

Q. Mr. President, can we ask you a question, please?

Visit of President Chirac

President Clinton. Yes. Before you do, let me say, first, I want to welcome President Chirac to the United States again and thank him for the wonderful job that he did in hosting the NATO meeting in Paris where we announced the historic partnership with Russia. I would also like to thank him for the work that we are doing together in so many parts of the world and especially on behalf of the American people to thank him for the help that France gave in the evacuation of American citizens in Brazzaville. We were very grateful for that.

The European Economy

Q. I would like to ask you, what's going to be your message to the French and to the Europeans regarding the economy? Do you have something special to say about how to have a better economy for Europe?

President Clinton. I don't think there is a uniform answer for one country you can apply to another. But I think that the trick is how do you have enough fiscal discipline and flexibility to grow jobs and have economic growth while still preserving an adequate safety net for people who deserve their support.

You know, the French have a lot of things that we Americans admire, a wonderful network of child care, for example, for working families, a provision for health insurance for all families. The question is, how can you preserve the essentials that make a society whole and give it integrity and have it be open and flexible enough to grow?

And this question will have to be answered a little differently, I think, in every country. But perhaps if we all work together in good faith, we can all make progress. The United

States has a very great interest in economic growth in France and, indeed, in Europe at large. I have always supported that.

Africa

Q. Mr. President, are you planning, with President Chirac, are both of you trying to re-shuffle the cards in Africa?

President Clinton. Well, I have always been impressed with President Chirac's leadership in Africa and his passionate devotion to it. And I can tell you that in every private conversation we've ever had that lasted more than 30 seconds, he's brought Africa up.

We have a proposal. We hope we can work together as we have in different ways in emergencies, in Sierra Leone, in Brazzaville, or the former Zaire. We hope we can work together to really do something for Africa.

You know, there are several countries in Africa that had growth rates of over 7 percent last year, 48 democracies now, and the rest of the world simply can't walk away from it. We need a balance of aid and trade. And we are prepared in the United States to do more. France has always been a leader, and I hope that together we can persuade other countries to join us.

NATO Expansion

Q. Do you think that it's possible to get an agreement of expansion of NATO with President Clinton before the Madrid summit? Is that possible?

President Chirac. I hope so, and I believe so.

President Clinton. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:50 p.m. at the Brown Palace Hotel. President Chirac spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Romano Prodi of Italy in Denver

June 20, 1997

Proposed Tobacco Agreement

Q. Mr. President, could we ask you one question again—I'm sorry—on tobacco? Apparently,

Mr. Kessler is already a little bit skeptical about the agreement, particularly as it concerns regulating nicotine levels. Could the White House

be in a position of rejecting this agreement? What are your concerns over nicotine levels?

President Clinton. Well, of course we could. We could be in a position of rejecting it or accepting it; I haven't seen it yet.

I received a letter—I was told that I received a letter after I left to come out here, from Dr. Kessler and Dr. Koop, both of whom, as you know, have worked with me very closely on this issue, asking for a reasonable amount of time for them to evaluate this. And I think that they should evaluate it, and of course I care very deeply about what they say. I have worked with them on a whole range of issues. And we want to see what it says.

The test should be, does it preserve clear and unambiguous jurisdiction for the FDA in important areas, and is the money spent in an appropriate way so that we advance the protection of public health and reduce children smoking? That's it. It's a simple test for me and I—but I can't comment on it because I haven't seen it. And I think that it's the same for them. You would expect them to put up a few little red flags, but we all ought to—these folks have been working hard and they've done their best, and now we should look at it and make our judgments.

Let me say to the American press, while you're here, I want to thank Prime Minister Prodi and the members of his government for the extraordinary leadership that Italy has shown in the Balkans, working with us in Bosnia, being a very effective member of the contact group, providing support for American actions there, without which we would not have been able to proceed, and then, most recently, for really an almost unprecedented effort to lead a multinational force in Albania. I will predict to you that in future years we will look back on this Italian effort and see it as a real watershed in European leadership for promoting security and minimizing disruption. I just wanted to thank him and say that to you, sir.

Prime Minister Prodi. Thank you.

Bosnia and Albania

Q. Mr. Prodi, on Bosnia, do you believe that the multinational force should stay after 1998? Do you have any concerns that fighting will still break out?

Prime Minister Prodi. I have some concerns, but we shall talk about that in our conversation. And of course, the Bosnian situation is very complex and a program to end it in a short time is not easy to solve. But we came here just to talk of this problem.

Q. Thank you.

[*At this point, one group of reporters left the room, and another group entered.*]

President Clinton. I would like to say that it's a great honor for us to have Prime Minister Prodi and the distinguished members of his government here. And I want to also say that the United States is deeply grateful for Italy's leadership in promoting peace in the Balkans, especially the work that we have done together in Bosnia. The United States could not have done its job in Bosnia without the support of Italy.

And I am especially grateful for the leadership that Italy has shown in Albania. It is an almost unprecedented effort to put together a European initiative to minimize the troubles of Albania, which are the kinds of things that we will be dealing with for a long time. And I believe that in years to come, we will look back on the Italian effort here as a dramatic historic breakthrough in the capacity of the European nations to promote peace and deal with difficulties.

NOTE: The exchange began at 4:25 p.m. at the Brown Palace Hotel. In his remarks, the President referred to David A. Kessler, former Commissioner of Food and Drugs, and C. Everett Koop, former Surgeon General.

Statement on the Proposed Tobacco Agreement

June 20, 1997

Less than one year ago, my administration announced an historic rule to protect children

from the harm caused by tobacco products. Two months ago, a court in North Carolina issued