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Q. No objections, sir?

The President. We've had three different conversations, of course, and this will be the fourth. And each of them, although leaders can characterize them for themselves, but I have been very pleased so far.

Q. Have they raised security issues with you, that they are worried that if there should be some kind of resurgence in Russia that they feel protected, or are they still worried about this?

The President. No one has said that they expect something like that in the near future. What no one knows is whether the future of Europe will be like its past or if it will be different.

Q. Are you saying that all have accepted the Partnership so far?

The President. You'll have to ask them when we do the press conference.

NOTE: The exchange began at 11:06 a.m. in the library at the U.S. Ambassador's Residence. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

The President's News Conference With Visegrad Leaders in Prague

January 12, 1994

President Clinton. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the very beautiful American Embassy.

I have just finished a very productive and enjoyable working lunch with the leaders of the Visegrad states: President Václav Havel and Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus of the Czech Republic; President Arpad Goencz and Prime Minister Peter Boross of Hungary; President Lech Walesa and Prime Minister Waldemar Pawlak of Poland; and President Michal Kovac and Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar of Slovakia.

I want to, at the outset, stress my appreciation to President Havel, Premier Klaus and the Czech people for their hospitality and contributions to our meeting, and I thank again all the Visegrad leaders for joining here today.

This region, where the great democratic rebirth of Europe began 5 years ago, holds a special place in my own affections. I first came to this city 24 years ago this week, and two of my senior national security advisers were born in this region: the Chairman of our Joint Chiefs of Staff General Shalikashvili, who spent most of his early years in Poland, was born there; and my U.N. Ambassador Madeleine Albright who was born here in Prague. I told President Havel yesterday that the Czech Republic is the only nation in the world that has two ambassadors in the United Nations.

I have come to Europe to help build a new security for the transatlantic community for the 21st century. During the cold war the security of the Western alliance was defined by the division of Europe. Our new security must be defined by Europe's integration, the integration of a broader Europe based on military cooperation, robust democracies, and market economies. That was my message in Brussels, where I met with our NATO and European Community allies. And it will be my message as I travel to Moscow.

I am mindful of an old Polish saying, which I have, I hope, learned to pronounce properly: *Nits o nas bez nas*; Nothing about us without us. And so I have come to this region to share my thoughts directly with your leaders and your people. I believe the United States must make clear to all of you first that we are committed to helping you continue your work of reform and renewal in peace. That commitment derives from more than our shared values and our admiration for your efforts. It also derives from our own security concerns. Let me be absolutely clear: The security of your state is important to the security of the United States.

At today's lunch I discussed three ways in which my nation is prepared to advance Europe's democratic integration by supporting your region's continued renewal and security. First, we discussed the Partnership For Peace, the American proposal NATO has just adopted. The Partnership invites all former Warsaw Pact and former Soviet states, plus other non-NATO members in Europe, to join in military cooperation with NATO in training exercise and operations jointly.

While the Partnership is not NATO membership, neither is it a permanent holding room. It changes the entire NATO dialog so that now the question is no longer whether NATO will take on new members but when

and how. It leaves the door open to the best possible outcome for our region, democracy, markets, and security all across a broader Europe, while providing time and preparation to deal with a lesser outcome.

Second, we discussed ways in which the United States can help to solidify your democratic and market reforms. I stressed that I have ordered our programs to give greater emphasis to helping this region tend to reform's impacts on your workers and your communities. I talked about the ways we are working to expand trade and investment between your region, the rest of Europe, and the United States. I also discussed the steps we are taking to help the Visegrad region and other parts of Central and Eastern Europe bolster their new democracies.

We're supporting the development of a thriving civil society. And in our meeting I announced the creation of the democracy network, an initiative to bring new resources to grassroots and independent groups throughout the region. I stressed our interest in fostering regional cooperation among your countries, practical things that can advance your integration into a broader Europe.

Finally, I salute all those leaders here in Prague today who have worked to build practical regional cooperation and consensus in Central Europe at this pivotal moment in history. I congratulate them on having this regional meeting. And I suggested several ways we can help to support regional integration, including support for regional infrastructure projects like highways and communications networks and air traffic systems.

I have greatly enjoyed my discussions today here. I assure you I will follow up on them. The United States will have a special conference this year on trade and investment in the countries represented here on what we can do to increase American investment and to increase the purchase of the products made by the people who are working hard in all of these thriving democracies.

I come away convinced that, together, we can place Central and Eastern Europe at the heart of a new Europe, an integrated Europe, democratic, prosperous, secure, and free. That is my commitment; I believe it is our joint commitment.

Thank you very much, and I'd like now to turn the microphone over to President Havel.

President Havel. Distinguished President, ladies and gentlemen, we are living in a time of a dramatic searching for a new order, an order in which no one would be subjugated or endangered and which would make it possible for all European people and states to live in an atmosphere of peaceful cooperation.

Our today's meeting in Prague bears witness to the great importance which the United States and the North Atlantic alliance attach to stability, security, and peace in Central Europe, in relation to peace in all of Europe as well as to the security of the United States.

We welcome the Partnership For Peace project as a good point of departure in NATO's quest for a new identity of the alliance as a true stabilizing core of European security. We appreciate that it allows individual approaches from the various countries. At the same time, however, it depends on how energetically and how quickly the different countries will move to instill in Partnership For Peace contents meeting their interests and their possibilities. For our part, we want to do everything in our power in order that our partnership results in our full membership in the alliance. We do not regard Partnership For Peace as a substitute for that but rather as a first step toward NATO.

The reason why we want to join the alliance is that we share the values of civilization which it protects, and that we want to take part in protecting them. We realize that it is neither possible nor desirable to isolate Russia. However, we are independent states, and we decide ourselves about our affiliations and our policies.

Ladies and gentlemen, as we agreed in our conversations with the representatives of the Central European nations that are represented at this meeting in Prague, our countries have very similar views on this subject. This is certainly a gratifying circumstance, and it is to the benefit of us all.

Let me, therefore, conclude by expressing my firm conviction that this meeting has become an important landmark on the road to-

ward a new democratic and truly peaceful Europe, sharing firm and natural ties with the North American continent. At one time, the city of Yalta went down in history as a symbol of the division of Europe. I would be happy if today the city of Prague emerged as a symbol of Europe's standing in alliance.

Thank you.

Russia

Q. Mr. President, there are nationalists in Russia who look at these four countries and other nations that were under the grip of Moscow, and they dream of rebuilding the Soviet empire. What will you tell Russian President Boris Yeltsin about the security needs of these countries, and how far it should go in guaranteeing their territorial integrity and their borders?

President Clinton. First of all, I would say that based on their past statements, he's right, and they're wrong. That is, I think that the Russian position, the position of the present administration there that they will respect the territorial boundaries of their neighbors is the proper position.

You know, each nation at critical periods has to imagine again what its future is going to be, and it has to define itself—how it will define itself as a nation and how it will define a standard of greatness. The United States, in very different ways, is going through such a period today. And Russia must do that.

In the 21st century can anyone seriously believe that we will define greatness by whether one country can physically occupy another, since we all know that wealth and opportunity will be determined by things other than physical possession of land mass? I don't think so.

And my urgent task will be to try to continue to press the path of democracy and reform and America's support for it in Russia. They are a great people with a great history and a great future. But the future must be different from the past, and the way greatness is defined must be different. And that, I think, is a struggle plainly going on there now that will play itself out over the next few years. And I'm hoping and will be working for the best possible impact.

Security of Visegrad States

Helen [Helen Thomas, United Press International]?

Q. Mr. President, it's obvious that the leaders have accepted something short of what they really wanted. And in a way they're being treated as second cousins. They really wanted security guarantees, and you and all the NATO allies have told them that that's not in the package. In view of——

President Clinton. Let me just—I disagree that they're being treated as second cousins. This is something NATO has never done before. We will have people out in the next few days talking about how we're going to begin all kinds of joint security operations. To say that 16 nations of NATO made a mistake not to immediately issue security guarantees to some nations of Europe and not others, without knowing in any way, shape, or form whether the reciprocal obligations of NATO could be met by new members, I think is an unfair characterization of the NATO alliance.

Q. My question is, in view of the lessons of World War II, is it conceivable if any of these nations were invaded or aggressed against that NATO would not come to their aid?

President Clinton. I think it is doubtful; that's right. I think our reading of history is right. But frankly, I think none of us believe that—I can't speak for the other Presidents except based on our conversations—that that is imminent. I think—what I was impressed by from these leaders is that they very much want to be a part of Europe, of the Western alliance, in an economic and social and political, as well as a military way, and that the broad definition of security is in that.

Of course, there are always concerns that in the future, the darker past might be recreated, that there could be an expansionism again. But what we need to do is—again, what I'm trying to do is to reach out and enhance the security of these nations in ways that also permit other nations to enhance their security and partnership with us, and that does not now draw a new line of division across Europe. Maybe there will be a new line drawn some day, and if so, we want to do what we can to support the security of these nations. But we hope that we are giving

Europe the possibility for the best possible future.

Mr. Blitzer [Wolf Blitzer, Cable News Network] I think had a question for President Walesa, and then I'd like a question from the foreign press next. But, Wolf, go ahead.

Poland

Q. President Walesa, I'm sorry I can't ask you this question in Polish. But Poland seems to be the least enthusiastic among the Visegrad countries for the Partnership For Peace proposals. Is that accurate? And can you describe exactly how you feel about this proposal and whether Poland will seek membership in the Partnership For Peace proposal.

President Walesa. I can answer in two words: Sometimes small is beautiful. And we do believe that this is a step in the right direction. It's been decided by the powers of the world, and we shall try to make good use of this.

Prague Visit

Q. What about your next part of your unofficial program in Prague with President Havel? Did public radio give you a tape of your saxophone concert? [*Laughter*]

President Clinton. I think the best part of my unofficial time in Prague was becoming reacquainted with the city, walking across the bridge again after 24 years and seeing the family I stayed with 24 years ago and just meeting the people. I was very pleased by the large number of people who came out yesterday to see me and say hello. And seeing the changes here, it was very rewarding, and it stiffened my determination to continue to support these kinds of changes.

Now, I had a lot of fun playing the saxophone, and the President gave me a saxophone, you know, with his name inscribed on it, so it's a gift I will always treasure. The nice thing about the little music we played last night was that the Czech musicians with whom I played were so good that they covered up all my shortcomings.

Is there another question from the foreign press?

Bosnia

Q. What is the next American step in the Bosnia war?

President Clinton. Well, the next thing that we are doing now is what we are doing with NATO. NATO adopted a new resolution and our military commanders in Europe now are looking into the instruction they got from the NATO commanders, which is to examine what plans can be developed to ensure the rotation of the troops at Srebrenica and to ensure that the airstrip at Tuzla is open.

Now, in addition to that, I have been actively consulting with all the people with whom I have met. I have asked all the leaders here what further steps that they thought ought to be taken. Everyone recognizes that the peace prospects have been diminished now because, for the first time in a good while, all three parties seem to believe they have something to gain by fighting. And as long as that circumstance continues, it's going to be difficult for us to convince them through a political process to stop. But there are some ideas floating around, and I'm going to solicit some more.

Yes, sir, go ahead. Well, I'll take two more. Go ahead—three more.

Ukraine

Q. Mr. President, already there are voices in Ukraine's Parliament suggesting that President Kravchuk went beyond his authority in negotiating the agreement to eliminate nuclear weapons. And even a Foreign Ministry spokesman there today said there may not be an agreement ready for you and President Yeltsin and President Kravchuk to sign in Moscow on Friday. Is that your understanding, and is this causing concern about this agreement that you reached this week?

President Clinton. Well, let's see what happens in Kiev. I think, you know, we have to let President Kravchuk make his own judgments about what he can and cannot do with his government. I expect that we will have an agreement, and I expect that it will be honored. And I think, frankly, the more the people in the Ukrainian Parliament know about it, the better they will feel about it. I think as the details get out, they'll feel better about it.

Yes, I'll take you too. Go ahead.

Q. There appears to be some difference of opinion even within your own staff about President Kravchuk's ability to order these changes, whether he can do it by executive order, whether the Rada or Parliament has to vote on it. What is your understanding of that, sir?

President Clinton. We'll talk about it in Kiev and beyond. Let's watch it unfold and see.

We've got to go.

Q. Mr. President, I had planned to ask the question that Mark [Mark Knoller, CBS Radio] asked. But let me ask you, the reformers in Russia seem to have had trouble building coalitions to offset the rise of the nationalist forces. What kind of advice will you be giving Mr. Yeltsin and other reform leaders about how to go about offsetting the threat of Mr. Zhirinovsky?

President Clinton. Well, I think first of all, perhaps in the last election they learned a good lesson, which is that the forces of reform need to find ways to work together and to speak if not with one voice, at least with a common message.

I expect there to be some rough spots along the way. I mean, after all, this is a rather new experience for them, and they'll have to figure out exactly how the forces are going to be organized within the new Parliament, and then they'll have to work out their relationship with the President. But even those of us that have been at it for 200 years still have difficulties from time to time. But I'm looking forward to meeting with a number of those leaders in the reform effort and getting to know them and getting some feel for where they are and where they're going. But I'm still basically quite hopeful.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's 42d news conference began at 1:55 p.m. at the U.S. Ambassador's residence. The Visegrad leaders spoke in their native languages, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

The President's News Conference With President Leonid Kravchuk of Ukraine in Kiev

January 12, 1994

President Kravchuk. Ladies and gentlemen, let me open this news conference and give the word to the President of the United States, Mr. Clinton.

President Clinton. Thank you very much. I have just completed my first meeting with President Kravchuk, and I am delighted that we have met under such promising and historic circumstances. I was also delighted to be able to wish the President a happy 60th birthday on this auspicious occasion.

President Kravchuk, President Yeltsin, and I are ready to sign on Friday an agreement committing Ukraine to eliminate 176 intercontinental ballistic missiles and some 1,500 nuclear warheads targeted at the United States. This breakthrough will enhance the security of Ukraine, the United States, Russia, and the entire world.

Ukraine is a nation with a rich heritage, enormous economic potential, and a very important position in European security. The ties between our two nations have deep roots. From America's birth to the present day, Ukrainian immigrants have helped to shape my nation's history.

Our meeting this evening begins a new era in our relations. The agreement President Kravchuk and I will sign with President Yeltsin opens the door to new forms of economic, political, and security cooperation. Our meeting tonight centered on three important issues.

First, we discussed the strategic importance, for this region and the world, of the nuclear agreement. I commend President Kravchuk for his courage and his vision in negotiating this agreement.

Second, I was able to issue a personal invitation to Ukraine to participate fully in the Partnership For Peace launched at this week's NATO summit. By providing for specific and practical cooperation between NATO and Ukrainian states and their forces,