

And all they've got to do is ask. And I'm the kind of person, if we can't help you, I'll say, "We can't help you." But if we can help you, we will. Interesting enough, there's a wonderful movie called "Hotel Rwanda," by the way. And the Belgian citizen who ran the hotel came to visit me yesterday in the Oval Office. He's a spectacular guy. I said, "You're a hero." And he said, "No, I'm not a hero." I said, "Well, you are to a lot of people," for being such a humanitarian and drawing—you know, to helping draw the world's attention to what it means to go through a genocide. And free nations must work together to prevent genocide.

President's Upcoming Visit to Brussels

Q. Can the Belgian Government read a positive gesture in your first visit to Brussels now?

The President. Oh, they already have. Listen, I'm absolutely convinced that the—His Majesty—my visit with His Majesty and

Her Majesty will be great, and the Prime Minister, who I've known for a long time, will be good. I'm looking forward to this. I really am. It's—I remember going to the chocolate shop and—which was not diplomacy, it was pure commercialism on my part. But it was kind of a sweet reminder of our trip there, and I'm just confident that the trip will be equally as good this time.

Q. Thank you so much, Mr. President, for these kind words.

The President. Good luck to you.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 10:41 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to Paul Rusesabagina, whose actions to shelter refugees during the 1994 Rwanda genocide were depicted in the film "Hotel Rwanda"; and King Albert II, Queen Paola, and Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt of Belgium. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With ARD-German Television
February 18, 2005

Agenda for the President's Upcoming Visit to Europe

Q. Mr. President, your visit to Europe is an important gesture. Now what many people wonder is, beyond the style, what substance you're going to add to the—in-vigorating the transatlantic relationship? Schroeder has just proposed a NATO reform, to have a forum to discuss policy. What do you think about things like that?

The President. Well, I—look, I mean, first of all, I think NATO is vital, and I look forward to reminding him that the U.S. position is that NATO is a vital institution, and that—but so is the EU. And we look forward to working with the EU.

In terms of—and I think it's a legitimate question for people to say, "Look, it's fine

to have nice words, but it's—what can we do together? What can we do together to make the world a better place?" We can continue to fight disease and hunger, which we will. The United States is actively involved on the continent of Africa on HIV/AIDS and wants to work with our European friends through the Global Fund to do so. We can work on trade matters, a benefit to the citizens of the U.S. and to Europe that there be active trade. And equally importantly, we can work to spread freedom and peace.

And so I'm going to talk about Middle Eastern peace, my vision about two states living side by side in peace, Israel and Palestine. I'm going to talk about Iran. I'll talk about Syria. I'll talk about Lebanon.

I mean, there's a lot of things—concrete things—that we need to be working on so that we can say when it's all said and done, the world is more peaceful for our children.

Iran and Syria

Q. You mentioned Iran and Syria, two real hot spots, two conflicts in the making. Now, 70 percent of all Germans are convinced, according to a latest poll, that you are already planning a military action against Iran. Now, what do you say to disperse these fears? You know that Blair, Schroeder, and Bush would like you to play a more active role in the diplomatic—

The President. No, I know—listen, we're playing—look, first of all, I hear all these rumors about military attacks, and it's just not the truth. We want diplomacy to work. And I believe diplomacy can work so long as the Iranians don't divide Europe and the United States. And the common goal is for them not to have a nuclear weapon. It's in the interests of the German people and the American people and all people for the Iranians not to develop that nuclear weapon.

And so I want to applaud and will applaud Gerhard and the other leaders for sending a clear message to Iran. The Iranians need to know—they know what they need to do. And so what they're trying to do is kind of wiggle out. They're trying to say, "Well, we won't do anything, because America is not involved." But America is involved. We're in close consultation with our friends. We're on the board of the IAEA. And we will continue to work with friends and allies to make it clear.

The other thing Iran's got to do—two other things they've got to do, is stop exporting terror through Hizballah, which could be a devastating blow to the peace process between Israel and the Palestinian people, and they ought to open up their country to more democracy and freedom, just like we do in the United States and Germany, give their people a chance to express themselves in a free way.

Q. Now, some people are reminded, when you say you have no plans for military actions, they're reminded of the pre-Iraq crisis, when you said, "No war plans on my desk," and then one month later, there was. What's different this time?

The President. Well, it's totally different. The Iraqi situation was one where many good people tried diplomacy to solve the problem. Remember, the whole world thought the man had weapons of mass destruction. The United Nations thought he had weapons of mass destruction. And that's why—one of the reasons why they passed 16 resolutions. I mean, this was an issue where diplomacy had been exhausted.

And I went to the United Nations and said, "Let's, one more time, hold the man to account." And the United Nations said, "Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." That's what the world body said. The United Nations Security Council voted 15 to nothing for that resolution.

The Iranian issue hasn't even been to the United Nations yet. In other words, there's a lot more diplomacy to be done. And the people of Germany have just got—I know the rumors, and I've heard all the gossip and the false stories about this, that—the people have got to know that we will try diplomacy for all means.

Iraq

Q. Are you happy with the way things are going in Iraq? They just had elections, but they seemed to not support the moderate Allawi but more the Shiites. And in that situation, what are you going to ask the Germans to do on top of what they're already doing in the training?

The President. Well, you know, look, I think Gerhard is comfortable in the training mission. But I'm going to wait for him to tell me if he's interested in participating. If so, the German Government would be welcome. Germany is really good at certain things, like we're good at things. And Germany is good at training and ministerial—developing ministries and humanitarian aid

and the PRT in Afghanistan, for example, is a great German contribution. And what friends do is they say, “Are you comfortable? If you’re interested in helping this fledgling democracy get to be a more mature democracy, where’s your comfort level?” And so I’m looking forward to talking to him about that.

You mentioned the Shi’as. Allawi is a Shi’a himself. My attitude is this: A Government that has been voted on by the people is going to be, by its very nature, a reasonable Government. In other words, it’s a—governments tend to reflect the will of the people, and the people of Iraq want to live in peace. The mothers and dads want to raise their children in a peaceful environment.

I am heartened by the political posturing going on. I think it is healthy to see the different factions of Government begin to emerge, all of whom are saying—this is an important point—all of whom are saying, “There needs to be a unified Iraq, respect for minority rights.” And there’s a nationalist feeling there. I mean, some are saying, “Are you worried about Iranian influence?” Well, if the Iranian Government tries to destabilize an elected government, I am. But to the extent that the Iraqi people love Iraq before they love Iran, I take comfort. And Iraq is a proud nation, and they care deeply about their national heritage and tradition and future.

Germany and the U.N. Security Council

Q. One word about Germany’s aspirations for a permanent seat in the Security Council?

The President. Yes, right. [Laughter]

Q. You knew I’d ask that.

The President. No, you should ask it. And Gerhard—I’m very aware of that. And we’ll look forward to working—look, I haven’t taken a position on reform yet. And I want to see how this—the different models of reform come forward. But Germany is a great nation, and Germany is—Europe is vital for the future of the United States, and Germany is vital for the future of Europe. And I’m open for suggestions.

Q. Thank you very much.

The President. Thanks for coming.

Q. We should do this every month.

The President. I’d like to.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 10:48 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi Interim Government. He also referred to Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), a component of NATO’s International Security Assistance Force operating in Afghanistan. The interviewer referred to Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Slovak State Television February 18, 2005

President’s Upcoming Visit to the Slovak Republic

Q. Mr. President, I assume that your trip to Europe, after your reelection, was very well tailored, and we can imagine why you go to Brussels and to Germany. But there are lots of—lots of speculation about why

you decided to go to Bratislava. So what was behind this decision? And what will be your message for Slovaks and people in our region?

The President. Thanks. I’ve been trying to think about when this thought got in