

referred to the Military Technical Agreement Between the International Security Force (KFOR) and the Governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia.

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Dinner June 10, 1999

The President. Thank you very much. Charlie, wait a minute. Before Chairman Rangel sits down—you know, Dick Gephardt got up there and said, “You know, the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee is as powerful as the President.” [Laughter] Bob Johnson said, “That’s a scary thought.” [Laughter] And I said, “No, no, he’s more powerful than the President.” [Laughter]

You should know that among all the things we have to be grateful for tonight and to celebrate, tomorrow is Charlie Rangel’s birthday. So I think we should sing “Happy Birthday” to him.

[At this point, the participants sang “Happy Birthday.”]

Representative Charles Rangel. My only response is, save Social Security now! [Laughter]

The President. That’s just like we rehearsed it. [Laughter]

Let me say to Congressman Rangel and, in his absence, Chairman Clyburn, Eleanor Holmes Norton, all the members of the caucus who are still here, and those who have come and gone, to the members of the Cabinet that are here—I saw Secretary Slater and Secretary Riley, there may be others here—and my former Cabinet member Jesse Brown, former Secretary of Veterans Affairs back there, I’m glad to see you. My wonderful friend from Chicago and fellow Arkansan John Stroger and all the others who did so much to make this night a possibility. I thank the chairman of the DNC, Joe Andrew, for being here; and Lottie Shackelford, others from the DNC who are here.

I want to say—I have so many friends here, but there’s one young couple here that I’m particularly pleased about being here because they’re new Washingtonians, the newly acquired new quarterback for the Washington Redskins, Rodney Peete, and his wonderful wife, Holly Robinson Peete. You all stand up there and say hello. [Applause] They are a big addition

to this community and wonderful people, and I’m glad to have them.

I want to say a few things rather briefly tonight. First of all, Congressman Rangel, my wife said to tell you hello, and once again, thank you for your friendship. [Laughter] Secondly, I want you to know when we had the New York Yankees at the White House today to celebrate their championship last year, I called them the Bronx Bombers, and I emphasized “Bronx,” and I said I was doing it at your behest. [Laughter]

Finally, let me say I was looking at Dick Gephardt standing up here, and I have known him for many years, and I thought he was a good man and an able man when I first met him. But I have watched him grow in his responsibility, in the depth of his understanding and his spirit. He should be the Speaker of the House. He should be the Speaker of the House.

The last thing I want to say by way of introduction is, I’m delighted to see Lionel Hampton again. We had—John Conyers and I had a 90th birthday party for him at the White House last year, almost a year ago, and they actually let me play with the band. And I hadn’t played in months, and it was really one of the nicest nights I’ve had in the White House, and I’m very grateful for that. And I’m grateful for him. If I look half as good at 60 as he does at 90—[laughter]—if I can hear to play my horn as well as he can hear to play his vibie, I will be a happy fellow.

I apologize for being late here tonight. I think all of you know why. I addressed the people of the United States tonight about the end of the conflict in Kosovo. I want to say a couple of things about that and what it has to do with all of the things that have already been mentioned and all the issues we don’t have time to mention tonight.

The unimaginable horrors that were inflicted on those people, which led to an unprecedented

indictment of a head of state, Mr. Milosevic, for war crimes and crimes against humanity, came to them solely because of their ethnicity and their religious faith. And it is indeed ironic that here we are on the edge of a new century and a new millennium, with the world growing closer together, with technology literally exploding opportunities for all of us, with America becoming more and more diverse by the day, that the world is most bedeviled by the oldest problem of human society: people are scared of people who don't look like them and who worship God in a different way than they do and who basically come from a different tribe.

We have learned, in ways good and bad, that our differences make us stronger; they make life more interesting; they make life more fun. But if that curious balance that exists inside all of us gets out of whack and our fears overcome our hopes, we can go quickly from fearing people to hating them, to dehumanizing them, to justifying all manner of repression and abuse of them.

What the conflict in Kosovo was about at bottom is whether or not, after all we have learned from what happened in World War II to the Jewish people and others in Nazi repression and all we have seen since, would or would not provoke the world, especially after the agonizing experience we had in Bosnia and the awful experience we had in Rwanda, when everyone was caught flat-footed, with no mechanism to deal with it—whether we would say, “Okay, from now on we don't expect everybody to get along. We don't think we can abolish all war. But if innocent civilians are going to be slaughtered and uprooted and have their lives destroyed and their families wrecked only because of their racial or ethnic background or their religious faith—if we can stop it, we intend to stop it.”

The United States did not go there for any territorial gain or economic gain. We went there because we want there to be peace and harmony, first in Europe and, wherever possible, in the rest of the world. We went there with an Army that looks like America, an Air Force that looks like America. We landed a Marine expeditionary unit in Greece today, going into Kosovo to help those folks come home, that looks like America. There are people from every conceivable racial and ethnic group and all different religious backgrounds, bound together by what they have in common being more important than the interesting things that divide them.

I say that because I am grateful for what they have achieved with our Allies. But I know, as I look toward the future, when I am long gone from this job, and the world grows closer and closer—but we will still have struggles between those who are left out and those who are included in the bounty of the world. We will still have to deal with terrorism and weapons of mass destruction and international criminal gangs and all, and people will always be trying to feed on the differences, to switch the balance from hope to fear. And it will be very important that the United States of our children and grandchildren be a force for bringing people together, not tearing them apart. And we will not be able to do that, over the long run, to do good around the world, unless we first are good at home.

That is why—that's why I've worked as hard as I can on all the issues involving race; why I know we've got to get rid of this racial profiling; why I know we've got to do more to deal with the threat of violence to our children; why I have asked everybody from the entertainment community to the gun community, to the schools, the people that provide counseling and mental health services, to the parents, to do something—all of us to do something to give our children their childhood back.

That is why I have asked the Congress to invest more in education, to adopt this new market initiative. I like the fact that we will give you tax breaks, tax credits, and loan guarantees to invest in poor countries around the world. I don't want to take them away. I just want you to have exactly the same incentives to invest in poor neighborhoods in inner-city America and Appalachia and the Mississippi Delta and Native American reservations and all those other places.

So I ask you to think about this. This is a night you can be proud of your country. This is a night you can be grateful for the economic prosperity that we have enjoyed, that we have the lowest African-American and Hispanic unemployment rates we have ever recorded, that wages are rising for people in all income groups. We can be grateful for that. And you have expressed your gratitude by coming here and giving these funds, for which I am grateful.

But I want you to support our party not just so that Dick Gephardt can be Speaker and Charlie Rangel can be chairman, we can have 3 or 4 chairmen and 19 subcommittee chairs, but for what Mr. Gephardt said: because if we

are in these positions of responsibility, we will show up for work every day. And we will not be interested simply in accumulating power but in using the fleeting power we have been given by the American people to advance the cause, the future, and the hopes of ordinary citizens from all walks of life.

I believe—it's not fashionable to say, I guess, but politics and public service are noble endeavors if they are informed by a high purpose. I have never thought that I was going to be President for life, and I have never thought one bit of power I exercised really belonged to me. It was something that was loaned to me for a little while by the American people, thanks to the remarkable Constitution under which we live.

And so if you give us this kind of responsibility, we will ask the American people to search their consciousness—and to serve their—search their consciences, to think and to feel what we still must do to deepen the meaning of freedom and widen the circle of opportunity and strengthen the bonds of community. That's what a lot of our fights are about. That's what the Patients' Bill of Rights is about. If I get sick tonight, I'm going to be fine. Unless God gets ready to take me home, I'll have the best health care in the world. I don't need it, and neither do most of you.

That's why we're trying to have America join the mainstream and stop being the only country in the world that doesn't even have sensible, commonsense regulation of these handguns, to keep them out of the hands of criminals and kids, and to keep the assault weapons away from the children. The Secret Service is taking care of me; I don't need that. And if anything happened to me, besides, I've already had more life than 99 percent of the people who ever lived. [*Laughter*] I don't have any gripe.

But all those kids—Dick Gephardt reminded us, 13 kids get killed every day, get shot and die and don't have the life that I have had or the life that you have had that has brought you to this point. And I have been so moved by the people at Littleton and how they have responded, and the courage and dignity with which they have borne their awful fate, and the way they have asked us not to let their children die in vain.

But every day, for years, 13 kids die in ones and twos, on the mean streets and the tough alleys in which they live. We want to do some-

thing about that, and we can. It's why we've tried to make college affordable for everybody and put a computer in every child's schoolroom. Our kids—we don't need that; our kids can have their computers.

I say that not to make you feel better than our political adversaries, either. I say that to make this simple point. The same thing that makes us believe that people are better off getting along than they are fighting over their racial or religious differences makes us believe that we ought to have universal excellence in education, universal quality in health care, a strong economy that includes everyone. But because we know down deep inside that that's being smart selfish, we know that we'll be better off and our children will be better off and our country will be stronger if we're not just sailing along alone.

If you ask me what the single most significant difference between the two parties is today and why it is so important that you're here and why we had the historic victory we had in 1998, even though we were outspent by \$100 million, it is because we believe, truly, that we are all God's children, that none of us inherently is better than any other, and that we don't believe, even if we are in the elite, in just the elite and their welfare. And this is not about class warfare, either. This is about whether you believe that individuals and families and businesses are better off when they're part of a fabric of a strong community, where everybody's trying to give everybody else a hand up. And if we ever do it right, there will be no more handouts. If we had enough hand-ups, there would be no more handouts.

So I want you to leave here being proud of what you did tonight, but I don't want you to quit. It's a long road between now and 2000. And we're not getting much encouragement from most of our friends on the other side of the aisle in campaign finance reform, because they figured if they outdid us by \$100 million in '98, maybe they can have a \$200 million advantage in 2000.

But one thing we showed them in 1998, partly thanks to a record African-American turnout, one thing we showed them: It doesn't matter if they have more money than you do if you have enough to be heard. If you have enough to be heard, if you have enough to make those telephone calls and to get those doors knocked on and to send those letters out and to put

those ads on and to be heard if you stand for something, if the power is not an end in itself but to be used as a gift, given for a limited period of time by the people to strengthen the common life of our country, we've proved that great things can happen.

You have done a good thing tonight for your country. I want you to think about it and continue to speak for it. And when people ask you why you were here tonight, I hope some of the words that we have said will give you an answer: because you want us to go forward together.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:12 p.m. at the National Museum for Women in the Arts. In his remarks, he referred to Robert L. Johnson, chairman and chief executive officer, BET Holdings, Inc.; musician Lionel Hampton; John Stroger, president, Cook County Board of Commissioners, Chicago, IL; Joseph J. Andrew, national chair, and Lottie Shackelford, vice chair, Democratic National Committee; and President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

Remarks at Whiteman Air Force Base in Knob Noster, Missouri *June 11, 1999*

Thank you very, very much. General Lyles, thank you for your introduction and your service. I'd like to thank General Barnidge for making me feel right at home. You can tell he's pretty proud of you, and he makes a good speech, doesn't he? I didn't know whether he was a politician or a general the first time I met him. [*Laughter*] I've got the coin, General. [*Laughter*] I think I know the rules. You got yours? [*Laughter*]

Actually, ladies and gentlemen, when I discovered these coins, I decided one way I could always remember the men and women of our military is to keep every coin I receive visible. And for as long as I have been President, I have done that. And if you saw the speech I gave last night on Kosovo, when the camera zooms in I have three racks of these coins behind me. I now have nearly 300 of these, from every unit, every enlisted person, every officer, every commander that has given me one of these, I still have the coins. And everyone who comes into the Oval Office sees them all, to remember you and what you do for our country. And this will be on that desk tonight when I get home, and I thank you for it very much.

I want to thank my good friend Congressman Ike Skelton for representing you so well and representing all of America's military families and military interests so well. I'd like to thank my National Security Adviser, Sandy Berger, who did a lot of working in planning and exe-

cuting our efforts in Kosovo and others who have come here with me today.

There are a large number of Congressmen here, and I want to acknowledge all of them, because I think it's important that you know you have broad support. We have four Members from Missouri here: in addition to Congressman Skelton, Congresswoman Pat Danner, Congresswoman Karen McCarthy, and Congressman Kenny Hulshof from Missouri. They are all here. I'd like to ask them to stand and be recognized. [*Applause*]

We have Congressman Norm Dicks from Washington and Congressman Steny Hoyer from Maryland, as you heard, two big supporters of the B-2 program. We have Congressman Leonard Boswell from Iowa and Congressman Dennis Moore from Kansas, two of your neighbors here. And we have two Congressmen who came all the way from New York State, Congressman Eliot Engel and Congressman Peter King. I'd like to ask the rest of the members of the congressional delegation to stand. I thank them for being here. [*Applause*]

We all came down from Washington today on behalf of your fellow Americans to salute the men and women of Whiteman Air Force Base, to thank you for a job well done, to honor you for the way you honor America.

Over the past few months, our Nation has faced an extraordinary challenge. A decade of brutal policies in the former Yugoslavia, and in