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Guest: George C. Wallace
Former Governor of Alabama

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JOHN CHANCELLOR, NBC News
LAWRENCE E. SPIVAK, Regular Panel Member

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MR. NEWMAN: Our guest today on MEET THE PRESS is George C. Wallace, former Governor of Alabama and a Presidential candidate in 1968. Mr Wallace has just returned from his first visit to South Vietnam and a number of other Asian countries.

MR. SPIVAK: Governor Wallace, before you left you said this was going to be a "fact-finding" trip. What facts did you learn about the war that you hadn't already known before you left?

MR. WALLACE: I found after talking to Asian and American military leaders and those in the civilian branch of the government that the war is winnable, that this war can be won in Vietnam and if it is not won in Vietnam, then in my judgement all Southeast Asia is going Communist.

I also found that—to those who say we must get out that there is no way for the American troops to get out unless we do win the war.

MR. SPIVAK: Governor, as you know the President has begun to withdraw troops and the stories are that that will be escalated as we go along.
Are you in favor of further troop withdrawal based on what you saw and heard there?

MR. WALLACE: I agree with the President's speech. The President said we would not abandon our allies in Asia. He said if the North Vietnamese escalate the conflict he would respond in kind, which left some options. Exactly how this plan will be implemented has not been made known to the public.

I did find in Vietnam among the military and those in civilian capacities, those in Governmental capacities, that the war is winnable, that they feel that they can win the war. They worry
MR. KWILHART: Governor Wallace, we notice that the Post Office Department is pulling out of China. We notice also that the Post Office Department is planning to withdraw from Russia, from India, from the Philippines, from the Middle East. It seems to me that this action on the part of the Post Office Department is really a part of the overall strategy of the United States Government to withdraw from the world, to disengage from the world. Is this the policy of the United States Government?

Governor Wallace: Yes, sir. I am not against the withdrawal of our armed forces from any country, Mr. Kwilhart. I am against the withdrawal of our armed forces from any country if it means that we are going to lose the war. If we are going to lose the war, then I believe we should continue to fight. But if we are going to win the war, then I believe we should withdraw from the country.

MR. KWILHART: Governor, do you think the United States should withdraw from Vietnam at the same time that it is withdrawing from other parts of the world?

Governor Wallace: Yes, sir. I think we should withdraw from Vietnam at the same time that we are withdrawing from other parts of the world. If we are not going to win the war in Vietnam, then we should withdraw from Vietnam. If we are going to win the war in Vietnam, then we should continue to fight. But I think we should withdraw from Vietnam at the same time that we are withdrawing from other parts of the world.

MR. KWILHART: Governor, you have said that you are against the withdrawal of the United States armed forces from any country. But do you think that the United States should withdraw from Vietnam?

Governor Wallace: Yes, sir. I think the United States should withdraw from Vietnam. But I think we should do it in a way that is not going to lose the war. If we withdraw from Vietnam and lose the war, then I think we should continue to fight. But if we withdraw from Vietnam and win the war, then I think we should continue to fight. But I think we should do it in a way that is not going to lose the war.
bus any pupil, to bring about racial balance. It violated the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

I said that you should exercise freedom of choice which had been upheld by the federal courts, but of course the federal courts then destroyed freedom of choice. I only advocated that parents take advantage of what the courts had upheld in the past, the right of a parent to choose the school that their child attended. But of course that has been stricken down by the Nixon Administration.

I was against the imposition of even freedom of choice upon the school systems of the states, because I felt it was no concern of the federal government—regarding the policies of any school system in any state. But since they upheld freedom of choice and the people had accepted it so to speak, then they said they didn’t choose properly and they struck it down. They closed hundreds of schools, they bused children across states and countries. The point I am making is that this is disrupting the public school system not only in Alabama but throughout the country, and unless this ceases and unless there is turned back to the people of Alabama and the states the right to control the public school systems of their states, then that will bear upon whether I become a candidate in 1972.

MR. SEMPLE: Part of my original question was, what options are open to you now, to local and state officials, now that the Supreme Court has stricken all freedom of choice and has forced even this Administration to move much faster?

MR. WALLACE: Since the President himself, I understood in the campaign, advocated freedom of choice, since Mr. Agnew advocated freedom of choice, then this Administration, to carry out the commitment to the people can support the Constitutional Amendment that has been introduced by Senator Jim Allen and others of Alabama in the Congress. They can support Congressional action to turn back the public school system to the states.

MR. CHANCELLOR: Governor, I’d like to ask you a couple of questions on Vietnam based on some of the things you have said here. You say that the feeling in this country is that the Vietnamization policy might take only a year or so but that in Vietnam someone told you that three to five years was a sort of an accurate time frame. Were those Vietnamese or Americans who told you that?

MR. WALLACE: The impression that I received from people in this government, in the military of the United States and of our Asian allies, was that it is going to take longer than one year to Vietnamize the war, and even then they say that would not stop the fighting.

I heard servicemen from the private up say that this war could be won. This war can be won and the only way we are going to get out is to win the war.

In other words, if we withdraw all the combat ground forces then unless the enemy’s will to carry on the war has been destroyed, unless his staging areas have been destroyed, unless his source of supply has been destroyed, then he is going to continue his destruction of American and Asian lives, who are our allies. I have found there is no way to get out of Vietnam unless you win the war, and that the war can be won.

MR. CHANCELLOR: We know you are not a military expert, Governor, but how long do you suppose it would take? If Vietnamization is going to take three to five years, how long would it take to win the war?

MR. WALLACE: As you say, I am not a military expert, but the military people who talked to me say it could be won in a lot less time than we have been there already and they feel that—I got the impression that within the next year, if they were allowed to use conventional forces against the source of supply of the enemy, that they could destroy the effectiveness of the North Vietnamese armed forces and destroy the supply of material to the Viet Cong in South Vietnam.

MR. CHANCELLOR: Does that mean bombing Haiphong? Does that mean going into Cambodia?

MR. WALLACE: Of course, Cambodia and Laos are part of old French Indochina, and it is all the same war. So I would say you are going to have to destroy the enemy in Cambodia and in Laos because those countries have been unable to keep them out. There are about 40,000 of the North Vietnamese regulars, I understand, in Cambodia and also in Laos. So I would say that, let the military decide that. We have tried every other plan under the sun, but we still have fighting and killing. I was told that the most merciful way to end this war is to destroy the North Vietnamese source of supply, which means less North Vietnamese would be killed and less Americans would be killed.

MR. CHANCELLOR: Then given these two plans of slow Vietnamization or fast victory, do you believe that the war is going to be an issue in the ’72 campaign?

MR. WALLACE: Do I believe it will be an issue in the ’72 campaign? I am sure that this would probably be an issue in the ’72 campaign. If Mr. Nixon can win this war with honor and not desert our Asian allies, as he has said, then, of course, that is to his credit.
But if this war ends after having lost 40,000 American service-men and thousands wounded and maimed and all the treasure we have spent, not counting the lives of our allies, then I am sure it will be an issue in that regard.

Again, let me emphasize what I heard, that if we were to withdraw, we would lose about as many men or just as many withdrawing as we would losing the war. Because as long as they are in force, you can not withdraw because they will be shooting at the last drawback. How can you get out if they are there in sufficient numbers and force to destroy you when you start to leave?

So if we are going to have anyone killed, I would rather for them to be killed defeating the enemy than running away from the enemy.

MR. SPIVAK: Governor, you have made it clear that you are for winning the war. What do you mean by “winning the war”?

MR. WALLACE: Destroying the effectiveness of the North Vietnamese armed forces and destroying their ability to make war, isolating the battlefield, so to speak, and having them unable to carry on an effective aggressive military campaign against the people of South Vietnam and the American armed forces.

MR. SPIVAK: You mean actually defeat the enemy on the military field?

MR. WALLACE: That is correct.

MR. SPIVAK: Governor, may I take you to Alabama for a minute. When he was in Alabama recently, Vice President Agnew praised Governor Brewer and said that Alabama is—in his words—“fortunate to have him as Governor.”

What do you think about the job Governor Brewer has done? Now, you know that job pretty well. What do you think?

MR. WALLACE: I am sure Governor Brewer is doing a good job. I would say, if you are getting around to the point of whether I am going to run for Governor or not, let me say that the people in 1966 in electing my wife did so for the purpose of making it possible for me to run in ‘68, in order to try to throw the Federal Government off our backs and to get some relief from centralized federal control of our everyday lives. She was elected; I ran. As a consequence of our movement, we find Mr. Agnew coming to Alabama with Postmaster General Blount. We find the Humphrey-Muskie supporters in Alabama, including Dr. Cashion, the head of the Democratic Committee in Alabama, and some politicians in our state and some of our big businessmen in the State, already meeting these diverse elements and groups saying, “We must destroy Governor Wallace’s political future; if he runs for governor, we must defeat him.”

I didn’t realize that this country boy from Alabama was going to have these strong forces arrayed against me in case I decided to become involved, so they have offered a challenge. If I were to run for Governor and win, it would mean that Mr. Nixon and Mr. Agnew must put into action some of the statements they are making. In other words, they could not just continue to talk; they must act. If I lost, they could continue to talk and wouldn’t have to act, because our movement would be dead. And Mr. Nixon cannot win the next presidential race unless he carries our part of the country and he cannot carry our part of the country unless those criteria I mentioned a moment ago: taxes, law and order, local democratic institutions and a solution to the war in Viet Nam. I pray and hope he is successful in all regards because it would be good for our country.

MR. SPIVAK: Governor, on the basis of what he has done so far, could you support Governor Brewer for re-election?

MR. WALLACE: On the basis—it will all depend upon whether I become a candidate.

MR. SPIVAK: If you had to decide today? If you had to decide today, and you knew what the governor had done and you knew what the state of the country was, you knew what Nixon had done, what would your decision be?

MR. WALLACE: Oh, yes, I could decide to support him. I could decide to support any number of people.

MR. SPIVAK: Would you decide to run yourself as things are today?

MR. WALLACE: If I decide to run for governor, I am not going to be running against anybody. I am going to be running to carry on a movement because the people of our state wanted to utilize the governor’s office in 1968 to help throw them off our backs, as I said a moment ago. And if we ran again it would be the people wanting, in my judgment, to use that office to get some relief from centralized control over our lives in Alabama, a reduction of taxes, a conclusion of the war in Viet Nam and a restoration of law and order.

MR. KILPATRICK: To return to Vietnam for just a moment. Mr. Governor, in his speech of May 14 President Nixon said of Viet Nam, “We have ruled out attempting to impose a purely military solution on the battlefield.” Do I understand you to say that you want to rule that back in?

MR. WALLACE: Mr. Nixon made some very strong statements
prior to the election which indicated he wanted a military victory, and I think that is one reason why the people of our country got very disenchanted about the war. They couldn’t negotiate it to conclusion and now they have said we are not looking for a military victory. But I think he recouped in his speech of November 3rd when he said, “If they escalate, we will respond.”

I say that the only way to get out of Vietnam is to win the war in Vietnam. It can be won with the loss of less lives than to continue this war of attrition that we cannot continue long at.

MR. KILPATRICK: By that you mean a military solution?

MR. WALLACE: Yes, a military solution.

MR. KILPATRICK: And do we understand that this was the recommendation that you gleaned from high-ranking American military officials in South Vietnam?

MR. WALLACE: Every high-ranking American military official and government official, and Asian, also, that discussed the matter with me—all of them didn’t discuss it, so I am going to leave—all of them didn’t discuss it in that context.

MR. KILPATRICK: But those who did, urged a reescalation?

MR. WALLACE: Those who did—and they were the overwhelming majority of those that I talked to, said this war is winnable. They talk “win” in that part of the world, but they talk “no win” in this part of the world.

MR. KILPATRICK: Could you identify some of the officers who made that—

MR. WALLACE: No, sir. I would rather not identify them. As you newsmen say, I would like not to reveal my sources of information, but they talked very frankly to me.

MR. SEMPLE: Governor, the President seems to be having enough trouble keeping the public behind his plan for gradual disengagement from Vietnam. Do you seriously think that the public would support a reescalation of the war?

MR. WALLACE: Of course one reason the public has been disenchanted with the war is that we have been there so long. We couldn’t negotiate it to conclusion and they didn’t bring it to a military conclusion, so they said, “What are we doing there, we are not going to continue to expend lives and money for a no-winnable war.”

“When you say escalation, you are going to have to escalate to get out, so I’d rather escalate to win than to escalate to get out.

MR. NEWMAN: About four minutes left, gentlemen.

MR. SEMPLE: Turning to another subject, Governor, I’d like to ask you about some of the specific criteria by which you would judge the Nixon Administration’s performance in office. Take taxes, for example. Do you approve of what he has done on tax reform so far?

MR. WALLACE: On the tax reform so far?

MR. SEMPLE: Yes.

MR. WALLACE: Of course the Tax Reform Bill is very complicated, but in my judgment it is not too much. Each taxpayer should be given a $1,200 exemption instead of a $800, and the multi-billion and multi-million dollar tax exempt foundations ought to be taxed. There are so many inequities in the tax structure that leave the multi-rich free and tax the average businessman and farmer and working man that it is just almost unbearable. There is tax revolt in the air, and I am not satisfied with that, no.

MR. CHANCELLOR: Governor, what would you have done last year if neither Hubert Humphrey nor Richard Nixon had won a majority of the votes in the Electoral College and the election had gone in the House of Representatives?

MR. WALLACE: It would never have gone in the House of Representatives in my judgment. We would have settled it in the Electoral College.

MR. CHANCELLOR: How would you have done that?

MR. WALLACE: I am not sure exactly how the vote would have gone. I was very much against Mr. Humphrey, but that is a very hypothetical question, I can say that whoever became President under those circumstances would have been a better President.

MR. CHANCELLOR: Can we infer then, Governor, that had it come to that, you would have thrown your support to Mr. Nixon and not to Mr. Humphrey? You have just about said that.

MR. WALLACE: You can infer anything you would like to infer under that limited question, but I can say whoever became President would have been a better President.

MR. CHANCELLOR: Will you be speaking for candidates around the country in the 1970 elections?

MR. WALLACE: No, sir, I will not be speaking for candidates around the country. I could be a candidate myself, although I am not sure whether that is necessary to continue our movement
or not. But if I decide that it is, of course I would be involved myself.

MR. NEWMAN: Two minutes.

MR. SPIVAK: I am curious about this. You didn’t think it was necessary to take a trip to Vietnam when you were running for President and discussing the issues in 1968.

MR. WALLACE: Yes, I did think—

MR SPIVAK: —Well you didn’t go.

MR. WALLACE: You know my wife was very ill with cancer and died in May of 1968, and then we had to make ballot position in the states. I had planned a trip prior to that, but because of her illness, I was unable to go and that is the reason that I have made the trip this time. I think anybody in public life, national or statewide, should be interested in closehand observation of our heavy involvement there.

There is another point that I want to make, that we ought to make Japan and the members of the free world help us at least monetarily in this involvement in Southeast Asia because Japan is getting rich while we are doing the fighting in that part of the world.

MR. SPIVAK: Governor, it seems pretty clear that our negotiations in Paris on Vietnam and the war are stalemated. If you were President, what would you do today about the Paris negotiations?

MR. WALLACE: I probably would have a negotiator there, but in my judgment the negotiations are fraudulent. The North Vietnamese never intended to negotiate, and so I wouldn’t pay much attention to the negotiations since they have gone this long. I would try to win the war militarily.

MR. KILPATRICK: In his best selling book, Kevin Phillips says your constituents are mostly Democrats on their way into the Republican Party, and he denies that your party or your movement is a permanent entrant on the national scene. Do you expect your American Independent Party to be a permanent part of the American political scene?

MR. WALLACE: If this Administration does not comply to the criteria I mentioned a moment ago, it will be permanent.

MR. NEWMAN: At this point I must interrupt. Our time is up. Thank you, Mr. Wallace, for being with us today on MEET THE PRESS.