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Remarks in the Univision Town meeting in Buenos Aires. (Bill Clinton) (Transcript)

October 16, 1997

The President. Thank you, Jorge and Maria Elena. And I thank Univision for giving us the chance to have this conversation. I want to thank all the young people here in Buenos Aires and joining us from Miami and Los Angeles for being a part of this.

I am near the end of a remarkable trip which my wife, Hillary, and I, a distinguished group from our Cabinet and the United States Congress, have taken to Latin America to celebrate the changes that have taken place: the moves from dictatorship to democracy; the moves from closed economies, high inflation, and big debt to stability and growth; the moves that are bringing all of us closer together.

I came here to talk about what we have to do to prepare for the 21st century, how we have to work together to seize the promise of education and technology, to shoulder the burdens of preserving our environment and dealing with new security threats from drugs and crime and terrorism. Most of all, I came to reaffirm the commitment of the United States to be a good partner with Latin America as we move ahead and especially to emphasize the fact that our fastest growing minority of Americans are Hispanic-Americans. We are growing together in more ways than one, and today I hope we'll talk about what we can do to build the kind of future we all want, together.

Maria Elena Salinas. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I'd like to ask you for your permission to introduce your wife, Mrs. Hillary Clinton is here with us today. Mrs. Hillary Rodham Clinton, of course, has been accompanying Mr. Clinton throughout this Latin American tour, but she herself has traveled through several Latin American countries promoting programs to benefit women and also programs that alleviate poverty. So we want to welcome her especially. And many Latin Americans of course read your weekly column. Welcome.

[At this point, moderator Jorge Ramos introduced a National University of Buenos Aires law student from Colombia.]

Antidrug Efforts

Q. Mr. President, can you show the world a reduction in drug consumption which is proportional to the reduction of production and

cultivation of drugs?

The President. I think the short answer to that question is yes, we can do that, we can show that a lot of our drug consumption is going down. Overall drug consumption has been going down in America for the last several years. But to be fair, we have one big, troubling thing, which is that drug consumption among our younger people, people under 18, is still going up. And since in America children of school age now are the largest number they have ever been, that's a problem we have to continue to work on.

So the answer is, we've made some progress. We have to do much more. I just secured from the Congress a program to dramatically increase our efforts to reduce drug demand at home, especially to reach out to our younger people with messages from people they respect telling them that drugs are wrong and illegal and that they can kill them. Now, in addition to that, of course, we are working more closely - we spend more money in Colombia than any other country working with the authorities there on antidrug campaigns. But this is an issue that will increasingly involve all the nations not only here on our own soil in the Americas but throughout the world, and there is no easy answer. You must fight all the chain of supply, and you must change the whole psychology of demand. And we have to give a lot of our young people hope so that they have something to live for, something to say yes to, some reason to do things that are constructive and good not only for society but for themselves as well.

Mr. Ramos. Mr. President, a question related to this. As you yourself have recognized, the United States is a country that consumes more drugs in the world - one out of every three U.S. citizens, according to the polls - and many believe that the certification process is unfair. Is it true that at the Summit of the Americas in Chile next year you are going to announce the end of the certification process?

The President. We have made no decision about that. Several years ago, our Congress passed a law which requires us every year to certify that the people in authority in countries are doing all they can to help us to fight the drug problem. The decertification process and some intermediate steps are extreme measures taken under unusual circumstances. But even in the case of Colombia where there was a decertification decision, we still continue to invest more money in Colombia than any other country in working with local authorities there and Federal authorities to fight the drug problem.

So I think what we have to emphasize is that our approach is partnership. Whether it's Mexico, Colombia, any other country in the world, what we prefer is to work with people. And we recognize that in a lot of the producing countries, it requires enormous courage - enormous courage - and people putting their lives on the line to try to stand up to the narcotraffickers. And what we want is a world in which we work more closely with them and we reduce American demand. And as I said, we have now seen American demand go down, but our children are

still using too many drugs.

[Ms. Salinas introduced an employee of the Foreign Ministry in Argentina.]

Q. Mr. President, good afternoon. Over the last few months there's been a lot discussed about the role of the armed forces in our region in the fight against drug trafficking. There are messages, although not all of them homogeneous, from your country that would seem to favor such a role. And specifically, in our country there are certain fears. And since you know the tragic history we've suffered here, I would ask for your personal opinion on this.

The President. Well, first of all, let me say that one of the great things that should make all Argentineans proud is the changing nature of the role of the armed services in the last several years. Now Argentina is recognized - when people think of the Argentine military around the world now, they think of peacekeepers, from Bosnia to Cyprus to Mozambique to Haiti. This is very different than it was in former times. And I would say you wouldn't want to do anything to change that.

Now, in different countries there will be different capacities for dealing with this issue. And different nations may want to find some role for the military; it may be necessary. In our country we use the National Guard, to some extent, to fight the drug problem. But I think we all recognize that it is a national security issue. We all recognize that these people are wealthy and powerful and well-armed and capable of killing large numbers of people in a short period of time. So the question each country will have to face is, how am I going to deal with this? How am I going to fight it? And if you use the military in a domestic situation, then there must be extraordinary precautions, obviously, taken to avoid the kinds of abuses which would be possible. In most cases in our country, such things are not legal anymore because we're so sensitive to it. But I wouldn't want to make a judgment for every nation. I would just say every nation should do what is necessary to deal with the security threat but should do so in a way that protects the civil liberties and the human rights of the people and guarantees civilian control of the military, because that's one of the great triumphs of Latin America in the last 15 years or so, and it should not be sacrificed.

Ms. Salinas. As we said earlier at the beginning of the program, we are not just going to have questions in Argentina. We're also going to have questions from Los Angeles and also Miami. We're now going to hear Teresa Rodriguez in Miami, a city that many times has been the northernmost Latin American city.

[Miami, FL, moderator Teresa Rodriguez introduced a high school student.]

Freedom of Information

Q. Good day, Mr. President. Freedom of expression and access to information are two basic ideas for any democracy as an example of a hemispheric initiative to provide more information for North and South America. My question is, which of these events or which of these things do you think are necessary, or what should happen in order to increase access to information? And also, how we, as a hemispheric community – how can we incorporate countries like Cuba where actually there is no respect for freedom of expression?

The President. Well, let me answer your bigger question first. I think it's very important not only that we have freedom of speech and freedom of the press, freedom of association in every country in the Americas but that we take the initiative to try to increase the information available to people. I just came from Brazil, for example, where I visited a school in a poor neighborhood in Rio. And they had computers there which were placed there through a joint operation of private companies and the government. And we spoke over the Internet to students in an American school just across the Potomac River from Washington, DC.

One of the things that I have been trying to do on this trip is to get all the leaders of South America to work with me, especially in Argentina and Brazil, to dramatically increase the technology available to students and then the use of the Internet. In addition to that, the United States is trying to get all the countries in the word to promise not to overly regulate or tax or burden the Internet so that we can get more information out.

The technology available today enables us to bring education to children who could never get it, enables us to bring information to people who want to make a living, who never would have been able to get that information. It can revolutionize the way we do business in a positive way if we do it. And eventually I think no society can remain closed to it. Cuba will inevitably get this information and respond to it, and it will lead to a rising democratic impulse, just as it did in the former Communist countries of Eastern Europe. So you should be optimistic about that. We just have to push this technology out there for education and for opportunity, to all people. It's one of the ways we're going to sort of close the gap between the haves and have-nots and not leave all the poor people that are still in Latin America behind – and still in our country, I might add.

Mr. Ramos, We're jumping back and forth. We're going to jump from Cuba to other subjects. Let's go to one of the most multicultural and multiracial societies in the world, Los Angeles, with Maria Antonietta. Go ahead, please.

[Los Angeles, CA, moderator Maria Antonietta Collins introduced an immigration lawyer.]

Immigration

Q. Mr. President, on behalf of - [inaudible] - in LOs Angeles and the Central American community in the United States, I'd like to thank you for the leadership you have demonstrated through the initiative of the legislation presented to Congress several weeks ago. As you well know, last week two Republican Members of Congress announced an agreement which has not yet been finalized and a legislative proposal. My question is, what possibility is there to see legislation passed that is fair and just in the way that Salvadorans, Nicaraguans, and Guatemalans are treated, all of these people who are under special immigration programs?

The President. just very briefly, for the benefit of all the people here in Buenos Aires and who are listening to this who may not know what we're talking about - in the political upheavals of the eighties in Central America, the United States gave special permission to people who were affected by these troubles to come to the United States, in theory for a limited amount of time until democracy or peace had been restored to their country; then they were to return home. By the time that happened, they had been here quite a long while, particularly Guatemalans, Salvadorans, and Nicaraguans. Under the law passed by our Congress last year, they would all have had to go home immediately. So our Attorney General, working with me, issued an order to stop that while we tried to fix it.

I think the chances are excellent that we will be able to at least return to the former system, where we'll be able to leave people here on humanitarian grounds who have made marriages and made families, had children, and started their lives. And I'm encouraged that finally we have also gotten a positive response from some of the Republican Members. Some of that legislation, as you know, is directed to benefit only Nicaraguans. I think that we should help them, but I don't think we should forget about the Guatemalans and the Salvadorans either. I think the chances are excellent that we will have legislation which will enable us to do the humane, decent thing. Thank you.

Let me also say, if I could just make a point about Los Angeles. While Hispanic-Americans are the fastest growing group of Americans, Los Angeles County, our largest county, has people from at least 150 different racial and ethnic groups - in one of our counties. So we are becoming a multiethnic democracy in ways that we never have been before, and if we do it properly, it will be a great thing for our future.

Thank you very much.

[Ms. Salinas introduced a patent lawyer.]

U.S. Trade Policy

Q. Good afternoon, first of all, Mr. President. The United States on the one hand is promoting the establishment of the free trade area of the Americas, the FTAA, and has now embarked on its own regional integration project, which is NAFTA. On the other hand, it says that it would be against integration blocs in Latin America that would limit the exports or imports of third parties. Now, my question is this: How can you simultaneously hold both positions, which at first sight seem to be contradictory?

The President. Well, first of all, let me tell you what my position is. I supported the establishment of NAFTA. I supported the strengthening of MERCOSUR. I support the Andean Pact, I support CARICOM. Why? Because when countries that are neighbors lower their barriers and trade with each other, they increase growth and wealth. They also acquire a political closeness that makes former conflicts unthinkable. And they begin to look to the future and to their children, instead of to their past prejudices or difficulties. They tend to work together to solve problems, the way we're working with Argentina and Brazil, for example, to help Peru and Ecuador resolve their problems on the border.

Secondly, I believe that being for MERCOSUR, being for NAFTA, being for these other pacts is sort of a first step toward trying to have a larger hemispheric economic integration. If you imagine - all of you here are younger than I am - imagine what your life will be like 20 years from now. Imagine all the people who live in Argentina who couldn't come here wearing a coat and tie yet. How are they going to have opportunities in the future? How are they going to live out their dreams? If we can integrate the markets from the northern part of Alaska to the tip of Tierra del Fuego so that you have 800 million people who are, in a deliberate fashion, trying to work together and grow together, that will change the future of people that otherwise won't be touched. So to me, I say yes to hemispheric integration, but let's build on what's happening now that's working.

1996 Campaign Financing

Ms. Salinas. Mr. President, of course, you have tried to keep the focus throughout this tour on trade, which is one of the main points. But unfortunately, other subjects have come up that you would have preferred to leave at home. Some people in Latin America criticize Presidents because they use their position to benefit from power and from elections, and there are people who criticize you perhaps for the same thing, by making phone calls from the White House or perhaps holding coffees for people who could finance your campaign. Do you think there is anything valid in any of those criticisms?

The President. No. [Laughter] But it's true that I tried to win

reelection, and it's true that I asked people to support me, and it's true that from time to time I actually talked to my supporters. I think that's how democracy works.

But on the other hand, I don't mind people saying that, well, in their opinion we should have done it one way or the other. The fundamental problem in America is there is no effective limitation on spending. There is no access by national candidates or Federal candidates for our Congress to free or reduced air time, and so we have increasing costs of communication in campaigns. And one of our big problems - if we want to preserve our democracy in a way that has the trust of the people of our country and gets participation back up, people in public life and people who want office should be doing more things like this. And there should be strict limits on spending in return for access like this to the public, so that people feel that they're participating. That's the real problem. We ought to pass the finance reform legislation that I'm supporting or some other version of comprehensive campaign finance reform. Every nation should do that.

[Mr. Ramos introduced an Argentine lawyer.]

Domestic Violence

Q. Mr. President, I'd like to ask you with regard to domestic violence, which recently has been publicly recognized by the nations of the world as a serious social problem that especially victimizes women and children, what are your policies - active policies to prevent it and eradicate it?

The President. First of all, I think - I thank you for working in the field, and I think it's very important that domestic violence is being recognized as a human rights issue. My wife should be answering this question. She has done a lot more work on this than I have. She went to Beijing to the International Women's Conference to talk about this, among other things. She spoke with women from Argentina today, just today, about this and has talked about it all over Latin America.

It is not a cultural issue; it's a human rights issue, and it is a crime. What we have done is we set up a special division in our Justice Department with an advocate on violence against women. We established a toll-free long distance phone line so that people could call us from all over the country to talk about instances of domestic violence, to ask for help, to get - for treatment for people, for law enforcement support, for whatever. And it has been very well used. And we have done a lot of work to increasethe sensitivity of our local law enforcement officials and to train them better, so that they know it when they see it. I know that may sound funny, but a lot of people don't know it when they see it, don't know how to respond to it.

And I think every country needs to do that. There needs to be an

advocate; there needs to be a way ordinary people who aren't being heard in their neighborhoods or their communities can call and get help; and then there needs to be a comprehensive training program to change the priorities, the attitudes, the understandings of the people in law enforcement. It should be a priority in every nation of the Americas. And I would be the last to say we have solved the problem in America, but at least we are aggressively pursuing it. And I thank my wife for making sure we're trying to do the right thing anyway.

[Mr. Ramos called on Ms. Rodriguez, who introduced a Costa Rican participant from Florida.]

Human Rights

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. For the first time since the Carter administration, the United States has decided to promote human rights in Latin America. Given the fact that in the past the United States has demonstrated its will to intervene or even invade on behalf of causes such as democracy or to take away from power supposed criminals, alleged criminals, what possibilities are there for the United States to do that today for human rights?

The President. Well, the United States is being very aggressive in the support of human rights. It affects our other policies. It is a part of all of our dialog with countries where it's an issue. We are trying to move away from the period when the United States was eager to invade other countries in our hemisphere and our neighbors, toward a spirit of partnership and cooperation but a cooperation based not simply on common economic interests but most importantly on the shared values of freedom and democracy, of peace and prosperity, of cooperative efforts in environmental protection and education and other things. So you can't have a relationship like that if human rights is taken out of the equation.

And I might say - you're Costa Rican - if you look at the experience of Costa Rica, if you look at how wonderfully they have done, part of it is because they have observed basic human rights and did not have institutions within the society that had a vested interest in holding people down and denying their human potential. That's a lesson we all need to learn.

So I wouldn't think that America would want to get into the invasion business. We did participate in the United Nations-sanctioned restoration of the elected Government of Haiti, but only after it became sanctioned by the international community, where there were serious human rights abuses but where an election had also been interrupted. But what we can do to have the most influence is just, day-in and day-out, find ways to work together to deal with it, and hopefully in a multilateral situation. The OAS can do more, and we can do more bilaterally as well. But thank you for your question and for your concern.

[Ms. Salinas called on Ms. Collins, who introduced the coordinator for inter-American affairs, William C. Velasquez Institute.]

Free Trade

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. Hispanic congressmen here in the United States are against fast track, as a result of certain hacks in certain NAFTA programs for retraining workers who have lost their jobs as a result of NAFTA and others to create jobs for those same workers. My question is, don't you think that we need to improve NAFTA before we expand it to South America or before we negotiate any other free-trade agreement, before we ask for fast-track authorization?

The President. Absolutely not. Let's look at the economic facts here. First of all - and I would be happy to discuss this, but whether you believe NAFTA was a success or a failure - and I believe we are far better off economically and in our relationships with Mexico than we would have been had we not passed NAFTA - but we are the only developed country in the world with a 2,000-mile border with a country that is still developing. We have unique historical, cultural, economic, environmental, and other challenges in our relationship.

Our trade with the Americas has grown enormously in the last few years. It has gone up 200 percent since 1990. It's now over $109 billion. In the last year alone, 70 percent of America's trade growth has come from the Americas. So should we do something to trade more with Chile, with Argentina, with Brazil, with other countries? Yes, I believe we should. Should we wait while Europeans and others make agreements that help their workers? No, I don't believe we should. Are there political benefits as well as economic benefits to our cooperation? Absolutely.

Now, in the case of NAFTA - let's go back to NAFTA. We had a couple of rough years with NAFTA because of the peso crisis in Mexico and the recession which followed. But they were not nearly as bad and Mexico bounced back much more quickly than they did when the same thing happened to Mexico in the early eighties and there was no NAFTA, there was no trade.

We have not solved all the environmental problems along the border, but at least we have a financial mechanism and a testing mechanism now, and we have shown we have some examples of progress. I think you can rightly say that the North American Development Bank lost 2 years in the development, in '94 and '95. We've been working since early '96 to get it going. And just recently, I reached an agreement with the Hispanic caucus to dramatically increase the lending capacity of the North American Development Bank to help Americans displaced by NAFTA-related trade. We've already doubled worker retraining funds. I've reached an agreement with the Hispanic caucus to increase it

another $450 million over the next 5 years.

So I think that we do have to do more to help Americans who are disadvantaged by trade, but that is not an argument against fast track. Fast track is about the future of Latin America and its future economic relations with us, and I think we'd be making a terrible mistake to delay. We should speed up, not delay. The economy down here is on a fast track. I can see it all around me. They're not waiting for us to do this. We just should be a good partner and do it.

[Mr. Ramos introduced an Argentine pediatrician.]

Q. Good afternoon.

The President. Good afternoon.

Health Care

Q. My question has to do with health, and it's this. Access to health care is a basic human right. The United States has many times helped to promote and defend human rights. How do you think the United States can help us now to be able to gain access for the entire population to health care? And how does this work in the United States, immersed as you are in a free market economic system?

The President. Well, you know, that's a problem that we haven't fully solved. Hillary and I tried in 1994 to devise a system where everyone who could afford it would pay something, according to their ability to pay, for themselves and their employees to buy health insurance so everyone would have access to health care. That plan did not pass.

What have we done instead? We have tried to make it possible for health care to be more affordable. We've tried to protect people's health insurance when they have it so that they don't lose it. And we have a network of public health clinics throughout the United States that people can visit if they do not have access to health care. We just passed a law in our country with 24 billion U.S. dollars to provide health insurance to another 5 million children over the next 5 years. So we're trying.

But I think that we should - from my own point of view, we should support programs through the international financial institutions that help you and through AID, the USAID programs that deal with basic health care. Access to health care is, in my view, right up there with education in terms of what it will take to give every single child in this country and on this continent a chance to participate in the future we're building. And I think the United States should continue to have a high priority on health care at home and health care abroad.

And thank you for being a pediatrician.

[Ms. Salinas introduced a Uruguayan English teacher.]

Intercultural Education

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. I spent some time studying in the United States. Your universities and your schools in the United States are full of foreign students who seem to have understood the need to culturally interact in this era of globalization. Don't you think that more U.S. young people should be going out to the world in order to get to know it and get to know people and get in touch and not be so unaware of the needs of globalization?

The President. Yes, absolutely. You know, one of the reasons I have the attitudes that I have today is that when I was a young man I was given the opportunity to study in another country for 2 years and travel to other countries. I have strongly supported America maintaining the Fulbright scholarship program for that reason. And I believe that we should do all that we can to encourage more students from the United States to take a year or so and study abroad. I'm very glad that we have students from other countries in the U.S. I think there are now 2,000 students from Argentina in the United States. Are there any American students here? Good for you. Well, we have a few here, beating the odds. But I think it's very important,

Let me also say that there is a marked attitudinal change, though, now. Young Americans, Americans under 30, are far more likely to want to be involved with a foreign culture, to want to study overseas, to understand the importance of trade and political cooperation to their own future - far more likely. So I wouldn't be surprised if we don't see a big upsurge in the number of young Americans now who want to take at least a year and go overseas to learn about another culture, to master another language, to be a part of the world as it is developing. But you're absolutely right, we should do more of it.

[Ms. Salinas called on Ms. Rodriguez, who introduced the president of the Puerto Rican Students Association at the University of Miami.]

Puerto Rican Statehood

Q. Thank you. Good afternoon to everyone and good afternoon to you, Mr. President. This is my question. If Puerto Rico were accepted as the 51st State, what assurance could you give the Puerto Rican community that we would be able to keep our traditions, our culture, our language, and not lose our Puerto Rican identity?

The President. Well, first, let me state what my position is. My position is that the status of Puerto Rico should be for the Puerto Rican people themselves to decide. Whether a commonwealth, independence, or statehood, it should be totally up to the people of Puerto Rico. If Puerto Rico were to become a State, among other things, under our laws the educational system of Puerto Rico would be primarily the constitutional responsibility of the State of Puerto Rico, so that to whatever extent the State wanted to have a cultural support for the native culture and the native customs and the native language would be a decision for the State to pursue that the Federal Government should not try to undermine.

So that's my position. I don't think you'd have to worry about that, There are complicating questions on both sides of that issue. But I think that the preservation of the unique and wonderful culture of Puerto Rico would not be a problem probably in either way, but there may be some specific problems I'm unaware of. But I would say that people should make their decisions about commonwealth and statehood probably based on what they think is best economically, rather than that. I believe that we'll be able to preserve the culture no matter what.

As a matter of fact, if you look at what's happening in Miami, what's happening in Los Angeles, what's happening in Chicago, what's happening in the Fairfax County school district across the river from Washington, DC, where there are people from 180 different national groups in one school district, we're going to do a lot of cultural preservation in the years ahead.

[Mr. Ramos called on Ms. Collins, who introduced the coordinator of a Los Angeles human rights organization.]

Immigration

Q. Yes, Mr. President. The new immigration law of 1996 has caused a major crisis for immigrant families. In the past, you have said that life was not going to be made more difficult for those immigrants who have complied with the law in this country and who are seeking the American dream. What I'd like to know is what do you plan to do so that the immigration laws are more humane for the people coming from those countries?

The President. First of all, I think it's important that you look at the changes that we just put into the recently passed budget. As you know, I was bitterly opposed to the immigration law changes made by Congress last year, and I said I would do all I could to reverse the harshest aspects of them. Those laws were largely reversed in their impact in the budget that we just passed.

Now, for people who are there without legal approval, they may be eligible to become legal immigrants and, if so, they should try to get legal status. For some legal immigrants that may still lose some public benefits, our information is that over 70 percent of them are eligible to become citizens. I would urge them to become citizens. We just had a big report from our immigration commission saving that we in the United States Government should do more to try to push citizenship and help new citizens to integrate more successfully into our society. So we're going to be looking at that to see if there are some people who have fallen between the cracks, that we can change their status so they won't be put in a perilous circumstance. But I'm confident that most of the people's problems were taken care of by the recent budget law. The others, I think, we'll have to work hard, particularly moving people into citizenship, because most of the people who don't have benefits now, because they're legal immigrants and not citizens, are old people who aren't in dire health conditions. But almost all of them are eligible to become citizens, and I think we have to move them through the system as quickly as we can.

[Ms. Salinas introduced a Chilean computer company president.]

Major Non-NATO Ally Status and Arms Sales

Q. Mr. President, in the United States seeking MNNA status for Argentina, the armed forces of Argentina, no doubt, would also be given a new status by the U.S. Government. Don't you think that a rivalry can be generated between these neighboring countriesin the south and also produce democratic instability in the region in an arms race that could be unleashed through this decision?

The President. No, but let me explain why. Let me explain why. It's a fair question. And let me say if someone - an Argentine here might stand up and ask the following question: Mr. President, don't you think the fact that the United States is now willing to send - sell sophisticated jets to the Chilean air force could cause the same problem you just said? So let me answer both questions, if I might.

We accorded the major non-NATO ally status to Argentina because of the truly extraordinary efforts that have happened just in the 1990's, where Argentina has gone with us to Bosnia, has gone into Haiti, is working with British soldiers in Cyprus, is working in Mozambique. There is hardly a country in the world that has anything approaching the record of the Argentine military in being willing to stand up for the cause of peace. We believe that we should be sending a signal that this is the policy that other countries should follow. There is nothing here designed to upset the military balance in South America. We want Argentina to be working with Chile, to be working with Brazil. It would be the height of stupidity for these countries to go to war with each other.

Now, why did we decide to say that we might sell aircraft to Chile?

Because Chile was interested in our making a bid. We used to have - essentially, when the continent was governed by military dictators, we said we're not going to sell them planes because they'll use them to go to war with each other. Now that the continent is governed by stable democracies, I asked myself this question: Is there some reason I should continue to discriminate against Chile and treat them differently than I would France or Germany? And the answer was no.

So what we're trying to do, so that no arms - so that we don't have a new arms race in Latin America and people don't get scared about this, whether - I mean, Chile may or may not buy American planes, for all I know. But what we think ought to be done is that all the OAS members ought to say, "Look, we have militaries, we have to keep them properly equipped, but we're going to share information with each other about what we're buying and why." No more secrets, no surprises, no attempts to gain any advantage over one another - that's the answer there. So I think that we ought to just be very open and honest with each other about why we're doing these things, and if so, we won't be heightening the military tension.

Malvinas-Falkland Islands

Mr. Ramos. Mr. President, as a journalist, before going to the next question, I wanted to say this. Since Argentina is an ally of the United States, a non-NATO ally, what would happen if, for example, Argentina wanted to seek a diplomatic or military solution to the Malvinas-Falkland Islands? What would the United States do, ally itself with Great Britain or Argentina?

The President. The United States would say - we tried that once; it didn't work out so well. And the United States would say, here are two great countries following, in every other respect, farsighted policies. Great Britain is enjoying enormous success now in Europe in economic recovery, showing real responsibility in international affairs, trying to deal with the question we must all deal with, which is how do you have a free market and preserve the social contract, treat the poor fairly, grow the middle class. This is not the time to be going to war. These are our friends. They should get together and work this out. That's what the United States would say. The United States would say, for goodness sakes, don't spoil a good thing. We have two good countries here with two - with strong leadership. They should get together and work this out. This is not a cause for war; this is a cause for negotiations.

[Mr. Ramos introduced Mexico's special envoy for the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.]

Youth Empowerment

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. This is my question. We young

people are concerned about solving the problems that affect our countries, but the only thing we can do is show up these concerns because we don't have the proper platform for decisionmaking. I'd like to know, do you have concrete policies designed for young people to become part of strategic decisionmaking processes? And could this policy be used as a tool for better intercontinental integration?

The President. To be perfectly honest with you, I'd never thought of it in that way before. It's interesting; in the United States more and more of our school boards, 'for example, are having a student be a member of the board. More and more of our university boards of trustees are having a student be a member of the board, trying to actually share power with people who are even younger than you, to get young people into this. I haven't thought of this in the context you mention, but I would urge you and anyone else here who is interested in this, if you have any ideas, write to me about it. I will think about it, and I will see what can be done.

But since you're from Mexico though, let me make a specific suggestion. I believe President Zedillo did a very brave and good thing in basically genuinely opening up the Mexican political system, knowing that it would cost his own party positions in the Mexican Congress in the short run. Now you have a much more competitive democracy in Mexico. As a result of that, all these parties are going to be looking around now for young people like you, with ideas and energy and values, people who can command the support of other people. And I think this is a very good time for young people in Mexico to try to make their influence felt in the political system. Because the old - the PRI, they desperately need now young people to come in and say, "No, we have new ideas. We have a future." The other parties that are competing are going to be open. And I think for young people who are of the age to be in politics, not just as elected officials but I mean as activists, there is an unprecedented opportunity in Mexico to affect policy now because you've just opened up a new chapter in your political history.

On the other question, think about it. If you have any ideas specifically, write to me. I'm intrigued by it. I hadn't thought of it before.

Q. We'll ask for the address then.

Ms. Salinas, Mr. President, we've run out of the time we had for questions. Of course, there are so many young people here and in Los Angeles and Miami as well who wanted to take advantage of this opportunity to ask you questions. Others have been able to do that, and they're very grateful. But now, please, you take the floor.

The President. First, let me thank all of you for coming. Let me thank the people in Los Angeles and Miami. Let me congratulate the people in Miami. Their baseball team is going to the World Series faster than any new team has ever gone before. Let me thank the people

of Venezuela and Brazil and Argentina for making us feel so welcome.

And let me say again, I am convinced that the best years in all of human civilization can be ahead of us if we take advantage of the revolutions that are now in play and honestly face our problems together. And if we define the worth of our lives by what we can accomplish by helping each other to make the most of their lives, then I think you will have a very wonderful time in the 21st century.

Thank you, and God bless you.

[An additional question was asked in Spanish, but a translation was not provided.]

Bilingual Education

The President. Believe it or not, I lost my interpreter, but I know what we're talking about. [Laughter]

Here's what I think about the whole bilingual education issue. Every country has a dominant language, and should. And the children in the schools should make every effort - should learn that dominant language and become proficient in it. I think more and more, our children in America will want to speak at least two languages and perhaps more.

What I'd like to see is a situation where we say, however - we can't say we're not going to have any bilingual education, because then children would come here, not just from Spanish-speaking countries but from any number of Asian cultures, and not be able to learn in school for 2 or 3 years. And when children come to the United States and they don't speak English, but they're school age, I think they should start school immediately. They should be able to get whatever instruction they have to have in the language that they do speak, but then they should learn to speak English in an appropriate time, so that we're always encouraging bilingualism or multilingualism.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:07 p.m. at the Univision Television Network Studio. In his remarks, he referred to Univision journalists Jorge Ramos and Maria Elena Salinas, who moderated the meeting in Buenos Aires; and President Ernesto Zedillo of Mexico. The President also referred to the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), Mexico's ruling political party.