AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

Interview With the Voice of America

January 11, 1996

Q. Mr. President, you are regarded as a hero in Bosnia, you are the person who brought peace over there. Yet, we do have some renewed fighting between Muslims and Croats. Are you going to be meeting with any local leaders and addressing the issue?

The President. Well, I know I'm going to see President Izetbegovic, and I'm going to, hopefully, see President Tudjman. And we may be able to see some others, as well—I don't think that it's been finalized, all the people I will speak with. But I will do what I can while I'm there to help to encourage the parties to follow the letter and the spirit of the Dayton Agreement and the Paris Peace Accord.

Q. NATO bombed the Bosnian Serbs, we know that, and these people are terrified. What do we tell them now that NATO is back in Bosnia?

The President. You should tell them that NATO is back in Bosnia only because the leaders of all the groups asked NATO to come in, as a strictly neutral partner. If you look at the United States, we have agreed to work in an area of Bosnia where we will be working with the Russians who are more sympathetic with the Serbs. We and the Russians are working together in the hope that we can convince all the parties, the Serbs, the Croats, and the Muslims, that we have no ill-will toward anyone, we wish to hurt no one, we are there only to help them implement the peace agreement their own leaders have made.

Q. Thank you.

The President. Thank you.

Q. Good luck.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview began at approximately 10:15 a.m., following the videotape recording to the people of Bosnia in the Roosevelt Room at the White House, and it was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 12. In his remarks, the President referred to President Alija Izetbegovic of Bosnia-Herzegovina and President Franjo Tudjman of Croatia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to Employees at Peterbilt Truck Plant in Nashville, Tennessee

January 12, 1996

The President. Thank you. Boy, I'm glad to be here. I need this. Sort of a fix from home. [*Laughter*].

I want to thank the Vice President for his wonderful statement this morning, but more important, I want everyone of you to know that whether it's working on downsizing our Government in a way that gives the American people a Government that works better for less or working on finding ways to protect our environment in ways that grow jobs instead of undermining the economy or working on our relationships with Russia in a way that makes sure we are never, never, never again threatened with the specter of nuclear war, Al Gore, from Carthage, Tennessee, is the most influential and effective Vice President in the history of the United States of America.

I've got a lot of friends here today. I want to thank the Mayor for coming and Congressman Clement and Gordon and Tanner. And my dear friend, your former Governor, Ned Ray McWherter, who actually purchases your trucks. At least that's what he tells me. [*Laughter*] The first time I met Ned McWherter I talked to him for 30 seconds, and I wanted to reach in my back pocket and make sure my billfold was still there. [*Laughter*]

Audience Members. Ohhhh. [*Laughter*]

The President. But they're not making many like him anymore, and I'm glad to see him looking so thin and fit. Looks like a new morning. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank Joe Scattergood and Wayne Wooten for going through the plant with me. And thank you, Bobby Lee, for what you said and for being here. And thank you, Tom Plimpton, for the wonderful tour. And let me say also, I want to thank these retirees who are back here, and I want to mention I met two people today who work here, and this is their last day on the job. And I want to acknowledge them because I think Al Gore and I should have shown up for their retirement party.

The first person has been here 25 years, Mr. Bill Douglas. He's over there. And I met

a lady on the line. I don't know where she is, but she's been here 19 years, and she's leaving today. Her name is Dorris Skaggs. Dorris, where are you. Give her a hand. [*Applause*]

I want to say one word—before I talk about where we are with the big budget fight in Washington and the economy, I want to say a word about one other issue that involves three people from this plant.

As the Vice President said, as soon as I leave you here in Nashville today I am going to Bosnia to visit the men and women who are helping to secure the peace agreement there. With our help the people of Bosnia who, for 4 long years, were denied the simple chance to go to work and raise their children in peace, now have an opportunity to rebuild their lives and their country.

Bosnia is the country where World War I began. Bosnia is the country that's so closely tied to others, that if that war were to spread it could cause many Americans and many other people from freedom-loving countries around the world to lose their lives trying to stop it.

So we have worked hard not to try to fight a war but to bring a peace for the humanitarian reasons that involved the people there and to keep that war from spreading in ways that could hurt the United States and our friends and allies in Europe. This is a very good thing the American people and our friends from around the world are doing. And all Americans should be proud of what they are doing in Bosnia.

Three of your own co-workers are in Germany right now with their National Guard units supporting that mission. A lot of Americans don't know this, but you can't just send soldiers to Bosnia. We have people in Hungary supporting them, people in Croatia supporting them, and people in Germany supporting them. And people that you have are Emmett Northington who puts these world-class trucks together, Charles Hobson who paints them, and Richard "Lightning" Maxwell who actually gets to test drive these machines. Give them a hand. Let's give them a hand. [*Applause*]

Most of the time, these people work right beside you. Today they are a long way away, working for a better, safer world. I know they and their families will remain in your prayers until the day when they all come back here to work again.

What they are doing, to me, symbolizes what the great issue of our time is all about. The United States, if you just look at the rest of the world with the cold war over, it is tempting for us to say, "Boy, we ought to just shut down our defense and come home and hope nothing bad happens." But the truth is that, as Nashville, as this area, perhaps more than any other area the South knows, we are tied in with the rest of the world today whether we like it or not. And we have a profound interest in seeing the United States be the world's leading source of energy for peace and freedom and democracy. It helps us economically, and it helps us to be more secure.

I am proud of what our country has been able to do in the last couple of years in Bosnia and the Middle East, in Haiti and Northern Ireland and southern Africa. I am proud of the fact that, with the leadership of the Vice President, for the first time since the dawn of the nuclear age, there is not a single nuclear missile pointed at an American child today. I am proud of that.

With terrorism threatening people all around the world, both homegrown terrorism—we've seen that—and terrorists coming into our country to make mischief and kill people—we've seen that—I am proud of the fact that because we're cooperating with other countries, we have actually seen them help us arrest, apprehend, and send back to this country people who came into our country and killed innocent people for illegitimate political ends. I am proud of that, because we do cooperate.

Because we cooperate with other countries, I am proud of the fact that our military and our civilian law enforcement officials helped to capture seven of the biggest drug leaders in Colombia in the last 2 years, because we're cooperating with other countries. And I am proud of the fact that in the last 3 years, our exports of American products have increased by one-third in only 3 years to an all-time high. So we are involved in the rest of the world.

People are making decisions about dope in other countries that are going to kill Amer-

ican kids on the streets here. We need to be involved with them. Their governments are having to take more risks than we do to try to stop it. They have to put their lives on the line. We need to be their partners.

If we want people to buy our products, we need to be their partners. If we want people to dismantle their nuclear weapons and not to build these awful biological and chemical weapons, we have to be their partners. If we want people to stand up to terrorism, we know no country can do it alone.

So you have to see what we're doing in Bosnia and what your three co-workers are doing as part of America's efforts to create a world where people like you everywhere can build strong families and have decent jobs and relate to one another in an atmosphere of peace. That is what those people are doing in Bosnia. And I am very, very proud of them.

Now, here at home, all the headlines are dominated by the budget debate. And every day sounds like a long horse race. Well, are they going to get a deal or aren't they going to get a deal? I want you to see that in kind of a big picture, too.

One of my favorite Presidents is Andrew Jackson. And one of the things Andrew Jackson did was to get rid of the national debt. Now, it was easier back then, but it was still hard. And he got it done because he was determined.

When I showed up in Washington, I could not believe that we had quadrupled the debt of this country in only 12 years. Until 1981, we never—we never had a policy, in all of our history, of consistently spending more money than we were taking in. Debts had been used to try to spark the economy when there was a recession. Or if we were at war, we had to sell bonds and borrow more money because we had to gear up in a hurry. But until the 12 years before I became President, there had never been a policy in our country to just run a big debt all the time, in good years and bad years, just because it was too much trouble to be disciplined.

So I don't like what has happened. And when we showed up, we had a different idea. We said, the people who think you don't have to be concerned about the deficit are wrong. But the people who think that it doesn't matter how you spend your money, and therefore, you don't have to invest in anything, they're wrong, too. We have to cut the deficit and invest in our future. It's worth investing in education. It's worth protecting Medicare and Medicaid. It's worth investing in the environment to protect the environment for the future. We have to invest in some things, but we've got to get rid of this deficit. It is eating us alive.

I want you to know that in the last 3 years we've cut that deficit in half in only 3 years—from nearly $300 billion a year down to $160 billion. I want you to know that your Federal budget would be balanced today if it weren't for the interest we have to pay on the debt that was run up between 1981 and the end of 1992, before we took office. Just that interest rate—this budget would be balanced today if it weren't for the interest we're paying on the 12 years when we departed from the historical practice of this country of paying our way and running the deficit only in recessions or wartime.

Now, those are the facts. So you need to know there is no party in Washington trying to expand the deficit. We now have a consensus on that. This debate is over how to balance the budget, not whether to balance the budget.

You heard the Vice President talk. You know, I'm proud of the fact that the economy has rebounded since we took office. It's rebounded because we invested in our country and cut the deficit. It's rebounded because we changed the way the Government works. Under his leadership—I bet you nobody in this room knows this—under his leadership there are now 205,000 fewer people working for the Federal Government than there were the day we took office—205,000.

Now, how come nobody knows that? For two good reasons. One is we just didn't throw those people in the street. I don't believe in that. If you've got to downsize the Government you need to treat the workers with dignity, and we gave them good early retirement packages. We gave them good severance pay. We gave them extra time to find other jobs. We gave them time to go on and find a different life where they could be even more productive.

The second reason is, the folks that are left are working harder and smarter, and they're doing a better job, just like you. Their productivity has gone up. But all these people that talk about big Government—your Government is the smallest it's been since 1965. As a percentage of the work force, because the population has been growing, your Government is the smallest it's been since 1933. So don't let people tell you that we're the big Government crowd in Washington.

But maybe more important, we've tried to do things that would reinforce our values. We passed a tough and a smart crime bill. Do you know, in America—read the cover one of our national news magazines this week—the crime rate is down in America; the welfare rolls are down in America; the food stamp rolls are down in America; the poverty rolls are down in America. For 2 years, the teen pregnancy rate has come down in America. The American people are rallying around their basic values. And if we can keep this economy growing and keep people moving from welfare to work, so that we stand up for our values and grow the economy, that's what will take this country into the next century as the world's strongest force for freedom and opportunity. That's what we've got to do.

So what I want you—that's how I want you to see this budget debate. That's the background. This country is moving toward the right kind of future. We do have to finish the job and balance the budget; the question is how. The Vice President framed it in one way. He said, we try to think about what's best for people like you. We want to grow the middle class and shrink the under class. We think the best way to make more millionaires is to have more successful working people buying the things that they're putting out, whether they're products or services. That's one way to say it.

Let me say it in another way. I think what works in this plant is what works in America. What works is teamwork. We believe in individualism. We believe in individual rights. We believe in individual decisionmaking. But the truth is we are not in this alone. And another big line, a way to think about this debate we're having in Washington is whether you think we're working toward a society where we've either got winner-take-all or a society where everybody had got a chance to win. I think we ought to have a society where everybody's got a chance to win. If you're willing to work hard and play by the rules, everybody ought to have a chance to win.

And if you look at the teamwork—you know, everybody cheered here, everybody cheered here when you said that Peterbilt was the world's best plant making trucks. Everybody cheered. I didn't know who was management and who was labor. I didn't know who was working on the chassis or the cabs. Right? What works is when you work together.

Yes, we have created a good economic climate, but if you folks weren't doing a good job, you still wouldn't have these extra 650 workers. You did that. We didn't do that. We didn't have anything to do with that. Our job in Washington is to create a framework in which you can succeed. But we can't guarantee that. That's all your doing. You deserve all the credit. But you didn't do it by first one person running this way and another running the other way and pulling everything apart. You did it by pulling together.

That's what I'm trying to do for this country. And that's what this budget debate is about.

Now, I introduced a budget and—balance the budget in 9 years. Then the Republicans said, "Let's do it in 7." I said, "Okay." Then they said, "We think that you're too hopeful about the economy." I said, "Well, I think the economy will get better if we balance the budget. But if you don't think it will, we'll do it on your numbers." So then I gave them a 7-year balanced budget on their numbers. And then we began to try to work out our differences. Now, all the press is about the differences. But I want you to know that we have resolved a lot of those differences, and the differences that remain, I think, are quite important.

My plan protects Medicare so we can honor our duty to our parents by seeing to it that they're able to lead lives of dignity. But it is not just for them, because if you weaken Medicare too much, then people like you will have to spend more money on your parents, and you'll have less money to send

your kids to college. This is an intergenerational thing. This is not about pandering to senior citizens. This is about helping families stay together.

Our plan also leaves more funds to invest in education from Head Start to helping our schools meet higher standards, not by telling them what to do but by saying, ''Here are the standards and you figure out how to meet them, and we'll give you some money so you can do it;'' by providing more affordable college loans and more college scholarships, not just because we're trying to help the young but because we're trying to provide for the future. And that's what we have to do.

Our plan leaves more money to invest in the environment because we know we've got to find a way to grow the economy and preserve the environment. Just last week there was a big story about something the Vice President's been saying for years and years and years. Last year was the hottest year on record, and we have got to find a way to keep growing the economy without burning up the atmospheric layer that protects us all. We've got to find a way to do it and still preserve the clean rivers that we fish in and the woods that we hunt in and the parks that we take our children to. It's a big issue. You've got to set aside something for that. And that's what we do.

The Medicaid program is the program that pays for middle class folks to send their parents to nursing homes so that they don't have to go totally bankrupt and their kids don't have to go totally bankrupt. It also pays for health care for poor children, including some children of working people who make very modest wages. We can make some savings there, but we've got to be careful how far we go.

It also pays for care for middle class people who have disabled children. I bet there are people that work in this plant who have children with some sort of physical disability who get a little help through that program. That is an honorable and a decent thing to do.

Yes, we need to control medical inflation, but we have to do it in a way that leaves that intact. Why? Because we are stronger when we are working together than we are when we just cut everybody loose. That is the issue: Are we going up or down together; do we want a society where all can win or are we satisfied with winner-take-all? America is best when everybody's winning as a team. That is what we are for. We are not for big Government in Washington. We're for a Government in Washington that plays its part as your partner to see that everybody has a chance to win. That's what this whole budget debate is about.

As I said, to be fair to the Republican and the Democratic congressional leaders, we have sat together for 50 hours. And I thought the other day, you know, sometimes we fight with one another in these 50 hours, and they think I'm wrong and I think they're wrong. And here we are in Nashville. It reminds me of that old country song, ''It's hard to soar like an eagle when I'm stuck with a turkey like you.'' [*Laughter*] Sometimes they think that about me. Sometimes I think that about them.

But we've tried to resolve our differences. And we've made a lot of progress. And here's where we are. They still want levels of reductions in Medicare and Medicaid and education and the environment that are not necessary to balance the budget. They admit they're not necessary to balance the budget. They sent me a letter saying that my plan balanced the budget. So there's no question that they're not necessary to balance the budget.

My plan strengthens the Medicare Trust Fund and gives more choice and more preventive benefits to older Americans and added help for families that are caring for loved ones with problems like Alzheimer's disease. But it will save money from the present system. We agree on that. But they want to go beyond that.

Their plan cuts Medicare more than it needs to be cut to balance the budget. And they would favor wealthier and healthier senior citizens at the expense of everybody else by giving them many more opportunities just to get out of the Medicare system. Well, the reason Medicare works is that everybody's in it, the sick and the healthy alike. You're got a great big pool that's low risk. And we can afford to run it, and you can afford to pay for it. So I just disagree with that.

Under their plan, older couples would pay $400 more a year. Well, if you're making a

good living, $400 may not be very much. But there's a lot of retired people in the hills of Tennessee and rural Arkansas that $400 is a whole bunch of money. And I simply don't think it's right for me to get a tax cut in my income bracket and then to charge them $400 more a year. I just don't think it's right. If it were necessary to balance the budget, it would be all right. But it's not. It is not necessary to balance the budget.

You know, where I come from, $400 is still a whole lot of money to a lot of those old folks. It really matters. Now, if we had to have it to balance the budget or save Medicare, I'd be happy to ask for it. But since we know we don't, we shouldn't take it.

The real problem is this: Some of the Republicans honestly just want to balance the budget. And they're also honestly concerned with the cost of Medicare and Medicaid. Some of the Republicans are using the balanced budget and the very large tax cut they want to say, ''Well, if we balance the budget, we have a big tax cut, then we just don't have any money for this.''

What they want to do is to end the ability of your Nation's Government to say America can protect all our seniors through Medicare, can protect the poor children, the handicapped children, the people in nursing homes through Medicaid, can made a major contribution to education, to educational technology, to reviving this country. They don't believe we ought to do that any more. They think we should put that back to the market alone.

The problem is if the market alone does that, then we're not working as a team anymore. Then we're not saying everybody has a chance to win anymore. Then we're not being your partner anymore. That is the whole issue here. It's not about big Government. We have given you the smallest Government the American people have had as a percentage of our civilian work force since 1933. It's not about regulation. We're getting rid of 16,000 pages of Federal regulation. It's not about the deficit. The deficit has been cut in half, would be balanced today if it weren't for the debt run up in the 12 years before we showed up. But it's nothing about that. It's about philosophy.

Now, here's the argument I'm making to them. Now, they've got a lot of compelling points. If they were here today, they could make their speeches, and you'd think they'd make some good points, too. My argument is, we're going to have an election here in November, and we can argue about how the Medicare program should be structured, beyond where we can agree; we can argue what our environmental policy should be, beyond where we can agree; we could argue whether it's a good or a bad thing for the Federal Government to give lower cost college loans to students and give them better terms to repay it so nobody will be discouraged from going to college by the debt. We can argue all that, but we have already agreed on enough savings to balance the budget. And since we agree on that, and we've already agreed on how to save the money to do it, let's go on and balance the budget and get that out of the way. We owe that to the American people. It is wrong not to do it. Let us balance the budget and do it now.

I will say today, I watched that cab being set down on the chassis today, right before I came up here, and I thought, now, that's a picture of what America's all about. We work well when we work together. I got tickled—you know the Vice President talked for 6 minutes before he mentioned the Tennessee football team. I didn't dream it would take him that long. [*Laughter.*] Now, Tennessee's got a great quarterback, but if it weren't for the other 10 people on the offense and the other 11 on the defense, you wouldn't have the ranking you enjoy. You watched that Ohio State game; it was a balanced team that won that game.

If you look at what happens when the American military goes someplace, and you're proud of them, there are a lot of heroes out there, but it's the team that wins. And that's what this is all about. It's also about recognizing that in life you do what you can today and you put off the rest until tomorrow. So I say again to my Republican and my Democratic friends in the Congress, we can balance the budget today. We have already agreed on how to do that. We can give a modest tax relief geared to childrearing and education for the working families of America. We have agreed on that. We can

do some things for small business. We've agreed on that.

Let us take what we can agree on and balance the budget while we protect Medicare and Medicaid and education and the environment and give modest tax relief. Let us be honest with the American people what we disagree on, and let the American people make their decision in November. But we are hired to show up for work every day, just like you are. We can't just go on a work stoppage from now until November and not deal with this. So we should balance the budget now and put the differences off and let you decide in November who you think is right. Whatever you say, it will probably be right. It's been right most of the time for the last 200 years. But meanwhile, we should do our job.

Thank you very much, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:10 a.m., on the factory floor. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Philip N. Bredesen of Nashville; Joe Scattergood, plant manager; Wayne Wooten, president, United Auto Workers #1832; Bobby Lee Thompson, director, United Auto Workers, Region 8; and Tom Plimpton, general manager, Peterbilt Division. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Proclamation 6861—Martin Luther King, Jr., Federal Holiday, 1996

January 12, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Our country's motto, "E Pluribus Unum"—out of many we are one—charges us to find common values among our varied experience and to forge a national identity out of our extraordinary diversity. Our great leaders have been defined not only by their actions, but also by their ability to inspire people toward a unity of purpose. Today we honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who focused attention on the segregation that poisoned our society and whose example moved our Nation to embrace a new standard of openness and inclusion.

From Montgomery to Birmingham, from the Lincoln Memorial to Memphis, Dr. King led us to see the great contradiction between our founders' declaration that "all men are created equal" and the daily reality of oppression endured by African Americans. His words have become such a part of our moral fabric that we may forget that only a generation ago, children of different races were legally forbidden to attend the same schools, that segregated buses and trains traveled our neighborhoods, and that African Americans were often prevented from registering to vote. Echoing Abraham Lincoln's warning that a house divided against itself cannot stand, Dr. King urged, "We must learn to live together as brothers, or we will perish as fools."

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s call for American society to truly reflect the ideals on which it was built succeeded in galvanizing a political and moral consensus that led to legislation guaranteeing all our citizens the right to vote, to obtain housing, to enter places of public accommodation, and to participate in all aspects of American life without regard to race, gender, background, or belief.

But despite the great accomplishments of the Civil Rights Movement, we have not yet torn down every obstacle to equality. Too many of our cities are still racially segregated, and remaining barriers to education and opportunity have caused an array of social problems that disproportionately affect African Americans. As a result, blacks and whites often see the world in strikingly different ways and too often view each other through a lens of mistrust or fear.

Today we face a choice between the dream of racial harmony that Martin Luther King, Jr., described and a deepening of the rift that divides the races in America. We must have the faith and wisdom that Dr. King preached and the convictions he lived by if we are to make this a time for healing and progress—and each of us must play a role. For only by sitting down with our neighbors in the workplace and classroom, reaching across racial lines in our places for worship and community centers, and examining our own most deep-seated beliefs, can we have the honest conversations that will enable us to understand the different ways we each experience the challenges of modern life. This is the peaceful process of reconciliation that Dr.