

are taking refugees out of the camps in Macedonia into our nations. We are helping relief groups to improve their registration systems so those of you who have missing family members can find them and so that we can restore identity papers.

I know you will understand what a difficult task this is. More people are pouring into Macedonia every day. More people are pouring into Albania every day. And then we are taking some people from the camps into Germany, into the United States, into other countries. But we know this is an agony for those of you who do not know what has happened to your family members, and we are working on it. Just this week, we will begin to put in computer terminals here and in other refugee centers so that you can constantly get news in your own language on the situation in Kosovo and the status of the NATO campaign.

Let me say on a very personal level, Chancellor Schroeder and I understand that what has been done to you and your children and your homeland cannot be undone. But you must know that you have not been forgotten or abandoned. Mr. Milosevic has not succeeded in erasing your identity from the pages of history, and he will not succeed in erasing your presence from the land of your parents and grandparents. You will go home again in safety and in freedom.

Now in closing, I would like to ask of all of you something I asked of the smaller group

with whom I just met. When you have gone through something as awful as this, it is very easy to have your spirit broken, to spend the rest of your life obsessed with anger and resentment. But if you do that, you have already given those who oppressed you a victory.

I am of Irish heritage. The great Irish poet William Butler Yeats once said this; I hope you can remember this. He said, "Too long a sacrifice can make a stone of the heart."

I ask you all to work with each other, to support each other, not to let your hearts turn to stone, to be determined to go home to a Kosovo where all the children can go to school and all the children can laugh and play and we can have a future that is not only free of the bad things that have happened to you but is full of hope and opportunity, where you're a part of Europe and a free world, where all the children can pursue their faith, their religion, and their dreams. We are working hard for that day.

God bless you, and thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. at the Refugee Reception Center. In his remarks, he referred to Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany; Minister-President Kurt Beck of Rheinland-Pfalz, Germany; and President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

Remarks Following Discussions With Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany and an Exchange With Reporters in Bonn

May 6, 1999

Situation in Kosovo

Chancellor Schroeder. Ladies and gentlemen, we had a very intensive discussion together, the main emphasis, of course, having been on the crisis on Kosovo. We basically agreed regarding all of the questions that were discussed. And when I say "we agreed," then I'm talking about the two of us but also about Germany and the United States of America.

There is no reason whatsoever to go in and change our jointly adopted strategy. We very much welcome the initiative taken by the for-

ign ministers today, the G-8 conference. We have noticed from looking at the results that some strong movement has happened there. We have also conjointly decided that it is very necessary to support the frontline states of the region and particular Macedonia and Albania, the two countries that at present are shouldering the vast burden regarding the refugee problem.

We very much have to go in and make sure that the earmarked 250 million euro as support have to be channeled into those frontline states

and really get there. You might know that Germany has earmarked 60 million German marks as support there. We have to make sure that those supports and that money speedily flows into the region.

I personally had the opportunity of talking to the Prime Minister of Macedonia today, and we also agreed that we were trying to spur matters in this very way.

The President of the United States of America has emphasized the fact that the United States will take on a large number of refugees. You know that we here in Germany have already taken on quite a few, and we hope that in taking these actions, both America and Germany will set an example also for other European countries to follow up and to take on refugees themselves. We hope that as a consequence, that they will follow suit.

Germany itself is continuing to think about whether they could potentially take on even more. And if you hear the most recent news today, yet again, another 10,000 refugees have flooded into Macedonia yet again and in addition. And if you then bear in mind that soon the border might be closed off, sealed off, in fact, altogether, then really urgent action and consideration is needed here.

We have also discussed the possibilities of having some influence on the discussions taking place at the Club of Paris, where thoughts are ventilated about a potential suspension or a relief of debt for the frontline states involved, and we have decided that we conjointly support a debt relief or at least a suspension of debts for Macedonia and Albania.

And I think all of that—and I think that goes without saying—should be independent of the necessity of continuing our actions, continuing the NATO actions and the measures taken so far. But one point that was strongly emphasized was the necessity of giving a more comprehensive economic and political perspective for the Balkans.

President Clinton. If I could just say very briefly—Chancellor Schroeder has faithfully summarized the items we discussed and the conclusions that we drew. And I would just like to say on behalf of the United States how much I appreciate the leadership of the German Chancellor and the German people in dealing with the refugee crisis, in trying to relieve the pressure on Macedonia and provide for the economic needs of both Macedonia and Albania,

and in looking to the long-term development of the Balkans and southeastern Europe, which is critical if you're going to avoid future incidents of this kind.

And on all those scores, both as the German Chancellor and as the present leader of the EU, I think he has done an outstanding job, and I am personally very grateful for it.

Cooperation of Russia and China

Q. Mr. President, how important is it in your view to get the U.N. behind the principles on Kosovo, and what do you intend in order to get not only Russia but also China into the part?

President Clinton. Well, I believe it would be very, very helpful if the United Nations would endorse a peace process if it is a peace process that will work, meaning that the refugees would have to be able to come back with security and autonomy, and the Serb forces would have to be withdrawn, and there must be a multinational security force there that NATO is a core part of.

Now, the U.N. did so in Bosnia. We were there as—under the umbrella of the U.N., NATO was there; Russia was there; Ukraine was there. It worked. And it will work again, and obviously would be much better.

With regard to the Chinese, of course, the Chancellor is going to China in a couple of days, and he will have fresh news when he comes back. But I believe if the Russians support this, the Chinese will support this. And I think they believe that this is something the U.N. should do.

Q. Mr. President, what's the significance of the agreement or statement that Russia—[*inaudible*—initially today?

President Clinton. I think the Chancellor might want to comment on that as well. The significance is that as far as I know, this is the first time that the Russians have publicly said they would support an international security as well as a civilian force in Kosovo. This is a significant step forward, and I was personally very pleased by it.

Balkan Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, what is your personal impression? Do you think there is a message you can convey to the German people that there is a longer period of blood, sweat, and tears that you have to look forward to or to look

at in the near future, or do you think that there is a real peace process underway?

President Clinton. I think there is a real peace process underway, but it has no chance of reaching a satisfactory conclusion unless we maintain Allied unity and firmness. I don't think the process is long, but I don't think we can afford to be discouraged or be impatient. We need to stay with the strategy we have and continue to aggressively support our air campaign and to aggressively support any diplomatic initiative that will secure the conditions necessary for a lasting peace in Kosovo.

Group of Eight Statement on Kosovo

Q. Mr. President, and Chancellor, do you think that the agreement, the statement that was issued today by the G-8 and Russia, will do anything to hasten the end to the conflict?

Chancellor Schroeder. I can only repeat and emphasize what the President of the United States of America has just said. I consider it as truly substantial progress which has been made there. There has been open talk about the presence and the necessity for the presence of international troops there, and I think things will continue along that way.

I would also very much like to emphasize the fact that I agree that there is no reason

whatsoever to now think about a change in the NATO strategy now that the strategy does seem to work, and I'm talking about military as well as political initiatives undertaken therein.

President Clinton. Let me just say very briefly, I agree with what the Chancellor has said. I do believe it's an advance because you have to see the G-8 resolution here, the statement, in the context of Mr. Chernomyrdin's efforts. I mean, here is a man that served as Premier of Russia twice; very highly regarded, I think, by all of us who have ever dealt with him on all sides of this issue. And this statement, plus his ongoing effort, I think you have to read this as a move forward and increasing the likelihood that there will ultimately be a resolution of this that will actually work.

Thank you.

NOTE: The remarks began at 5:45 p.m. in the Office of the Chancellor at the Chancellory. In his remarks, the President referred to Special Envoy and former Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin of Russia. The President also referred to the European Union (EU). Chancellor Schroeder referred to Prime Minister Ljubco Georgievski of Macedonia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Memorandum on Assistance for Federal Employees Affected by the Tornadoes in Oklahoma and Kansas May 6, 1999

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: Assistance for Federal Employees Affected by the Tornadoes in Oklahoma and Kansas

I am deeply concerned about the devastating losses suffered by many as a result of the tornadoes in Oklahoma and Kansas. Multiple parts of the Federal Government have been mobilized to respond to this disaster.

As part of this effort, I ask the heads of executive departments and agencies who have Federal civilian employees in designated disaster areas resulting from the tornadoes in Oklahoma and Kansas and their aftermath to use discretion to excuse from duty, without charge to leave

or loss of pay, any such employee who is prevented from reporting for work or faced with a personal emergency because of this disaster and who can be spared from his or her usual responsibilities. This policy also should be applied to any employee who is needed for emergency law enforcement, relief, or clean-up efforts authorized by Federal, State, or other officials having jurisdiction.

I am also directing the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to establish an emergency leave transfer program, which would permit employees in an executive agency to donate their unused annual leave for transfer to employees of the same or other agencies who were adversely affected by the tornadoes and who need