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FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

PROGRAM 60 Minutes

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SUBJECT New Zealand

JUDY WOODRUFF: The little nation of New Zealand and its not-so-little Prime Minister David Lange have declared a cold war, or at least a cool war, against their old friend, the United States. It started when Lange said U. S. ships carrying nuclear weapons can't stop in New Zealand ports, an act which threatened to bust up a 34 year-old defense treaty called ANZUS. And it's not just the Americans he has his hands full with these days. In the midsts of everything else, the French came along and bombed a boat belonging to an orgnaization called Greenpeace while it was in a New Zealand port. Just before the Greenpeace incident, we were there trying to figure out what all the raucus was about on this tranquil little island of three million people, sixty million sheep, all looked after by a mischievous Prime Minister who loves being at the center of it all.

The cab driver on the way in said to me, "You know, Prime Minister Lange, he doesn't really care about New Zealand; he just wants to win the Nobel prize."

PRIME MINISTER DAVID LANGE: Well, that's the sort of thing. You know cab drivers, don't you? Why was he being so kind? If that's all a cab driver can say about the Prime Minister, it's a great Prime Minister he's got.

WOODRUFF: Cab drivers may or may not think David Lange is a great prime minister. But it's certain the U. S. government thinks he's a terrible ally.

When Lange and his Labour Party decided to ban American nuclear ships, they shattered an old friendship and, in effect, declared that the U. S. may be bigger, but New Zealand will set

-2-

the rules.

What is wrong with having a ship pass into your port that might at some point have a nuclear weapon on it?

PRIME MINISTER LANGE: What's wrong with it is that this country has declared that it is no part of a nuclear structure, does not want to be defended by nuclear weapons, pleads with our allies not to defend us by nuclear weapons, and has said that that enhances our security. We do not want to see our part of the Pacific become yet another theater in which the superpowers might indulge in confrontational rivalry.

WOODRUFF: But in the event of such a conflict, would you want those ships in your ports?

PRIME MINISTER LANGE: We don't want to be defended by nuclear weapons. We've said so.

WOODRUFF: So, no, you wouldn't want the ships in the port.

PRIME MINISTER LANGE: Look, surely one of the worst things to happen to you is to be annihilated by the nuclear weapon of your opponent. And very much the same effect occurs when you're annihilated by the nuclear weapon of your mate. Now New Zealanders don't want to be incinerated by either. It's as simple as that.

WOODRUFF: So in the event of a war, you still wouldn't want nuclear ships around defending....

PRIME MINISTER LANGE: I don't want to burn at the hands of my friend or at the hands of my enemy. If I'm going to be evaporated, I'd like it to be done in sort of a more congenial way.

WOODRUFF: But you're not going to keep the Soviets out of these waters. The Soviets travel in with submarines.

PRIME MINISTER LANGE: The Soviets aren't going to come within a bull's roar of any port in New Zealand.

WOODRUFF: Lange's convinced that the Soviets aren't going to be interested in New Zealand, unless New Zealand attracts Soviet attention by permitting American nuclear ships in its ports.

Would you like to see the United States disarm unilaterally?

-3-

PRIME MINISTER LANGE: No, it would be crazy, and I've never advocated it. What we need is a balanced, verifiable reduction in armaments, and any form of disarmament must be to enhance the security of the nation.

WOODRUFF: If you believe, then, in the nuclear reality, which is the Soviets have the weapons, and therefore it's better that the Western allies have countervailing weapons, why should the United States alone, or even the United States and the other allies alone, be responsible for bearing the risks of that reality and New Zealand not?

PRIME MINISTER LANGE: Because New Zealand has never elected to buy into that, was never consulted as each side armed and chooses not to so arm itself. That's all.

I have no doubt, from another perspective, that could be regarded as selfish. But that's the fact. And I can't see why any nation, which is itself overarmed with capacity, wants to foist that capacity on its friends.

WOODRUFF: That's pretty big talk from a very little country, a country whose entire army is less than half the size of the New York City police force. And the New Zealand navy won't make anybody tremble either. The fleet essentially consists of four aging frigates and a handful of patrol boats. Which is why the whole squabble with the U. S. seems so preposterous. A tiny population, with a tiny defense force, decides, in defiance, to go it alone. It sounds like something out of Gilbert and Sullivan, but no one in Washington or Wellington is laughing.

New Zealanders, as a whole, are caught in a contradiction on Lange's move. In the polls, they support what he did, and yet they also say they don't want to break with the United States. But the old soldiers at this rally aren't troubled by any contradictions. They think Lange and his supporters, like this young man from Greenpeace, couldn't be more wrong.

MAN: You have done nothing for New Zealand except talk about it. You talk about Greenpeace. There is no peace without sacrifice. Talk will never bring it.

MAN: I'll say again that we really have to look into what causes war.

MAN: What causes war?

MAN: What causes war.

MAN: There's only one person who knows. He's up there,

-4-

and he hasn't given us an answer yet. I've been in two of them. I hate it as much as anybody else. But I would go ten times more to preserve the way of life that I've got now and the love I have for New Zealand and the people in it.

MAN: I fought alongside the Americans in the Pacific in World War II. And I regard as one of the worst crimes that human beings can be involved in is ungratefulness. And I'm sorry to have to say that under our present administration, that's what it looks like.

But I think you should know that there's a silent majority here, and I'm sure it is a majority, that really, if you get down to basics, they look upon the Americans still as allies and friends. And I want that to be maintained.

PRIME MINISTER LANGE: My father used to tell me how the United States Navy had saved him from being invaded on the north island of New Zealand in 1942, as he frequently pointed out the year I was born. I didn't have that same particular sense, in that my generation saw the United States as the country that had swept us into Vietnam.

SIR ROBERT MULDOON: I despise the man. I despise the man because he says whatever will get him votes.

WOODRUFF: Lange's chief political adversary is Sir Robert Muldoon. Muldoon was Prime Minister for nine years until Lange beat him in 1984. If Lange declares himself the Vietnam generation, Muldoon aggressively is not.

MULDOON: Well, I was a soldier in Italy at the time of Hiroshima. And we were just about to ship over to the Pacific for the landing in Japan. I've got to say to you that particular nuclear attack saved the lives of thousands of allied soldiers who would have had to land in Japan. Now I say that because it is a very easy question to say "Would you not wish to be defended by nuclear weapons?" If it was the defense of my country, I would not be saying to my allies "You can use that weapon; you can't use that weapon." I would say "Please defend us."

WOODRUFF: It's a political disagreement. But in New Zealand, politicians get personal. Lange's answer to Muldoon is to laugh Muldoon's short size.

PRIME MINISTER LANGE: Well, I don't regard him as any sort of authority on me. I'm the only fellow that's beaten him. He did everything that he could to hold onto office.

I remember when he was knighted, and I was asked what I thought of it. I said after a very long year, we've got a very

-5-

short "knight." And really, I haven't been very sure that he's an objective judge of me ever since then.

WOODRUFF: And Muldoon says Lange's real problem is he's fat.

MULDOON: Here's a man who's been a figure of fun for many years. He was huge, long hair down to his shoulders, a figure of fun. And suddenly he can be leader of the party and prime minister.

WOODRUFF: What sort of little boy was David Lange?

PRIME MINISTER LANGE: Never a very little boy. Never a little boy, always a big boy, brought up in a home which was what you could call middle class professional; father a doctor, mother a nurse. Pretty interesting childhood because I was fat, though I was never the sort of athletic, outdoor type that all New Zealand young men are supposed to be. Always a bit aloof from people. Had to excel in wit, in repartee, in speaking; had to compensate for not being a hurdler or a rugby player. And you gradually grow till you are good in verbal combat; you've got to win.

WOODRUFF: Verbal combat and reading books. Lange says that's what he did, because in his fundamentalist family, that's all there was to do.

PRIME MINISTER LANGE: The family didn't go to dances. We were smalltown Methodists.

WOODRUFF: Did you bridle against that?

PRIME MINISTER LANGE: Well, yes. It's very difficult to be athlete when you're 25 stone at 17.

WOODRUFF: Twenty-five stone is 350 pounds, and David Lange was only 17 years old.

When Lange got up to 400 pounds, he decided to have a stomach bypass operation, called a stomach stapling. And it helped him lose almost 150 pounds.

It's a dangerous operation.

PRIME MINISTER LANGE: It is. It was. It's an operation which caused me to go and make a will on the morning before the surgery. And the result was that I woke up in a room and heard the sound of a seven part choral and thought that it had been a very, very unsuccessful operation. And then it turned out it was merely a student group singing to intensive care users in

-6-

a recovery ward.

WOODRUFF: And not the heavenly choir.

PRIME MINISTER LANGE: Not the heavenly choir. No. I'm sure the heavenly choir in the end would be better.

WOODRUFF: But if you can laugh at Lange's size -- and, in New Zealand, they do -- you laugh at his sharp tongue only at your peril, as a hapless young man at the Oxford University Debating Society discovered earlier this year.

The Society, called the Oxford Union, asked Lange to come to England to debate the morality of nuclear weapons, and Lange gave one of his cheeky young challengers a night to remember.

MAN: What I should like to know, sir, is why you don't do the honorable and the consistent thing and pull out of the ANZUS alliance, for whether you are snuggling up to the bomb or living in the peaceful shadow of the bomb, New Zealand benefits, sir, and that is the question with which we charge you, and that's the question with which we would like an answer, sir.

PRIME MINISTER LANGE: And I'm going to give it to you if you hold your breath. I could smell the uranium on it as you leaned towards....

[Applause.]

PRIME MINISTER LANGE: To compel an ally to accept nuclear weapons against the wishes of that ally is to take the moral position of totalitarianism, which allows for no self-determination and which is exactly the evil that we're supposed to be fighting against.

[Applause.]

WOODRUFF: But the U. S. says Lange is just making debater's points, that in the end it still comes down to this. If New Zealand wants to be part of the alliance of free nations, then New Zealand has to do its full share. Otherwise, New Zealand could set a precedent which other nations might decide to follow. And if that happened, the entire Western alliance system could start to unravel.

That's why the Americans decided that the Lange government had to pay a price.

The U. S. cancelled joint military exercises with New Zealand, which means no more shared military equipment or secret

-7-

information. And the U. S. declared the New Zealand end of the ANZUS treaty inoperative until the Prime Minister comes to his senses.

A lot of people also say that you have the luxury of taking this position because you have had the luxury of the alliance protecting you all these years.

PRIME MINISTER LANGE: But do you think it's a luxury when we don't have any contact now with the United States' defense system? We are actually paying the price for that.

WOODRUFF: But you brought it on yourself.

PRIME MINISTER LANGE: And happily. This country is enthusiastically behind that policy. Now I suggest that it's time for us to stop endlessly having the post-mortem and decide how we can best cooperate in the future, because we are incapable of having a divorce. We might have some sort of estrangement, but New Zealand and the United States are inevitably, indivisibly bound to each other. We've got our hand in each other's wallets.

WOODRUFF: Where is it going to end? If the public opinion polls....

PRIME MINISTER LANGE: Peace might break out one day in this world. Wouldn't that be terrible? Wouldn't it be awful if people decided to have some sort of verifiable, mutual disarmament?

WOODRUFF: One gets the sense that you really like the rough and tumble of politics, you were born to it.

PRIME MINISTER LANGE: I think that there is in me a need to be tested. And there is -- I have a fear of the hum-drum and the constantly predictable, and there is in me a desire to be -- almost a desire to be under challenge. In fact, it's probably marginally unhealthy. But I really expect people to have a crack at me.

WOODRUFF: Like the David and Goliath talk going around these days?

PRIME MINISTER LANGE: Yes, except that I usually used to be classed as the Goliath. Much better to be a David. You're a winner.

WOODRUFF: But in fact, the winner is still undetermined. U. S. officials say they'll hang tough and hope for Lange's defeat in the next election sometime in the next two years.

-8-

And what about the Nobel Peace Prize? Well, the cab driver was half-right. Lange was mentioned, but he didn't win.