AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

a key role in promoting stability and securing free elections. Your nation, at its own initiative and its own expense, has helped your faltering neighbors get their feet back on the ground. And for that, the world salutes you. Of course, there is more work to do. I come here to say that America will do that work with you.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. The values that govern Romania today, liberty, openness, tolerance, free markets, these are values shared by the community of democracies Romania is joining. The community includes security cooperation through the Partnership For Peace. It includes strong ties of trade and investment. It includes institutions like the European Union. And of course, it includes NATO.

I welcome Romania's deep desire to contribute even more fully to Europe's security and strength. I welcome your desire to join NATO. I want that, too, for Europe, for America, and for you. And I say to you today: Stay the course, and Romania will cross that milestone.

To all nations who embrace democracy and reform and wish to share the responsibilities of membership, I reaffirm from this plaza of freedom: The door to NATO is open. It will stay open, and we will help you to walk through it.

NATO has committed to review aspiring members in 1999. Romania is one of the strongest candidates. And if you stay the course and manifest the love of liberty we all see here today, there can be no stronger candidate. Stay the course. Stay the course. The future is yours.

Audience members. Clinton! Clinton! Clinton!

The President. Thank you.

In the meantime, your President and I have agreed to establish a strategic partnership between our nations, a partnership important to America because Romania is important to America, important in your own right, important as a model in this difficult part of the world. Romania can show the people of this region and, indeed, people throughout the world that there is a better way than fighting and division and repression. It is cooperation and freedom and peace.

Mr. President, citizens of Romania, my visit has been brief, but our friendship will endure the test of time. As long as you proceed down democracy's road, America will walk by your side.

The great Romanian-born playwright, Ionesco, once said, "There has always been at every living moment of culture a will to renewal." Here in Bucharest, I see that will to renewal all around. I am reminded of the words of your hymn, once forbidden but never forgotten: "Wake up, Romanian." You have shown the world, and you have shown me here today, that Romania has awakened, awakened to democracy, awakened to freedom, awakened to security, awakened to your destiny. And because of you, the world has awakened to Romania. May the light of your freedom shine forever, and may God bless the Romanian people and the future of our two peoples together.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:25 p.m. in University Square at Piata Universitatii. In his remarks, he referred to Semina Munteanu, a student who introduced the President; and President Emil Constantinescu of Romania. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Exchange With Reporters in Bucharest

July 11, 1997

Museum Visit

Q. What did you buy at the Peasant's Museum?

The President. I bought just a representative sample of the things that were there.

President's Reception

Q. What did you think of the reception?

The President. It was amazing. It was truly amazing. I can't imagine how many people were there; because there were people, when I drove up, in blocks that had been blocked off by the police, who were way back—weren't even visible from the stage. There were a lot of people there.

Q. Were you surprised by the warmth?

The President. Well, I was surprised by the size and intensity of the crowd. I knew that the Romanian people—my friend Mr. Moses here keeps me updated, and I knew that they were very friendly toward America. And keep in mind, they really did suffer more in the recent past than any other people under any of the other Communist governments—I mean, what they went through here to gain their liberty. You saw behind the stage today—the President and I were before the cross there, and that cross marks the place where people were actually killed when they threw off the previous government. So I think that the price they paid is very fresh in their minds.

Romania and NATO

Q. Mr. President—[*inaudible*].

The President. They're a very impressive people. And I do believe if they keep going, they'll make it, just like I said. They've just begun in the last year or so, and they have an enormous undertaking with their economy. But if you look at the rich resources and the fact that the people here are very well educated, I'd say they have an excellent chance, a really good chance.

Q. Did they express disappointment? Were they frustrated?

The President. Oh, I think, of course, they were disappointed. But I think they also—the leaders have managed this very well, and they talked very frankly to the people and said—well, you heard what the President said today. NATO is a part of their larger strategy. And as long as they see that we're all still on the same page with the larger strategy, that we want them integrated into the West, we want their democracy to flourish, we want their economy to do well, and that if they keep going the way they're going, they will certainly be qualified for NATO membership. And everybody—a hundred percent of us in Madrid agreed that one of the things that we wanted was to have some more membership from the southern flank, because of the problems that are likely to develop in this region in the years ahead.

Q. By NATO's test, where is their area needing greatest improvement, the economy?

The President. Well, I think for one thing, when a country assumes the responsibilities of membership, you want to be—[*inaudible*]—hopefully, would even be helpful because of the extra psychological boost it gives.

So Poland and the Czech Republic and Hungary, they've all been through that roller coaster that the economists call the J-curve, where you undertake the reforms, there's a drop in economic output, people suffer, they go through it, they bottom out, and then they start coming back. And they've been through that. So you don't want to impose on a country big, new external burdens while they're going through that. But on the other hand, you don't want to take away the hope that these people have waited decades for.

Martin Luther King Assassination Investigation

Q. Mr. President, what do you think about the King bullets not matching the James Earl Ray rifle?

The President. I'm sorry, I don't know—you're the first person who's asked me that. I haven't been briefed about it.

Q. The test results show that the markings do not match.

The President. I'll review it.

NOTE: The exchange began at 7:06 p.m. at the Village Museum. In his remarks, the President referred to Alfred H. Moses, U.S. Ambassador to Romania; and convicted assassin James Earl Ray. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Excerpts From an Exchange With Reporters Aboard Air Force One

July 11, 1997

Visit to Romania

[*The President's remarks are joined in progress.*]

The President. ——but also, what if anything can be learned.

Q. When you looked down on that crowd, is it the same feeling you had in Ireland? Was it the same feeling you had in Ireland? Is it different?