

Exchange With Reporters in Brussels June 13, 2001

Visit to Europe

Q. Sir, how would you sum up the trip so far?

The President. Great. Very happy with it and pleased with the progress made on key issues. Pleased that we had the opportunity to spend some quality time with fellow leaders. One thing is for certain, European leaders now know that our administration is committed to a strong NATO and a free Europe. And that was important for them to hear, and I'm real pleased.

Patients' Bill of Rights Legislation

Q. I understand, sir, that Charles Norwood has signed on to the McCain-Kennedy bill.

The President. Yes. I haven't had a chance to talk, but I'm confident we'll get a bill that I can live with if we don't. I made a speech in Florida that laid out the principles. And if those principles are not met, I meant what I said—I said I can't live with the bill. And so—

Q. Does that mean you'd veto it?

The President. Can't living with the bill means it won't become law. And I'm hopeful we can work out our differences. We're working hard to do so, and I believe we can. I believe we can have a good Patients' Bill of Rights. I support a Patients' Bill of Rights. I just don't support one that will encourage lawsuits, that will hurt consumers, and hurt people trying to find quality health care.

Q. So your red line is the ability to sue in State court, sir?

The President. No, my red lines are what I laid out in the speech. And as you remember—I'm sure you remember the speech. [Laughter] I'll get you a copy of it. [Laughter]

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Assistant Press Secretary Gordon Johndroe. We'll let the President and First Lady buy some chocolate now.

The President. I'm not having much of a selection here. I am willing to share the chocolate, however, with whoever—of the stories. [Laughter] So who would like some?

Q. Backpedaling already? [Laughter]

The President. That's right, changing positions. It didn't take me long. [Laughter] I want you to note this was made by the proprietor—the castle—here on location, who is right here. Here's the artist. It's amazing; he looks so skinny. Must not eat his own product, I guess. [Laughter]

Assistant Press Secretary Johndroe. All right, you all, we're going to step outside.

The President. I will fulfill my promise, for those of you who would like a piece of chocolate.

Q. Are you enjoying your trip?

The First Lady. I'm enjoying my trip a lot. I've had a really great time. I've loved it. I've loved having an opportunity to meet my counterparts here, which I have. Today I had lunch with all the NATO—the spouses of NATO Ambassadors.

The President. The First Lady is holding a press conference, Ron [Ron Fournier, Associated Press]. You're missing it.

The First Lady. And that was it. [Laughter]

The President. Just as she was getting to EU expansion. [Laughter] I told you to leave the missiles secret. [Laughter]

The First Lady. Ron, actually, I was talking about meeting my counterparts here in Europe.

The President. Here's what they want—an action shot. [Laughter] I like a man

with a Houston Astros hat, though. I picked him out.

[At this point, the President and First Lady continued on their way back to the motorcade.]

Meeting With NATO Leaders

Q. Mr. President, you seemed pretty pumped up at the press conference. Did it go better than you expected, the meeting?

The President. I was very pleased. I was. I was—as you know, part of the kind of the code is not to name names. But the folks I quoted were true quotes, and I was very pleased with the reception.

Q. It sounds like your strongest support came from Eastern Europe or former Soviet bloc.

The President. As I said, I'm not going to break the code, and you're fishing for the code. But it was widespread support. It was not confined to one area of Europe. It was a good meeting, very positive meeting that gave us a chance to have a good exchange. I was very pleased with the reception and the willingness for countries to think differently and to listen to different points of view.

Visit to Europe

Q. How does it feel for you—we just asked the First Lady—but this is your first—I know you've been to Mexico and Canada, but this is—

The President. Well, this is a trip that was a very important trip because of the—the Alliance is very important. And as I said the other day, a prosperous and peaceful NATO and Europe—a prosperous Europe because of NATO is important for America. And there were some people—there was a lot of talk about unilateralism and the U.S. going it alone, and it was just very important for me to dispel those notions. And the leaders here now know that we are committed to NATO; we're committed to NATO enlargement. And tomorrow I'll have an opportunity to talk

about the EU, and we'll have—after the—at the press conference you can ask me questions about how it goes there.

But there will be, you know, the tendency for, obviously, in your business to focus on where we differ. The truth of the matter is, the meeting today, the focus was on where we agree. And that was the very thing that encouraged me about it.

So I felt great walking into the press conference because I felt great after the meeting.

Upcoming Visit to Poland

Q. Sir, what's the big theme you're going to hit on Friday in Warsaw?

The President. Europe—whole, free, expanded.

Q. Bring up your father—

The President. No. Well, I mean, when they say, "President Bush," it will be brought up. But—[laughter].

Q. I'm just thinking about his Europe policy.

The President. No, that's right. No, it's a—kind of same values. The values haven't changed. The issues are different, but the goal of a free and united Europe is not. I'm looking forward to giving this speech because it will be given on the soil of a country that has really emerged as a result of its NATO membership and its adherence to free markets. And I'm not going to tell you any more about it because I want you to listen.

Assistant Press Secretary Johndroe. We've got to get in the vans.

The President. I can only have one press conference a day. It's unbelievable how accessible I am these days. [Laughter]

European Leaders

Q. Every President has European friends. Who are your European friends?

The President. Tony Blair, clearly a friend. But by not naming somebody, they'll assume that they're not a friend. They're all friends, to begin with. Jose Maria Aznar and I get along great. We had a wonderful

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visit yesterday. He's a very interesting man. If there were, kind of, objective observers, they would have said the body language was very strong between us. Prime Minister Blair and I get along well.

I will get along with every leader. I haven't had a chance to nurture a relationship beyond some casual conversations with some of the leaders, but I suspect we'll have very close relations with all the leaders. But those two initially are people that I feel very comfortable in singling out. Havel is a very interesting guy whom I admire a lot. I've read some of his writings, and he's a legend in many ways in Eastern Europe. And I have a great relationship with him.

Q. Is he one of your strongest allies on missile defense?

The President. Well, as I said, there's kind of a code of silence. But I appreciate his friendship.

Okay, get out of here. [*Laughter*] We've got to pay for this.

NOTE: The exchange began at 6:24 p.m. at Mary Chocolatier. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; President Jose Maria Aznar of Spain; Michel Boey, proprietor, Mary Chocolatier; and President Václav Havel of the Czech Republic. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Exchange With Reporters in Göteborg, Sweden

June 14, 2001

European Union-U.S. Summit

Q. Mr. President, can you share with us your message for the European leaders?

The President. See, Fournier [Ron Fournier, Associated Press] asked you to ask that. [*Laughter*] I haven't made up my mind who I'm calling on at the press conference yet, so if you don't behave, you may not get called.

Q. And chances keep diminishing. Right, sir? [*Laughter*]

The President. Did you put him up to that, Ron?

Q. I'm not that smart, sir. [*Laughter*]

The President. Let me just say this: I'm honored to be the first United States Presi-

dent to come to Sweden, and I appreciate so very much the hospitality that we've received, and I'm so looking forward to these discussions. What the people of Sweden and Europe will realize is that mine is an administration that is deeply committed to a prosperous Europe and a whole Europe and a free Europe. And we look forward to a constructive relationship.

NOTE: The exchange began at 12:24 p.m. at Gunnebo Manor House, prior to the plenary session of the European Union-U.S. Summit. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.