

Feb. 19 / Administration of George Bush, 1992

Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater on Establishment of Diplomatic Relations With Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan

February 19, 1992

The President has decided that the United States will take immediate steps to establish diplomatic relations with Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The United States had recognized their independence on December 25, 1991. Following Secretary Baker's recent visit to these countries, the President believes U.S. interests will be best served by having diplomatic ties to their Governments. Secretary Baker conducted detailed discussions with the leaders of the four countries on the political, economic, and security principles of most importance to the United States. The depth, extent, and richness of U.S. relations with each of these countries will depend on their commitment

to these principles.

With this step, and yesterday's establishment of diplomatic relations with Moldova, the United States now has diplomatic relations with 11 of the 12 former Soviet Republics. The United States does not intend or seek to isolate the people of Georgia, as Secretary Baker said in Moscow. But, at this time, the United States is not in a position to establish diplomatic relations with Georgia.

The United States will open embassies in these countries by March 15. In addition, the U.S. will support their membership in relevant international organizations, including the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater on the President's Meeting With President Frederick Chiluba of Zambia

February 19, 1992

The President and President Frederick Chiluba of Zambia met for approximately 30 minutes in the Oval Office. They had an excellent meeting, during which they discussed the political and economic developments in Zambia. The President congratu-

lated President Chiluba on moving Zambia into a democratic era. President Bush was also supportive of President Chiluba's economic policies, particularly the privatization program.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Carl Bildt of Sweden

February 20, 1992

The President. Well, look who's here. You're not going to need this, I don't think.

Q. Mr. President, why have you not condemned the latest Israeli invasion into Lebanon, sir?

The President. We're not going to take any questions at this photo opportunity.

We're going to be discussing very important relations between Sweden and the United States and also get into a lot of multilateral questions. But that's it.

Q. Will that issue come up in your talks, sir?

The President. Any issues he wants to talk

about will be coming up.

Q. Do you think the invasion might hamper the current Mideast peace talks?

The President. You missed it. I'm not going to take any questions. Thanks.

Q. Thank you.

[At this point, one group of journalists left the Oval Office, and a second group entered.]

Q. Are relations with Sweden different since Carl Bildt took over?

The President. Put it this way: I don't think they could be much better. And we're very happy with the relations with Sweden. We view it, incidentally, as a very important bilateral relationship. And I have great respect for what this gentleman on my right is doing and what he has already accomplished. And he's already had a very good, thorough discussion with the Secretary of State, and now I look forward to having one with him. But I welcome Prime Minister Bildt here, and just to say he comes to a fertile territory because there's an awful lot of respect for what he's doing, right here in this Oval Office, the State Department, all across our Government.

Q. Do you really have time with Sweden after the setback in New Hampshire?

The President. Yes, I've got time for it.

Q. Shouldn't you put America first, to quote the famous—

The President. I'd like to think America is first. But that's the way I look at it. But I don't think any President would look at it differently. But we are going to stay engaged around the world. We've got a leadership role, and we're working closely with leaders from different countries. And clearly, Sweden is a very important country. I can learn a lot from him—

Q. What can you learn?

The President. —about what's happening in Eastern Europe, for example, what's happening in the Baltics, what's happening in Europe itself. And I can tell him that we plan to stay engaged. And no domestic politics is going to dissuade us from that.

Q. What specific roles do you see Sweden—

The President. Listen guys, this isn't a press conference. This is what we call a photo op. But I just really wanted to say, with the Swedish journalists here, a warm welcome to this very able Prime Minister. We're just so pleased he's here.

Thank you all very much.

Note: The exchange began at 11:03 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks at the Departure Ceremony for Prime Minister Carl Bildt of Sweden

February 20, 1992

Mr. Prime Minister, I am delighted to have welcomed you on your first official visit to Washington and to have shared very profitable, congenial talks.

Prime Minister Bildt comes here at a time when Europe is being transformed and when Sweden itself is beginning a new chapter in its history. As the Prime Minister remarked on his election night last September, the winds of political change blowing through Europe have finally reached Sweden.

Well, he understands well his nation's past. Just more than 100 years ago, his

great-great-grandfather was Prime Minister. But even more, Prime Minister Bildt represents a rising generation of leadership for a people seeking a new role in Europe and a new birth of freedom and initiative in Swedish domestic policy.

We welcome Sweden's desire to play a more active part in the emerging global community. The Prime Minister is committed to democracy, to free markets. And I know that as active partners in the common endeavor to create a free, open, and prosperous world, the United States and Sweden will make a real difference.