuary; North Viet Nam, where they now have a total sanctuary; or Laos, where they've got a partial sanctuary.

And it's also attributable to the fact that you can't restore security because in many of the areas security in that sense never existed. So driving the North Vietnamese intruders out does not give you any kind of effective security unless you've got continued occupation.

So that really from a military standpoint, you'd only have two possible courses of action. One would be the geographic expansion of the war, which I don't think would be supported by the American public and which would pose a severe risk of extending the war by bringing Communist China in. Or, alternatively, maintaining a large scale American occupation of South Viet Nam for a protracted period of time while you painfully nurse along the political processes so that the indigenous forces could themselves maintain security. Again I don't think the American public will support that sort of a long range effort.

A further problem which you've got is that, as far as Southeast Asia is concerned, a total resolution on favorable terms of the situation in South Viet Nam would not in fact achieve our objectives. Our basic objectives are to promote stability in the area and permit the independent countries in Southeast Asia to remain independent.

Now supposing that the North Vietnamese were to say, "Okay, you've licked us; we quit; we're going home; you can put in UN troops lining the border all at arms length." And you will end up with an independent autonomous anti-Communist South Viet Nam. And supposing that as a result of that the North Vietnamese really lived up to their word, pulled every troop out of South Viet Nam and brought them all to bear in Laos. Now, they could obviously overrun Laos within--It might not be a period of hours, but it wouldn't be much more than a period of days, particularly

if they took their battle trained forces from South Viet Nam and applied them against the Royal Laotian government forces.

And then you'd have a situation in which Thailand and Cambodia would be in even greater jeopardy and in greater fear than they would be if North Viet Nam were to take over South Viet Nam, but were to leave Laos as at least sort of a pale neutral state. So that what you need is a political settlement that will permit a resolution of the situation in Laos, and will eliminate any kind of external threat to Thailand and hopefully to Cambodia.

Now that can only be done politically, because I don't think that the will of the American people would be exerted to permit the introduction of ground forces in either Laos or Thailand. So that I have to look at the Paris talks as representing not only the best, but really basically, the sole hope of achieving American objectives in Southeast Asia.

P: In achieving these objectives the way you are speaking, that includes the complete removal of our presence in South Viet Nam?

W: No, I don't think it does necessarily at all. And I don't think that we need to do that except as part of a total political solution in which there is some other form of assurance of continued stability in the area. I would think that the American public should support a continued American military presence until then, and that it would.

But I'm saying that it won't support either an increased effort or the indefinite prolongation of the present effort, particularly under circumstances in which between one hundred and two hundred American boys

are being killed each week. I couldn't set for you just what the price is that the American public would pay, but I would think that if you could scale down gradually the cost of our effort in Viet Nam, and could scale down dramatically and permanently our casualties, then the American public would support it for quite a long period of time, and it would be in our interests to do so.

In other words, what I'm saying is that, on the question of Viet Nam, I am neither one who says that what we have tried there was totally ridiculous, nor one of those who says that it's vital that we achieve our initial objectives. To me you have to look at Southeast Asia the way you look at anything else, and that's in terms of the overall security interests of the United States. It's worth something to us to preserve an independent South Viet Nam. And really the argument, as far as I'm concerned, is not over principle at all. The argument is over price. And what value you set on achieving a single one out of the entire shopping list of American objectives. I think that there are other interests of the United States that are of greater value than having our way in Southeast Asia; and that we have to take those other interests into consideration in determining what our course of action should be in Viet Nam.

P: To go back to what you said about wrong analogies that we've perhaps applied in this area, the domino theory comes in this light, too?

W: That again is a purely subjective kind of an issue. In my opinion, yes, the domino theory would be an instance of using inapposite analogy.

First of all, what's going to be the moving force that's applied against the so-called dominoes? I've already suggested that nothing in our experience with Communist China indicates that Communist China would

be that force.

P: What about Indonesia?

W: Indonesia, as the applier of the force? It's hard for me to see how Indonesia would be able to mount that kind of an aggressive campaign against any of its neighbors.

P: I'm sorry--I meant the Chinese threat that occurred in Indonesia a couple of years back.

W: There again, I think I would have to disagree that that was a Chinese threat. I'd say that the threat to Indonesia arose because of the erratic nature of its own ruler; and that certainly Indonesia is no stronger in terms of materiel resources now than it was under Sukarno. What you've had is a change of leadership, and a collection of leaders who A, are strongly anti-Communist; and B, are not subject to some of the personal eccentricities that Bung Sukarno was.

P: I thought that this was a Chinese Communist attempt to take over the government that was failing.

W: No, I would not say so. I would say that what you had was a movement within Indonesia which was backed very substantially by Indonesians of Chinese origin who happened to be Communists. But there's nothing to indicate that you had either any substantial number of Communist Chinese who had infiltrated into Indonesia or that the motivating force came from China rather than from within Indonesia. Now obviously it was encouraged by the Communist Chinese; it was applauded by the Communist Chineses; it was supported to some extent by the Communist Chinese.

P: And it would have set up an alignment with Communist China.

W: That's correct. But that still would have been done by Indonesians. So

a different group of Indonesians got in control, and they were oriented in directions other than towards Communist China. In other words, I think you have to make a distinction between native Communists and Communist aliens.

Now you could say certainly that with respect to Cuba, that this is something that was encouraged and applauded by the Soviet Union, as well as by Communist China. But you could not say with any degree of veracity that the Castro take-over and the overthrow of Batista was either inspired or executed by either the Soviet Union or Communist China. They did it for themselves.

There's a difference between suicide and homicide. Maybe you've got a responsibility to prevent homicide; certainly to try and prevent homicide. But if somebody's determined to commit suicide, eventually he'll pull it off.

P: This is what I was thinking about in terms of the domino theory. I didn't mean to interrupt you.

W: Well, I say it depends really on what you mean by the domino theory. If what we mean by it is that, were the United States to withdraw its military presence from Asia and the United Kingdom were to withdraw its military presence from Asia, a number of changes would take place; those changes would have an escalating effect; they would feed on one another. And you would have, I would suppose, quite radical changes in both the composition and the disposition of the governments.

Under those circumstances you would have to anticipate that Thailand and Cambodia and Laos would be more oriented towards Communist China. Communist China would then be the strong physical presence in the area.

I don't think they'd be occupied by Communist China. I don't think they'd become provinces of China. But I think that they would look toward China as being the one great power left in the area. And in that sense they would be "dominoes" because they would fall more and more under Communist China's influence.

But I think that the usual meaning of the domino theory is one of aggression--and of external aggression. And again we reason from our post-World War II experience that East Europe fell like dominoes under Soviet Russia's pressure. Now I don't see a similar development occurring in Indochina.

You also would have opinions that would vary as to what would cause the dominoes to fall. Now I've already suggested that I have not seen any evidence that China,--as China and as an external force--would try and take over the Indo-Chinese peninsula.

I think there's more question as to whether the North Vietnamese might. And certainly one of the apprehensions that the Cambodians and the Thais would have would be that if North Viet Nam were to succeed in uniting Viet Nam under Hanoi's control, that then the Vietnamese have traditionally been more aggressive than anybody else in Indochina.

But then also you'd have to consider what would that mean in American interests. Would you really feel that San Francisco was jeopardized because of a North Vietnamese-dominated Indochinese peninsula!

P: Let me ask you that question. What do you think our national interests or strategic value in Southeast Asia?

W: I'd say it resides in two separate things. First of all, it certainly would not be in our interests to have Communist China control the

entire peninsula. That would give them really almost the entire seaboard, and it would I think represent a real threat to the independence, and the western orientation, of not only Japan but also Indonesia, the Phillippines, and potentially even Australia and New Zealand.

But what I've suggested is that our fear of aggressors is directed not only at Communist China, but also at North Viet Nam. Now let's suppose that North Viet Nam were in fact to dominate the Indochinese peninsula. I'm nowhere near as sure that that would be adverse to the national security of the United States. Under those circumstances you'd have to find out what way the Vietnamese hegemony evolved, and whether it constituted perhaps the best buffer against China; or whether it was going, instead, just to be the prelude to Communist China's takeover in the area. And what I submit is nobody can be quite sure which of the two is true.

P: What were your opinions and views of our bombing? What activities did you play in it, and also do you think we could have stopped the bombing of North Viet Nam sooner?

W: Now, let's break it down chronologically. As I've said, I think that the real purpose of the bombing, initially, was to show North Viet Nam that it was going to be very expensive for them to continue on their course of action. It didn't work. And I don't think it ever would work, because I think that once it became apparent that they were willing to pay a disproportionately high price, that then we had to find some other rationalization for the bombing. Now the other rationalizations turned out to be inadequate.

You can look at the purposes of the bombing campaign, it seems to me, in basically three separate ways. One of them is this idea of

exacting a toll; showing the other side that it's going to be very costly for him to continue aggressive conduct. Okay, we tried that. I think it was worth trying. It turned out they were willing to pay that price.

A second possible objective is to destroy their war-making potential. We destroyed their war-making potential, but it didn't put them out of the war because of the fact that the war supplies did not emanate from North Viet Nam. They emanated from cities that we weren't bombing. And unless we were prepared to bomb the Chinese cities and the Russian cities where the war supplies were in fact manufactured, we couldn't destroy the war-making potential of the other side. As I've put it, I think, on a number of occasions, North Viet Nam was not a source of supply, it was a conduit.

Okay, that brings you to the third possible purpose of bombing. Can you so impede and block the conduit as to prevent the flow of men and materials to the battlefield? And I say the answer to that has been proven to be "no." You cannot. You can make it more difficult. You can make it more costly. But you can't prevent it.

Now when I say "can't," I would have to amend that and say that you can't do it by any means that you are willing to utilize. It's possible that you'd be able to do it with nuclear weapons. But there we would be paying what everybody would concede would be too high a price to achieve our objective.

Now as to whether the bombing should have been stopped sooner; again, that's just a kind of a question on which you're going to get as many different answers as you interview people. I would say that I personally felt for some time that we ought to stop the bombing. I thought we ought to stop the bombing because I thought the greatest value of the

bombing was that it was something you could stop. And stopping it, you could demand a price. So that the question you had to ask yourself was at what point would you get the best possible quid pro quo for stopping the bombing.

Now, I think it's pretty clear that, at some point of time in the past, stopping the bombing would not have brought us anything at all. After all, we did have a bombing pause of I think it was thirty-five days back in 1966--early '66. That didn't buy us anything because they weren't prepared at that time to make the kind of a deal that would have any appeal to us.

Now, no one will ever know whether if we had stopped the bombing maybe a year before we stopped it, it would have brought us something. I personally thought it was worth trying, and that it might have bought us something. And that it would, in any event, have prevented some erosion of public and world opinion in support of our position in Viet Nam.

As it was, when we did stop the bombing, it seems to me that it worked. The bombing first of all was dropped down geographically to the twentieth parallel; and that brought the North Vietnamese to Paris, and to, at least, preliminary discussions about peace talks. Then when the President on October 31st stopped the rest of the bombing, it certainly brought them to the position where they were willing to get into substantive negotiations, and I think those substantive negotiations will take place and that they will eventually succeed. So in that sense the bombing campaign could be said to have been a success.

It achieved a fourth objective. As I said, you could have three possible immediate objectives: One, to raise the price; the second, to

destroy war-making potential; the third, really to interdict the flow of men and supplies. A fourth one is that it can be used as a bargaining tool. It has proven, in my opinion, to be an effective bargaining tool.

P: Along this line, thinking in terms of Viet Nam, do you think that our commitment there has caused us to sacrifice other interests in the world that we should have been pursuing?

W: No, I don't think it has. But I'd say it could. And the consequences of it could be adverse to our interests in other parts of the world. That's why it's important that we salvage something out of it that can be looked at as having been a success.

If you look at what we've done elsewhere in the world while we've been conducting the war in Viet Nam, I think you'd have to say that we have protected our position. Take for example, the situation in Europe. We've maintained over three hundred thousand American military personnel in Europe during this period of time. That has continued, I think, to serve as a very effective deterrent to any sort of overly ambitious ideas on the part of the Soviet Union.

As far as the Middle East is concerned, I doubt like the devil that we would have taken any direct action in advance of the June 1967 war--even if there had been no Viet Nam--because I don't think that our interests would have led us make any kind of direct intervention by military personnel or that it would have been effective. And as far as other areas of the world are concerned, it's hard for me to see how we have in any respect shirked either any responsibility or failed to take any kind of military acts that might have been called for. So as I say, up to the present time it hasn't cost us in terms of other interests

in other parts of the world.

The real risk is that if we don't end up with a solution that the American public accepts as satisfactory, this might eliminate, or at least impede, the appropriate public support for other courses of action that we should take in the future.

P: What is your opinion of the idea of our involvement in limited wars?

W: I'm not sure I understand the question. Let me handle it in two different ways: First of all, if what you're asking is whether I think that wars ought to be limited, or whether we ought to apply the full force of American power, I would say that the wars should be limited. Limited wars are infinitely better than unlimited wars, and you're going to have many more of them. You'll have only one unlimited war, and that'll be the last.

Secondly, as far as whether the choice is between limited war and no war at all for the United States, we still have to pick our cases. I don't think that we can assume that our interests can always be protected if we are unwilling ever to apply military power. I can conceive of just a whole variety of situations in which I think you'd have very widespread American support for the application of our military power.

Now maybe opinions would vary on most of them; but let's suppose, for example, that the Soviet Union were again to try to establish a power base in the Western hemisphere. And let's say that they picked some place like Guatemala. And they actually intervened physically in Guatemala. Is there any real doubt in your mind that the United States would respond?

We'd respond, I'd say, for a whole host of reasons. First of all,

because we could respond quite easily. They'd be playing the game in our ball park, and with a real hometown audience and with all of the umpires really hometowners. So that you would be able to intervene; you would intervene successfully; and you would intervene in a matter which was crucial to the security of the United States.

Okay, then you can pick a whole lot of closer cases. Let's take the present situation in Europe, and let's take a whole series of examples in sort of ascending order of importance.

We did not intervene when the Russians moved into Czechoslovakia. I think that that was just an eminently correct decision. We then would have been playing in their ballpark under the most unfortunate of circumstances, and we would not have been successful.

All right, supposing that they were encouraged by this, and were to say to themselves, "Let's clean out all the heretics; let's really make it a clean sweep!" So the next move is against Romania. Again, I would say that the American public would not and should not support American military intervention under those circumstances. Again, you'd be dealing with a Russian occupation of a contiguous country. Your chances of success would be minimal unless you were willing to brandish the nuclear weapon. Then you might provoke nuclear preemptive strike on their part. Moreover, we don't owe Romania anything. It's essentially still a Stalinist regime, and its basic display of independence has been of an economic rather than of an ideological nature. So that in no sense would there be any commitment, either implied or explicit.

But then you start getting into the harder cases. How about Yugoslavia? And on that, I think you'd begin to find a number of Americans

that would say, "Yes, we have to do something." That would be because of a whole variety of factors again. First of all, the Yugoslavs would fight, so you'd be confronted by the situation of an independent country willing to fight for its existence against a powerful aggressor. It would have tremendous emotional appeal.

A second reason would be that the strategic situation of Yugoslavia is of much greater importance to Western Europe than is the case of Romania or Czechoslovakia. So I would think that there would be some cause for actual American military intervention.

All right, then, Austria! Austria is a neutral nation. And we have, although no security commitment, nonetheless we were one of the occupying powers and one of the participants in the arrangement that restored Austria's independence. And there once again, you'd be bringing Communist power closer to Western Europe and to the jeopardy of the security of Western Europe which we've always regarded--and which I still regard--as integral to our own security. So you'd have pressure there again for American military intervention.

All right then, take it a step further. Supposing that instead of picking on any of these, they pick on their real Bete Noire and pick on West Germany. That would be regarded as an attack on the United States. Now I for one under those circumstances would support immediate American military intervention and the utilization of the American forces that are presently in Germany. And the standing instructions, of course, for the American commanders there are to fight under those circumstances, and I think we would. And I think that we'd have American support.

Then your question would be--is that a limited war, or is that an

unlimited war! I would do my best to keep it a limited war for as long as I could.

So that I think that the issue is as between unlimited war and limited war, I'm a limited war man. As between limited war and no war under any circumstances, I'm still a limited war man.

P: Mr. Warnke, when the world stops fighting over what land belongs to whom--which pretty soon they'll have to do--do you view the world in terms of spheres of influence, even if the influences haven't quite been determined in some cases?

W: Meaning no insult, that's a kind of meaningless cliche. The world is always spheres of influence, but the question is what do you mean by spheres of influence. Now normally when people talk about spheres of influence, what they are doing is justifying at least a partial isolationism; that what they're saying is, "We ought to look at this geographically. We're in the Western hemisphere. We include Latin America as under our sphere of influence--and Canada (although with some unwillingness I would suppose on the part of the Canadians), and give up everything else."

P: Mr. Warnke, my question was prompted by what you've used as "ball parks."

W: I'm talking about a ball park in terms of logistics rather than in terms of either cultural or physical assimilation. What I'm just saying is that it's an awfully lot easier for the Russians to fight a war in Romania than it is for us to fight a war in Romania. Now if you recognize that as a sphere of influence, I don't. I recognize that as being a geographical fact of life.

But this sphere of influence theory, as I say, is really an excuse for

doing nothing in instances in which you probably ought to do something. Because if you were going to draw any sort of a circle showing the logical sphere of influence of the Soviet Union, it would encompass, I submit, all of Western Europe. And I don't think that would be acceptable to us.

P: It's not an excuse then to sort of cut up the world and say, "We don't go there, and we can go here."

W: No. I think that geography is one of the factors that you have to take into consideration in determining the permissible limits of the extension of American military power. But that is not the same as saying you cut up the world into spheres of influence, and recognize some kind of an inherent right on the part of the great powers to exercise dominion in the contiguous countries.

P: And the other great power is to exercise a hands-off.

W: I think that great powers ought to keep their hands off whenever they can, yes.

P: Mr. Warnke, have you expressed these views to the two Secretaries of Defense that you've served under regarding Viet Nam?

W: I would say never in that sort of detail, no. I think that I have expressed to both Secretaries of Defense, at repeated instances, what I would regard as the practical consequences of those views. In other words I have advocated courses that were consistent with those views. But nobody has ever seen fit to draw me out at quite the length that you have, Miss Pierce. I don't think that that exposition of my views would come as any surprise to either Mr. McNamara or Mr. Clifford.

P: I'd like to ask you about a couple, in the last few years, just specific events that happened in terms of crisis situations. This is the seizure

of the Pueblo and the Tet Offensive. These were all early in 1968. What is your assessment of them and view of them, and what did you consider the impact both militarily and psychologically?

W: Let's deal first with the Pueblo because I think it's the simplest. The Pueblo I regard as being sort of a security sport. It bore no resemblance to anything that came before and had very little impact on anything that came afterwards. I can't of course, know what the motivation was of the North Koreans in seizing the Pueblo. I suspect that it was not planned out in advance. I suspect that it was an on-the-spot impulsive decision. And I suspect that they were surprised that it turned out to be such a coup. I think that it, on the whole, up to the present point has hurt us more than it has hurt them; and as a consequence, they probably still regard it as quite a coup. I think long-range it will do them no good because it was really irrational and motivationless.

At the time, actually, I was in the Far East. We were coming from Japan where I had been at a security subcommittee meeting, and we were landing in Okinawa just as the planes were taking off in the totally vain effort to see if there was anything they could do about the seizure.

Something as irrational and outrageous as the seizure of the Pueblo presents a country like the United States with a problem for which there is no satisfactory answer. There is really nothing intelligent that you can do about it. In the first place, you can't prevent that sort of thing happening any more than you can prevent episodes such as the assassination of Bob Kennedy or snipers getting up in the tower of the University of Texas. But if people behave badly enough and with no motivation that you can discern, then you can't predict their conduct; and it's almost

impossible to deter their conduct.

In the case of the Pueblo, of course the immediate impulse is to do something to them in return. Now the question is, what can you do! Immediately after the seizure, there was really the highest level concentration on the available courses of action. There were lots of things that you could do. You could bomb Wonsan Harbor; you could sink the Pueblo; you could launch some sort of an attack across the DMZ; you could try and seize a North Korean ship. There were a lot of things that you could have done. The question is, what would any of them have achieved!

Now, we had found in our experience in the bombing of North Viet Nam, and our previous experience for that matter in the bombing of North Korea, that a relatively undeveloped Asian country with a surplus of men can stand an awful lot of bombing without saying "uncle!" So that the net result probably would have been to increase the plight of the Pueblo crew without really achieving any sort of a realistic American objective.

Another thing that you could do would be try and retaliate against the Soviet Union. In other words, supposing that you were to adopt the thesis that all of these Communist ploys are part of an overall orchestrated effort aimed against the Free World, which some people believe and which in some instances may be the case. What you then might be able to do is to seize a Soviet intelligence ship.

Now, if the United States were to seize the Soviet intelligence ship, you would immediately create a confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States; and I would suspect would convene a court of public inquiry in which we would lose because the world as a whole would say,

"Here you've jeopardized the peace of the world on a thesis which is unproven and unprovable," namely that the Soviet Union inspired the North Koreans to do it.

An alternative I would suppose would be to have the South Koreans seize a Russian ship. But there again, would the risks that are implicit in that be worth the chances of any kind of gain or profit from it! And I would submit that they would not be.

So, as a consequence, about the best that you could do--and an unsatisfactory best it was--was to negotiate with the North Koreans over a protracted period of time and eventually secure their release under less than I would regard as magnificent circumstances.

But looking back at it, it's impossible for me to see what could or should have been done. But I think that what we did was correct.

All right, then the question is, what can you do about it! Well, you can do a variety of things. In the first place, once outlandish conduct of that sort has occurred, you can no longer regard it as unthinkable. You have to assume that if they had behaved that egregiously at one time, they're apt to behave that egregiously again, and you have to take steps to protect yourself against the consequences of such conduct.

The other thing that you can do is to try to leave them worse off than they were before. Now that involves, of course trying to strengthen the Republic of Korea. Their real objective, and the only possible motivation--if there is any kind of a rational explanation of the seizure of the Pueblo--was that this would somehow advance their cause against the Republic of Korea. Whether it was their intent in the first place

or not, obviously they sought to capitalize on the seizure of the Pueblo by worsening relations between the Republic of Korea and the United States; and to drive a wedge between the two; and really to weaken the respect of the Republic of Korea for the United States; and possibly to bring down the government.

Now it didn't have that consequence. It didn't have that consequence because I think we behaved intelligently. The President sent a high level Ambassador, Mr. Vance, over to Korea to deal with the government, to try and calm them down, to try and show America's continued support for the Republic of Korea; and to show that we viewed with just as great distaste the Blue House raid--which was designed to assassinate President Park--as we did the seizure of the Pueblo.

The other thing that we did was to get a one hundred million dollar supplemental for military assistance to the Republic of Korea so that instead of appropriating one hundred and sixty million dollars in fiscal 1969, we appropriated two hundred and sixty million dollars. Now that left, I would say, North Korea at least one hundred million dollars worse off in its confrontation with the Republic of Korea--so that they succeeded, it seems to me, on the whole in winning kind of a propaganda battle up to this point. But in terms of military actualities, they lost ground. I think also that eventually we can make them lose the propaganda value by showing that their conduct was totally unjustified; by showing that the Pueblo did not intrude on their claimed territorial waters, and by showing their abuse of the American prisoners.

Now the Tet Offensive, it seems to me, is an entirely different species of event. The Tet Offensive of course has to be placed in the

context of the Viet Nam interlude. And to me what the Tet Offensive was, was really just the corroboration of the military and political facts of life--that you were engaged in a war that could not be brought to a satisfactory military conclusion within any sort of a reasonable period of time. Now all Tet did was to confirm that fact, and make it more apparent to more people. So long range I would say that the Tet Offensive really just hastened the realization of the ultimate facts of the Viet Nam predicament.

It showed that although you could make progress in pacification, that this progress could be reversed by the enemy making that kind of a large scale offensive. It showed, also, that whatever your ability to beat the enemy on any kind of a sustained basis, the enemy would still retain the capability of launching this kind of an attack; and that you could not provide the sort of continued security in South Viet Nam that would enable the government to make steady progress as far as extending its control where the countryside was concerned. So that the net impact was to make us face up to where we were in Viet Nam; and what our prospect was of achieving a wholly unilateral military solution. As a consequence of course, it had a great deal to do with the President's decision first to cut back the bombing, and then eventually stop it.

P: During the course of this answer, you spoke about things being sort of related to orchestration of events. Do you see that in any of the crisis situations that have arisen? Is there a relation between something like the Pueblo and Viet Nam?

W: I have not been able to find any satisfactory evidence that this is part of the coordinated, worldwide Communist plan. It may be. But if so,

certainly the evidence is unpersuasive to me at the present time. I think there are some people who quite rightly speculate as to whether or not there is some relationship between, say the seizure of the Pueblo and the Tet Offensive; and whether this is all being coordinated in Moscow. If that's the case, they do a better job in security than we do.

P: During crisis events such as this, do you work with the White House; do you contact them, or do they contact you, on stand by--?

W: Well, I think as I said in our first interview my participation is almost exclusively through the Secretary of Defense and through the Deputy Secretary of Defense. So in most instances somebody like Walt Rostow will be directly in contact with the Secretary or with the Deputy Secretary. In some instances I have worked directly with the White House, And, of course, I do work directly with my counterparts over in the State Department. But the White House contact is at the Secretarial level.

P: You mentioned earlier that you were Chairman of the POW committee? Could you tell me a little bit about what you were doing in that area?

W: Well, the Prisoner of War Committee was set up by the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Mr. Nitze, and I think it was in July 1967. The idea was to coordinate the various activities of the Department of Defense in the prisoner of war field and to provide sort of a regular group that could coordinate these policies and do what we could to promote the welfare of our prisoners. It also gave the Department of Defense a point of contact with Governor Harriman over in the State Department, who of course was appointed by the President as the overall supervisor of prisoner of war matters.

Now what we've endeavored to do is to, of course, do what we could

to promote the release of American prisoners of war, and see if we couldn't take advantage of any kind of openings that did exist. We've had very limited success in that regard.

Another thing that we've endeavored to do is to bring to bear such pressure as could be martialed to achieve some betterment in the conditions under which the prisoners of war were being held. We don't really know what our success has been in that regard. All we know is that prior to the formation of our committee I think that Governor Harriman's public affairs campaign against the proposed war crimes trials of the prisoners of the North Vietnamese was successful. I think that it did indicate to the North Vietnamese that this would be an unfortunate development for them, and would cost them in terms of world opinion. Therefore they did not proceed with those trials.

I would hope that the various efforts that we have made to get them to live up to the Geneva Conventions may have had some impact on their treatment of our prisoners of war. But so few have been released at the present time that we just have no evidence in that area.

P: You spoke about working and coordinating with your counterpart in the State Department. How does this work? Is there any overlapping, or is there any difficulty in arriving at decisions when you need to touch base in the various areas, and yet formulate your own?

W: I would say no difficulty in reaching decisions, if by that you mean is there some sort of a procedural impasse. There is not. I have a telephone with a direct wire to the State Department. It's very easy to dial any of the Assistant Secretaries or the Under Secretaries or anybody else, and they will usually answer the telephone. If by difficulties you mean

are there differences of opinion, there frequently are, of course, just as there are differences within this building and within the Department of State. I have found that the relations on the whole have been quite harmonious, and that we've been able to resolve any of these issues.

P: Can you generalize in saying that the position of the Defense Department and the State Department is such, or has differed on these occasions?

W: No, I couldn't say that there has been any sort of a consistent pattern of difference. There's no secret of course of the fact that Secretary Clifford, having come into office in 1968, was not as personally committed to the course of events in Viet Nam, as say, Secretary Rusk, who had been in office since 1961. Now that frequently has been reflected in positions taken, but that's just really a chronologically inescapable situation.

But if by your question you mean, do we reflect essentially the military point of view, or a Defense security point of view, whereas State represents a diplomatic point of view, I'd say "no" that we're both working after all in the interests of national security, and that really there is a degree of similarity between the approaches of almost everybody in the national security field which insures that there are going to be many more coincidences of view than there are disparities of view.

P: I believe in your capacity in this position that you worked with the National Security Council. Could you give me your opinion of the effectiveness of this institution?

W: I'm a tremendous iconoclast when it comes to organizations. I don't think it really matters a darn what sort of an organization you have. And a National Security Council is effective if you utilize it effectively

with effective people. But it would not be indispensable, and no formal organization is indispensable.

An awful lot of the national security decisions have been made at the so-called Tuesday lunch. That's because the President of the United States elected to meet on Tuesday with the Secretaries of State and Defense and with his National Security Advisor and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Now that was a "institution" that, as far as President Johnson was concerned, worked. Now if President Nixon wants to have regular meetings of the National Security Council at which he brings together those people and some added starters and he in fact uses that as an institution in which differences of opinion can be aired, worked out, and resolved, then he'll have an effective National Security Council. But you could have a Friday night tea party and it might be just as effective an institution.

I'd say one of the problems of something like a National Security Council is that it acquires sort of an institutional life of its own, and builds up a momentum that sometimes continues beyond the period of utility. For example--here I really demonstrate my iconoclasm--the Cabinet, as a working group, years ago outlived its usefulness. At one point of time the Cabinet consisted of the President's closest advisors; and therefore you could get the Attorney General and the Postmaster General and the Secretary of Interior and the Secretary of State and the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy--get them all together--and hash out issues of national security. The Cabinet at the present time, as an institution dealing with national security, would be a terrible anachronosm. There's just no way why the Postmaster General would have

anything pertinent to say about what you do in response to the Pueblo seizure, for example.

Now the National Security could--I'm not saying it ever has--but it could acquire some Cabinet status. You might find that some of the people who participated in the regular deliberations were just making no contribution, and that, as a consequence, the existence of a national security council and the necessity for undergoing its meetings and living through them turned out to be an irrelevancy, and even a diversion in the orderly administration of the national security. I think it would have to do with the experiment and not be committed to any particular organizational structure, and then, finally, find some sort of formula and some way of working which in fact works.

P: Has President Johnson used the National Security Council much in order to make his decisions?

W: I don't believe he has, at least not during the period of time that I've been with the Federal Government. I think it has been used more as a body which endorses decisions which have previously been reached.

P: I have a nice broad question for you. What do you see as the future in the importance of NATO in regard to our national security?

W: Certainly as far as the immediate future is concerned, NATO is going to have very direct relevance to our national security. I think that the conduct of the Russians during the past summer indicates that they're not really housebroken yet. As a consequence NATO is not an anachronism, but NATO as a defense alliance does serve a direct purpose in preventing the Russians from doing things that they might otherwise be motivated to do.

Now as far as its future is concerned, it depends of course on what happens in Russia. And that's something I just plain could not predict. I don't know enough about the power structure in Russia to make any kind of a guess as to how decisions are made, by what sort of majority they're made, and whether this majority is one which is firmly entrenched or whether it's one that's apt to be supplanted. We can't even tell whether these supplanters would be more militant or less militant, so that I couldn't make a guess at the present time. All I can say is that under this present circumstance of uncertainty, it's certainly in our interest to continue to maintain a strong NATO.

I'm afraid I've only got about five more minutes.

P: In your judgment why are we having such slow progress on the question of disarmament?

W: There again, you'd have to ask the Russians. It's, in my opinion, totally imprudent for the United States to disarm unilaterally, and we have never really been able to engage in any sort of a meaningful dialogue with the Russians on bilateral disarmament. The one area in which they have indicated a willingness to talk, as you know, is in the strategic missiles field, and I would hope that some progress could be made at a very early date in those discussions.

I think that they've recognized that in terms of any kind of realistic application of military power, strategic missiles don't buy you anything--that their one value is in their ability to prevent somebody else from using their strategic missiles to achieve their political and military objectives. Now I would suppose that they have become sufficiently sophisticated in the strategic field so that they would recognize that

you can achieve this same mutual deterrence at less cost. In other words, it doesn't matter whether each side has got one thousand ICBM's, or whether each side has got fifty, as long as they're in a position to inflict on one another the same degree of damage. And under those circumstances, it's going to create the balance of terror which exists at the present time. But it would be less costly and really less dangerous; because even then the nuclear exchange, although it would inflict commensurate degrees of damage, would not be so totally devastating to one another's society.

P: Then your views on the deployment of something like the ABM missiles are that we should continue negotiations before we escalate our use of them?

W: I'd say my view on the ABM is a somewhat a schizoid one. The ABM really doesn't buy you anything long range vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. By that I mean that all that it does is force the Soviet Union to increase its offensive strength so that they can neutralize your deployment of the defensive system. There is no effective system that you can build that will really be enough to meet the Russian offensive potential.

All right, then the question is why do you build an ABM! Well, I can think of two good reasons. The first one is that vis-a-vis the short range and even reasonably long range Chinese threat, it is effective. So here for something like five to six billion dollars you can buy an insurance policy. Now it's an insurance policy against a relatively unlikely disease. But nonetheless, if the premium is not excessive, it's worth our while to buy that sort of an insurance policy. So vis-a-vis the Chinese threat I agree completely with the decision, to deploy what we refer to as the Sentinel system. It costs five billion dollars, and I

think it's five billion dollars well spent.

Then what you have to consider is whether buying that insurance policy has got any kind of negative implications insofar as our relations with the Soviet Union, the possibility of strategic talks, a Soviet-United States arms race, etc., are concerned. And that really depends upon whether you're able to engage in any sort of meaningful dialogue with the Soviet Union.

Now the Soviets themselves have deployed a limited ABM system. The only one that can be identified as such is around Moscow. It really won't work against an American threat, but nonetheless they have one. Now if you were going to have talks with the Russians, you are probably better off if you've got an ABM system that you can trade off against their ABM system in terms of limitations. So, again, as a bargaining tool, it's useful vis-a-vis Russia. As a defensive system, it could be rendered useless against Russia.

But I don't think that our decision to deploy an ABM lessens the chances of getting into a meaningful dialogue with the Soviet Union. I'd say that the real risk of a decision to deploy an ABM is that those who have not thought the problem through may be encouraged to the illusory view that you can build a better system that would be effective against the Soviet threat; and that it may result in pressures to spend forty or fifty billion dollars when that additional thirty-five to forty-five billion dollars will really be wasted.

P: Would you like to cut here?

W: I'm afraid that's it.

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By Paul C. Warnke

to the

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