

message to those doomsayers and the pessimists. They say our economy has fallen into an abyss. They say America is a weakened giant. I say, "Bunk." We are the United States of America, and we can compete with anybody. I've heard these doomsayers all my life; so have you. Think back a year ago, one year to this very day. While American men and women risked their lives halfway around the world, what did we hear from those professional pessimists? They spoke of defeat and humiliation. They spoke of a long and bloody war, another Vietnam, a quagmire. Well, they were wrong then,

and they are wrong now.

Here in this county, here in your home county and all across the country, Americans are ready to move, ready to face the challenge and meet a new American destiny. So, I ask you on March 3d to cast your ballots for George Bush. The fight for our future has just begun, and it will continue for 4 more years.

Thank you for your trust.

*Note: The President spoke at 6:18 p.m. at Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School.*

## Exchange With Reporters Aboard Air Force One February 25, 1992

*The President.* Good morning, traveling squad.

*President Reagan*

Q. What's this about President Reagan says you don't seem to stand for anything?

*The President.* I don't believe that.

Q. Are you going to have trouble in California?

*The President.* Well, we're taking it time by time. I think we'll be all right in California. It's a little early to be into that one. We've got some earlier hurdles which I feel good about.

Q. Do you expect Mr. Reagan to campaign for you actively?

*The President.* Well, I don't know. He's been very good about that, but I haven't even discussed it with him. It's way premature for that. But he's been quite supportive, as you know, already endorsed me enthusiastically.

Q. Are you disappointed at all that he won't be at the fundraiser?

*The President.* No. I've known him for a long time. I'm going to go see him, I think. I don't know if it's going to work out or not.

*The Economy*

Q. Why do you think your poll numbers are so much lower in California than—

*The President.* I think the economy. I think they're hurting there. And I think any-

time a person has—as President, you take the heat on the economy. It's happening worldwide.

*Loan Guarantees for Israel*

Q. Any reaction from the Israelis to Secretary Baker's—

*The President.* I haven't seen it this morning, saw some yesterday but hadn't seen anything new to add to that. I thought the Secretary expressed the policy of the U.S. Government very clearly, very forcefully, and very correctly.

*General Motors Plant Closings*

Q. Any reaction to the shutdown of GM?

*The President.* No, only regret for the hardship that it causes families, but just keep plugging away to try to get this economy moving and stimulated. That's what's needed. So, I'll keep challenging the Congress to do just that.

*Iraq*

Q. How about Iraq?

Q. —your help to Iraq? What was behind that to help them get loans?

*The President.* I haven't read all the charges about Iraq. But as you may remember in history, there was a lot of support at a time for Iraq as a balance to a much more aggressive Iran under Khomeini. So that was a part of the policy of the Reagan ad-

ministration, and I was very proud to support it.

*Loan Guarantees for Israel*

Q. If Congress were to pass the loan guarantees without the settlements freeze, would you veto any such legislation?

*The President.* That's too hypothetical. We spelled out our policy, and there it is. And it's the proper policy. We haven't changed. That's been the policy of the U.S. Government for a long, long time.

Q. Is it politically risky for you to now take this position?

*The President.* It might be, but I'm not going to shift the foreign policy of this country because of political expediency. I can't do that and have any credibility worldwide. And we have credibility worldwide. Otherwise we wouldn't have been able to facilitate the peace talks in the first place. So, we just have certain policy positions, and they're sound.

*Presidential Primaries*

Q. Do you expect to be making a lot more trips to California? How are you going to try and turn around your situation there?

*The President.* Just go about our game plan, which is to take our message out there. I understand there's two extraordinarily successful fundraisers in place out there, so that should say something. Maybe that will get people thinking positively.

Q. Mr. President, do you think you'll be able to win California, sir? Do you think you'll be able to win?

*The President.* Oh, sure. Yes.

Q. Oh, sure?

*The President.* Yes.

Q. Pretty confident?

*The President.* Yes, I am.

Q. Patrick Buchanan—fire Bush immediately—do you think he's getting a little personal in his attacks and his charges?

*The President.* I haven't seen that, John [John Cochran, NBC News]. I wouldn't worry too much about that.

Q. Those FBI—

*The President.* Yes. I think we're going to do all right down South. I feel good about it. We've got good people working, and I think the people down there understand my message. And I think as people

compare the two candidates, why, we'll be fine.

Q. Will you be mentioning Buchanan by name? Last week you said you were going to take the gloves off. Do you intend to do so, sir?

*The President.* Well, I'm still sorting all that out. You heard me last night. I'd rather define it on the issues. There are plenty of surrogates that are willing to make it more specific. I think that's a good way to leave it.

Q. Ads starting up in Georgia against Buchanan?

*The President.* I think that there will be ads that define the differences in position, yes. And I expect that people will understand that, after the ads from the Democrats in New Hampshire against me and from him against me. But I'll try to keep it on a high plane—together and go on and win.

Q. You seem kind of subdued today, Mr. President. Are you feeling okay?

*The President.* Yes, I feel good, Rita [Rita Beamish, Associated Press].

Q. How come you're so subdued? It's early.

*The President.* Do you remember Lesley Stahl [CBS News] asking when the Berlin Wall came down why I wasn't jumping with joy? I said, "We're taking care of this." It's a little early. We're going on a long trip, and it's kind of a calm but determined approach.

Q. Have you added any additional stops on this trip? We heard you might add some on the end, Saturday or Sunday, additional stops.

*The President.* I haven't heard it yet, but I might be the last to know. [Laughter]

Q. We probably would.

*The President.* Have a nice trip to California, everybody.

*Note: The exchange began at approximately 8:30 a.m. prior to the President's departure from Andrews Air Force Base in Camp Springs, MD, for San Francisco, CA.*