

## Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Chancellor-Elect Gerhard Schroeder of Germany

October 9, 1998

### Kosovo

Q. Mr. President, the Serbs are threatening to retaliate against aid workers if NATO uses force. Any second thoughts, sir?

President Clinton. I think they would regret that very much if they did it. I think they know better than to do that.

Q. What do you expect from the German side?

President Clinton. Perhaps the Chancellor-elect would like to make a statement about that.

### Impeachment Inquiry

Q. Mr. President, is there anything you can do to speed up the impeachment inquiry on the Hill by agreeing not to challenge everything in the Starr report?

President Clinton. I don't have anything to add to what I said yesterday.

Q. Mr. President, have you had time—

Q. Are you in agreement on Kosovo?

Q. —promises continuity. What do you expect—

President Clinton. He has something to say.

### Kosovo

[At this point, a question was asked and answered in German, and a translation was not provided.]

President Clinton. Will somebody translate for the American press? I understood it, but I don't—[laughter].

Q. Well, then, you translate, sir.

Q. [Inaudible]—work on Kosovo?

President Clinton. Excuse me?

Q. Did you also agree with Mr. Fischer about Kosovo?

President Clinton. I don't know, I just—

Chancellor-Elect Schroeder. It's enough to agree with me.

President Clinton. That's right. [Laughter] I think—let me say—we had obviously spoken about Kosovo and that—we had agreed about the next steps to be taken, and you started to have them Monday in Germany. Is that right?

Chancellor-Elect Schroeder. Yes.

President Clinton. In other words, we believe the next step is that the NATO Allies must

approve the action order, and what Herr Schroeder said was he expected that to happen on Monday. And he has talked with Chancellor Kohl; they talk back and forth together about this.

### Germany-U.S. Relations

Q. What would you say about the prospects of German-American relations with the new government?

President Clinton. Oh, I feel very good about it. The United States and Germany have had a unique and profoundly important relationship for decades, and I believe it will continue to be very strong. I am very—personally, very excited about a lot of the ideas that Mr. Schroeder advanced in the campaign, things that he wanted to try in Germany. They bear some similarity to some of the things that I have tried to do here, that Prime Minister Blair has tried to do in Great Britain.

I think we are all trying to adapt our countries to this global economy, a global society, to reap the benefits of it, but to keep a human face on it, to make sure that this world we're living in really works for ordinary citizens more effectively. And no one has all the magic answers, but I'm confident that we need bold experimentation. We need to be trying new things. And I hope we can work together on those things. I'm quite excited about the prospect of doing so.

Q. No worries about the Greens?

President Clinton. I have enough to do to worry about getting America to do what we need to do here. That's Germany's issue.

Chancellor-Elect Schroeder. That's my problem. [Laughter]

### Kosovo

Q. Mr. President, what happens if the Germans do not pledge troops for Kosovo?

President Clinton. Excuse me?

Q. What would happen if the Germans would not pledge troops—ground troops or air troops from our contingent for NATO action on Kosovo?

President Clinton. Well, let me say, first of all—and it's important that all of you—there

are two separate issues here, as I understand it, and if I make a mistake, Herr Schroeder can correct me. The first issue is whether Germany will support NATO issuing the action order to make sure that the plans are in place and authorized if military action should be needed. That is what he has said yes to today.

We all hope this will not happen. The President of Russia sent three high-ranking officials of his government to Mr. Milosevic, and he made a lot of specific commitments to honor the U.N. resolution. Those commitments are not being kept today. He can still keep the commitments that he made to President Yeltsin and keep the commitments inherent in the U.N. resolution, and none of this will happen. But I am convinced that it's important that we authorize NATO to act. So that's where the agreement is.

Now, as I understand it, the German Constitution requires the Bundestag to approve any out-of-Germany military action, and that is something that will have to await the Chancellor

assuming office later this month, and then we will see. I don't think it's appropriate for me to comment on that. It's enough for me right now that we are in agreement on the action order. That's all that matters today.

And I think we—in fairness to him, he's putting together his government. He's working out the understandings of the coalition. He's preparing to assume office. He has to make a wide range of decisions about new domestic policies. I've been exactly where he is, and I don't think we ought to add to his burdens today.

Thank you.

NOTE: The exchange began at 12:30 p.m. in the Colonnade at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; President Boris Yeltsin of Russia; and 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.

## Remarks on Education Legislation

*October 9, 1998*

Let me begin my thanking Senator Daschle and Congressman Gephardt and all their colleagues who are here for their leadership and their commitment on the issue of education. Let me also ask you to listen to what they said. We are less than 4 weeks away from an election. All public officials would like to go home, but they said that they and their colleagues would put the American people before their political interests and would put progress before partisanship and would stay here until we finally address the issue of our children's education.

We had over 50 Members of Congress here just a few days ago to ask the Republican leadership to give us just one day, one day to pass a budget that honors our values and cares for our children's future in the area of education.

We have the first balanced budget in 29 years. Our economy is prosperous amid global turmoil. We have the confidence that we can solve our problems, and the space—the emotional and the intellectual space—to think about our future. Now, this budget is purely and simply a test

of whether after 9 months of doing nothing, we are going to do the right thing about our children's future. Members of Congress should not go home until they pass a budget that will strengthen our public schools for the 21st century.

I am determined that this budget will make a strong downpayment on our drive to hire 100,000 new highly qualified teachers, to reduce class size in the early grades. Today there are a record number of children in our schools, and studies confirm what everyone knows: smaller classes and better trained teachers make all the difference. We have a duty to provide them.

Smaller classes and more teachers—well, you've got to have some place for the class to meet. All across America, children are being forced to learn in school buildings that are either too crowded or even crumbling or are not wired for the 21st century. I have asked the Republican majority repeatedly to act on an innovative plan to help communities modernize or build 5,000 schools. We can do this without