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Office of the Vice President
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REMARKS OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
AT THE
NATIONAL BROADCAST EDITORIAL ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING
EAST ROOM, MAYFLOWER HOTEL
WASHINGTON, D. C.

AT 9:35 A.M. EDT

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Peter, Dick Hughes, President Rash and ladies and gentlemen.

Just to respond to Peter slightly on what he was saying, I was asked the other day, in light of developments in New York City and New York State, what would I have done differently than I did. And my answer was, very simply, I would not have resigned.

(Laughter)

I have to say that the default on the notes of UDC, which started this little domino operation up there, was totally unnecessary. The plan existed to meet the situation. It had already been worked out and just wasn't carried out.

What some don't realize is that where you have credit, it is based on trust. And one failure to meet a commitment undermines the confidence in the whole structure. And I think history is going to show that that was a disastrous misjudgment to allow the notes of UDC not to be met when they came due. But that is history and just looking backwards.

Ladies and gentlemen, I appreciate very much the opportunity to be here as an ex-politician. I see you had a real live politician coming out just as I came in, and I am delighted to be here as an ex.

I would like to talk briefly, and then it is my understanding I will have the opportunity to attempt to answer questions.

For several years now television and radio have surpassed newspapers as the principal source of news for the majority of Americans. You, therefore, possess enormous power to shape the people's conception of the world around them and the issues which affect them. The fairly recent use of editorials by radio and television strengthens that power considerably. I am all for it. It is a healthy development.

We cannot have too much free expression of opinion in a democracy -- provided it is well-thought out, properly labeled as opinion and offered with opportunity for the presentation of dissenting views, which you do.

Recently, some have questioned the magnitude of your power. I do not. I believe that the right of free inquiry and expression, freed by the First Amendment, is as

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vital to democracy as breath is to life. For these reasons, when I was Governor, I supported a Freedom of Information Act in New York with the result that New York has the strongest shield law in the country.

Your enormous power, your function as the Nation's eyes and ears, even its conscience, imposes an awesome obligation on the broadcasting profession to be responsible, to be objective in reporting the news, fair-minded in taking editorial stands, and resistant to the temptation to accentuate the negative for journalistic shock effect.

I am particularly concerned, now that the seemingly endless investigations of our intelligence community have ended, that the Nation get back to a balanced consideration of our enlightened self-interest, and that we regain a perspective and recognize the tough, hard realities of the world in which we live, where the performance of this intelligence function is vital to our security as a Nation and our freedom as a people.

Other nations, especially the Soviet bloc nations, invest large sums of money, personnel and sophisticated technology in collecting information within the United States and throughout the world on our military capabilities, our weapons systems, our defense structure, our American enterprise system and our social divisions. They seek to penetrate our intelligence services, to compromise our law enforcement agencies, and to recruit as their agents United States citizens holding sensitive jobs in government, industry, labor, and the universities as well as the news media.

Their objectives include subversion and internal dissension, designed to undermine the will and determination of Americans to make and sustain the hard decisions for national strength which are necessary to preserve our freedom. They can and do invade the privacy of U.S. citizens by listening to telephone conversations within the United States and throughout the world.

As the CIA Commission I headed for the President reported, Communist countries "have developed electronic collection of intelligence to an extraordinary degree of technology and sophistication." Still quoting, "Americans have a right to be uneasy if not seriously disturbed at the real possibility that their personal and business activities which they discuss freely over the telephone could be recorded and analyzed by agents of foreign powers," the Commission noted.

The Commission's findings pertain not only to national security and other vital governmental information, therefore, but also electronic intrusion in the business and private lives of American citizens. This is not only possible, but it is being done. Microwave transmissions are wholly susceptible to interception. Information so recorded can be stored and analyzed through computer technology for myriads of usages, all deeply disturbing.

This technology, of course, is not limited in its availability to foreign agents or governments. It is

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obtainable here at home by elements who have little or no respect for the law and American legal protections for individuals.

Obviously, such devices and equipment can involve wholesale invasion of privacy, in the hands of organized crime, of those who seek to steal information from their competitors, or those who seek to get information for purposes of blackmail, hijacking or terrorist activities. The President is deeply concerned about this problem and is taking steps to reduce the vulnerability of our telecommunications system.

But all Americans, whether private individuals, public officials, professionals, businessmen, citizens in all walks of life, should be aware of their vulnerability to the recording of their telephone conversations or transmissions of secret defense plans by teletype, or even the recording of microwave intercommunication of computer data. It is going to be extremely difficult to devise methods to protect the privacy of these communications.

It is tragic to think, as someone has suggested, that we have reached the stage where the slogan should be: "If you don't want it known, don't use the phone."

Our open society is much easier for certain foreign governments to penetrate than it is for us to penetrate their tightly closed systems. Our society must remain an open one, if we are to preserve our traditional freedoms. But when the intelligence activities of other countries flourish in the free environment which we offer, then it is all the more essential that our intelligence activities have the support necessary to protect the national security and freedom of American citizens.

Communist bloc intelligence forces throughout the world currently number well over 500,000. The number of Communist government officials in the United States has tripled since 1960, and it is still increasing. There are nearly 2,000 of these officials now in this country. A large percentage have been identified as members of intelligence or security agencies.

We have to face the realities if free societies are to survive. The United States must have the most highly skilled and dedicated intelligence and counter-intelligence organization. This is absolutely indispensable to the Nation's security. Such an intelligence operation is crucial to the effectiveness of our global diplomacy and to a military presence that commands respect throughout the world.

It is essential that the American people and the Congress recognize this fact and take the steps to provide the Executive Branch of the government with the necessary authority and funds, while making provisions for appropriate congressional oversight, and while protecting the secrecy that is absolutely essential to carrying out an effective intelligence operation.

For this Nation to lead the forces of freedom in this world without such an intelligence system, including

covert operations, is like sending in a deaf, dumb and blind man as quarterback of a football team. Yet, correctable faults in the system have been misconstrued as a condemnation of the intelligence function itself -- a gross and naive assumption.

I started out these remarks by noting the tremendous power you people in broadcasting possess to shape America's impression of institutions and events. I urge you to carry out your legitimate function in your news coverage, reveal abuses where they occur, and in your editorials, demand reforms where they are needed.

But let us not make the suicidal error or condemning the Nation's intelligence system, instead of correcting the wrongs. To destroy our Nation's intelligence capacity is to disarm this Nation unilaterally. And this would be the end of freedom.

Thank you very much. I am delighted to try and answer any questions.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, as you know, for editorialists matters of public morality is a question of great importance, and, I would hasten to add, public morality of several kinds. I was wondering how you feel about this: Is there a question of morality in a political leader like yourself being able to turn over scores of votes from the Republican delegation from a State to one candidate?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: If that were true, it would be what you say it is, but it isn't true. Therefore, the issue is not moot.

QUESTION: You mean Republican delegates from New York who turned to Ford did not do so because you, in effect, said they should?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Exactly true. They are independent individuals. I spoke, Senator Javits spoke, Congressman Barber Conable spoke, and the chairman spoke. Then there was debate and opposition, and then a vote was taken on a roll call basis. And I think it expressed the feelings of the individual delegates.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, how do you assess what happened yesterday to the President in Mr. Reagan's surge in California?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I thought it was a standoff in the results as far as the President and Governor Reagan were concerned.

QUESTION: Do you think the Republican Party will be split, say, as the Democrats were four years ago, on an ideological basis with the issue of troops, the rest of it?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't honestly think ideology enters into this. I think that the ideological thrusts are something of the past, that basically President Ford is middle of the road, that Reagan's position -- well, he was a left-wing Democratic leader at one point and now he has been a right-wing Republican leader, but I think

basically his record shows in California a middle-of-the-road record.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, could you support Ronald Reagan should he be the nominee?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: He won't be the nominee; therefore, I haven't crossed that bridge.

QUESTION: Will President Ford win on the first ballot?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think so. I have every confidence he will, not because of dictated delegates but because of the conviction of the delegate system, what is in the best interests of the country and the best interests of the party.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, I was fascinated by your talk on foreign intelligence penetration of the U.S. society.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

QUESTION: It was a subject I hadn't heard you speak on before, although you may have. I would like to ask, somewhat naively, if this is a fairly recent development, this increased penetration, and how great a concern is it of yours and the President's?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: A very real concern. The CIA report, which I chaired at the President's request, was published about a year ago and contained a chapter on this subject. And I quoted from that chapter, which gave the basic information but did not give quite as explicit statements as I made today in pinpointing what the impact was.

I think that this has opened up -- and is a matter of recent years, very recent years -- a totally new dimension for this country. The problems of protecting the privacy of telephone conversations technically are very difficult. Therefore, in my judgment, the only way at the present time that American citizens or American corporations transmitting secret military plans to the Pentagon for approval or for comment -- which is constantly going on, as you all know -- by air, by telephone over this teletype system -- these are subject to interception and recording. And, therefore, I think that, just as I said, American citizens ought to know, American business ought to know, American government must know that they have to consider what they say in terms of what they want known.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, just as a point of curiosity, how extensive is the effort by the People's Republic of China as compared to the Soviet Union?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I feel that to get into more details than I have said gets very delicate, because both in terms of what the government knows and how it knows it -- that is, our government -- and what the government is doing to counteract this, if known, make it more difficult.

Therefore, the only thing I can do is to alert you to the facts and to point out, which has not been made clear, that this isn't only foreign governments or the Communist bloc, but this can be done by citizens in the United States. Microwave and satellite communications are open, and they can be intercepted and recorded, put into computers and pull out what information you want, based on telephone numbers or whatever it might be.

So this is a totally new ball game we are getting in, and it is only going to get more complicated as time goes by and as more people go to microfilm and more communications go to microwave in more of our whole life as a society and in our countries around the world.

QUESTION: What citizens are you talking about?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You.

QUESTION: I mean, if anybody could go out and do this -- do you have anybody in mind, or do you have evidence that someone is doing this?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: The citizens I am talking about that I worry about are the American citizens who are subject to, who are vulnerable to this eavesdropping. The citizens who can undertake it are those willing to break the law, anybody who is willing to break the laws and run the risk of being caught.

QUESTION: Do you have anybody in mind? Do you have any evidence of anyone in particular or any group?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I am telling you about what the possibilities are technically.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, laying aside for a moment the possible dangers of disclosure of our intelligence community to foreign governments, do you feel that it did the American people good to have heard of the excesses and possible abuses that have been committed in the past by some of those selfsame intelligence agencies?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, because they are all corrected. But what I am keen about is that I would hate to see the American people protected only from their own government and exposed to everybody else.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, a former top official from the CIA, (inaudible) recently said that some members of the national press here in Washington, of the American Press, are paid agents of the KGB and other foreign agencies. Are you aware of any of that sort of thing?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, sir. But certainly one has to assume, as I said in my remarks, certainly their efforts are to recruit agents. And this is nothing that is peculiar, let's face it, to the Soviets. They are more extensive in their operation, but other governments, including our own abroad, carry on the same activities.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, you said in your talk, or you indicated, at least, that we have been

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successfully infiltrated on several levels in the United States by foreign governments, government employees, news media, colleges and so forth, college professors, college people. How widespread do you think that is, and what is being done to counteract that? I haven't heard a charge like that in an awful long time.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That's right. That is what I am saying. How widespread it is I don't know. Time Magazine did a piece on this in relation to the Hill in which they listed the double agents that they had recruited of those who were close to the Soviet.

I think the important thing is that we recognize the realities, the hard, tough unpleasanties of the world in which we live, and that this is going on, and that the price of freedom is constant vigilance. And if we are going to preserve freedom, we can't take it for granted. We have got to be aware. We have got to be sophisticated, and we have got to know the realities of the world that exist.

I feel you all have a great responsibility not only to help the public understand those abuses that have been carried out by our own system domestically which we found to exist but not in a massive form, but to be aware of the fact that this is on a massive scale being carried on by others. And, therefore, you have no assurance that any phone conversation is not being recorded.

All I am saying is that the American people, if they recognize that, then they would be more careful about what information they transmit or what they say.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, what do you see as possible social and economic changes or reforms that might be necessary in our people's future that, with a good and reformed intelligence program, will kind of double-time to protect and perpetuate what is important to us?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: What we want to perpetuate is freedom and an open society. The challenge is how does an open society -- this is in economics as well as in defense -- function in a world of centrally-controlled economies and societies? And this is a real challenge, and I don't think we have debated it or faced it as realistically as we have to if we want to preserve our freedom.

And this is a very interesting, exciting, challenging possibility and awareness, not going back to a cold war and breaking off -- I believe in detente. I think detente is essential. It makes possible communications with the Soviet Union, with China, mainland China, where the problems can arise in terms of confrontation and leading to nuclear war. That we want to avoid.

But Mr. Brezhnev has made very clear this does not mean they are abandoning their ideological objectives. And all I am saying is we have got to be equally determined. It is more difficult in a democracy to sustain our determination to preserve freedom and see that it is protected against all forces, and they are multiple.

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QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, to what degree should there be congressional oversight of covert activities of the CIA?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: To the degree that they feel necessary that can be carried out on a basis of secrecy. The Angola situation to me is the perfect example of this. The same thing happened, if you take history, in the Congo when the Belgian Congo achieved its independence. The Soviet Union had organized a Communist Party, and under their theory of supporting wars of liberation, this Communist Party was seeking a war of liberation and they sent in the military equipment.

The United States undertook a covert action at the direction of President Kennedy through the CIA and destroyed that equipment. This never was a source of public knowledge. It was a covert action. It was never publicly discussed. So everybody thought that the Congolese determined their own government in their own way, which they did. But they were able to do it because the military equipment that was going to dominate their country was destroyed.

Twenty years later the same thing happens in Angola. The Communists have organized in one of the three tribes a Communist operation. They sent in equipment. We undertake a covert action to counteract that. The covert action is successful. So in order to perpetuate their effort, they now have to bring in what I call colonial troops, just like the British used. They bring in the Cuban troops because they couldn't achieve it on the basis they were doing it on.

Six committees of the Congress approved a second covert action. This is leaked and then a motion is presented in the Senate by a Senator to cut off the funds that are requested under the covert action on the grounds of -- which is totally unrelated to what was going on -- "Are you going to support racist white South Africans, or are you going to support the blacks?"

Well, in Angola obviously the Senate, without knowing the details, was going to support the blacks as against the racists. And, as you all know, there were television cameras outside the Senate floor, and every Senator was asked, "Did you support the blacks or did you support the white racists?" In an election year who wants to say, "I supported the racist apartheid South African whites," so they cut off the money. So what happened? The Soviet was successful with the Cuban troops.

Now, these are the tough realities. We might as well face them if we are going to do these things and not go to war. I don't think the American people want to go to war again on a land war. If diplomatic actions fail, if negotiations fail and you don't want to go to war, you have got one area left, which is covert activities.

Now, this is a tough reality, and the American people have not had to face this before. But now it is out in the open, and we might as well face it, because this importantly relates to our preservation of freedom.

It is a competition in the world. I am not blaming anyone. I have great admiration for the Soviet Union, what they have accomplished. Their naval build-up by Admiral Gorshkov -- and he has written a book. He goes back historically and slightly rewrites history, -- but it is an interesting rewrite -- and said the British and other nations who control the seas, they control the world. Therefore, they want the naval power that can control the seas.

I think we just have to face these realities. To me, I respect what they have done. And they have got their thing to do, and all I want is that we do our thing to preserve freedom and respect for human dignity and opportunity.

QUESTION: You speak of the tough realities, tough realities about the Helsinki Agreement, which the President signed after certain remarks were stricken that he had planned to make about his commitment. The Latvians and Lithuanians feel that it was a total sell-out. Was this not a situation where we could have taken a stand and said to those people that there might be some hope in the future rather than say, "Take her, Soviets; it's all yours"?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: My son happened to be at Princeton at the time of the invasion of Hungary. We had just come back from a trip, and we had met the Hungarian Freedom Fighters in Syngman Rhee's office in Korea. He had been a freedom fighter. He made a speech on campus saying that if we really believed in what we said about freedom and supporting freedom, where were we when the tanks rolled into Hungary, when the Hungarians rose up? That was the opportunity, if you are talking about doing something, to have done something.

What hope we can hold out for the Latvians and Lithuanians in terms of a specific military action if we weren't willing to take action in Hungary or in Czechoslovakia when the same thing happened? It is a little hard for me to understand exactly what you have in mind as to the interpretation of that treaty.

QUESTION: Just not writing them off, at least.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think that is a question of interpretation of the treaty, whether it was a write-off or not. I don't think, myself, that it was. I think this country believes in freedom for the world. This is our way of life. We fought for it 200 years ago. We are celebrating that now.

All I am saying is we should preserve it and extend it. There is a competition in the world. I understand what you are saying, and you have got to take that both in terms of interpretation and in terms of on-balance judgment of all of the facts and all of the elements that were in that treaty.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, you said that there were 2,000 Communist bloc agents who are now government officials.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: 2,000 government officials, a large majority of whom are agents.

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QUESTION: If that can be quantified, why can they not be identified?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: They are identified.

QUESTION: To whom?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: . United States Government.

QUESTION: Can we tolerate it?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Tolerate having agents in this country? We know there are agents in this country. It depends on what the agents do. And in individual cases agents are requested to leave.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, going back to that Angola situation for just a moment, you said that covert action was planned but then the Congress was not aware of the facts. That's what you said.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Six committees had approved it.

QUESTION: Right. And the Congress was not aware. Why was the Congress not aware of the facts?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Because it was a secret action. And the problem of preserving secrecy is the only basis on which you can undertake a covert action.

QUESTION: Are you saying the Congress should have no input; that the Executive must make the decisions?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, I am not.

QUESTION: I am not going to sit still for that.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I just explained to you there were six congressional committees, which was their basis of determination as to who should know, who were aware of this and approved it. They were delegated by their fellow Congressmen to assume that responsibility.

Now, the problem is -- this goes right to the heart of it, and I mentioned it in my remarks -- in order to be effective in intelligence, both in the collection of intelligence and the carrying out of counterintelligence and covert activities, there has got to be the ability to do so with secrecy, or you can't get people in another country to be willing to cooperate with you. If they think their names are going to be given, they are not going to cooperate, because their heads are liable to be cut off in the country in which they are located or maybe shot instead.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, you stated that your purpose is to inform the public of the problem, i.e., that we should be careful with telephone calls and so forth.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Aware.

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QUESTION: But the discussion of the possible solutions could in fact add to the problem. Is your purpose to stimulate discussion, or are you suggesting that broadcast journalists advocate a certain course of action? For example, should the public expect legislative initiation, something to be initiated on the part of the Executive Branch to protect --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: The Executive Branch is in the process of acting on this, but the difficulties are very great. Therefore, -- and this is just my own personal judgment -- in the meantime, the American people ought to be aware of what the situation is. I don't think the American people are aware.

I don't like to have somebody who is a free citizen subject to eavesdropping that he doesn't know or she doesn't know about. I deeply believe that a democracy can only function if the people understand the realities.

Now, there are certain things that have to be kept secret, but the broad spectrum doesn't have to be. And I think it is very important that the people of this country to the maximum degree possible are aware of what is happening in the world -- and this is a very fast-moving interdependent tough world we are living in -- if we want to preserve freedom, respect for human dignity and equality of opportunity, which I do.

QUESTION: Some people might think you are trying to scare the American people, though.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: If you interpret it that way, I think I would have to disagree with you. I don't think the American people are going to be scared by realities. I think they are scared by uncertainty and not knowing what the facts are.

QUESTION: What evidence do you have that there are some other groups, citizen groups or whatever you call them, individuals, who are doing this against the other American people?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: The only evidence that I have is that it is totally feasible to do this on the part of anyone who wants to spend a reasonable amount of money and who wants to violate the laws of our country about violating privacy. Therefore, if that is the case, which it is factually, I have to assume that either they have or they will at some point undertake this. But, in the meantime, we know that foreign governments are doing it.

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen.

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(At 10:15 a.m. EDT)