AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

Charleston in 1970. It seems like yesterday when we were all young and beginning and everything was new. And it passes in the flash of an eye. And when it's over, what remains is the feeling that you have been human and alive to the needs and aspirations of other people. There is nobody in public life in this country today who embodies it better than Dale Bumpers, and I am honored and proud to have served with him.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9 p.m. at the Statehouse Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Rabbi Eugene Levy, Temple B'nai Israel, who offered the benediction; Bishop L.T. Walker, Church of God in Christ, who offered the invocation; Arkansas State Democratic Party Chair Vaughn McQuary; Carroll Willis, director, community services division, Democratic National Committee; Kris Engskov, the President's Aide; Senator Blanche Lambert Lincoln; and former Senator David Pryor.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With NATO Secretary General Javier Solana and an Exchange With Reporters

March 15, 1999

President Clinton. Let me just say that I'm delighted to have Secretary General Solana here. I think he has done a superb job in leading NATO. We are very much looking forward, in just a little over a month, to celebrating the 50th anniversary of NATO by admitting new members. The documents were issued over the weekend. The Secretary of State went to Missouri with the representatives of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, and we're very pleased. I'm looking forward to the meeting and looking forward to NATO's missions in the 21st century.

Let me say I'm also very, very pleased by the news we received this morning that the Kosovar Albanians have agreed to sign the peace agreement. And I want to thank Mr. Solana and Secretary Albright and all the others who have worked on this so hard. And again, I would encourage Mr. Milosevic to agree to the terms, as well, so that we can avoid further conflict and bloodshed.

Kosovo

Q. Do you think they will—the Serbs will go along with it?

President Clinton. I don't know. I hope they will. And I think it is clearly the right thing to do. From his point of view, I think it's the best chance to preserve the integrity of Serbia and avoid economic and other adversity. So I would hope that he would do that.

Q. Mr. President, is it a certainty that NATO will strike if he doesn't sign? Is that for sure?

Q. Well, do you have anything to talk him into it?

President Clinton. One at a time. Wait. Wait.

Q. Is it a certainty that NATO will strike the Serbs if Milosevic does not sign?

President Clinton. Well, all I can tell you is I think we have a clear statement out there about what our policy is. And if he shows intransigence and aggression, I think from our point of view we would have little option. You might want to ask Mr. Solana what he thinks about that.

Q. Do you agree with that, Mr. Secretary General?

Secretary General Solana. I agree. Yes, yes. As just said, the President—I do agree, yes.

Q. Mr. President, how long are you prepared to let these talks in France go on?

President Clinton. Well, I think they ought to be able to talk this through a little bit. I don't know that anyone was absolutely sure the Kosovar Albanians would sign this morning. And peace is better than war. But obviously, they can't go on indefinitely. We need to give everybody time to assess the current situation and where they're going to go from here.

But again, I think the most important thing now is that Mr. Milosevic and the Serbs agree to sign. And it's clearly the right thing to do.

Q. Mr. President, in the past, NATO has only been willing to act in the wake of extreme atrocities. Why is it credible to threaten the use of military force in this situation if that doesn't take place?

President Clinton. What would your answer be?

Secretary General Solana. My answer is that if an agreement is not reached—if President Milosevic doesn't sign, the risk of a catastrophe will be very likely. And we have to prevent that from happening. And NATO will prevent that from happening.

President Clinton. Let me say, in sort of support of the other NATO allies as well, the reason we—you're absolutely right, there's not a lot of precedent for what we're trying to do here. But the reason that we worked so hard—that Secretary Albright, Secretary Cohen, the rest of us—the reason we worked so hard to get NATO to take this position is to avoid the level of atrocity and death that we saw in Bosnia. We didn't want to go down that road again. We wanted to try to dramatically shorten the timetable from aggression and the loss of innocent life and upheaval to action.

And so far I would say that it seems to have been a successful policy, in the sense that we at least have one side now signing on to this peace agreement. We just have to stay with it. We have to be firm about this.

Press Secretary Joe Lockhart. Thank you, pool.

Q. Thank you.

President Clinton. Thank you.

Q. Going to hold a news conference soon, right?

President Clinton. Good morning. That's what—I think so. I just miss you so terribly and not having any questions.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:08 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Interview With Michael Jackson on KRLA Radio

March 15, 1999

Mr. Jackson. Forgive me. There we had the Deputy Director of the Office of Management and the Budget with us, Sylvia Mathews. We are supposed to be at the end of the show, but I'm changing the rules. I'm going to carry my microphone and stand up for a moment. I'm truly honored to have the opportunity of saying good morning to the President of the United States.

The President. Good morning, Michael. Or good afternoon, here.

Mr. Jackson. It's good to see you again, sir.

I have had most of your Cabinet here this morning. The enthusiasm that they show for the jobs that they have—and they all come from different worlds. It's something uniquely and distinctly American. And I also said to, I think it was Donna Shalala—I said, when I see pictures of you with the leadership of Japan or the Central American countries most recently, you look America. And when I see you standing next to Al Gore, you look America. And when I see you standing with the First Lady and Al Gore's wife, Tipper, you look America.

What are you most proud of, sir?

President's Accomplishments

The President. You mean about what we've done here?

Mr. Jackson. Yes.

The President. I think I'm most proud that we've been able to pull the country together and give people a sense that we're going in the right direction again. I'm proud of the opportunities that millions of Americans have had to live out their dreams and shape their destinies and take care of their children. I'm proud of the fact that we have faced the tough challenges that our country has, instead of dodging them. I'm proud of the fact that—I think Americans have a lot of confidence now that we can deal with all the things that are before us and move into the future in a very good way.

I'm proud of all that. I'm just grateful that I have the chance to serve and that we've got almost a quarter of our time left to get some of the things done that I very much want to do before it's over.

Mr. Jackson. Isn't that expression "lame duck" a painful one? A quarter of your time still remains.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Jackson. Do you know a full agenda of what you would like to be able to accomplish in that time, sir?