

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

APRIL 2, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY
(Milwaukee, Wisconsin)

THE WHITE HOUSE

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION
WITH THE PRESIDENT
BY

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
GREATER MILWAUKEE ETHNIC ORGANIZATIONS

MADER'S RESTAURANT

1:10 P.M. CST

QUESTION: Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, it is an extraordinary privilege to welcome you to Milwaukee, a truly cosmopolitan, ethnic cross-section of America.

This is exemplified by the fact, Mr. President, that in every fall we have an international show here and we have over 30 different ethnic groups. We have 100,000 people attending this affair.

I intend to be brief and concise.

First of all, the Americans with ethnic ties are very appreciative of your services to America during the time of immediate post-Watergate, and we will always remember this, and our prayers were with you every day during this period.

However, this is a two-way street and the name of the game of the record is voting and I feel that we would like to offer you a service for your consideration of loyalty of Eastern and Southern European countries.

Consequently, I would like to make a few observations.

The different nationality groups have been in the camp of the Democratic Party since Roosevelt's time. This is a known fact. Now, during the 1972 campaign of Nixon I was surprised and amazed to see this ethnic group go along with Nixon and his campaigners and it was amazing to my own office (inaudible), the areas I traveled in America and it was a surprise.

However, this was shortlived and right after the 1972 election our group not only became disenchanted with the national recovery and the plight of our people but it (inaudible).

MORE

Consequently, Mr. President, something specific by you and through your Administration must be done to win back this allegiance which was so shortly held by Nixon. Surprisingly, very little needs to be done.

Specifically, the consensus I gather, talking to various ethnic groups around the country, number a few things.

Number one, the ethnic American studies, we ask the Administration to give their full support. We, the ethnics, have paid our taxes, have supported the United States Government and the armed forces, and the highest number of enlistments in the First and Second World Wars have been silent and manned the factories and so on and so forth, and we asked very little in return. This was the first gesture by the United States Government towards the ethnic groups.

First, \$100 million was supposed to be funded. They cut it down to \$20 million, and finally they cut it down to \$1.8 million, and this was also supposed to be eliminated until a last ditch thing.

Now we are not going to march in protest to Washington, D. C., but the ethnics will show it at the voting polls and, consequently, I ask that this Administration give consideration.

Secondly, --

THE PRESIDENT: Can I answer --

QUESTION: Wait.

THE PRESIDENT: Let me say first, on the question of appointments and recognition, I think we have in our presence here now Mitch Kobelinski, who is in charge of the Small Business Administration.

Number two, on the ethnic education matter, about a week ago the Office of Management and Budget and myself were discussing this with the head officials in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and they are seeking a way within the funds that have been appropriated to continue the \$1.5 million for that program. So I can't say today that it is accomplished, but there are people in the top of HEW and in OMB who are working on it and I am confident that they will find a solution.

Ask one more and then I want to answer questions from some others.

MORE

QUESTION: The second point I want to bring out -- and I will be all through in a minute and a half -- is we strongly request that the President, by Executive Order, include Eastern and Southern European affirmative action programs if this is possible.

Thirdly, we ask in regards to the 1980 Federal Census -- this is very important to the ethnics -- we ask that all ethnics be included in the Census. Now only the first and second generations are included and you forget about the third, while the Blacks and the Latins are always counted. This is important in many areas. We request --

THE PRESIDENT: One more and then I have got to get on here.

QUESTION: I agree with you. (Laughter)

We request that the United States publications that appear in Poland and other (inaudible) countries have the same privilege -- and they are allowed to be circulated in America -- that these publications be allowed to be circulated in Europe.

The last point that we wanted to get support of -- and this will take 10 seconds -- House Bill Number 9466, in regards to establishing a commission on security and cooperation in Europe so we can follow through on the deals that we make with Russia and other countries.

Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: On that last point, the European Security Conference agreement provided that there should be within two years another meeting to determine whether the agreements that were signed were lived up to and we have people in the Department of State who are following it very closely and we will be prepared in 1977 to go there and to make certain that what was agreed to in Helsinki is being carried out.

Yes?

QUESTION: Mr. President, we, here, in Milwaukee, are very appreciative of the fact that in your Administration you have appointed someone as the Special Assistant for Ethnic Affairs, the office that was long overdue, and I think this will help us in our area of making ourselves heard to you.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think we have a great person. I think we have an excellent representation of the ethnic groups in the White House and so I am sure that I will hear if I make any mistakes, and he will tell me if I am about to. (Laughter)

Yes?

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, when we spoke a little earlier I indicated that if there is anything this group can offer you it is the first-hand experience and knowledge of Communism and totalitarian Government, and I hope that you accept the counsel of those people here -- that first generation that fought its way out of Eastern Europe and sought out the United States as the ideal homeland for their families.

Along with that line there is a concern now about our current defense stand, our current strength. We spoke a little earlier about the National Guard and the fact that numbers are down -- our military budget is the smallest as the percentage of the GNP it has ever been. Many of the people here that have been in the countries prior to World War II that skimped on their military now find themselves enslaved nations.

I wanted your comments on the military budget and the defense spending.

THE PRESIDENT: Let me first tell you that in January of 1975 I submitted to the Congress the largest peacetime military budget in the history of the United States -- unfortunately, the Congress cut it by \$7.5 billion. The cut was too big. And if reductions of that magnitude were to go on, we will be in jeopardy.

On the other hand, in January of this year, to make certain that we keep the momentum going for our military capability, so that we are unsurpassed, I recommended the largest military budget in the history of the United States, peacetime or wartime. It is \$112.4 billion with a \$1 billion 800 million increase in strategic funding, \$4.8 billion in conventional force increased funding, a \$1 billion increase in research and development, and a number of other increases. It was an increase of about 11 percent and, as you know, the budget for next year in many domestic programs is being reduced.

So, in defense, with a budget for the fiscal year 1977, I recommended a military budget that turns the trendline upward to maintain our unsurpassed military capability.

Now let me take our strategic forces. Before I do it I want you to know that I spent 14 years in the Congress of the United States spending most of my time in military appropriations hearings. We would go seven months a year, five hours a day, five days a week listening to Secretaries of Defense, Secretaries of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Chairmen and Joint Chiefs of Staff. I think I know something affirmatively about military programming and the history of what we have had, what we have now, and what we need.

MORE

All right, let's take our strategic forces right now. Our ballistic missiles are more accurate than those of the Soviet Union. Our ballistic missiles in the covers that they are in, the launch pads they are on, are more survivable than those of the Soviet Union. But the most important fact is we have a ratio, as I recall, of roughly two to one more warheads than the Soviet Union has.

Now it is warheads that do the damage if they are called upon to be utilized. So if we are ahead in warheads, I think we have the necessary capability.

For what reasons? To deter aggression, to maintain the peace and to protect our national security.

But this is not all of our strategic capability. We have a three to one ratio over the Soviet Union in strategic bombers -- three to one -- and we are following on the B-52s, which is our current strategic bomber capability, with the B-1 if we can get the Congress to fund us, if we can get the Congress to give us the money to carry on.

Let's turn to the submarine situation. We have the Polaris, we have the Poseidon, and I have requested additional funding for what is called the Trident, which is a much more capable submarine for ballistic missile purposes.

But now let's take, having mentioned the Navy, I heard somebody or read somebody saying that we were outnumbered in the Navy and they quoted the figures, as I recall, of 1,100 to 400, something like that. That is an oversimplification. It shows that you are comparing apples with oranges. We have about a three to one ratio over them in tonnage. Some people try to take numbers and compare a torpedo boat with an aircraft carrier. Now they don't quite relate to one another.

An aircraft carrier that costs a billion dollars and has probably 125 strike aircraft, that has probably a tonnage of 80 million (thousand) tons, is a lot more powerful some torpedo boat. So you have to understand what people are comparing and it is a distortion, it is a misleading statement for people to quote numbers without quoting what the military capability is, and I think it is unfortunate for this country that misleading statements like that are made -- it could alarm the American people, it could have an adverse impact on our allies, and it could encourage our enemies, and I think it is very unfortunate.

Yes?

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, I would just like to say that we, the American people, feel honored having you as President for your frankness and honesty in bringing the truth to Government -- to the American people.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

QUESTION: Mr. President, do you believe we are committing suicide by attracting our information-gathering sources abroad by publishing the names of those people that serve this country abroad in a very important field?

THE PRESIDENT: I think that some of the information that has been given out as to people who represent us abroad is very harmful to our intelligence-gathering capability. I think one of the most tragic incidents was when some, I think, underground newspaper in Greece published the name of a man named Richard Welch and the net result is Richard Welch was assassinated. I think that is unforgiveable, unconscionable, indefensible. We cannot get people to work for the United States if we can't give them the assurance that their identity and whatever else is needed is protected. And these publicity seekers in this case, whoever they were, and I don't know, resulted in the murder, the loss of life of a person. I think it is unconscionable.

QUESTION: Mr. President, over the past years we have been (inaudible) -- it is one-sided; that is, it is working largely for the benefit of the Soviet Union. What are we doing to turn this trend around?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I respectfully disagree with your appraisal that it is harmful and beneficial to the United States. As a matter of fact, I think it has been a two-way street and from our point of view I think we have done very well.

Let's take the Helsinki agreement which many people have castigated. The Helsinki Conference was the greatest political liability propaganda loss to the Soviet Union, period. The net result is that we have forced the Soviet Union and others who signed that -- number one, they have to give far more human treatment, the getting together of family, the movement of press personnel back and forth across the borders. The Helsinki agreement, for the first time in writing, authorizes peaceful readjustment of borders. The Helsinki agreement under no circumstances wrote into a legal document the existing board. There were 33 nations there, as I recollect, including a representative from His Holiness and I don't believe that His Holiness would have his representative sign a document that would be, under any circumstances, inhumane.

What I am saying is it was a propaganda liability to the Soviet Union.

MORE

Now we are insisting, whether it is in SALT I or in SALT II negotiations, that it is a two-way street, and as long as I am President it will be nothing other than a two-way street.

QUESTION: Mr. President, Americans of Ukranian descent in this country are particularly concerned about the persecution of the Ukranian intellectuals in political prison in the Soviet Ukraïn. Under the interpretation of the Helsinki Conference or for purely humanitarian reasons, what can our Government do to help them to get freed?

THE PRESIDENT: The first thing you can do, if you would give me the names or give somebody on my staff the names --

QUESTION: Amalrik (?) is one of the most prominent --

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, I have heard of that.

QUESTION: He suffered inhuman treatment for the crime of no more than writing three novels. Now does the Helsinki Conference guarantee their right of speech for free expression or religious feeling?

THE PRESIDENT: It does not involve that particular aspect. It does involve the reuniting of families, it does involvesome of the other humane things, but it does not seek to interpret or to change local laws in that sense.

Let me give you an example. Remember this Lithuanian Kudirka who tried to escape from a Soviet fishing boat and got on board an American Coast Guard vessel and then was put back? This was before I was in the White House.

I want you to know -- and I saw him -- where did we see Kudirka the other day? Some place in the last month or two I saw him and he was very grateful because he knows through my personal intercession he got back here and is in the United States.

QUESTION: What can our Government do from a humanitarian point of view to intercede on their behalf, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, if you will give me the names, we will undertake it.

QUESTION: Sir, I wrote you a letter and hand delivered it to Mr. Kuropas.

THE PRESIDENT: All right, fine.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, I am a Soviet Orthodox priest from (inaudible) and also a citizen of the United States. I would like to inform you that in our Orthodox Church services we always pray for you and for your health, so I guess I deserve to ask you a question. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: If I don't answer it right, will you still pray for me? (Laughter)

QUESTION: Mr. President, I cannot change our books. (Laughter)

Last December my brother who was a mechanical engineer and doctor of engineering, he was the professor at the University, he was killed in Tito's jail and I read this morning's newspaper that he said that they are sentencing those people who are pro-Soviets who do not have anything to do with the pro-Soviet regime. His father is -- my brother father from my father's brother, cousin. He does not have anything to do with Soviet. His father was the (inaudible). He fought against Communism. He invented three inventions over there and they didn't recognize them so he fought against it and they put him in jail and at 9:00 today in jail he was killed. So you can expect me to ask you a question (inaudible) to give you information on this.

I came to this country 13 years ago and I am proud to live in this country and I am grateful that you invited ethnic groups to discuss this. I would like to say this. I lived in Yugoslavia for 22 years and I know that Yugoslavia is not independent, she is still an enemy of the United States. (Inaudible) the United States Government sends to Yugoslavia is not used for the people but for their leaders and rulers to prolong their regime and to enjoy American dollars that might be available.

The Yugoslav Government sent a field hospital to North Vietnam while still the United States was fighting in North Vietnam. The same money which the United States gave them, they bought a field hospital to send to help North Vietnam, Communists, against this country.

Secondly, I do not think that visits to Yugoslavia helped the people in Yugoslavia because that helps the Communist Government to kill traits of freedom which those freedom lovers still have in their hearts. That helps the Communist Government to survive longer, and I would appreciate if you would consider that in your next trips which you might plan or in your next financial aid which you are going to send or not to send to Yugoslavia because in that way the Americans are helping the Communist Government in Yugoslavia to survive. We are helping that regime to survive.

MORE

I am grateful to be here. Thank you very much for coming to Milwaukee and visiting us ethnic groups.

I will still pray for you. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, thank you very much.

I think we all recognize that in those Communist-dominated countries in Eastern Europe there is far from the kind of freedom that we enjoy in this country. On the other hand, I think we have to recognize in the case of Yugoslavia back in about 1950 or 1951 there was a distinct break -- was it 1948 -- from Stalin's Soviet Union. That was the first breach in the solid European-Asian Communist hierarchy.

In the interim time there has been that continued attempt to get more independence from the domination of the Soviet Union, and in more recent years we have had Romania move to a more independent status. There are indications that several of the other Eastern European countries, to the degree that they can -- and you know probably better than I, in some of those countries it is very difficult for a government to adopt a total independence from the Soviet Union.

It is a slow process but, from our point of view, as people interested in human beings, interested in freedom, interested in national independence, I think we have to keep pressure on and help in any way we can, and I can assure you that as far as I am concerned we will do so.

QUESTION: Mr. President, the question I have is, we are a bit concerned about the \$1 billion military aid to Turkey. Turkey is starting war already with Greece. Even though the American bases would be under Turkish control, we are still going to give \$1 billion aid to Turkey.

THE PRESIDENT: The gentleman refers to the negotiated military treaty with Turkey which was concluded several weeks ago, subject now to Senate confirmation.

There are several involved questions here but, let me take the first one of just the treaty. The United States has as part of our NATO contribution a very significant U.S. military operation in Turkey. I can't recall precisely how many U.S. Army, Air Force and Navy personnel are stationed in Turkey. We have, as I recall, some 10 fairly sizeable, very important military bases in Turkey, including three to five extremely important intelligence gathering stations where we use the most sophisticated hardware for the gathering of intelligence relating to the Soviet Union.

MORE

Now, all of those people, all of those bases are on Turkish soil. I think we have to expect to pay them something. Now that is why the agreement was reached.

But, let's now turn to Greece. We are right in the same kind of a negotiation with Greece because the United States, as a part of our NATO contribution, also has U.S. military personnel in Greece and we have U.S. military bases in Greece. I think as soon as the negotiators can conclude it we will probably have a U.S.-Greek treaty of somewhat the same kind.

The United States, as a partner in NATO, has to make a contribution when we put our people on their soil with our military hardware. In both Greece as well as in Turkey, we are using their soil, using their country for our mutual defense.

Now, the other question I think you probably are asking is, what about Cyprus? A quick review of the history.

As you know, in July of 1974 the then Greek Government tried to throw Makarios out, assassinate him and put a man named Sampson in. They were unsuccessful. They did not achieve the assassination of Makarios and they were not successful in getting Sampson in,

Then the Turks reacted and sent in up to 40,000 Turkish military personnel. Since August of 1974, we have had this stalemate on Cyprus and I think it is unfortunate, I think it is tragic, because you have somewhere between 200,000 and 300,000 Greek-Cyprus Cypriot refugees and I think that is one of the saddest things in current history.

We are working very hard to try and get Clerides, the Greek Cypriot negotiator, and Denktash, the Turkish Cypriot negotiator, to settle this tragic situation. They have made headway, they are making progress, and if we can be a little more patient I think we will get a settlement between the Greeks and the Turks, between Denktash and Clerides, and that tragedy will be over.

We are doing our utmost. As you know, it is a longstanding rivalry between Greece and Turkey over Cyprus as well as other matters, the Aegean Sea. I can just say we are trying to be fair to get a settlement of Cyprus and if we do, we will strengthen NATO. And if we get these two treaties -- one for Greece, one for Turkey -- it will improve our capability to help in that end of the Mediterranean.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I would have many questions but I would like to fulfill one question of my daughter. She told me if I have a chance to wish you health as President of the United States.

MORE

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very, very much, sir. Give her my very best, please.

Yes?

QUESTION: Mr. President, about a day ago or so we listened to another gentleman, your opponent, speak. I think one of the points that he was underlining was that it was a kind of a general decline in the moral -- I am not speaking about the hardware, it was kind of a moral defeat on the part of the United States.

The same thought was echoed also by Alexander Solzhenitsyn -- one is kind of a native American speaking and the other is one who has come from the Soviet Union -- and he emphasized the same thing.

Would you reassure us -- and I am sure that you feel the same as I do feel -- that your Administration is doing the best to kind of dispel this kind of a belief? Would you tell us something about this? We are doing the best to kind of keep not only the military strength but also the moral leadership.

THE PRESIDENT: It is my very strong personal belief that this Administration, represented by me and by the others who hold positions of great responsibility, approach every problem from a moral position plus an equitable position. I don't think you can achieve an equitable settlement unless you have a moral position to begin with, and so what we are trying to do and whenever we negotiate is to adopt what we think is right in our conscience from a position of morality and, at the same time, achieve it without going to war, and I think we are making headway.

We aren't compromising and we aren't sacrificing, and anybody who says we are does not know the facts. There is no evidence whatsoever that this Administration has done anything to step back from a position of morality and good conscience in dealing with any of the Communist countries. As a matter of fact, all of my public life I entered as a person who believed in helping our friends around the world trying to stand up for freedom on this side and the other side of the Iron Curtain.

One of the amusing things is really that in the 25-plus years I was in the Congress I was known as the biggest military hawk in the Republican Party or Democratic Party, and that is a fact.

So you aren't going to have to worry about any retreat on my part from either moral or equitable or military position.

MORE

QUESTION: We want to thank you on behalf of all these ethnic leaders, and I think they all recognize that you are the best friend that ethnic Americans have ever had in the White House.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Thank you very much. I have really enjoyed it. I will have to go out and swim or walk or something.

I want to thank the wonderful hosts here, as well as all of you, for one of the most delightful luncheons. It is a great privilege and a great honor to see you all.

Thank you.

END (AT 1:40 P.M. CST)