

17 février 1999 - Seul le prononcé fait foi

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Interview de M. Jacques Chirac, Président de la République, accordée à la chaîne de télévision américaine "Associated press" le 17 février 1999, sur la réunion du Groupe de contact sur le Kosovo à Rambouillet, l'acquittement du Président Clinton par le Sénat, la proposition française de doter les comités du FMI et de la Banque Mondiale de pouvoirs de décision, le raid aérien sur l'Irak, et l'arrestation du chef du PKK Abdullah Öcalan, Paris le 17 février 1999.

QUESTION ¿ Mr. President, three days before the deadline in the Kosovo peace talks, Yugoslav President Milosevic shows no sign of compromise. What can be done to make him sign ?

LE PRESIDENT ¿ Those people, Kosovars and Serbs, are together in Rambouillet. And you know what the contact group wants : a large autonomy, a substantial autonomy for Kosovo, and ground troops in Kosovo to be sure that the agreement can be implemented. For that we need a strong diplomacy and firmness and unity within the contact group. We have that and we hope that before Saturday midday the two parties, Serbs but also Kosovars, will have understood that they have to accept a compromise for peace.

QUESTION - What happens on Saturday if there is no signature ?

LE PRESIDENT - Well, I don't want to think that it will be possible : no solution. But in case of a failure, the party which will be responsible for the failure will have to bear all the consequences, and I repeat, all the consequences.

QUESTION - The United States has proposed to send 4000 US troops. What contribution will France make ?

LE PRESIDENT - France is ready to send 4000 or 5000 troops, immediately.

QUESTION - This force will deploy as soon as the agreement is signed in Rambouillet ?

LE PRESIDENT - Of course, just a few days are necessary for the deployment.

QUESTION - You are one of the first leaders to have come out in support of President Clinton during his troubles. Have these troubles harmed the effectiveness of the United States as the world leader ?

LE PRESIDENT - No, I don't think so, you cannot say that. This is not true.

QUESTION - What is your opinion today of Mr Clinton's presidency and the way in which he has led the United States ?

LE PRESIDENT - Well this is an american problem and the american people made its decision. And may I say that I am very glad about this decision. Personally because I have a great esteem and friendship for President Clinton. Also for the United States which are a great democracy. And for the world which needs a strong America. And this is the case and I am glad.

QUESTION ¿ You have come out and pleaded for a new Bretton Woods conference. What do you

hope to achieve and why is the United States resistant ?

LE PRESIDENT - I would not say exactly a new Bretton Woods conference. But the financial world system needs to be improved, no doubt, because things have changed, the world has changed. We have the globalisation and its consequences. Then I think we should have a better organisation. And the United States are not resistant, we work together particularly in the G7 for now several years and we made progress. The second point is the relations between moneys, the new european money, the euro, the dollar and the yen. And I think that we should not accept too large evolutions between those moneys. And at this point the United States, the american authorities say : well, how to do. Then we have to discuss. I agree that we have not exactly the same point of view but we have to discuss and we prepare the next G7 which will be under german presidency in Cologne. And I hope we can make a new progress on this occasion.

QUESTION - France came out strongly against the air strikes in Iraq. Why is there such a divide between the US and French policy and what would you suggest to Kofi Annan this coming week end ?

LE PRESIDENT - I would not say that french and american policies were so different. We both agree about the responsibility of Saddam Hussein. The thing is that France asked : what shall we do after the bombing? And now we propose a kind of new deal because we cannot let Iraq without control of armament. And now we have no more control. And we think that this is a necessity to have a new international armament control in Iraq. We think that it is necessary to improve the situation of the iraqi people, a situation being very bad, and we think that we have to control the money that Iraq receives from oil revenues to be sure that this money is not used to buy armaments. And on those basis we are not far from the United States as you can see .

QUESTION - Is there any situation where you would support military action against Iraq ?

LE PRESIDENT - You can't say that. It depends on what happens. I told you what were our priorities, the control of armament, the situation of the people, the control of money. And I hope that this could be done without any military action. But we shall see.

QUESTION - France appears to be worried by the danger of only one superpower, the United States, dominating the world scene. How do you plan to counter this ?

LE PRESIDENT - France is not worried about powerful United States. It is in the world of today a real necessity. France wants to be a part of a strong Europe. And we do as much as we can for this purpose. I don't like the idea of presenting Europe and the United States as competitors. Together we represent something like 56% of the world's production of goods, of the world's wealth. Which means that we have to cooperate. We share the same values, we are two great democracies, Europe and United States. We have everything to be together. That is why, I repeat, I don't like the idea that we should be competitors. We are partners and we must be good partners.

QUESTION - Protest by the kurdish people has brought their ploy to the center stage. Was Turkey justified in their methods of arresting Öcalan ?

LE PRESIDENT - Öcalan belongs to a group which is considered as a terrorist group by many countries, including France. This group is prohibited in France. He has been arrested, he is in prison, I am sure that his trial will be done in the respect of the rule of law.

QUESTION - You have recently attended King's Hussein funerals. How much will that change the political landscape and hopes of peace in the Middle East?

LE PRESIDENT - I was a good friend of King Hussein but I also know the new King, Abdallah. I am sure that he is a man able to maintain the situation of Jordan. He has the confidence of the jordanian people and the respect of the heads of states and governments of the countries around Jordan. I am pretty sure that he is able to continue his father's policy. I am not worried about that.

QUESTION - Are you looking forward to your trip to the United States ?

LE PRESIDENT - Well, it's always a great, great pleasure for me to go to the United States. I am going for a long time now quite often to the United States even if my english is not very good. And it's a great, great pleasure. I'm delighted to go there, only for three days but delighted.\

