

reconstruct the Balkans. But the key thing about this is our determination to make sure that reconstruction actually happens.

NOTE: The exchange began at 1:42 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. In his remarks, the Presi-

dent referred to Representative Carolyn McCarthy and Sarah Brady, chair, Hand Gun Control, Inc. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany in Cologne June 18, 1999

Character Education in Public Schools

Q. Mr. President, in another House action, the House has passed a measure which would permit the Ten Commandments to be posted in public schools. Do you think that's constitutional?

President Clinton. I think it raises constitutional questions. I think what they're trying to do is to say that the schools ought to teach basic elements of character education, and I agree with that. And Secretary Riley and I have worked on that for several years, now. So I would—what I would like to do is to, rather than get into a big constitutional fight, is to have the Secretary meet with the Members of Congress, show them what we're trying to do in this area that is plainly constitutional, and maybe get them to support that, so we can intensify our efforts.

And the idea that the schools ought to build the character of children I think is a very good idea. But it ought to be done in a way that respects the wide diversity of our student body and that doesn't lead to a long, drawn-out legal challenge.

I understand the impulse behind it, and I think the impulse is good. We just have to be—we don't want to raise constitutional questions. There is another option here that I think achieves their objective. I'm going to—when I get home I'm going to talk to them about it.

NATO-Russia Negotiations on Kosovo

Q. [Inaudible]—you think there will be a solution with the Russians concerning the problems in Kosovo?

President Clinton. I do. The Chancellor and I—we're going to talk about it.

I'd like to begin by thanking the *Bundeskanzler* for hosting this and for doing such an outstanding job not only leading the G-8 but also leading the EU in this period and for being a wonderful leader in our Alliance in the campaign in Kosovo.

We have been working very hard in the last days, as you know, to get our troops in as the Serbs leave. Today, we have 19,000 in; 35,000 of theirs have gone. And this is a good day. And I do believe, based on what I have just heard, that we have a good chance of reaching a resolution today on the role of the Russians in our KFOR. So we have to discuss this, but I think if we can get everybody together on this in the next couple of hours, we'll have an agreement. I'm hoping.

Debt Relief

Q. Chancellor Schroeder, the indebted nations want debt forgiveness now, about \$100 billion. Is that doable?

Chancellor Schroeder. I think that sum will certainly not be achieved, whatever it will get to. But we certainly get together here during the summit to talk about the fact that we would like to assist the poorest countries with their development and their debt problems.

We, of course, have to—we're at the beginning of the summit—have to go in and discuss the more finite detail, and then we'll come up with a result which we'll share with you at the end of the summit, and not now, at the beginning. [Laughter]

NOTE: The exchange began at 2:51 p.m. in the Isabellensaal Room at the Gurzenich. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.