

# The President's News Conference

February 06, 1969

## THE PRESIDENT'S TRIP TO EUROPE

THE PRESIDENT. [1.] Ladies and gentlemen, as you will note from a release from the Press Office, I will leave on the 23d of this month for a trip to Europe which will take me to Brussels, to London, to Berlin and Bonn, to Rome and to Paris.

I will be accompanied on the trip by the Secretary of State, Mr. Rogers, and by my Adviser for National Security Affairs, Dr. Kissinger.

The purpose of the trip I will describe as being a working trip rather than a protocol trip. I plan to see in each of the countries I visit the head of government, and in addition to that, I will have a visit with the members of our United States delegation in Paris, headed by Ambassador Lodge, and will have a meeting with Pope Paul in Rome.

While I am in Brussels, I will see leaders of the NATO community. As far as the agenda is concerned for these meetings, it is wide open. I have some ideas about the future of the European community which I will discuss, and I am sure that my colleagues in that community have some ideas that they will want to discuss.

I have requested that, in addition to the usual group meetings which will take place, I have an opportunity to have an individual, face-to-face meeting with each head of government, with no one present except a translator when needed.

As I look at this trip and what it may accomplish, I want to make very clear that this is only a first step in achieving a purpose that I have long felt is vital to the future of peace for the United States and for the world. That is the strengthening and the revitalizing of the American-European community.

This will be the first, I would hope, of several meetings of this type that will take place in the years ahead. I would trust that, as a result of this meeting and as a result of other meetings that will take place, this great Alliance which, in my view, has been the greatest force for peace, to keep the peace, over the last 20 years-this great Alliance which was brought together by a common fear 20 years ago-will be held together now and strengthened by a common sense of purpose.

I will go now to your questions.

## QUESTIONS

### THE PRESIDENT AND THE PEACE TALKS

[2.] Q. Mr. President, in connection with your visit to Paris and your talks with Ambassador Lodge, do you see any possibility of your having any direct contact with the other side in these negotiations, specifically, the representatives of North Vietnam or the NLF [National Liberation Front]?

THE PRESIDENT. Mr. Smith [Merriman Smith, United Press International], I do not see any possibility of that kind of conversation at this time. I would not rule it out at some later time, if Ambassador Lodge and others who have responsibility for negotiation thought it were wise.

With Ambassador Lodge and his colleagues, I hope to get a complete report on the progress of the negotiations and also any recommendations that he or they may have with regard to new initiatives that we might take to make more progress than we have made.

I think we have made a good start in Paris, incidentally. I believe that we can now move forward to some substantive achievements.

## FUTURE MEETINGS WITH SOVIET LEADERS

[3.] Q. Mr. President, looking beyond this trip, could you give us a clue to your attitude toward the possibility of future meetings with Soviet leaders?

THE PRESIDENT. I believe that a meeting with Soviet leaders should take place at a future time. I should make clear that I think that where summitry is concerned I take a dim view of what some have called "instant summitry," particularly where there are very grave differences of opinion between those who are to meet.

I believe that a well-prepared summit meeting, where we have on the table the various differences that we have on which we can perhaps make progress, would be in our interest and in their interest, and it will be my intention after this trip is completed to conduct exploratory talks at various levels to see if such a meeting could take place.

I should point out, incidentally, that one of the reasons that this trip takes precedence is that I have long felt that before we have meetings of summitry with the Soviet leaders, it is vitally important that we have talks with our European allies, which we are doing.

## AMERICAN TROOP WITHDRAWAL IN VIETNAM

[4.] Q. Mr. President, this morning South Vietnamese President Thieu said that the South Vietnamese army is capable of relieving a sizable number of American troops in Vietnam. What is your understanding of "sizable," and do you think there will actually be a reduction of the number of American troops?

THE PRESIDENT. Well, speaking personally, and also as the Commander of the Armed Forces, I do not want an American boy to be in Vietnam for one day longer than is necessary for our national interest. As our commanders in the field determine that the South Vietnamese are able to assume a greater portion of the responsibility for the defense of their own territory, troops will come back. However, at this time, I have no announcements to make with regard to the return of troops.

I will only say that it is high on the agenda of priorities, and that just as soon as either the training program for South Vietnamese forces and their capabilities, the progress of the Paris peace talks, or other developments make it feasible to do so, troops will be brought back.

## THE PARIS PEACE TALKS

[5.] Q. Mr. president, on your trip to Paris, do you plan to see the South Vietnamese negotiators there? In that connection, a general question on the talks themselves: Do you think you can continue to separate the military issues from the political issues and the political settlement of South Vietnam in the negotiations in Paris?

THE PRESIDENT. Well, Mr. Lisagor [Peter Lisagor, Chicago Daily News], that is one of the matters that I want to discuss with Ambassador Lodge, to get his judgment on that point. It is our view that at this time the separation of those two items is in our interest and in the interest of bringing progress in those talks.

Now, as far as meeting with the South Vietnamese leaders is concerned, we have no present plans to do so. If Ambassador Lodge advises that it would be wise to do so, such meetings will be scheduled- There will be enough time in the schedule for a meeting if he does suggest it.

## AMBASSADOR CHARLES W. YOST

[6.] Q. Mr. President, your nominee and now your Ambassador to the United Nations, Mr. Yost, has been under attack from some conservative groups, such as the Liberty Lobby, for his past associations with certain individuals, particularly including Alger Hiss. In light of your more than

passing familiarity with the Hiss case,<sup>1</sup> would you comment on these attacks on Mr. Yost and whether they should be given any credence?

THE PRESIDENT. As far as Mr. Yost's background is concerned, I am completely aware of it because, of course, all of these matters are brought to my attention before appointments are made. But what I am looking to now is his capability to handle the problems of the future and not events that occurred over 20 years ago.

<sup>1</sup>As a member of the House Un-American Activities Committee, Congressman Nixon spearheaded the 1948-1949 investigation of Communist activity which subsequently led to the perjury conviction of former State Department official Alger Hiss.

There is no question about his loyalty to this country. And I also think there is no question about his very good judgment on critical issues confronting the United States, particularly in the Mideast.

As I pointed out, he is one of our prime experts in the Mideast. He sat in on the National Security Council meetings when we discussed the Mideast and made some very valuable contributions.

#### U.S. POLICY ON THE MIDDLE EAST

[7.] Q. Mr. President, on the Middle East, now that you have completed your review with the NSC [National Security Council], you spoke of a need for new initiatives, can you tell us what your policy is going to be now and what initiatives you do expect to take?

THE PRESIDENT. Mr. Bailey [Charles W. Bailey 2d, Minneapolis Tribune, Minneapolis Star], our initiatives in the Mideast, I think, can well be summarized by that very word that you have used. What we see now is a new policy on the part of the United States in assuming the initiative. We are not going to stand back and rather wait for something else to happen.

We are going to assume it on what I would suggest five fronts:

We are going to continue to give our all-out support to the Jarring mission.<sup>2</sup> We are going to have bilateral talks at the United Nations, preparatory to the talks between the four powers. We shall have four-power talks at the United Nations. We shall also have talks with the countries in the area, with the Israelis and their neighbors, and, in addition, we want to go forward on some of the long range plans, the Eisenhower-Strauss plan for relieving some of the very grave economic problems in that area.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup>United Nations mediation mission in Arab-Israeli dispute headed by Gunnar Jarring, Swedish Ambassador to the Soviet Union.

<sup>3</sup>A project to employ nuclear energy for water desalination and irrigation to further economic development of the Middle East. Proposed in the summer of 1967 by Lewis L. Strauss, former Atomic Energy Commissioner, and supported by former President Eisenhower, the plan was approved by Senate Resolution 155 of December 12, 1967, sponsored by Senator Howard H. Baker, Jr., of Tennessee.

We believe that the initiative here is one that cannot be simply unilateral. It must be multilateral. And it must not be in one direction. We are going to pursue every possible avenue to peace in the Mideast that we can.

#### TAX REFORM PROPOSALS

[8.] Q. Mr. President, how do you feel about the Johnson administration's tax reform proposal that would exempt many poor families from paying any taxes at all, but would guarantee that wealthy families at least pay some minimum income tax? We are told that you are sending up a tax reform proposal and would like to get your opinion.

THE PRESIDENT. Tax reform has been a matter of discussion within administration councils during the past week. In a discussion, which I understand has already been widely publicized, that I had with Chairman Mills of the Ways and Means Committee, and the ranking Republican, Mr. Byrnes, we went over the agenda and also the timetable as to when the proposals should come down.

The Secretary of the Treasury will have a preliminary announcement to make on tax reform tomorrow. He will make major tax reform recommendations to the Congress at a later time.

But at this time I do not want to indicate in advance the areas in which we are going to move. I will say that the two areas that you mentioned were considered and were discussed in the conference that we had here in the White House with the ranking members of the Ways and Means Committee.

#### LATIN AMERICA

[9.] Q. Sir, would you please tell us how you plan to move in solving some of the problems of Latin America? Have you decided on your Assistant Secretary of State in that field?

THE PRESIDENT. I believe we have decided on the Assistant Secretary of State, but I am not yet prepared to make the announcement because the necessary clearances have not taken place. <sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Charles A. Meyer was nominated on March 10, 1969, as Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs and U.S. Coordinator, Alliance for Progress. Subsequently he was named to represent the United States on several bodies concerned with special aspects of inter-American affairs (5 Weekly Comp. Pres. Docs., pp. 412, 605, 643, and 726).

May I make one thing very clear: I have noted news stories to the effect that the job was going begging and we were unable to find a qualified man. We have several qualified people but the Secretary of State and I agree that this is an area of top priority. We think we need new initiatives with regard to the Alliance for Progress.

I would describe that in this way: I think the difficulty in the past, a well-intentioned difficulty, has been that we have been putting too much emphasis on what we are going to do for Latin America and not enough emphasis on what we are going to do with our Latin American friends. The new Assistant Secretary will attempt to remedy that and we shall attempt to develop new policies.

#### SENTINEL ABM SYSTEM AND ARMS CONTROL TALKS

[10.] Q. Mr. President, the Pentagon announced this morning that Secretary Laird had ordered a temporary halt in the construction of the Sentinel system, pending a high level review. Does that represent a change in policy on our part? Does it indicate that maybe we are getting somewhere with the Russians toward an agreement whereby neither one of us would have to build it?

THE PRESIDENT. Well, Mr. Kaplow [Herbert Kaplow, NBC News], answering the second part of your question first, there has been no progress with regard to the arms control talks with the Russians. I have made it clear in the appointment of Mr. Smith to that position that we are going to put emphasis on those talks, but I do believe we should go forward on settling some of the political differences at the same time.

As far as the decision on the Sentinel is concerned, Secretary Laird and his colleagues at the Defense Department will make decisions based on the security of the United States, and he will announce those decisions and justify them at this point.

#### U.S. RELATIONS WITH ASIA

[11.] Q. Mr. President, there has been some apprehension, sir, in Asia that your re-emphasis on U.S. relations with Europe would mean a lessening of U.S. interests in Asia. Would you comment on that, sir?

THE PRESIDENT. This gives me an opportunity to perhaps state my philosophy about emphasis on different parts of the world.

The reason that we have been discussing the Mideast a great deal lately is that it is an area of the world which might explode into a major war. Therefore, it needs immediate attention. That does not mean, however, that we are not going to continue to put attention on Latin America, on Africa, on Asia.

I think you could describe me best as not being a "half-worlder," with my eyes looking only to Europe or only to Asia, but one who sees the whole world. We live in one world and we must go forward together in this whole world.

#### THE ANTIBALLISTIC MISSILE SYSTEM

[12.] Q. Mr. President, with regard to the ABM [antiballistic missile] system, you know this was planned originally to protect us against the threat of a nuclear attack by Red China early in the 1970's. Does your information indicate that there is any lessening of this threat, or is it greater, or just where do we stand on that?

THE PRESIDENT. First, I do not buy the assumption that the ABM system, the thin Sentinel system, as it has been described, was simply for the purpose of protecting ourselves against attack from Communist China.

This system, as are the systems that the Soviet Union has already deployed, adds to our overall defense capability. I would further say that, as far as the threat is concerned, we do not see any change in that threat, and we are examining, therefore, all of our defense systems and all of our defense postures to see how we can best meet them consistent with our other responsibilities.

#### PROPOSALS FOR A DEPARTMENT OF PEACE

[13.] Q. Mr. President, as you are aware, I am sure, there has been discussion on the Hill about trying to set up a Department of Peace to include the Peace Corps and the Disarmament Agency and other organizations. I wondered about your reaction to that idea.

THE PRESIDENT. In fact, one of my task forces recommended a Department of Peace. I think, however, that derogates and improperly downgrades the role of the Department of State and the Department of Defense.

I consider the Department of State to be a "Department of Peace." I consider the Department of Defense to be a "Department of Peace," and I can assure you that at the White House level, in the National Security Council, that is where we coordinate all of our efforts toward peace.

I think putting one department over here as a Department of Peace would tend to indicate that the other departments were engaged in other activities that were not interested in peace.

#### FCC PROPOSAL TO BAN RADIO-TV CIGARETTE ADVERTISING

[14.] Q. Mr. President, do you support the FCC proposal to ban cigarette advertising on radio and TV?

THE PRESIDENT. Well, as a nonsmoker, it wouldn't pose any problems to me. I, however, have only had that FCC proposal brought to my attention by the late TV reports last night and the morning papers. I have not yet had an opportunity to evaluate it. After I have evaluated it, I will make an announcement as to my position.

#### ADMINISTRATION POLICY ON SCHOOL DESEGREGATION

[15.] Q. Mr. President, there has been conflicting speculation about the extent to which your administration will seek to advance school desegregation. Could you tell us what your policy will be on that, specifically including the so-called "freedom of choice" plan?

THE PRESIDENT. That was a subject, as you will recall from having covered me in the campaign, that I addressed myself to on several occasions.

First, as far as freedom of choice is concerned, freedom of choice must be defined in terms of what it does. If freedom of choice is found to be simply a subterfuge to perpetuate segregation, then funds should be denied to such a school system. If a freedom of choice plan, however, is found to be one which actually is bringing an end to segregation, then a freedom of choice plan, in my opinion, is appropriate and should receive funds.

As far as school segregation is concerned, I support the law of the land. I believe that funds should be denied to those districts that continue to perpetuate segregation. I think that what we have here is a very difficult problem, however, in implementing it. One is our desire, a desire that was emphasized by Dr. Allen,<sup>5</sup> to keep our schools open, because education must receive the highest priority. The other is our desire to see to it that our schools are not segregated.

<sup>5</sup>Dr. James E. Allen, Jr., Assistant Secretary designate for Education in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and U.S. Commissioner-designate of Education.

That is why I have, in discussing this with Secretary Finch and with Dr. Allen, urged that before we use the ultimate weapon of denying funds and closing a school, let's exhaust every other possibility to see that local school districts do comply with the law.

#### AID TO URBAN SCHOOLS

[16.] Q. Mr. President, do you support Dr. Allen's statement of yesterday that he believes massive aid to urban schools is necessary?

THE PRESIDENT. Well, I support the proposition that there needs to be a massive infusion of assistance to education. Let me make one thing very clear in that respect, so that you can get my thinking directly. You will note yesterday that I supported a \$10 million increase in the funds for the National Science Foundation, which will go to higher education.

I believe higher education needs more assistance, too. But at the present time the great need is in the area described by educators of "K through 12," kindergarten through the 12th grade--preparing students in those years for the higher education which is now available to virtually every student who is capable of meeting the standards for getting into college.

As far as Dr. Allen's method of doing so, I do not believe that he, sophisticated as he is as the superintendent of a State school system, would suggest that we go around the States. We cannot do that because the cities and the school systems within a State cannot exist without the State government.

However, the area of need is primarily in the city school systems. We will try to meet that problem as best we can.

#### OIL LEAKAGE IN SANTA BARBARA CHANNEL

[17.] Q. Mr. President, may I ask you two questions about the disaster in Santa Barbara. One, do Secretary Hickel's actions so far accord with your policies; and two, what implications does this disaster have for future conservation policy here?

THE PRESIDENT. Well, answering the second part of your question first, I have found that for 15 years we have not had any updating of our policies with regard to offshore drilling. Secretary Hickel has now initiated a study within the Department for updating those regulations so that this kind of incident will not occur again.

With regard to the action that he has taken, I think he acted promptly in temporarily stopping the drilling and then insisting on very stringent requirements on the Union Oil Company and others involved so that this would not happen.

Looking to the future however, we have got to get at the source of the problem. That means very stringent regulations in offshore drilling, because there isn't any question that if the companies involved will make the necessary expenditures in setting up their wells offshore, there is minimal danger of this kind of an activity.

#### THE DOCK STRIKE

[18.] Q. Mr. President, we were told yesterday by the congressional leaders, <sup>6</sup> that in dealing with labor disputes, like the dock strike, you preferred a permanent, long-range approach. And yet there seems to be real skepticism on the Hill that anything will be done. Can you give us your views currently on this?

THE PRESIDENT. Well, my view with regard to the dock strike is that for the White House to indicate publicly that we are going to do this and that generally has the effect of telling the parties to do nothing. For that reason, I think Secretary Shultz very properly is playing a mediating role but making it very clear that the primary responsibility is on the parties themselves.

<sup>6</sup> Following a meeting with the President on February 5, 1969, Senate Minority Leader Everett McKinley Dirksen of Illinois and House Minority Leader Gerald R. Ford of Michigan met with reporters at 10:40 a.m. in the Fish Room at the White House for a news briefing (5 Weekly Comp. Pres. Docs., p. 219).

Now, long range, I believe that the Taft-Hartley Act's provisions for national emergency strikes, which I helped to write along with other members of the Labor Committee 20 years ago, that those provisions are now outmoded. I do not believe we have enough options in dealing with these kinds of disputes and breakdowns. I have, therefore, asked the Department of Labor to develop some new approaches in this field, and we will submit them by legislation to this Congress.

#### BLACK CITIZENS AND THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

[19.] Q. Mr. President, do you agree with those who say that you and your administration have a serious problem with distrust among the blacks, and whether you agree that it is one of your more serious problems or not, could you tell us specifically what you are doing to deal with what some consider to be this distrust among the blacks?

THE PRESIDENT. I am concerned about this problem; and incidentally, let me make it very clear that those who have raised this question are not simply those who are political opponents. My Task Force on Education pointed up that I was not considered--I think the words they used--as a friend by many of our black citizens in America.

I can only say that, by my actions as President, I hope to rectify that. I hope that by what we do in terms of dealing with the problems of all Americans, it will be made clear that the President of the United States, as an elected official, has no State constituency. He has no congressional constituency. He does not represent any special group. He represents all the people. He is the friend of all the people.

Putting it another way--as a lawyer--the President is the counsel for all the people of this country, and I hope that I can gain the respect and I hope eventually the friendship of black citizens and other Americans.

#### RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE STATE DEPARTMENT AND THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

[20.] Q. Mr. President, there has been some confusion this week on the relationship between the National Security Council and the State Department--for example, the Assistant Secretary of State reporting to the NSC. Could you clarify that for us, please?

THE PRESIDENT. Yes. The Secretary of State is my chief foreign policy adviser and the chief agent of this Government in carrying out foreign policy abroad. As one of my very close friends, personally, he advises me independently as well as through the National Security Council.

The question has also, I know, been raised as to who makes the policy and the decisions? Are they made in the National Security Council or are they made in the State Department?

The answer is, neither place. The State Department advises the President. The National Security Council advises the President. The President has the authority to make decisions, and I intend to exercise that authority.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup>A White House press release of February 7, 1969, announced steps taken by the President since January 20, 1969, designed to revitalize the structure and role of the National Security Council and reorganize its staff. The announcement (5 Weekly Comp. Pres. Docs., p. 232) lists the substantive components of the NSC staff and its personnel.

#### FOREIGN TRADE AND LIMITATION ON TEXTILE IMPORTS

[21.] Q. Mr. President, during the election campaign, sir, you said that you would seek international agreements to limit the import of certain textiles. Can you tell us when you plan to get around to doing that?

Also, could you give us some idea as to what you feel about the growing feeling of protectionism in Congress?

THE PRESIDENT. Let me start at the second part of the question first. I believe that the interest of the United States and the interest of the whole world will best be served by moving toward freer trade rather than toward protectionism.

I take a dim view of this tendency to move toward quotas and other methods that may become permanent, whether they are applied here or by other nations abroad.

Second, as far as the textile situation is concerned, that is a special problem has caused very great distress in certain parts of this country, and to a great number of wage earners, as well as those operate our textile facilities.

For that reason, exploratory discussions have taken place and will be taking place with the major countries involved to see if we can handle this on a volunteer basis rather than having to go to a legislation which would impose quotas, and I think would turn the clock back in our objective of trying to achieve freer trade.

#### THE "PUEBLO" AFFAIR

[22.] Q. Mr. President, there has been a court of inquiry in the city of Coronado, California for several weeks now on the Pueblo<sup>8</sup> seizure. Do you think it is proper for the Navy, in effect, to be sitting in judgment of itself, or do you see any need for any kind of Presidential commission on this?

THE PRESIDENT. Well, as a Navy man, I know that the Navy has procedures which I think very adequately protect the rights of defendants in courts-martial.

<sup>8</sup>The electronic intelligence ship U.S.S. Pueblo and its 83-man crew were seized by North Korean patrol boats January 23, 1968, and taken captive to the port of Wonsan. On December 22, 1968, President Johnson announced the release of the 82 surviving crewmen.



Second, I believe those procedures, from my investigation to date, have been very scrupulously followed.

Third, however, because of the great interest in this case, the Secretary of Defense has asked, as you know, Mr. [David] Packard, the Deputy Secretary, to conduct a thorough investigation, not only of the handling of this case, but also an investigation as to how we can avoid this kind of an incident occurring in the future.

I also want to make it clear that I, as the Chief Executive of the Nation, will examine the whole record myself, both with regard to the individual guilt or innocence of the people involved, and also with regard to the even more important objective of seeing to it that this kind of incident can be avoided in the future.

#### NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION TREATY

[23.] Q. Mr. President, you have now asked the Senate to ratify the Nonproliferation Treaty. On your trip to Europe, do you have any hopes of trying to persuade particularly West Germany and France to move a little closer toward signing that Treaty?

THE PRESIDENT. My view about asking other governments to follow our lead is this: They know what we think, and I am sure that that matter will come up for discussion.

I will make it clear that I believe that ratification of the Treaty by all governments, nuclear and nonnuclear, is in the interest of peace and in the interest of reducing the possibility of nuclear proliferation.

On the other hand, I do not believe that we gain our objectives through heavy-handed activities publicly, particularly in attempting to get others to follow our lead. Each of these governments is a sovereign government. Each has its own political problems. I think in the end, most of our friends in Western Europe will follow our lead. I will attempt to persuade, but I will not, certainly, attempt to use any blackmail or arm-twisting.

#### WOMEN IN THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

[24.] Q. [Vera R. Glaser of the North American Newspaper Alliance] Mr. President, in staffing your administration, you have so far made about 200 high-level Cabinet and other policy position appointments, and of these only three have gone to women. Could you tell us, sir, whether we can expect a more equitable recognition of women's abilities, or are we going to remain a lost sex?

THE PRESIDENT. Would you be interested in coming into the Government? [Laughter]

Very seriously, I had not known that only three had gone to women, and I shall see that we correct that imbalance very promptly.

#### SOVIET UNION AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND THE NONPROLIFERATION TREATY

[25.] Q. On the Non-proliferation Treaty again, last fall during the campaign, Mr. President, you opposed ratification because of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Can you tell me, sir, how you feel that situation has changed since then?

THE PRESIDENT. It has changed in the sense that the number of Soviet forces in Czechoslovakia has been substantially reduced.

It has changed also in the sense that the passage of time tends somewhat to reduce the pent-up feelings that were then present with regard to the Soviet Union's actions.

I want to make it very clear that in asking the Senate to ratify the Treaty, I did not gloss over the fact that we still very strongly disapproved of what the Soviet Union had done in Czechoslovakia and

what it still is doing. But on balance, I considered that this was the time to move forward on the Treaty, and have done so.

Merriman Smith, United Press International: Thank you, Mr. President.

*Note: President Nixon's second news conference was held in the East Room at the White House at 11 a.m. on Thursday, February 6,*

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