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and President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

Remarks on the Unveiling of a Portrait of Former Secretary of State Warren M. Christopher

March 30, 1999

Thank you very much, Secretary Albright, Chris, Marie, other members of the Cabinet who are here, Secretary Rubin, Secretary Shalala. We thank very much Tunky Riley and Hattie Babbitt for being here. And we're glad that Tom and Oya are here and past and present officials of the State Department, other distinguished guests.

I would like to begin by saying that it is ironic, but perhaps appropriate, that we are unveiling the portrait of this truly wonderful, distinguished American who did so much to bring peace to Bosnia at a time when we are engaged in a struggle for peace in Kosovo. I hope you'll just let me say a word about that.

The NATO military operation is continuing today against an expanded range of targets, including Serbian forces on the ground in Kosovo. The allies are united in our outrage over President Milosevic's atrocities against innocent people. We are determined to stay with our policy. As President Chirac said yesterday, what is happening today must strengthen our resolution.

Countries from throughout the Balkans, from Greece to Turkey to Romania to Bulgaria, are helping us to meet the mounting humanitarian crisis. We are all dealing today with the same horrible pattern of conduct we saw in Bosnia. We saw that conduct resume in 1998 in Kosovo, when a quarter of a million innocent people were driven from their homes. We saw it escalate in January and February of this year, as Serbian forces, in violation of the agreement the President had made last October, moved from village to village and atrocity to atrocity while their leaders pretended to negotiate for peace in France.

Now it is clear that as the Kosovar leaders were saying yes to peace, Mr. Milosevic was planning a new campaign of expulsions and executions in Kosovo. He started carrying out that plan as the talks ended, increasing our sense of urgency that the airstrikes NATO had threatened for some time must begin.

Now, lamentably, we have credible reports that his troops are singling out for murder the moderate Kosovar leaders who supported a peaceful solution. Refugees are streaming out, clearly shaken by what they have seen. Altogether, since the conflict started last year, more than half a million people have been forced from their homes.

If there was ever any doubt about what is at stake in Kosovo, Mr. Milosevic is certainly erasing it by his actions. They are the culmination of more than a decade of using ethnic and religious hatred as a justification for uprooting and murdering completely innocent, peaceful civilians to pave Mr. Milosevic's path to absolute power.

The NATO air campaign is designed to raise the price of that policy. Today, he faces the mounting cost of his continued aggression. For a sustained period, he will see that his military will be seriously diminished, key military infrastructure destroyed, the prospect of international support for Serbia's claim to Kosovo increasingly jeopardized.

We must remain steady and determined, with the will to see this through.

I can't think of anyone whose life and career and personality those words—"steady, determined, the will to see this through"—I can't think of anyone those words apply better to than Warren Christopher. No one worked harder than he did to bring an end to the bloody war in Bosnia. No one worked harder than he did to galvanize the unity in our NATO alliance that has allowed us to act with resolve today and gave us the vision to take on new members and new missions in the aftermath of the cold war.

It took time to forge a just peace in Bosnia, because Chris and his team were persistent and prevailed. We must be as persistent today as we were then in pursuit of peace.

He was our first post-cold-war Secretary of State, our first chief diplomat in over 50 years who faced, as Madeleine recently said, the challenge of defining our foreign policy in a world without a single, overriding threat to our security. But he saw that, as did I, as a great opportunity. He was determined

to make sure that we maintained our leadership in the world, consistent with our values, our interests, and our tradition, and that we remained alive to the new possibilities for peace and prosperity and security that this new world brings.

From the first days of 1993, he was a whirlwind of activity. I like to say—I used to kid him that he really weighed 250 pounds when he became Secretary of State, and he just worked it off. But that's not true. He got up every morning and went running to wake up and get his exercise, and he never stopped running.

He advanced the peace process in the Middle East, from the unforgettable signing on the South Lawn in 1993 to the peace between Israel and Jordan in the Wadi Araba, to the countless days and nights of hard work to keep the process alive through hope and despair after the death of our friend Prime Minister Rabin.

He led our efforts to secure the agreed framework with North Korea to achieve a secure peace on the Korean Peninsula, to make the Dayton agreement first a reality. He shepherded our alliances in Europe and Asia into a new historical era.

He tried to bring new unity to our diplomacy, between our diplomatic, our military, and our economic strategies, aggressively supporting NAFTA and GATT. He helped us to reach out to the rest of the world in new and innovative ways through the Asian Pacific Economic Leaders meeting, the Summit of the Americas, the first White House Conference on Africa.

He understood how important it was for us to maintain and intensify our partnership with Russia, and we did a lot of good things together in those 4 years. More than any other previous Secretary of State, he understood that protecting the environment would become an increasingly important area of international security, requiring greater international cooperation. He put the environment where it belongs in the 21st century—in the mainstream of our diplomacy.

Like his successor, Chris also fought tenaciously for the resources the State Department needs to do the job you do so well.

Now, Chris had about the lowest ratio of ego to accomplishment of any public servant I've ever worked with. And we can all say these noble things about him. It's true. He never thought you had to hit below the belt to get above the fold in the morning newspaper. He was always willing to go the extra mile for peace, and is now the most traveled Secretary of State in our history—though Madeleine seems determined to overtake him. [*Laughter*]

All that is true. But just remember one thing: People ask me all the time, ''How did you ever decide to make Warren Christopher your first Secretary of State?'' And I said, ''You know, I don't know; it just sort of came to me in the transition process''—which Warren Christopher ran. [*Laughter*] It is a great mistake to underestimate this man. [*Laughter*]

Near the end of his book, ''In the Stream of History,'' Chris reveals that he is not fond of emotional goodbyes. I have tried with some difficulty to honor his preference. But I'd like to just mention a couple of things from the book because they particularly touched me. He confesses his admiration in the book for George Marshall and Dean Acheson, two World War II generation public servants who defeated formidable foes but had the foresight to commit America to continued leadership in a new world. In his farewell address to the State Department, he summoned their memory. I suspect that his admiration stems from the fact that they were Americans who put the needs of their country above their own, who were modest when they could be but forceful when they had to be, who possessed the stamina and the steel to accomplish things that were truly extraordinary. He has all those qualities.

And I can tell you, every day I remain grateful that somehow, someway, a few years ago our paths crossed. We became friends and allies. I don't think I've ever known anyone with quite the degree of selfless devotion to public service and aggressive pursuit of the Nation's interest put into one compact, brilliant person that I have seen in Warren Christopher.

I am honored by his service and by his friendship. And I thank you all for being here today to unveil his portrait.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:47 p.m. in the Benjamin Franklin Room at the State Department. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary Christopher's wife, Marie, his son, Tom, and daughter-in-law, Oya; Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley's wife, Ann (Tunky); President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro); and President Jacques Chirac of France. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of former Secretary Christopher.

Remarks on Receiving the Report of the Social Security and Medicare Trustees and an Exchange With Reporters

March 30, 1999

The President. Thank you very much. Please be seated. I welcome all of our guests here, as well as the members of the administration. And I thank those who have joined me here on the platform for this important announcement.

Twice in the last 6 years we have strengthened our Nation's future in the 21st century by addressing serious, great fiscal challenges to America. In 1993 we met the threat of mounting deficits and a stagnant economy with an economic plan of fiscal discipline, expanded trade, and investment in our people. Thanks to that action, the red ink of the Federal budget has turned to black, and we are enjoying the longest peacetime expansion in our Nation's history. In 1997 we reaffirmed our commitment to fiscal discipline with the bipartisan balanced budget agreement. It took important steps to improve Medicare, saving tens of billions of dollars in costs while expanding benefits for recipients and choices.

Today we have new evidence that those determined actions were the right ones. I have just been briefed by our four Social Security and Medicare trustees for the administration—Secretaries Rubin, Shalala, Herman, Social Security Commissioner Apfel—who are here with me today. The trustees have issued their annual report on the future financial health of these vital programs. The trustees' report shows that the strength of our economy has led to modest but real improvements in the outlook for Social Security. They project that economic growth today will extend the solvency of the Social Security Trust Fund to 2034—2 years longer than was projected in last year's report.

After that date, however, the Trust Fund will be exhausted, and Social Security will not be able to pay the full benefits older Americans have been promised. Therefore, still I say we must move forward with my plan to set aside 62 percent of the surplus for Social Security, investing a small portion in the private sector for better return, just as any private or State government pension would do.

As I said in my State of the Union Address, we then must go further with difficult but achievable reforms that put Social Security on a sound footing for 75 years, that lift the earnings limitations on what seniors can earn, and that do something about the incredible problem of poverty among elderly women living alone.

The trustees have also told us that today the future for Medicare has improved even more. The trustees project that the life of the Medicare Trust Fund has been extended until 2015. That's 7 years longer than was projected in last year's report. These improvements are only partially due to the stronger economy. According to the trustees, they are also the result of the difficult but necessary decisions made in 1997 and to our successful efforts to fight waste, fraud, and abuse in the Medicare program.

Now, this trustee report is very good news. We should be pleased; Americans can be proud. But we should not be lulled into thinking that nothing more needs to be done, because the improvements we see today, themselves, did not happen by accident but instead came as a result of determined action to make sure that the problems were not allowed to get out of hand.

When I became President 6 years ago, Medicare was actually projected to go bankrupt this year. We worked hard in 1993 and 1997 to make sure that didn't happen. Some of the actions we took at the time were not particularly popular, but we knew they had to be done. They helped to strengthen Medicare, and they laid the foundations from the difficult challenges we still must face.