

needed here to be able to take a proper decision. That is the line that I consider the right one.

President Clinton. First, I agree with everything he just said. But to take your specifics—I saw the interview that President Chirac did with you, and what he said about the electrical power I thought was pretty good, that it would depend. That is, for me, it is important that if the Serbs want to keep Mr. Milosevic and don't want to be part of southeastern Europe's future, that at least they not freeze to death this winter and that their hospitals not be forced to close. So they need some power.

In terms of rebuilding the bridges so people can go to work, I don't buy that. That's part of their economic reconstruction, and I don't think we should help—not a bit, not a penny. So that's—but on the other hand, I think their hospitals ought to be able to function. I think—babies will be born; people will get sick; I think though—that people shouldn't be cold in the winter if we can help that. That's basically where I draw the line.

But we will—the reason the G-8—we didn't have a disagreement about it. We recognized that—the Chancellor read us through this—we recognized that we would have to have people in place in whom we had confidence, who could make most of these decisions on a day-to-day basis, and if they had a question, they could then kick it back to us. But I'll give you—I'm just giving you my kind of feeling about it.

Lori [Lori Santos, United Press International].

Reconstruction of the Balkans

Q. In your discussions over the past few days, did you win specific commitments—in your talks over the past few days, did you win specific commitments from the European leaders for the billions that you'll need for the reconstruction effort? And are you confident that they will carry the lion's share, as you said you wanted?

President Clinton. I think that their commitments and mine are in good faith. Let me restate what I said in my opening remarks. There will be—let me back up. I expect, in the next several days, all of you will hear various things about how much the im-

mediate reconstruction of Kosovo will cost, what we're looking at in terms of long-term development. Then you'll see both Europeans and Americans say we will or won't pay this or that amount of money.

I think that that—almost all of that is going to be rather fruitless in the end. What we have to do is have our people go in there and figure out, ballpark, what it's going to cost to get Kosovo up and going and whole again. And then we have to convene the leaders' meeting as well as have people look at what it would take to have a long-term development strategy for southeastern Europe. And obviously, that will be greater flexibility there; in other words, the more money you have, the more you can do; but there will be some flexibility there. And then we will—I will try to allocate our responsibilities.

But I am absolutely convinced—you heard what President Santer said—I think that all of us are committed to doing this. And let me just say to the American people and to—who would be listening to this and to our friends in Europe, it will probably cost more than most people think, but I promise you, it will be a lot cheaper than a continuation of war would have been. It will be phenomenally less expensive than a land invasion of Kosovo and a protected conflict would have been.

So I want to say what I said again is, the most expensive peaceful reconstruction is still cheaper than the cheapest war. This is a responsibility we should assume, and it will pay for itself many times over in future conflicts avoided, in future trading partners, in future cooperation.

Bombing of Chinese Embassy in Belgrade

Q. Mr. President, China last week bluntly rejected Under Secretary Pickering's explanation of the bombing of its Embassy in Belgrade. What is your reaction to that? Does it have any merit, their position, and have you given up—do you think you've lost any chance of reaching a WTO agreement with China before the end of this year?

President Clinton. Well, the answer to the second question is, no. I have not given up. The answer to the first question is, I think—as they have time to review the information we gave them, and reflect on it, I

think they will conclude that it was a truly tragic accident, that a series of very bad mistakes were made, and a tragic accident occurred.

I also, frankly—after Mr. Pickering made his important but difficult journey there, I noted that the reports, the contents of the report, were highlighted in Chinese news for 2 or 3 days thereafter, which I took to be quite a positive sign, actually.

So this is a difficult, painful period for them and for our relationship, but I'm not—I haven't given up on the WTO. I'd still like to see it finished this year. And I think we'll work through this.

Chancellor Schroeder. Last question.

Congressional Support for Reconstruction Funds

Q. Mr. President, your ability to keep your commitments on the aid to the region is dependent upon a Congress that has been very reluctant to come up with money. Do you anticipate difficulty there? And have you done anything to lay the groundwork with the Congress?

President Clinton. Well, yes and yes. Yes, I anticipate some difficulty; and yes, I've worked hard to lay the groundwork.

We have had lots of meetings on Kosovo, as you know, larger meetings with Congress. I have said all along that I thought that we had to participate in the long-term reconstruction, that I thought that we—just as in the peacekeeping—we can have a marginally more modest role in peacekeeping and reconstruction because we had a relatively larger role during the air campaign and paid a lot of the cost of that.

But we have—the Congress did give us funds, for example, in this supplemental, to help to pay for the relocation of the Kosovars' home and the attendant costs related to that. So I think that if we can make the case, that they will be willing to support it. And it's part of our responsibility.

You know, I just want to urge you to give us some time to come up with a plan for the short run, and then let the leaders in the region come up with a long-term plan and let us all sort of join together.

I think that our Congress and our taxpayers will be like most people—they want

to know what is the big picture; what is the long-term objective here; how does it relate to the interests of ordinary families in Germany and the United States, throughout Europe? And I think these are questions we'll be able to answer, and I think we'll get the support we need.

Do you want to take a European journalist question? Equal time here. [Laughter] You guys owe me one. [Laughter]

President's Visit to Slovenia

Q. Mr. President, you are going now to Slovenia. What's the purpose for the visit, and also the message of your visit in Slovenia?

President Clinton. Well, first of all, I'm going to Slovenia to highlight our partnership, our shared values, and our shared future. But I want the American people and the rest of the world to see a successful country in southeastern Europe that has done a good job of promoting democracy, of advancing prosperity, of working for integration in the region and with the rest of Europe.

They represent what I believe a whole region can become. So the Slovenians have been, in my view, very good citizens and good partners with all of us, and I have to highlight that. But I also want the trip to spark the imagination of others, both within the Balkans and beyond it, about the kind of future, the kind of societies we can build in all those countries if we work at it.

Thank you.

Q. Mr. President, take one more? Mr. President?

Chancellor Schroeder. One question for a European journalist. [Laughter]

Administration of Kosovo/Duration of U.S. Troop Involvement

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. Chancellor. Thank you, Mr. Chancellor.

Kosovo obviously now urgently needs an administration. How quickly do you think that can be facilitated via the OSCE or the European Union, and can the U.S. Americans contribute to that?

And now, one thing regarding President Clinton—6,000 soldiers on the ground; how long are they going to stay there for? How long will you want them to stay there? How