

Exchange With Reporters Aboard Air Force One

June 14, 1991

The President. What do you think of my shoes—okay? [*Laughter*]

Q. —slippers.

The President. I don't want anybody taking pictures of them, Jessie [Jessica Lee, USA Today]. Don't want to see them in USA Today, do you know what I mean?

Q. I don't have a camera with me.

The President. Okay.

President's Schedule

Q. So, this is the first of how many California trips in the next 15 months or so?

The President. What?

Q. This is the first of how many California trips?

The President. Oh. Well, I don't know. I haven't been out here as much as I'd like. And we've got several good events, one pure R&R tomorrow night, and then the graduation at a very important university, CalTech, with the emphasis on science and R&D. It's very symptomatic of what we need to be doing in terms of math and science. And then we have, Sunday, the Simon Wiesenthal memorial dinner.

So, it's a mixed trip. I'll be meeting with some press. We'll be doing an Asian-American event. And yes, I expect I'll be coming out here quite a bit in the next year and a half.

Soviet-U.S. Relations

Q. Is the summit now off until the fall, Mr. President?

The President. No decision on summit dates at all. We're still hoping and trying to go forward. But, as President Gorbachev said, it's hard to achieve, working all these problems out in a short timeframe. Although as far as we're concerned, if we can get the difficulties on START worked out, we can still have a meeting at the end of June. I think both sides think that the issues are fairly complex still. But we're going to try we're going to try.

Q. Still possible the end of June?

The President. Well, we've saved the time. But I don't want to mislead anybody. I mean, it's difficult. And he said yesterday—

I thought he said something like it looked more like the end of July. And so, we've got time set aside for both windows there.

Civil Rights Legislation

Q. Have you taken a look at—are you familiar with the Danforth proposal on a civil rights bill?

The President. Our attorneys and the Attorney General are looking at it. And I'd like them to look very hard at our proposal. We've heard very little about my legitimate civil rights proposal that is a really good one. And I just hope that when people thrash around, they'll take a hard look at that one. I'm told that the politics are such that the Democrat leadership simply won't accept our bill, which does hit a major lick against discrimination in the workplace. So, as we talk about other proposals, we're asking them to take a hard look at ours.

Iranian Nuclear Weapons

Q. Mr. President, there was a report this morning that Iran has a nuclear weapons program that's being aided by Pakistan. Do you know anything about that?

The President. Haven't seen such a report and I think I'd know about it—oh, Iran. I thought you said Iraq.

Q. Iran.

The President. Still don't know about it. But we'll take a look at that.

Soviet Union

Q. What sort of aid package would you like to see for the Soviets come out of the G-7 meeting?

The President. I think we need a reform package, and I think they think we need a reform package. After all the stories and price tags, I think there's a recognition on all sides that the best way to assist the whole reform process is move to reform itself. And then we'll see what else happens. I was pleased we were able to get certification from the Secretary of Agriculture that the grain credits are creditworthy. We went ahead with that project. There are other

things that we're moving on. But in terms of this whole reported megabuck package, I think we've got a lot of discussion to do in terms of reform. And they know that. This doesn't come as any surprise to Mr. Primakov or, well, certainly to Mr. Gorbachev.

Q. Do you think—is the G-7 agreed on that?

The President. Well, I think we have general agreement. We'll wait and see until we get the G-7. But I'm in touch with some of those leaders, and I don't think there are big divisions in the G-7 on that question.

Q. So, you think, for example, that Chancellor Kohl and President Mitterrand share your view that—

The President. Well, I don't know. That's one of the things you have a meeting about is to find out what views people have. But so far nobody's sent me a letter saying, hey, please write out a check for whatever it is—\$150 billion.

Q. Well, are the Soviets, in fact, doing enough in the way of reform?

The President. It's a very hard problem they face. Just yesterday we saw a major reform, which is a viable election system. And then you've got certain economic reforms that we're talking to them about in terms of agriculture distribution. But the problem is so immense that it takes some time. But if the question is, do they want a reform, certainly Gorbachev, certainly Yeltsin. I think the answer is yes.

They've got an enormously complex situation. In a country that big moving from a solid state-controlled system to a market economy is not easy. They've got horrendous problems there. But the reforms have got to be detailed a bit more before blank checks are written, and even then it would be difficult. The U.S. is—we're not rolling in cash. We've got big deficits; we've got enormous problems ourselves. And my first interest is the American people.

Q. Will Yeltsin get a warmer reception in Washington—

The President. We already planned, regardless of this, to meet with Mr. Yeltsin. And I think the significance—there were free and fair elections. And several mayors that support reform were reelected, and Mr. Yeltsin was elected. I say, mayors elected, and Yeltsin elected. And democracy is on the move there. I happen to think this is good for everyone in the Soviet Union, including the man that started reform, President Gorbachev. And I think he would look at it that way.

South Africa

Q. You're also going to meet with Buthelezi when he comes.

The President. Yes, we certainly are. We certainly are going to do that, just as we met with Mr. Mandela, Mr. de Klerk. Buthelezi is a very powerful leader there. He's got a strong following and constituency. And what we want to do is see peace, reconciliation in South Africa. And I think they're moving dramatically in that direction. So, I look forward to seeing him again. I think it will be my third or fourth meeting with him.

Thank you all very much.

Note: The exchange began at 7:05 a.m., prior to the President's departure for Los Angeles, CA. The following persons were referred to: President Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union; Senator John C. Danforth; Attorney General Dick Thornburgh; Secretary of Agriculture Edward R. Madigan; Special Envoy Yevgeniy Primakov of the Soviet Union; Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany; President Francois Mitterrand of France; Boris Yeltsin, President of the Republic of Russia; Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi, Chief Minister of South Africa's KwaZulu Homeland and leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party; Nelson Mandela, Deputy President of the African National Congress; and President F.W. de Klerk of South Africa. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.