

bility in Europe. We don't want to do anything that increases tensions. I think that what we have decided to do will work if the Eastern European nations will make the most of it, and I hope they will.

Q. Do you think they just don't understand the concept well enough? I'm referring specifically to the President of Poland today.

The President. Yes, President Walesa. Well, you know what he said today in his interview. I think that that's why I'm going to see him. I'm going to Prague to see them, and we're going to talk about it. And Ambassador Albright and General Shalikashvili are both going to Eastern Europe ahead of me, and we're going to work hard to try to make everybody feel good about this approach. I think it's what our NATO partners want to do, and I think that it's a good beginning.

Q. How long does the evolutionary approach take?

The President. We don't know. We'll just have to see how it goes.

Q. Do you have a hope that all the nations of Europe eventually will be a part of NATO, including Russia?

The President. Well, I have a hope that all the nations of Europe will eventually be clearly and unambiguously committed to a peaceful and stable, secure Europe where the nations respect each other's borders. And I think we're working toward that.

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

Visit of Prime Minister Lubbers

Q. Mr. President, did you invite Mr. Lubbers to come to the White House because you expect him to be the next President of the European Community and successor of Jacques Delors?

The President. No, I invited him to come to the White House because he is already one of the leading statesmen in Europe and because our two nations have had a very strong relationship. We've worked together on matters of European and international security, on matters of trade and economic growth. There is a very large investment in this Nation from The Netherlands. We feel very good about our relationship. We met a couple of years ago, but we've not had a chance to visit since I've been President. So, that's why I asked him.

Europe

Q. Mr. President, Dutch politicians are afraid your administration is losing its interest in Europe. Is that a correct observation?

The President. No. I'm going to Europe three times this year to try to allay that. I asked for this NATO summit so that we could get together and talk about the future of NATO, our common security future. I intend to make it very clear that as long as I am President, we will maintain a strong military position in Europe and a strong support for NATO. One of the reasons that I asked General Shalikashvili to be Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is that he had just come from being the Supreme Commander in Europe and the commander of our forces there. And of course, I worked very hard to get the GATT round completed, along with Prime Minister Lubbers. So, we've done this together.

I think our economic and our security ties to Europe are as critical as they've ever been. And I hope that the opportunities that I'll have on this trip and again at the G-7 meeting with Naples and in-between, when I go back to commemorate the—and at least three different nations—the 50th anniversary of the events that brought an end to World War II, that all those things will reassure the people of your nation and of Europe about the United States intentions.

Q. [Inaudible]—to expand the NATO, you seem to have another opinion, right?

The President. No, I'm not against expanding NATO. I just think that if you look at the consensus of the NATO members at this time, there's not a consensus to expand NATO at this time, and we don't want to give the impression that we're creating another dividing line in Europe after we've worked for decades to get rid of the one that existed before. What we want is a secure Europe and a stable Europe. And I think that the proposal that I put forward would permit the expansion of NATO, and I fully expect that it will lead to that at some point.

Q. A part of the feeling of neglect in Europe is that there is not really a response of the State Department, from the European Bureau, to discussions with the diplomats here. They feel that inadequate. Are you aware of that, and what's your comment on that?