

USA at G8 2003



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Interview of the President by TVP, Poland

The Library

2:28 P.M. EDT

Q Mr. President, in a few hours you begin your quite unexpected visit to Poland. Are you going to Krakow just to thank us for our support and participation in the war in Iraq?

THE PRESIDENT: That's one reason I'm going to Krakow. I think it's very important for the Polish people to understand how deeply Americans appreciate their sacrifice and their courage and their willingness to work with us in Iraq and in Afghanistan.

I'm also going to Auschwitz to remind people that we must confront evil when we find it, and there's no better place to remind people that there has been evil in the world than at Auschwitz. I'm also going to talk about the great spirit of the Polish people. And I'm looking forward to it. I will have been to Poland now twice since -- in my presidency, and there's a reason, because I have a special fondness for Poland.

Q Mr. President, as you probably know, we've been strongly criticized for our support to America. President Chirac started by telling us that we lost our chance to sit quietly. German press called us American trojan donkey in Europe -- not even a horse, American trojan donkey. How do you perceive these opinions from American perspective?

THE PRESIDENT: I think it's unfortunate that some of the countries in Europe will try to bully Poland for standing up for what you think -- what they think is right. And I'm going to say in my speech, Poland needs to be in the EU and Poland can be a friend of the United States and the two are not in conflict. I'm also going to remind the countries of Europe that we must work together. We don't need divides between us. We need to work together to achieve big objectives, which is to fight terror, to fight global poverty, to fight AIDS and to promote freedom.

Q But Mr. President, aren't you afraid that for our support to America we might be isolated in the future, united Europe, which we are about to enter?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I don't think you will be isolated. I think Poland is too important a country to be isolated. I think the days of harsh lecturing are over with. I think Poland is going to be such an important member of the EU that people will welcome Poland's entry with open arms.

No, I don't think so. I think that was a heated rhetoric of the moment.

Q But thanks to your decision we are going to run one of the zones in Iraq. And of course our EU partners do not want to be there, with us. They say that we're new, we're unexperienced and we simply do not deserve getting what we got. And aren't you afraid that we may fail in Iraq, or are you absolutely sure that you made the right decision?

THE PRESIDENT: I'm absolutely sure I made the right decision.

Q Why?

THE PRESIDENT: Because I've seen the Polish troops in action. And I know President Kwasniewski and I know the spirit of the Polish people. And there's no doubt in my mind that Poland will be able to accomplish the objectives we set out together.

And it was also -- the critics need to watch very carefully what's happening. NATO is going to support the Polish efforts inside of Iraq. Poland will not be alone. Poland will have plenty of support. Poland is a member of this coalition of the willing, who stood up for freedom and stood up for peace and stood up for security. And Poland also recognizes that there's more work to do. And I'm -- also I'm going to Poland to thank the Polish people for caring about freedom in other parts of the world.

Q But, still, those countries who didn't support the Iraqi Freedom operation use the same argument, weapons of mass destruction haven't been found. So what argument will you use now to justify this war?

THE PRESIDENT: We found the weapons of mass destruction. We found biological laboratories. You remember when Colin Powell stood up in front of the world, and he said, Iraq has got laboratories, mobile labs to build biological weapons. They're illegal. They're against the United Nations resolutions, and we've so far discovered two. And we'll find more weapons as time goes on. But for those who say we haven't found the banned manufacturing devices or banned weapons, they're wrong, we found them.

Q Mr. President, the last question. Coming back to your trip to Warsaw. Two years ago you quoted a very popular song in Poland: on that wheat field I'm going to build my San Francisco, over the mole hill, I'm going to build my bank. And there are such places in Poland in which people believe they could build a little San Francisco, if, for example, they have American military base in their neighborhood. What would you tell these people today, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I'm telling them that we're looking at all options, of course. I make no promises, but we will remember who our friends are. And the Polish people have been strong friends of the United States. And for that, we are very grateful.

Q Thank you very much, Mr. President, and here's something for you. They couldn't come for a concert to play for you, the -- the songs that you quoted, and they wrote it here: "To Mr. President Bush, fond greetings from the mountains, and hope you enjoy it."

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, thank you so very much. I'm honored. I look forward to listening to this. I've got just the CD player to use, right upstairs in the residence here.

Q That's great. It's number three on that CD.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, thanks.

Q Thank you.

END 2:34 P.M. EDT

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