

The President. Well, I think in the nearest term what has changed is that Argentina moved away from military governments that oppress and kill its people, toward not only a democracy but a democracy under President Menem that has genuinely reached out to the rest of the world and tried to open not only the economy but the society. Even the debates you are having about the government here are evidence of that. So I think that's the first and most important thing.

Then I think the United States—I would hope that this is true; it's self-serving for me to say this, but I hope it's true—the United States, since I've been President, we have had a genuine interest in establishing a new kind of partnership with Latin America. President Roosevelt wanted to do it. He wanted to be a good neighbor, but the cold war intervened. He died. The cold war intervened. Things happened. President Kennedy wanted to do it. He wanted an Alliance for Progress. But there were difficulties which made it impossible to have a continuing effort. And then some of our Presidents just simply disagreed. They saw every development in Latin America as a manifestation of what was happening in the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union.

I saw, as the first President who would govern completely at the end of the cold war, an opportunity essentially to go back to the vision of Bolivar. And we are becoming more alike, not

only because of the globalization of our economy and the universality of our communications but because Spanish-speaking Americans are our fastest growing group and because we share now these values of democracy and peace and security.

So I think all these things have played a role. I hope that I have played a role. I was the first President, I believe, to appoint an envoy to all of the Americas, Mack McLarty, my former Chief of Staff. I don't think any President has ever done anything like that before. So I have a person that is very close to me actually in the region all the time, knowing the leaders, knowing the people working with this.

But I think none of it would have been possible if first you hadn't had the changes in Argentina. Because if we are totally at odds with a country over its human rights policy, over its political policy, over whether it's open to the United States in a genuine partnership, then even our ability to lay down the mistakes we've made in the past as a country would not have made it possible. So the two things happened together.

NOTE: The interview began at 11:05 a.m. at the Sheraton Hotel. In his remarks, the President referred to President Carlos Menem of Argentina and President Rafael Caldera of Venezuela. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Statement on the Japan-United States Trade Agreement on Access to Japanese Ports

October 17, 1997

I am pleased that our negotiators have reached an agreement in principle that will open trade in Japan's ports and level the playing field for American shippers. We have long pressed Japan for a firm commitment to liberalize trade in its ports, and today they have done just that. Japan has agreed to provide an expedited licensing process for American ships entering its ports and to support an alternative to the port services

provided by the Japanese Harbor Transportation Authority. Those provisions, after the details are worked out, will allow America's shippers to compete and win in the global marketplace. I want to congratulate our negotiators for all of their hard work on behalf of America's businesses and workers.