As Americans, we value the important role religious and charitable institutions play in the daily life of this Nation. Indeed, we know that fiscal responsibility for these institutions is fundamental to their efforts to meet the spiritual, social and other concerns of our Nation. It is a great loss to all of our citizens for creditors to recoup their losses in bankruptcy cases from donations made in good faith by our citizens to their churches and charitable institutions.

As Americans we also know that giving, whether to one's church, temple, mosque, or other house of worship or to any charitable organization, fosters and enriches our sense of community. We need to encourage, not discourage, that sense of community. The Religious Liberty and Charitable Donation Protection Act does just that.

NOTE: S. 1244, approved June 19, was assigned Public Law No. 105–183.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Estonia-United States Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty With Documentation

June 19, 1998

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Treaty Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Estonia on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, signed at Washington on April 2, 1998. I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to the Treaty.

The Treaty is one of a series of modern mutual legal assistance treaties being negotiated by the United States in order to counter criminal activity more effectively. The Treaty should be an effective tool to assist in the prosecution of a wide variety of crimes, including "white-collar" crime and drug-trafficking offenses. The Treaty is self-executing.

The Treaty provides for a broad range of cooperation in criminal matters. Mutual assistance available under the Treaty includes: taking the testimony or statements of persons; providing documents, records, and articles of evidence; locating or identifying persons or items; serving documents; transferring persons in custody for testimony or other purposes; executing requests for searches and seizures; assisting in proceedings related to immobilization and forfeiture of assets, restitution, and collection of fines; and rendering any other form of assistance not prohibited by the laws of the Requested State.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the Treaty and give its advice and consent to ratification.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
June 19, 1998.

Interview With CBS News, Cox Newspapers, and McClatchy Newspapers

June 19, 1998

President's Trip to China

Q. We've been talking among ourselves, so we'll just jump right into it. Just real quickly, one poll question. In a CBS/New York Times poll, some data that we put together shows that 59 percent of the American public believes you should go on this trip. But 35 percent say they—only 35 say they approve of your policy toward China. What do you hope to accomplish on this trip to pull that 35 closer to the 59 or higher?

The President. Well, I think one of the things I hope to accomplish is I hope that as a result of the trip, the American people will learn more

about China, and the Chinese people will learn more about America.

And I hope that what my policy actually is will be more broadly known among the American people. You know, I'm not surprised by the 35 percent because normally when there's anything written about China, it's one—something bad happens or some question's raised here. So if you never get any kind of constructive information, it's hard to know. But in specific terms, what I'll hope we'll do is to find a way to expand the areas of cooperation, to continue to discuss in an open way the areas of our differences. And I hope that by going there, I can strengthen the forces of positive change in the country.

So those are my objectives in going, and I think it's a very good thing. I think it's a tribute to the common sense of the American people and the good judgment that they understand, I think, that we have to be involved in China, that we have to try to have a constructive partnership with them.

Q. Mr. President, you've explained why you're going to the Great Hall, and you've said that the Chinese Government needs eventually to apologize to the people for what happened at Tiananmen Square 9 years ago. I'm wondering what will be on your heart and on your mind as you motorcade up to the Great Hall and gaze out across that square and ponder the pageantry and trauma that's taken place there over the past century?

The President. Well, obviously, I want to see Tiananmen Square, and I will think about what happened there 9 years ago. But I also will be thinking about the last turbulent century in Chinese history and the fact that that whole setting there has been the center of Chinese public life for probably 600 years now. There will be a lot to think about. I'm going to do my best to learn and absorb as much as I can and to increase my capacity to advance our interests and our values while I'm there. And I'm really looking forward to it.

Q. Mr. President, is it realistic that you could have a meeting along the lines of President Reagan—I believe 1988—a meeting in Moscow with refuseniks in admittedly a period of glasnost. But is it realistic in China? Is that a parallel situation, and are you satisfied that you'll be able to have a kind of contact with dissident and religious groups that you will like?

The President. Well, I'm going to meet with as many diverse people as I possibly can while I'm there. I'm going to try to meet with as many grassroots citizens who are active in all kinds of life as I can. And I'm going to make judgments about that based on what I think is most likely to promote our objectives, which include the advance of human rights and political civil rights, religious rights and, generally, that will promote more openness in China.

You know, I said to President Jiang when he was here, both in the press conference and in our private conversations, that I believe China can never obtain its own destiny full of greatness without becoming a more open society. Because whether you believe that human rights are universal, as the covenant says and as the U.N. embraces, or whether you believe it's just a cultural preference of some kinds of people, the reality of the world is that we now have an economy which is increasingly dominated by ideas. We basically moved from a farming economy to a manufacturing economy to an idea economy. That's what information technology is.

And it is therefore, I think, almost axiomatic that you can't have an idea-based economy that reaches its fullest success until people are free to think and feel and say and do what they please. And I have tried to argue it to President Jiang that you can have a stable society; in fact, you can have a more stable society when there are outlets for dissent, and where people have avenues within which they can express their ideas, and when you prove that you can incorporate diversity within a society.

I think, for example—I do not see the dialog with the Dalai Lama, for example, as a potential weakening of the coherence of Chinese society. I think it's the biggest opportunity to strengthen China. It's out there because the Dalai Lama's made clear he doesn't want to have an independent Tibet. He wants an autonomous Tibet—if the Chinese say they recognize—but that he recognizes that Tibet is part of China. I think that's an incredible opportunity.

Here we are on the edge of the 21st century, when we see some countries torn apart by religious and racial and ethnic differences. We've now got this great opportunity to harmonize, to reconcile something that has enormous symbolism not simply within Tibet and its sympathizers within China but all over the world.

So those are the arguments I'm going to make, and I'll keep making them. And I'm hoping that they'll be institutionalized to some extent in an ongoing human rights dialog and in NGO human rights dialog and in the areas—in the sort of cooperative law ventures that Chinese have been very interested in joining with us and legal issues relating not simply to the rule of law and commerce but rule of law dealing with the speech issues and human rights issues and labor rights issues and other things.

So I'm looking forward to having the chance to make that case.

Religious Freedom in China

Q. Mr. President, I noticed just glancing at the schedule that you're not only going to church on Sunday, but you're scheduled to make brief remarks. What will you be saying from the heart in that church about religious freedom in China?

The President. Well, I haven't prepared my remarks yet. And I suspect that of all the speeches I give while I'm there, that's the one that's most likely to be one that I will do virtually by myself and close to the time, although obviously I welcome the help of all the people who work with me on these things.

I hope to be able to say something about the importance of faith and religious liberty and the importance of religion to the character of a country, to acknowledge the role of Confucianism and Buddhism and other Eastern faiths and the history of world religions and the importance of giving everyone the chance to search out the truth for himself or herself; and the importance of recognizing that no matter how much the modern world comes to be dominated by technology, and no matter what advances occur in science, especially in the biological sciences, and no matter what we learn about other galaxies from physics, that each person's attempt to discern the truth and then to live according to it will remain life's most important journey. That's why, in the end, I think all this explosion of technology and communication will only intensify the pressure for openness in societies.

President's Trip to China

Q. Mr. President, you've developed a knack for, in this country, speaking directly to the American people, getting beyond opinionmakers and beyond the likes of us, quite frankly. I'm wondering how important it is to you to be able to speak directly to the Chinese people on this trip, and how, specifically, you'll be able to do that, given the state control of the media there?

The President. You know, I just did a roundtable with Chinese journalists. And one of the—the television person who was there gave me a chance to at least give an opening message to the millions of Chinese that watch that station. I think it's quite important. I think making an impression on the Chinese people is very, very important.

One of the things that we have learned—I don't mean the royal "we," I mean all of us working in this White House have learned—is that even in nondemocratic societies, in the end, the people have a big say in what happens. Popular opinion counts for something, and popular feeling and sentiment counts for something. So I hope that in many ways I'll be able to reach the Chinese people while I'm on this trip.

I also hope I'll be able to have quite a bit of contact with the citizens of China on this trip in ways that are planned, as we did in the roundtables in Africa, for example, and in ways that are unplanned. I just think that's important. It's important for me and for our whole team to get a feel of life there. I've never had the opportunity to go, so I'm really looking forward to it.

Q. This is your first trip there. You've gotten a lot of advice, solicited and otherwise, on the trip. I'm thinking now about people outside the administration. Who are you listening to, and how are you preparing personally, whether it's something you're reading or otherwise, for the trip?

The President. The truth is, I haven't done as much reading on this trip as I normally do in advance because of all the incredible time-consuming nature of this work in Congress for the tobacco bill and all the financial issues in Asia and all those things we've been doing on it. But I have solicited a significant library. I don't know if I can read all the books, but I've got—Jim Mann was just in here and gave me a copy of his book. Have you seen it? "Beijing Jeep: A Study of Western Business in China."

But I'll get Barry to give you a list of the books; I've asked for six or seven books to read. I'm going to try to begin in earnest over this weekend and then on the trip to do as much

as I can, because the reading always helps me. It helps me a lot with what I see and how I do.

And we solicited, also, opinions and advice from a number of China scholars from outside the administration. But I've been with Jiang Zemin enough now that I really have quite a clear idea of what I hope we can achieve and how I want to go about doing it. I've done my best to sort of counter what I think are misconceptions about America—you know, that we had some grand design to contain China, that we didn't really want it to emerge into its rightful position of leadership and prosperity in the 21st century, that we were unmindful of the different historical experiences, that we were unmindful of our own continuing challenges in America. I've tried to knock down all those barriers to honest dialog.

And I've tried to establish enough credibility in being candid and honest over time in the things we've done together—working on the peace in the Korean Peninsula, working to contain proliferation, to working on this latest nuclear testing incident on the Indian subcontinent—to get to the point where I could be frank and open with the President and others with whom I deal. And so I'm going to do my—I'm really looking forward to this, and I'm hoping it will be effective.

Economic Sanctions

Q. Mr. President, I have a sanctions question. Do you agree with Senator Lugar that the United States has essentially become sanction-happy to its own detriment?

The President. Absolutely.

Q. And do you favor his legislation, or something like it, that would roll back in a variety of ways the sunsets—the economic analysis?

The President. Yes. Let me just say, I think sanctions can be helpful from time to time. They're most helpful, clearly, when the world community agrees. I think that the sanctions on South Africa were helpful in bringing an end to apartheid. I think the sanctions on Serbia were helpful in bringing about an agreement in Bosnia. I think the sanctions on Iraq have been helpful in preventing Saddam Hussein from rebuilding the military that could dominate its neighbors and getting back into weapons of mass destruction. So when you've got uniform sanctions, they can be helpful. Sometimes they can be effective even if the United States is doing them, if it covers a situation we can dominate economically. Sometimes they're helpful just as a gesture of disapproval.

But the way these sanctions laws are written with—they really deprive the President, any President, of the necessary flexibility in the country's foreign policy. And even if you put them on, it's hard to take them off; and the conditions for not putting them on are such that the President is put under an enormous burden of doing things that he may believe that are not in the best interest of the country.

So I just think—and it's particularly ironic that we seem to have gotten sanction-happy at a time when we are reducing our foreign assistance to the countries that agree with us, that want to build a future with us.

Now, when we refuse to contribute to the IMF and won't pay our U.N. dues, we may lose our vote in the U.N. because 20 Members of the Republican caucus in the House want us to change our policy on family planning. Now, for me, I think that's a very dangerous thing for our country. It's not in our interest because, you know, we're in danger of looking like we want to sanction everybody who disagrees with us and not help anybody who agrees with us.

Q. Should food always be off the table?

The President. Should what?

Q. Should food—foreign products always be excluded from sanctions?

The President. Well, I believe they should—I think our policy—they should be—they should always be excluded from sanctions. And then if something comes up in the future where a country seems, or a government seems so bad and they've done something so horrible that the Congress believes at that time, the President believes at that time it ought to be done, then they can do it. But I think it ought—the rule ought to be that we don't do it. And then if there's some compelling reason for an exception, it can be entertained when that exception arises. But that's why I'm supporting Senator Murray and others in their attempts to exempt food from the sanctions I imposed on India and Pakistan. I just think that on balance we're better off not doing that.

Trade With China

Q. Mr. President, clearly, China wants our backing to get into the WTO. Is there any chance that that could occur out of this summit?

The President. I don't know. I wouldn't raise hopes on that issue. I think they should be in the WTO. They're not only the most populous country in the world, but they have a large and they have a growing economy, and they've got a, you know, an economic future that makes their membership virtually essential for the WTO to do what it's suppose to do. You know, at some point, they'll be big enough and strong enough that if they're not in the WTO, it'll be almost—even though it would be hard to call it a world—a trade organization. They're not there yet, but they will be. So I would like to see them in as early as possible.

However, I think it's also important that they be in on commercially viable terms. We have obviously supported China's economic emergence. I mean, we buy far more of their products than any other country does. And we do it not only because we think it's in our interest, but because, I think, at least, it's good that the United States helps in that way, economically, China to emerge, to be able to feed all its people, to give more of its people a good life. I think that makes them more likely to be more open and more free and more constructive partners.

But I also believe that the Chinese, for all the work they've done in privatizing the economy and opening themselves to markets, still have too much access control and, from the point of view of American products and services, too much access denial.

So I'm not troubled by the fact that we buy a lot of Chinese products. And inevitably we're going to have a big increase this year because of the strength of our economy coupled with the weakness of Asian economies, but that would widen the trade deficit. But that widening trade deficit will sharpen the debate and will increase the focus on our market access.

Now, I would prefer and I want more market access, and will argue for it on my trip. I don't want any special deals for the United States. I would prefer to see China work out an accession agreement to the WTO on commercial terms that would treat us just like everybody else and have more openness for everybody and then let the Americans compete with everyone else in the Chinese market and do as well as we can. But failing that, I will do my best to get more access for our products and services.

Nuclear Detargeting Agreement

Q. What would be the symbolism of a nuclear detargeting agreement between China and the United States? And is that something you think you might realistically be looking for?

The President. Well, I think it would be a good thing if we could get it. I can't say that we have it yet, but if we could get it, I think it would be a good thing. I think there are two things about it that would be good.

First of all, it plainly would be a confidence-building measure, as you pointed out. Secondly, it would actually reduce—it would, in fact, have the benefit of reducing the chances of an accidental launch. If you detarget, yes, you can always go retarget a missile. We all know that. But it takes some more time, and 20 minutes in a world of instantaneous communications is an eternity. So the possibility of avoiding a mistake, or even backing down from a conflict, is dramatically increased with detargeting. It really makes a difference.

To go back to the confidence-building thing, the one reason I'd like to see it done is that, you know, we're going—we have to try to work our way out of the dilemma that India and Pakistan find themselves in. And it's obvious that China is a part of that. Think how much worse this would have been if China hadn't signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. What kind of pressure would the Chinese have been under to test if the Indians said, "Well, we really didn't do this because of Pakistan; we did it because of China"? But China had a principled reason not to test. They had signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

All these confidence-building measures are important because they increase the ability of China to play a constructive role in all the security issues in Asia, in particular, where we have a common interest.

Influence of Money on China-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, Congresswomen Pelosi, in talking about human rights, keeps saying that there's one common denominator that explains U.S. policy toward China, and that's money, and that the Boeings and the Motorolas and the Westinghouses, through campaign contributions and other resources, have a disproportionate influence in being advocates for a warmer relationship with China. Given your concerns about campaign finance in general, is there some truth

to the role that money is playing in the China policy?

The President. Well, in view of the votes of some of the Republican Congressmen in the last couple of weeks, she may have a weaker argument there. [*Laughter*] I don't know.

I think that the members of the—that a lot of these companies tend to support Members of Congress who support more open trade with China and other places. But I don't think it's—you know, I think that in order for her argument to be right, the flipside would have to be true. That is, it would have to be true that if none of these companies contributed any money to any Republicans or Democrats, that every President would choose to isolate China and have no dealings with them, not give them most-favored-nation status, force them to make their way in the world without any kind of constructive commercial relations with the United States until they did exactly what we wanted on matters that we are concerned about in human rights and religious rights. And I just don't think that's true.

And I guess we're the best example. I'm sure that if you add it all up, that these companies have given far more money to the Republicans than they have to the Democrats. And I'm doing this because I think it's the right thing for America. I don't think those companies should be disabled from making contributions just because they happen to do business in China, nor do I believe that most—I think contributions normally tend to flow to people who are doing things that these companies agree with, but that most of them do it on conviction and then different people on different sides support different groups. I don't think that they bought this policy, and I know they haven't bought the policy of this Government. I'm doing what I think is best for the American people and what I think is going to give our kids a safer, more prosperous world to live in in the 21st century, and one I think is most likely to lead to a freer, more open China.

Asian Economies

Q. Mr. President, considering the economic developments in Asia this week, specifically Japan, what will you say to the Chinese to convince them to stick to their pledge and not to devalue their currency?

The President. Well, first of all, that obviously has got to be their decision to make. But I think they deserve a lot of credit for resisting the temptation to devalue. Now, there will be a price for them in devaluation—you know it's not a free decision. But I think they deserve a lot of credit for trying to be a force for stability in Asia in this financial crisis.

I will urge them to adhere to their policy as long as they can and to work with me in trying to create conditions in Asia that restore growth, starting with Japan embracing others. Because that ultimately, the ultimate guarantee against their devaluing their currency is the easing of the conditions which make them want to devalue, or at least force them to consider that option.

So I think the main thing—what I'm going to tell them is, "Look, I'm working hard with the Japanese; we've seen some progress this week; we've seen a clear, unambiguous commitment from the Japanese Government to undertake serious financial reform, and we're doing this—we're doing everything we know to do on this. And so, if you all hang in there with us, we think that there will come a time in the relatively near future when the conditions will begin to change, and you won't feel any pressure to devalue." I think that's the most important thing I could say to them, and I'm going to try to help create a different reality if I can.

President's Trip to China

Q. President Bush was in China in February of '89; he gave Li Peng a pair of cowboy boots. It turned out to be a somewhat unfortunate choice of gifts. Are you taking any presents to President Jiang Zemin on this trip?

The President. I am. As a matter of fact, I'm still—I sent out a note yesterday to explore two or three different options for gifts. But I don't want to give it away and destroy the secret. They're not cowboy boots. But if he gives me some, I won't be offended. I've got several pair and like them very much. [*Laughter*]

Q. We know President Jiang has a tendency to quote the Gettysburg Address. I think when he was with President Ramos of the Philippines they broke into "Love Me Tender." Do you expect something like that this time, as well?

The President. No, but I know all the verses to "Love Me Tender." [*Laughter*] I can hold my own if that's what the drill is. I can do that. He likes music, you know. He likes American music.

And he's a very interesting man, President Jiang. I remember when I first met him. You know, there were lots of articles at the time saying that he had been a mayor of Shanghai, and he was a very nice man but most people thought he was going to be a transitional figure, you know. And so I met him. We spent a couple of hours together, and it was not the warmest of meetings, you know, because we had all these differences between us and no personal chemistry to overcome it.

But after the meeting, I told all the people that were with me, I said, "I believe he's in this for the long haul; I expect him to emerge." And he has. I mean, I could see he had been a man that had been underestimated by outsiders, that his sort of friendly and open demeanor and his affinity for singing Western songs and quoting from Lincoln and all that, that it had led people to preach false judgments about his capacity and his toughness.

Legislative Agenda

Q. Sir, if I might switch gears and ask a non-China question along the lines of what you said today in your comments about tobacco. The last two congressional sessions have been marked at the end by a fairly remarkable coming together of the two parties on issues like welfare reform a couple of years ago, and then the balanced budget this year, but judging by the strength of your criticism today of Congress, it sounds like your instinct is that this year could be a very good year. Is that true?

The President. It could be, but I wouldn't give up on the other. I mean, I think we still might—we might still see a lot of progress at the end. We've got, you know, we've got this Patients' Bill of Rights still out there; we've got a big child care initiative still out there; a lot of the education agenda is still out there; a lot of the environmental agenda's still out there.

And this tobacco settlement is still very much alive as far as I'm concerned. This thing—because this thing has been hashed over and debated and amended and worked up and down and sideways, people pretty much know what the parameters are now. So it's not inconceivable that we could still get an agreement on this before this is over.

So I'm still hoping that progress will triumph over partisanship at the end and that we'll see at the close, as the Congress—either now, before the August recess, or when they come back in September, and they don't want to stay very long because they want to go home and campaign, and they've got all the appropriations bills and all this stuff still to do. I'm hoping that a different atmosphere will take over, and we'll see just what happened before.

You're quite right; we had a lot of success in '95. We had a lot of success in '96. We had a lot success—not '95—we had success in '96 and '97, and whether we will in '98 or not, I don't know. We could repeat '95. I mean we really could get to the point where we were almost as bad off as we were in '95, or we could wind up with a replay of '96 and '97. And it's really going to be up to the Republican majority to decide. But, you know, my door is open, and they know what I want. I have been very clear, I think, about it. And I'll remain hopeful and upbeat about it.

Q. Will you be able to meet with Senator McCain before you leave for China? Do you have plans, are you trying to put——

The President. I certainly intend to talk to him. He did a good job. He did the best he could. And he deserves the thanks of the American people for this. I'm grateful to him for what he did. And it's not over. It's not over. And it won't be over for me until I get on the helicopter and ride off into the distance in 2½ years. So I'm going to keep working on this until the end.

NOTE: The interview began at 4:47 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 19 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 20. The following journalists participated in the interview: Tom Mattesky, CBS News; Bob Deans, Cox Newspapers; and David Westphal, McClatchy Newspapers. In his remarks, the President referred to President Jiang Zemin and Premier Li Peng of China; Jim Mann, journalist, Los Angeles Times; former President George Bush; and President Fidel Ramos of the Philippines. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.