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2 AND TELEVISION PROGRAM TO "ABC'S ISSUES AND ANSWERS."

3
4 I S S U E S A N D A N S W E R S

5
6 SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1968

7
8 GUEST: SENATOR EVERETT M. DIRKSEN (R. Ill.)

9
10 INTERVIEWED BY:

11 Frank Reynolds, ABC White House Correspondent

12 Bob Clark, ABC Capitol Hill Correspondent.

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15 MR. REYNOLDS: Senator Dirksen, you have been a consistent
16 supporter of the President's broad objectives in Vietnam.
17 Have the events in the past week and the current communist
18 offensive there caused you to change your view and do you
19 agree with the President that the communist offensive in
20 military terms has been a complete failure?

21 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, let's separate the question.
22 First of all, I have not forsaken the President's position
23 in respect to North Vietnam -- North Korea or with respect
24 to South Vietnam. Let's look at that Korean picture
25 for just a moment. Here were such delicate questions as

1 whether or not the PUEBLO was in international waters.

2 Did it have any business out there?

3 Did the Skipper do quite the right thing? Did he get
4 his equipment overboard and get it destroyed in time? Oh,
5 there are a lot of delicate questions. Were there patrol
6 boats in addition to the sub-chaser? Were there any
7 MICs overhead? You see, those are the imponderables in
8 a picture of that kind. And then when you get it all together,
9 assuming that you are right, and you had a right to be there,
10 what do you do about it? Is there a way of applying diplomatic
11 persuasion? Can you apply moral persuasion? Does it require
12 force? Each one is a question that calls for a separate
13 answer and those answers are a little difficult at times.

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1 MR. REYNOLDS: In the event it is somehow determined that
2 perhaps the ship did violate North Korean territorial waters,
3 would it bother you if the United States did make an apology?

4 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, in the first place I would never
5 concede and I don't concede, on the basis of what I know, that
6 the ship was in territorial waters. We had a session after
7 that happened. I made a statement on the floor of the Senate.
8 I think I am free to say that I called up the President
9 before I made that statement. I have been in the hospital with
10 the flu bug, but I was very distressed watching all the
11 newscasts, reading everything that came in. I called him up.
12 I read him one or two paragraphs of the statement. He said,
13 "That's quite tough."

14 I said, "I meant it to be."

15 I said, "Maybe you can't say it, but I can say it."

16 Now, since that time, we had quite a long session with the
17 President and his leaders, and when I say "we," I mean my
18 colleague, Jerry Ford, the House Minority Leader. A lot of
19 things were supplied at the time, and that got to be a two-
20 hour conference before we got through. So I began to see
21 clearly exactly what the problem was, whether or not we were
22 in an indefensible position. I don't think we were, and that
23 is why I am always a little reluctant to ever apologize for
24 our actions or the actions of those who have taken their
25 instruments from the hierarchy of this country.

1 MR. CLARK: Well, Senator, you used some very strong
2 language in that statement.

3 SENATOR DIRKSEN: So I did.

4 MR. CLARK: You used the word " appease" and you warned
5 against trying to appease the Communists in this incident. Do
6 you think the president's delay, his attempt to use diplomatic
7 means to resolve this crisis amounts to appeasement?

8 SENATOR DIRKSEN: No; first of all, you have got to consider
9 the inherent delay in a diplomatic approach.

10 Now, of course, I listened to all the things that were said
11 to the United Nations Security Council. It was quite obvious
12 that we were hoping that perhaps the Soviet Union would enter
13 into this picture, knowing that North Korea is certainly
14 Communist-oriented and has among its defensive weapons a lot
15 of MIG airplanes manufactured in the Soviet Union.

16 Now, you have to wait a reasonable period of time because
17 they have to put their ducks in a row. So how long shall you
18 wait? Well, it is a fluid question, to say the least, as to
19 how long you wait, but you certainly do not resort to other
20 and harsher means when that offers a chance.

21 And then, secondly, in view of the fact that we have had
22 one session -- there may have been more -- at Panmunjom, what
23 was the fruit of that session; what have they asked for; what are
24 the general premises that the North Koreans have sought to
25 establish, and how shall it be answered? Can they be answered,

1 and reasonably so? So I don't rush those answers.

2 MR. CLARK: Senator, your views seem to have moderated
3 considerably --

4 SENATOR DIRKSEN: No, no, they haven't.

5 MR. CLARK: -- after that second talk with the President.

6 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Yes.

7 MR. CLARK: Well, would you, after waiting this reasonable
8 time, would you use military force, if necessary, to bring about
9 the release of the Pueblo and her crew?

10 SENATOR DIRKSEN: I don't think one can answer that
11 question at this time. You see, one of the purposes of this
12 statement -- and I say it very frankly -- was that I was
13 thinking about the morale of the troops in Korea and the morale
14 of the troops in Vietnam. I was thinking also of the prestige
15 of the country, but I was thinking of the fathers and mothers
16 and kinfolk of those who are abroad fighting for this country
17 at the present time. Once they ever got the idea that you put
18 them in uniform and ship them abroad you forget about them. --
19 I didn't want anybody in Vietnam or in Korea to get the idea that
20 that all was quiescent and supine in Washington and that we
21 didn't think all the way through the piece on this matter in
22 the hope that we could preserve our prestige and still get back
23 the skipper and our crewmen off the Pueblo.

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1 MR. REYNOLDS: Senator, how do we go about any military
2 action and still achieve the objective of getting those men
3 back?

4 SENATOR DIRKSEN: That is the reason I have not projected
5 myself into a speculation about military action. We had
6 a thing like this happen once before. I think in one of his
7 press conferences the President alluded to that fact.

8 MR. REYNOLDS: In the case of the RB-47?

9 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Yes. And you probably were there.
10 It did take quite a while before that was negotiated.
11 When you negotiate with other countries, it is not quite
12 so expeditious, not quite so easy, and it is not quite
13 so simple. And I make allowances for those things. But
14 I do press the point that I think we were on good, defensible
15 grounds that the North Korean action was absolutely
16 inexcusable and for that reason I am very reluctant to ever
17 give and utter an apology when no apology is called for.

18 MR. REYNOLDS: Senator, could we come back for a moment
19 to Vietnam and in view of what has happened there in the
20 current offensive, they still hold parts at least of some
21 provincial towns. Do you agree with the President who said
22 that their military campaign was a total failure, a complete
23 failure?

24 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, let's not use the word "total" but
25 let's say that it was a failure. And as I analyze the

1 thing from time to time on the basis of the kind of
2 information that is available to me, this looked like
3 something that had been dictated by councils of both
4 desperation and despair. I think you get that from the
5 fact that as you look at these captives and you get
6 reports on them -- youngsters, 12, 13, 14 years old -- what
7 would that probably translate to the average citizen, or
8 the average military commander? That they are running out
9 of manpower.

10 Now then when it comes to weapons, maybe the same
11 thing you can get there, namely that supplies are beginning
12 to run short. So, put it all in the one thing. Wasn't
13 it General Westmoreland who said "They are
14 going for broke"? Maybe that is the expression that applies
15 in this case. It is now or never.

16 MR. CLARK: One of your fellow Republicans, Senator
17 Tower, said this might be the death rattle of the Viet
18 Cong. Do you agree with that?

19 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, I think I am inclined to go along
20 with that general assessment, because this was a deadly,
21 dangerous undertaking that they got into, and they wouldn't
22 do it unless they were desperate. I can't imagine that
23 they would.

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25 (Announcement)

3 1 MR. CLARK: Your fellow Senator from Illinois,
2 Charles Percy, seems to take a much more serious view
3 than you do of the Viet Cong escapades these past few days
4 in Vietnam. He says that the President has been misleading
5 the American people about the extent of our military progress.

6 Do you think there is any justification for this
7 statement?

8 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, it is difficult indeed to make
9 a military assessment of something that is taking place 12,000
10 miles from home. In the first place, I am not a military man.
11 In the second place, I have not been out there in a great
12 many years, although I was there, even in North Vietnam,
13 ~~over~~ before Dienbienphu fell. That is when the French
14 finally caved in. So who shall say whether we have enough
15 troops, whether the deployment of our troops is very proper,
16 whether we are adequately weaponed. Until I see in detail,
17 those reports, then I could better tell, I think.

18 MR. REYNOLDS: Well, Senator, does it not give you pause
19 that they were able to mount this kind of a coordinated
20 offensive that had obviously been planned in advance, and
21 they were able to humiliate the United States in some measure
22 by at least occupying part of the Embassy ground there?

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1 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Frank, it does, but there is an
2 offsetting factor there. Having watched people move in
3 those countries like Vietnam, on foot, on bicycles, in motor
4 lorries, in every way known to mankind, how easy it is for
5 them to move into a city.

6 And then, of course, ethnically there is little sub-
7 stantial difference, if any, between a North Vietnamese and
8 a South Vietnamese; not very much.

9 I remember the story they used to tell about how to
10 identify a North Korean as against a South Korean, because
11 they wear a different type of sandal and the strap came in one
12 case between the big toe and the next toe; in the other case,
13 between the second toe and the third toe, and wherever they
14 found the callouses that determined who they were.

15 Now, with that kind of condition and with the hundreds
16 of thousands of refugees moving in and out, I do not know
17 that that is so surprising, that they could stage this kind
18 of an assault. And particularly, if they were wearing
19 uniforms that deceived the defenders of the place.

20 MR. CLARK: Senator, you have talked of the enemy's
21 manpower problem in Vietnam. Secretary McNamara's only
22 appearance this week, before the Senate Armed Services
23 Committee, pointed out that North Vietnam has an army of
24 480,000 men and thus far has committed only about 50,000
25 of those troops to battle in South Vietnam. Does that

1 sound like a very critical manpower problem?

2 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, are you mentioning now that
3 the Viet Cong and North Vietnam have committed only 50,000--

4 MR. CLARK: No, that would be the North Vietnam. The
5 total is something like 115,000.

6 SENATOR DIRKSEN: That is right. That is quite a
7 different thing, because the Viet Cong are very much in
8 there and for all practical purposes, they are the real militant
9 enemy out there.

10 MR. CLARK: Well, the expected assault on Khesanh will be
11 mounted apparently mainly by troops from North Vietnam
12 and still they have an uncommitted army of something like 430
13 thousand men.

14 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Yes. Now the question is, who is
15 in that uncommitted army? Because on the basis of what we
16 have captured, these kids -- you have to call them kids--

17 MR. CLARK: I would have to cite again Secretary McNamara's
18 report that 480,000 is only 3 percent of the population
19 of North Vietnam, which is much lower than the percentage
20 we had in our army--

21 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Oh, that might well be, but you are
22 talking about a force of 480,000. What does it include?

23 MR. CLARK: Well, Secretary McNamara said basically
24 that they are inducting each year into the North Vietnam
25 Army the youths that are becoming of draft age that given

1 year, but his whole point is that there is a great reservoir
2 of manpower in North Vietnam that has not yet been committed
3 to the war.

4 SENATOR DIRKSEN: If you put it all together I have
5 no doubt about it. But if you include down to age 14 in our
6 own population, why look at what our potential would be
7 military-wise. We have never done it.

8 MR. REYNOLDS: But isn't that precisely the point,
9 Senator: Nobody in this country has any intentions of including
10 our people down to the age of 14 or carrying a thing of that
11 nature --

12 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, I cited the matter only to fortify
13 our conclusion. I said, was this a matter dictated by desperation
14 or not, then you take all the factors into consideration,
15 and that is certainly one of them.

16 MR. CLARK: Senator, many of your colleagues in the
17 Senate and in the House, too, are concerned that we are
18 already so overcommitted in Vietnam and other parts of the
19 world that we would be unable or certainly it would be very
20 hazardous for us to get involved in another full-scale war in
21 Korea. Do you share this sort of concern?

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1 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Certainly I would be probably as unhappy,
2 if not more unhappy than anybody else, if we got committed in
3 Korea and that is why, at best, I could ever give a speculative
4 answer as to whether or not what we do after you have exhausted
5 every other administrative means in order to get a solution and
6 get our crew and our skipper back.

7 MR. REYNOLDS: Senator, do you agree with Mr. Nixon, who
8 said the other day that it was unbelievable that they did not
9 have air and sea cover for the Pueblo out there in that intel-
10 ligence gathering mission?

11 SENATOR DIRKSEN: You have to remember the type of a
12 vessel that this was. When they say it is a spy vessel,
13 well, it had that type of equipment on it. Let's not kid our-
14 selves. The Soviet Union does it, other countries do it and
15 we do it. We don't have too many of these vessels. You can't
16 weapon them very much.

17 I look at these letters from former Navy men. "Why didn't
18 the skipper strike back?"

19 They forget that he only had some light machineguns
20 aboard. You don't put heavy guns aboard a vessel like this.
21 It becomes too provocative. You have to hope that if something
22 untoward takes place the skipper will know enough to get his
23 equipment overboard and into the salt water so it will not be
24 useful to the enemy.

25 MR. REYNOLDS: But you don't think they ought to be

1 accompanied by an air and sea escort of some sort?

2 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, it would be a dead giveaway if you
3 did so.

4 MR. CLARK: Senator, we want to talk a little bit of
5 politics with you too, and I believe you now have three
6 announced candidates for the Republican nomination: Governor
7 Romney, Mr. Nixon and Mr. Stassen. Would you like to tell us
8 which of these three is your favorite for the nomination?

9 SENATOR DIRKSEN: At the moment I have no favorites. I like
10 to see what the disposition of the people is, and probably we
11 will know before very long. The first primary election comes in
12 New Hampshire in March. Then we get primaries in Wisconsin,
13 in Oregon, in Nebraska. It at least will give you some idea.

14 Now, it depends on the approach that you have to this
15 problem. Do you want a winner, an absolute winner, or somebody
16 who you think can actually win, or do you want to dilute that
17 somewhat with other considerations like who has had the broadest
18 experience, the best background? That is no easy matter to
19 resolve.

20 MR. CLARK: Is there one Republican whom you feel can
21 absolutely win?

22 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Yes, but I don't project any name at
23 the moment. I just watch all of them and rather carefully, and
24 see what kind of an account they give of themselves.

25 MR. REYNOLDS: Well, Senator Dirksen, I think what you

1 have just said is going to be interpreted by many people as a
2 push to Governor Rockefeller to come forward.

3 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, I don't think, Frank, you can come
4 to that conclusion. I have served with Dick Nixon in the House.
5 I served with him in the Senate. I served under him when he
6 was Vice President and President of the Senate, and he is
7 a long-time friend. Nelson Rockefeller is a long-time
8 friend. I have known him for 25 years and I like him. I set
9 high store by him. I think he has great ability.

10 I think Romney has ability. He demonstrated that in the
11 industrial field by what he did for American Motors, for
12 example. He did it in the political field as Governor of
13 Michigan. I remember George Romney when he was here in
14 Washington doing special work for some of the committees of
15 the Congress. So that relationship goes back a long ways, and
16 there can be no doubt about his ability.

17 All right, who do you select? Who can win?

18 Well, they are about now to peddle their political merchan-
19 dise and tell the country how they feel about the issues that
20 confront us.

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2 MR. CLARK: Well, apparently, Senator, most of your
3 fellow Republicans in Congress have already made up
4 their minds as to who can win. There is a poll in today's
5 papers that says 53 percent, I believe, of Republicans in
6 Congress think Governor Rockefeller would be the strongest
7 candidate. Is that an accurate reflection, do you think?

8 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, Bob, I looked at that account,
9 and 53 percent is all right, but the question is, how many
10 responded to the poll?

11 MR. CLARK: It said 139, I believe, which would be a
12 little over 50 percent of the total Republicans in
13 Congress.

14 SENATOR DIRKSEN: It certainly could be. You say 139?

15 MR. CLARK: Yes.

16 SENATOR DIRKSEN: There are 535.

17 MR. CLARK: I say of the total Republicans in Congress,
18 which would be some 220, or in that area.

19 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Yes, that is probably correct. But
20 that doesn't mean that that is a majority sentiment, by any
21 means, because just like taking a half of a half, in order
22 to come to a conclusion; then the other thing is, exactly
23 how did he express himself. The average Congressman and
24 the average Senator, I think, would be rather cautious and
25 quite careful about how he responded to that kind of a question
in a poll.

1 MR. REYNOLDS: Senator, do you believe the man who
2 wins the primaries is going to get the nomination?

3 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Oh, no, but it would indicate
4 what the thinking is, because you will have one far
5 Western state, which has been something of a bellwether
6 upon occasion. You will have one very liberal state, in a
7 sense -- that is Wisconsin -- you will have a very
8 conservative state -- that is Nebraska -- and you would have
9 a New England conservative state -- that is New Hampshire.

10 MR. REYNOLDS: Senator, there may be some Republicans
11 who believe because of your friendship with President
12 Johnson you might not be terribly anxious to see him defeated
13 next year.

14 SENATOR DIRKSEN: I want a Republican victory from the top
15 to the bottom. But Frank, I am glad you raised that question,
16 for a very simple reason. I have been here for a third of
17 a century. I have known the President man and boy, so to
18 speak. Do you drop a friendship? The fact he is a Democrat,
19 I am a Republican, does that mean I have got to take a knife
20 and suddenly cut that friendship, that acquaintanceship
21 in two? I think I should feel honored, I think my party should
22 feel honored, I think my people in particular out home should
23 be honored, that the President seeks my advice. Is there any
24 other answer that you can give?

25 You would be surprised how vehemently and testily I disagree

1 with him from time to time.

2 MR. CLARK: As a mark of your long friendship for
3 the President, Senator, are you going to support his
4 request for a ten percent tax boost?
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1 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, now, you know this has taken
2 a special turn. John Williams of the Senate Finance Committee
3 a Republican from Delaware, has set out about a 10-point
4 program. He makes that 8 percent on corporations and 6
5 percent on individual taxpayers. But you will note that it is
6 coupled with a very substantial decrease in expenditures and
7 a cut-back in appropriations.

8 MR. CLARK: Are you saying if Congress makes the
9 spending cuts that Senator Williams recommends you would
10 then support his tax proposal for a 6 per cent general
11 increase--

12 SENATOR DIRKSEN: I would be much closer to it than I am
13 now.

14 MR. CLARK: You think you could support that --

15 SENATOR DIRKSEN: You will remember that last year before
16 the session wound up, I did throw a little suggestion to
17 the President and to the country, that I had said to the
18 President, "All right, put it on a sporting ground: We will
19 give you \$4 billion in taxes, you give us a \$4 billion
20 cut, and we want to be sure that it is a cut."

21 In other words, the quid pro quo from both sides.

22 Now, there are other things in this package. And
23 I looked at that package pretty carefully and it seems to me
24 rather reasonable, and I believe we could go somewhere with it

25 MR. REYNOLDS: Where would you cut, Senator?

1 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Oh, there are a lot of places in that
2 budget that you can cut. But you have got to be selective.

3 Now, you cut often where it hurts most. And where does
4 it hurt most? So far as Senators and Congressmen are
5 concerned, it will be in projects out home.

6 Well, you've got to take the bitter with the sweet.
7 You cannot have it both ways.

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1 I have been asked: "Well, are you willing to throw your
2 projects in the state overboard?"

3 Yes, I am, if that is going to keep this country solvent
4 and get a little closer to this payments balance problem that
5 we have. And then, of course, the frightfully unmanageable
6 deficit that you foresee now, because, as Senator Williams put
7 it out, he would foresee a deficit for fiscal 1969 of \$28 bil-
8 lion, and that is not manageable in a free country.

9 MR. CLARK: Senator, we are just about out of time but I
10 would like your quick answer. "Is this election-year Congress
11 going to vote a tax increase?"

12 SENATOR DIRKSEN: I am not at all sure, and I see the
13 representations from both House and Senate from time to time.
14 That is wholly in the speculative field for the moment.

15 MR. CLARK: I hate to stop you there, but we are about
16 out of time. Thank you very much, Senator Dirksen, for being
17 with us on ISSUES AND ANSWERS.

18 (February 18th show: Mayor John V. Lindsay (R.-New York))
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