

Jan. 29 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1996

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report on Most-Favored-Nation Trade Status for Bulgaria January 29, 1996

To the Congress of the United States:

On June 3, 1993, I determined and reported to the Congress that Bulgaria is in full compliance with the freedom of emigration criteria of sections 402 and 409 of the Trade Act of 1974. This action allowed for the continuation of most-favored-nation (MFN) status for Bulgaria and certain other activities without the requirement of a waiver.

As required by law, I am submitting an updated report to the Congress concerning emigra-

tion laws and policies of the Republic of Bulgaria. You will find that the report indicates continued Bulgarian compliance with U.S. and international standards in the area of emigration policy.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
January 29, 1996.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin of Russia and an Exchange With Reporters January 30, 1996

Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission

The President. Let me say that we are delighted to have Prime Minister Chernomyrdin here. He and the Vice President have had very good meetings, and the relationship that they have established and the work they have done I think has played a major role in the continued strengthening of our partnership with Russia. And I'm very pleased at the progress of this meeting, and I'm very pleased again to have him here in the United States.

Prime Minister Chernomyrdin. Thank you, Mr. President. We have just held the sixth session of the commission, so we made some significant progress. And I believe that it is due to the organization of your side that it was possible to have some results. Perhaps for the lack of time, we don't have as many results as we could have. Well, I think that this is due to the Vice President, Mr. Gore, that we have this success.

The President. He thought it was due to you.

Russia

Q. President Clinton, are you concerned and are you going to speak about some of the anti-reform forces that seem to be operating in the former Soviet Union?

The President. Well, we're going to have a discussion about where things are in Russia on a number of issues, but I personally am convinced, by the assurances that I received from President Yeltsin on our telephone call last week and the record that the Prime Minister himself has established, that Russia is firmly moving forward on reform. And I believe that Russia will receive the support of the International Monetary Fund and the other international institutions as well as the United States and other allies. I think we'll keep moving in this direction.

They had a good year in 1995: They had inflation down; production was stable; the ruble was stronger. I think that they're seeing some real economic growth there, and it's a record they can be proud of.

Chechnya

Q. What about Chechnya? Are you going to discuss that, and do you have continuing questions about it?

The President. I talked to President Yeltsin about that last week, but we'll have a few words about it.

Welfare Reform

Q. Do you plan to veto a Senate version of the welfare bill, the next welfare bill? There's

some talk that conservatives will want to send you a tougher bill than the one that you vetoed last year.

The President. You mean a bill that would be tougher to veto, not a tougher bill. [Laughter] The Senate—the version that passed the Senate is a better bill than the bill that they sent me. But in fairness also to the congressional leaders, we discussed welfare reform extensively in the context of the budget negotiations. And I suppose whether they decide to send a separate bill in part depends upon whether we can reach a comprehensive agreement on the budget. But we had reached some understandings that I think would give us an even better bill.

Now, the Republicans, to be fair to them, are not bound by any of the discussions we had in the budget because we had a general agreement that nothing was agreed to until everything was agreed to. But we had certainly moved well beyond that bill in our discussions and made some critical improvements, particularly in the question of child care for women who would go into the work force and on the question of how to handle the families of children with disabilities, those two things.

We made some real movement beyond the Senate bill. So I would hope if they do send me a separate bill, which of course is their perfect right to do, that it would reflect the discussions that we had here in the budget negotiations.

“Primary Colors”

Q. Who do you think wrote “Primary Colors?”

The President. I don’t know. I haven’t read it.

Q. Are you going to?

The President. I don’t know. I’ve got a lot of books to read. I probably will. I’m going to have a lot of book-reading time this year, because I’m going to be traveling a lot. But I haven’t read it, and I have no idea who wrote it. I mean, you all find out everything in the wide world. The least you could do is tell all of us who wrote that book. I must say, I admire the publisher and the author. It’s the only secret I’ve seen kept in Washington in 3 years.

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

Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission

Q. Mr. President, can I ask you a question?

The President. Yes, but before, let me make a brief statement.

It is a real honor for us in the United States to have Prime Minister Chernomyrdin here again. I very much appreciate the work that he has done with Vice President Gore and the progress that they have made on many specific issues and, in general, in strengthening the ties and the partnership between the United States and Russia. So they’ve had another good meeting. I think that the Russian people and President Yeltsin will be very well pleased with the results. And I just want to say, for my part, how much I appreciate the time and the effort and the skill that the Prime Minister has brought to this work.

Q. Mr. President, this \$9 billion, that’s important for Russia money-wise and important as a sign of support, recognition. Can I report back home that you support Russia with this \$9 billion loan?

The President. Yes.

Q. Unconditionally?

The President. As far as I know, they’ve worked out—they either have worked out or we are in the process of seeing worked out the differences between them. So I believe that the loan will go through, and I believe that it should.

Russia-U.S. Relations

Q. Are you going to visit Moscow in April?

The President. That’s where we’re going to have our meeting, isn’t it? I told President Yeltsin I’d be there, and I intend to be there. I’m looking forward to it. And as you know, our United States Senate just ratified the START II treaty. And I’m hoping that the treaty will find favor in the Russian Duma. And then I’m really looking forward to our meeting in April and moving forward with a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty and a number of other issues.

I think that the leadership that President Yeltsin has taken in bringing together to discuss these issues is very important for the safety of the world and in reassuring all the countries and the people of the world that aggression of governments against one another is no longer an option. We have to work together to make all of our people safer and all of our people more prosperous.

Q. Mr. President, would you say that the general business between America and Russia is usual?

The President. Excuse me?

Q. Business between America and Russia is still as usual?

The President. I think that cooperation is there, the partnership is there, and I feel good about it. Perhaps the Prime Minister should comment.

[At this point, Prime Minister Chernomyrdin answered the question in Russian, and a translation was not provided.]

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:40 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Boris Yeltsin of Russia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on the Budget Negotiations and the Debt Ceiling and an Exchange With Reporters

January 30, 1996

The President. I'm glad to have these Members here, and we are about to begin a discussion about how we can make progress in our effort to get the right kind of balanced budget. Let me also say I think it is terribly important that Congress pass a clean debt ceiling and do it immediately, so that we can honor the full faith and credit of the United States and so that those Social Security checks can go out at the first of March. It's getting close, and we just have a month left, and I think it's imperative that this be done. But in the meanwhile, we're going to keep working on the budget, trying to find a solution that both parties can embrace and that I can sign.

Q. What about the House saying it's going to adjourn for a month at the end of the week? Are you going to be able to make any progress while they're gone?

The President. Well, I can only tell you that I think that we've got to deal with the debt ceiling. I'm more optimistic—I think we can clearly make progress on the budget whether they're in session or out of session. It depends upon who's available to meet and what kind of conversations can be held over the telephone. So I'm not so concerned about that, but it is imperative that we understand what the timetable is on the debt limit and that we not play games with that. That's an emergency. We can deal with the budget over the telephone. But Congress has to be here and actually pass an act to lift the debt ceiling.

Q. Mr. President, some Republicans say that it was your Treasury Secretary who played

games and said that the debt ceiling was going to run out the last time, and that in fact it didn't, and that there are ways to kind of correct this that he's talking about.

The President. No, he didn't play any games. He was deft and adroit and did the best he could to keep this country afloat. And he has notified them that he is out of options, just like he notified them before that we had some options. And I don't think anything has happened to change his mind. So he has explained to them what the situation is; that's what it is.

This country has not one time in its entire history refused to honor the obligations that it has committed to. And I don't believe we should now, and I don't believe we will. But I want to urge Congress to deal with this in a prompt manner.

Q. Why won't the Social Security checks go out? What—is this a separate—

The President. Because if the country cannot honor its debt obligations, it won't be able to keep its cash flow up.

Welfare Reform

Q. Would you sign the Senate welfare bill?

The President. Well, let me say, as you know, we got the bill out of the Senate, and it was much improved over the House. Then they didn't send it back to me. I think the discussion is recently moot because we made some advances beyond the Senate welfare bill in our budget negotiations.