

clusion of the intergovernmental conference. And this conclusion, we hope, would be finished under the Dutch Presidency in June 1997. So we are starting with the negotiation at the beginning of 1998.

President Clinton. Let me make two general comments. Number one, the United States believes that an integrated and democratic and prosperous Europe is very much in our interest, therefore we support the expansion of the European Union. But we recognize that it is for the Europeans to decide the terms and the parties and the timetable of that expansion. But in general, we welcome the strengthening and the broadening of the Union.

Secondly, we have spent a lot of time since I've been in office trying to minimize tensions and resolve difficulties between Greece and Turkey. And in particular, I have made an effort to try to resolve the problems over Cyprus. I believe that the future of the European Union and the future of the United States will be much brighter and much less troublesome if these things can be resolved.

I believe that Greece and Turkey are two great nations that have an enormous commonality of interest, whether in NATO, whether in their interest in European integration, whether in their interest in minimizing chaos in the vicinity in which they both live—if they could simply resolve these long-standing difficulties between them. And I can only say for my part that I intend to do whatever I can in these next 4 years the American people have given me to try to help work out the situation in Cyprus and work out the problems generally between Greece and Turkey.

They are both our allies, and they're both very, very important to a stable 21st century. And I intend to invest an enormous amount of effort in trying to succeed there. And I ask them to reexamine their positions and try to reach out to one another. They plainly have more in common looking to the future than they do which divides them. It is only the past which continues to bedevil them.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's 133d news conference began at 2:20 p.m. in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office Building. The President met with Prime Minister John Bruton in his capacity as

President of the European Council and President Jacques Santer of the European Commission. In his remarks, the President referred to Stuart E. Eizenstat, Special Representative of the President and Secretary of State for the Promotion of Democracy in Cuba.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister John Bruton of Ireland and an Exchange With Reporters

December 17, 1996

Irish Peace Process

The President. Let me say I'm delighted to have Prime Minister Bruton here again today, along with the members of his government, and we're going to talk about Northern Ireland today. And I want to reiterate my call for the IRA to institute a cease-fire in words as well as deeds. If they do that, I am convinced that Sinn Fein will be invited to participate in the talks, and we believe that substantive and inclusive peace talks are the only way to resolve this.

Meanwhile, the talks go on. Senator Mitchell is doing a terrific job. And I want to say also a word of appreciation to the Loyalists for holding the cease-fire. I think that's a very good thing. We can't make peace until we end violence, and that's what we're going to talk about today, how we can keep working on that.

Q. Do they await the British elections, I mean, the question of movement and progress?

The President. Maybe the Prime Minister ought to answer that.

Prime Minister Bruton. I would like to say that I completely endorse what the President just said. On the contrary, I think an immediate cease-fire would have advantages that a postponed cease-fire wouldn't necessarily carry. I think it would set a policy position in regard to Sinn Fein's participation in talks in place before an election, which would carry through into the next British Parliament in a much more durable way, whereas a postponed cease-fire after the election would go into the term of office of a new government, with perhaps a new opposition, and there would be much less certainty about the response.

So I agree entirely with what the President has said. I think from every point of view, the point of view of their own movement, from the point of view of maximum opportunity, from the point of view of maximum durability of inclusive talks—a cease-fire now is the right choice for the Republican movement to make. And I'm very, very heartened that the President has said that again in such clear terms.

The President. The British and the Irish Governments have made enormous efforts here, but we can't succeed—or they can't succeed unless there is a cease-fire, an end to the violence, and we ultimately have inclusive talks. And I'm convinced that will happen if there is a cease-fire.

Legal Defense Fund

Q. Mr. President, let me ask you about a domestic issue, sir. Is Charles Trie a friend of yours, and do you agree with the decision to return the money he attempted to deliver to your legal defense fund?

The President. Yes, and yes.

Q. Were you aware he was raising money for your legal defense fund?

The President. Not till it came in. But I supported the decision. I was aware of the decision to return the money because—and I think in all these fundraising endeavors, the rules should be that all the checks should be checked to make sure that not only the fact but any even appearance of impropriety should be removed. And Mr. Cardozo was interested in the appearance of that, so was I, and that's why the decision was made. That's what our campaign did, and as the Democratic Party's people have said, that's what they should have done. But the campaign did it, the legal defense fund did it, and I think it was handled appropriately.

Q. Is he a close friend of yours?

The President. I've known him a long time. I knew him when he and his family came over and started a little restaurant about a mile from my home 20 years ago. And I saw them start with nothing and build up their family enterprise. They've worked very hard in this country, and they've done well.

Q. Now we'll get a real story, when the Irish press comes in.

The President. This will be like a Jesuitical examination. [Laughter]

[At this point, one group of reporters left the room, and another group entered.]

Irish Peace Process

Q. When you meet with Mr. Bruton today, do you think—there has been a lot of discussion over just what Sinn Fein has to do in order to get to the table, but is there anything else that Britain can also do to encourage Sinn Fein to get to the table at this point?

The President. Well, that's what—we're going to discuss all of that. I just want to say again that first I appreciate what the Irish and British Governments have done to date. Secondly, I still believe the IRA should immediately call a cease-fire, in words as well as deeds. I'm convinced that Sinn Fein will be invited to participate in the talks if that happens. And I think inclusive talks are the only way to make peace.

The talks will go on. Senator Mitchell, I think is doing a fine job, though Loyalists should be commended for holding the cease-fire. But peace will not come in the presence of violence; it must come with the absence of violence. I'm convinced of that. That's what we're going to talk about today.

Q. Mr. President, in the event of an Irish cease-fire, do you believe—personally believe that Sinn Fein should get immediate and automatic access to the talks process?

The President. Well, I believe that Sinn Fein would be invited to participate in the talks fairly soon thereafter. That's what I believe. But we have to talk about the details, you know. The Prime Minister has to keep me educated here. The texture of the Irish peace struggle is rather complex.

Q. Mr. President, with all your foreign policy challenges in the second term, will Ireland still be a priority as it was in the first term?

The President. Yes.

Q. Mr. President, what was your reaction to this attempt to smear Martha Pope in some of the British newspapers?

The President. She's a fine woman and a friend of mine. And I understand that the charge has been retracted. And if that's true, that's good. It should have been. We ought

to have more false charges retracted in this world, and I'm pleased by that.

Q. Do you know anything about a possible cease-fire that would inject new life into the peace talks?

The President. I know nothing more than you do probably about that. We're going to talk about it. I know we're working for it, and we'll keep working for it.

Q. Mr. President, there is a perception that the talks in Northern Ireland are going nowhere at the moment, that an agreement on decommissioning which looked close this week is not now likely in the immediate term. Are you as pessimistic as some people are in Northern Ireland?

The President. No, we can't afford pessimism. I mean, after all, if you just look at the whole sweep of events in the last 3 years or so and compare that to the previous 25 years, I still think that things are moving right along here. We're in a rough patch, but if we just keep at it, I think it will come out all right.

Prime Minister Bruton. Exactly.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:05 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Charles Yah Lin Trie, CEO, Diahatsu International Trading Co.; Michael H. Cardozo, executive director of the Presidential Legal Expense Trust; and Martha Pope, Deputy to the Special Adviser to the President and Secretary of State for Economic Initiatives in Ireland. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on Receiving the National AIDS Strategy

December 17, 1996

I am pleased today to receive the first-ever National AIDS Strategy. In the 15 years of this epidemic, we have never had such a unified strategy. This strategy represents an important milestone in the history of the fight to defeat this epidemic.

The National Strategy reiterates our administration's and our Nation's commitment to winning the battle against AIDS. It establishes six major goals for our national efforts: to find a cure and a vaccine; to reduce new HIV infections; to assure people living with HIV and AIDS access to high-quality care;

to fight AIDS-related discrimination at every turn; to lead the global fight to end AIDS; and to translate our research advances into treatment as quickly as possible.

These goals will help to guide our work in the coming term, and more specifically in the coming year. We have made significant progress in the last 4 years. Researchers working toward a cure and a vaccine are reporting encouraging news and giving us hope. New treatments, approved by the FDA in record time, are producing some very encouraging results in terms of the quality of people's lives and the potential for extending the length of life.

This progress results from more than a decade of investment in AIDS research, prevention, and care. I am very proud that in the four budgets my administration has produced, funding for AIDS programs has increased by 55 percent. We have also strengthened the Office of AIDS Research at NIH and tripled funding for AIDS drug assistance programs.

Despite this progress, we must recognize that the AIDS epidemic is not over. Far too many of our sons and daughters are still losing their lives to this epidemic every day. Far too many are still becoming infected. We will win the battle against HIV, but to do so we must stand shoulder to shoulder in the fight and we must build on the strides we have made. I am confident that my administration will do its part and that we have taken yet another step forward in that battle today.

Statement on Approval of the New Stabilization Force in Bosnia

December 17, 1996

I have formally approved NATO's new operation plan for the Stabilization Force (SFOR) that will succeed the NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR) in Bosnia after December 20. I welcome NATO's decision yesterday to approve formally the new operation plan and today to approve the Activation Order that will authorize the start of SFOR's mission.

SFOR's limited and focused mission is to consolidate the peace that IFOR successfully established and maintained. During the past