

Keep in mind—and I think I made this clear at the time—the reason we went forward with the air actions is because we thought there was some chance it would deter Mr. Milosevic based on two previous examples: number one, last October in Kosovo, when he was well poised to do the same thing; and number two, in Bosnia, where there were 12 days of NATO attacks over a 20-day period. However, I also well understood that the underlying facts were somewhat different. I still believe we did the right thing. And I believe, as one of the area's leaders said in the last couple of days, it would have been much worse had we not taken action.

Now, there is a literal sense, Sam, in which, from the air, you cannot take every Serbian body in a uniform on the ground in Kosovo and extract them from Kosovo and put them back in Serbia. That, I think, is self-evident to everyone. So when I tell you that I think this will work, what I mean by that is, I think if we execute well, if we are determined, and if we spend enough time doing it, we will either break down his military capacity to retain control over Kosovo or the price of staying there will be far greater than the perceived benefits.

That is the logic behind the campaign, not that it will physically extract every person and put them back across the border. Everyone knows that's not true. And I'm glad you asked the question because I think it's very important that everyone be clear on this.

This is—my belief is that if we vigorously, comprehensively execute the air campaign, and if we are prepared to take the time and do our very best to care for the refugees as best we can in the meanwhile and to provide stability and support to the frontline states and especially to Albania and Macedonia, that we will prevail. That is what I believe. And I believe we will do it because we have the capacity to dramatically degrade his military operation which is the

instrument of his control and because we have the capacity to make this policy very, very expensive for him militarily and economically and in other ways.

Yes, sir, in the back.

#### *Effectiveness of Policy*

*Q.* Mr. President, under the scenario that you've just laid out doesn't mean that he would necessarily comply with the five conditions, which would also mean that it might be too high to keep his forces there, the cost, but then you would have to be willing to move some forces in to take the ground that they could no longer hold. And it seems at the moment there's no willingness to do that.

*The President.* Our position on that, I think, is the correct one. The Secretary General has recommended a reassessment of what would be required. I think that everybody in the Alliance agrees with his decision; that is the correct decision. But we have not weakened our conditions, nor will we. If anything, I think this meeting has seen not only a reaffirmation but an intensification of our determination to see the refugees back in, the Serb forces out, an international force to protect them, and the movement toward self-government for the Kosovars.

Thank you very much.

*NOTE:* The President's 173d news conference began at 3:50 p.m. in the amphitheater at the Ronald Reagan International Trade Center. In his remarks, he referred to President Leonid Kuchma of Ukraine; President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro); former Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin of Russia; former Chancellor Franz Vranitzky of Austria; U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan; and Secretary General Javier Solana of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

## Remarks at the Meeting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization-Ukraine Commission

*April 24, 1999*

Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary General. Like all the NATO leaders, I am very pleased

to welcome President Kuchma to this first summit meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Commission.

When we launched this commission 2 years ago in Madrid, we hoped it would lead to a pragmatic and truly distinctive working partnership. Ukraine is a nation critical to our vision of an undivided, peaceful, democratic Europe.

The experience of the last 2 years has vindicated our hopes. Our Armed Forces are working together well in Bosnia. Ukraine played a vital role in Kosovo in the verification mission until it was driven out by the regime in Belgrade.

I appreciate President Kuchma's efforts to persuade Mr. Milosevic to end his campaign against the Kosovar Albanians so that the Kosovar people can come home with security and self-government.

Ukraine has also proposed an ambitious program of cooperation with NATO, and the Alliance has agreed to establish our very first Partnership for Peace training center in the Ukrainian town of Yavorov. Our nations also will support Ukraine's efforts to reform its economy, deepen its democracy, and advance the rule of law, all vital to Ukraine's security and the success of our partnership.

When we act to maintain peace and security in Europe, we will strive to do so with our partners, including Ukraine. That is what we hope to do with Ukraine and other nations in Kosovo once peace is restored there.

We have taken many practical, good steps toward realizing the promise of our partnership. But we should also not lose sight of the larger significance of what we are trying to do here, in light of the history of Ukraine and the history of Europe, for the people of Ukraine have felt the horrors of communism and fascism and fam-

ine. At different points in this century, the flags of five outside powers have flown over Ukrainian territory. Now Ukraine flies its own flag, and it is incumbent upon all of us to support Ukraine's transition and what its people have called their European choice.

Ukraine still faces large challenges: political, economic, environmental. But now it is free to choose its destiny. And it has used that freedom to choose democracy and tolerance and free markets, integration, and the choice to dismantle its nuclear arsenal.

President Kuchma's presence here is a reminder that most of Europe is coming together today. Most of Europe has rejected the idea that the quest for security is a zero-sum game in which one nation's gain is another's loss. So most of all, I want to take this opportunity on behalf of the people of the United States to express my respect and gratitude to President Kuchma and the people of Ukraine for the choices they are making, and to assure them that all of us and our partners will stand with them as they work for a better future.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 4:28 p.m. at the Mellon Auditorium. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary General Javier Solana of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; President Leonid Kuchma of Ukraine; and President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary General Solana and President Kuchma.

## Remarks at a Dinner Honoring the Leaders of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council

*April 24, 1999*

Thank you very much. Please be seated. Mr. Secretary General, Mrs. Solana, allies, and friends: It's a great honor for Hillary and for me to welcome the largest group of world leaders ever to assemble in Washington here to the White House on this beautiful spring evening.

Just a few years ago, a gathering of all the nations here in partnership would have been unthinkable. But we are all here tonight because

we are thinking—we are thinking of a future brighter than the past; a future of shared values and shared visions; a future in which we define national greatness by its commitment to human rights and mutual respect, not to ethnic and religious bigotry; in which we measure the success of nations by how well we lift people up, not by how much we tear them down.