

Remarks to Humanitarian Relief Organizations in Roseville, Michigan
April 16, 1999

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you, Dean, for your work and your introduction. Mr. Mayor, thank you for making us feel welcome. I'd like to thank Hattie Babbitt and James Lee Witt, Eric Schwartz, and the other members of our humanitarian team at the Federal Government level for being here with me today.

I thought the youth choir was magnificent. I think we should give them another hand. *[Applause]* Thank you. I'd like to thank the Members of the Michigan delegation who are here—Congressman Dingell—we just left his district—Congressman Levin, Congressman Kildee, Congresswoman Stabenow. I thank Congressman Patrick Kennedy from Rhode Island who has joined us today, and a special word of thanks to our leader, Dick Gephardt, and to your Congressman, Dave Bonior, for their leadership and support in this important endeavor.

I know many people here have very strong feelings about the conflict in Kosovo. In a moment I will meet with a few families who have relatives there. Later tonight, 50 reservists from the area will go to France to support Allied Force. I'm going from here to Selfridge Air National Guard Base to thank the people there for their service to America and the cause of peace.

The Detroit area has a large number of Albanian-Americans, roughly 40,000. Many here today are from here, in Roseville, from Armada, from other communities in the region. Many of you have loved ones in Kosovo, relatives, friends, kicked out of their homes under pain of death. Our hearts and our prayers, our aid and our arms are with you today.

But I also want to point out, so as to make the larger point of my remarks, that America is proud to be the home to a large community of Serbian-Americans, many of them living in the midwest, Michigan, Ohio, other places. I believe overwhelmingly they want a democratic Serbia that is a part of Europe, not apart from it. I say that because I think it is very important that the American people not develop some negative feeling or bias

against Serbian-Americans, or even the Serbian people themselves, because most of them don't even know what has been done in their name in Kosovo, because the state-run media has covered it up.

I say that to make the larger point. We just came, as I said, from a meeting in Representative Dingell's district where we had Albanian-Americans who were inside meeting with me, and Serbian-Americans who were outside demonstrating against me. And I said that was good, because that was the American way. That is not Mr. Milosevic's way. And that's the point I want to make. Our quarrel is not with the Serbs in Serbia; it is not with the Serbs in Kosovo; it is not with Serbian-Americans; it is with the leadership of a person who believes it is all right to kill people and to uproot them and to destroy their family records and to erase any record of their presence in a land simply because of their ethnic heritage.

Most but not all are Muslims. So there is an element of religious conflict here as well. But it is not entirely that. And as I have said repeatedly and I'd like to say one more time, the battle we see in Kosovo today is the harshest example at the moment of what we have seen in Bosnia, what we saw in the slaughter, the tribal slaughter in Rwanda, what we see in the still-unresolved but hopefully about to be resolved conflict in Northern Ireland, what we see in the Middle East. We have come to the end of the cold war. People, by and large, have rejected communism. And we now see the prospect of a bright new future for the world in which we can resolve our differences in an orderly way and build a common future—that future threatened by the oldest problem of human society, our tendency to fear and dehumanize people who are different from ourselves.

And that is why the United States is in Kosovo; that and the fact that the practical significance of that war there could spread across all the Balkans, all of Southeast Europe, and threaten everything we want for our children in the 21st century world.

I have been very moved by the response of the American people to this crisis. Our men and women in uniform have performed superbly. So many thousands of Americans

have donated money and supplies. I was telling our folks before we came in, right after Easter Sunday the minister of the church that Hillary and I attend in Washington called and said, just on the spur of the moment he had called for an Easter offering for the refugees. And without any prior announcement in a church that is largely quite a middle class church, he raised \$15,000. And he was so proud of that.

Mr. Witt just told me about a person calling in to our 1-800 number and pledging \$1,000 and then calling the next day and said that he'd wrestled with it all night long, and he realized he hadn't given enough, and he wanted to give another \$1,000. So the heart of America has been engaged by this.

Many hardworking Americans have lent their time and energy to provide food and shelter. Some work for international organizations, like the Red Cross; some work for small NGO's and local charities, including some of the Albanian-American groups represented here today. Some are affiliated with the United States military or NATO, who are also working very hard on the humanitarian issues now. We in the United States, through our Government, have contributed \$150 million to humanitarian relief since last year. We've sent more troops to Albania and Macedonia to distribute supplies. We provide now over a million daily rations, over 50,000 blankets, 1,000 tents, tens of thousands of water jugs because dehydration is a terrible, terrible problem now.

I have directed our Defense Department to build a new refugee facility in Albania for up to 20,000 people, to help preserve lives, health, in hope of return. We will do the most we can also to make sure that the innocent families trapped within Kosovo do not go hungry, unprotected, or forgotten.

You know, this is a sad chapter, as was Bosnia, in an otherwise remarkable period of Europe in the last decade of this century: the fall of the Berlin Wall; the peaceful reunification of Germany; the enlargement of NATO to include Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic; our partnerships with Russia, Ukraine and two dozen other countries; the increasing unification of Western Europe economically and politically. It all gave us the chance on the continent where the two

World Wars began to build a Europe that was peaceful, undivided, and at peace for the first time in history.

And as I said, it is truly ironic that as we look toward a future where we want every classroom connected to the Internet, all the peoples of the world drawing closer together culturally and economically, that this entire vision is threatened by the most primitive of all human weaknesses, the fear and the tendency to hate those who are different from ourselves.

Now, this is a challenge we still face within the United States. The Mayor of Detroit said at our previous meeting that in Wayne County there are over 150 different languages spoken—140 different languages and ethnic groups. Michigan looks very different than it did when Mr. Dingell first went to Congress over 40 years ago. Macomb County looks different than it did when people said in the 1980's that it was the mirror image of emerging America. It probably is but in a very different way today. Mr. Bonior, himself, has Ukrainian and Polish roots. In this congressional district, you have not only those who are here, you have Italian-Americans, Belgian-Americans, Asian-Americans, African-Americans, Latinos.

We have to say to ourselves as well as to the rest of the world, that there will be a great contest for the next several years between the forces bringing us together and the forces tearing us apart, between our commitment to empower people and those who would suppress them, between the idea that we can only find unity with people who are just like us and the idea that life is richer in every way, not just materially, when people can celebrate their own convictions and their own ethnic heritage and their own religious faiths and still reaffirm their common humanity and draw up a set of rules which permit us all to live together, to pursue our faith, and pursue our humanity.

That is why we are in Kosovo, and that is why we must work here at home.

Now, I just want to make one other point. I tried to make it yesterday to the newspaper editors in San Francisco, and I want you here who have roots in the region to support our elected officials and to remind us of this. For the moment, we are caught up in a conflict

in which we have clear objectives: We want the refugees back in; we want the Serbian forces out; we want an international security force to protect the people, including the Serb minority in Kosovo, as they work toward self-determination. Our objectives are clear, and for the moment we must focus on that.

But we must be thinking about tomorrow, the tomorrow when the conflict is over, the tomorrow when the Kosovars are home. Now, what kind of future do we want? Do we want a future where every ethnic group is confined in smaller and smaller and denser and denser pieces of land, and then, just to be secure, they must be a separate country? Or do we want a future in the Balkans and in Southeastern Europe where they can do what we are struggling to do here in America, where, yes, people can have their own heritage and their own faith and their own traditions, but they are a part of a larger effort to share a bigger future?

I think the answer is clear. If you want people to give up the misery of yesterday, you must give them the hope of a better tomorrow. And that is what we have to focus on. After World War II, that's what we did for Germany, our adversary, as well as France and Great Britain, our allies. After the cold war, we reached out to Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic with economic and other aid. We reached out to Ukraine and to Russia to try to help to deal with the nuclear problems, to try to help them get started again. And if you look at the success of Central Europe, it's hard to say that it wasn't the right decision.

But if you look at the Balkans and Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, if you look at all these countries in Southeastern Europe, we have to say when the fighting is over and the Kosovars go home, what will Albanians, Serbs, Bosnians, Macedonians—how will they live? What will they do? What happens the next day? Will we have another decade where people carry around all this hatred in their heart, and every time they turn a corner in every little village, they look to see who lives on this corner and what they did to them? Or will we challenge them and help

them to be involved in a bigger, brighter future?

So I ask you, all of you here today, who have been so involved in this, we must do for Southeastern Europe, including the Balkans, what was done for Central Europe after the cold war, and for the battleground nations of Europe after World War II.

This is our competing vision. Mr. Milosevic's vision: greater Serbia, enforced by paramilitary thugs and propaganda, denying the humanity of people who do not fall within his ethnic group. But our version is democracy, messy sometimes, yes; votes and arguments and disagreements and demonstrations and religious differences and ethnic differences; but recognizing that it is better to work together for a brighter tomorrow because, underneath, our common humanity is more important than anything that divides us; that we are all the children of God. And it is hard to imagine that God would have ordained the construction of any religion or political philosophy which would justify the extinction of another of God's children simply because of their religious, racial, or ethnic background. It is a very simple statement.

So I thank you for being here. I thank you for your loyalty to your loved ones back home. I ask you to help me in making sure that in this difficult period we do not diminish the humanity of any group of Americans, including the Serbian-Americans, that we go out there and tell the world what we're trying to fight for is the fundamental dignity and integrity of all people and a system of democracy and cooperation which gives all of our children a better tomorrow.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:11 p.m. in the gymnasium at the Roseville Recreation Center. In his remarks, he referred to Albanian-Islamic Center spokesman Dean Shaska, who introduced the President; Mayor Gerald K. Alsip of Roseville; Mayor Dennis W. Archer of Detroit, MI; and President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). The President also referred to the Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit choir.

Proclamation 7185—National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week, 1999

April 16, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Organ donation is one of humanity's most noble expressions of compassion and generosity. It reflects the extraordinary selflessness of the donor and gives the recipient a second chance to experience life's abundant blessings.

For many people across our country, receiving an organ or tissue transplant means relief from suffering and a marked improvement in the quality of their lives. For others, it literally means the difference between life and death. And the demand for such donations continues to grow. In the last six years, the number of people on the national organ transplant list has doubled, from more than 30,000 in 1993 to more than 62,000 patients today. A new name is added to that list every 18 seconds.

Fortunately, thanks to remarkable medical breakthroughs, each of us has the power to improve these troubling statistics. In December of 1997, Vice President Gore and Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Donna Shalala launched the National Organ and Tissue Donation Initiative to raise awareness of the successes of transplantation and to educate our citizens about the urgent and continuing need for organ and tissue donations. Building on this effort, the Health Care Financing Administration now requires hospitals participating in Medicaid and Medicare to notify organ procurement organizations of all deaths and imminent deaths at their facilities and to train their personnel to discuss donation with the families of potential donors. Judging from the positive impact of similar legislation in Pennsylvania, we anticipate that this new Federal regulation will substantially increase the number of donations throughout the country.

Becoming a donor is simple, requiring only that we complete and carry a donor card and inform our families and friends about our wish to donate. This second step is a critical

one because, according to a new study issued by HHS, almost all Americans would agree to donate their loved one's tissue or organs if they knew their loved one had requested it. Fewer than half would consent if they did not know their loved one's wishes.

During National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week, I urge all Americans to become potential donors. By doing so, we can bring new hope and improved lives to thousands of our fellow citizens and hasten the day when no American on the organ transplant waiting list loses the race against time.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 18 through April 24, 1999, as National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week. I urge all health care professionals, educators, the media, public and private organizations concerned with organ donation and transplantation, the clergy, and all Americans to join me in promoting greater awareness and acceptance of this humanitarian action.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-third.

William J. Clinton

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NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on April 21.

Proclamation 7186—National Volunteer Week, 1999

April 16, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Helping others—and helping others help themselves—through volunteer work is a great American tradition. Our Nation's dedicated volunteers come from all walks of life, all races, and all ages. Whether they support