

May 13 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1999

rebuild southeastern Europe and to give them an economic future that will pull them together.

The European Union is prepared to take the lead role in southeastern Europe's development. Russia, Ukraine, other nations of Europe's east are building democracy; they want to be a part of this.

We are trying to do this in other places in the world. What a great ally Japan has been for peace and prosperity and will be again as they work to overcome their economic difficulty. Despite our present problems, I still believe we must remain committed to building a long-term strategic partnership with China.

We must work together with people where we can, as we prepare, always, to protect and defend our security if we must. But a better world and a better Europe are clearly in America's interests.

Serbia and the rest of the Balkans should be part of it. So I want to say this one more time: Our quarrel is not with the Serbian people. The United States has been deeply enriched by Serbian-Americans. Millions of Americans are now cheering for some Serbian-Americans as we watch the basketball playoffs every night on television. People of Serbian heritage are an important part of our society. We can never forget that the Serbs fought bravely with the Allies against Fascist aggression in World War II, that they suffered much; that Serbs, too, have been uprooted from their homes and have suffered greatly in the conflicts of the past decade that Mr. Milosevic provoked.

But the cycle of violence has to end. The children of the Balkans, all of them, deserve the chance to grow up without fear. Serbs simply must free themselves of the notion that their

neighbors must be their enemies. The real enemy is a poisonous hatred unleashed by a cynical leader, based on a distorted view of what constitutes real national greatness.

The United States has become greater as we have shed racism, as we have shed a sense of superiority, as we have become more committed to working together across the lines that divide us, as we have found other ways to define meaning and purpose in life. And so has every other country that has embarked on that course.

We stand ready, therefore, to embrace Serbia as a part of a new Europe if the people of Serbia are willing to invest and embrace that kind of future; if they are ready to build a Serbia, and a Yugoslavia, that is democratic and respects the rights and dignity of all people; if they are ready to join a world where people reach across the divide to find their common humanity and their prosperity.

This is the right vision and the right course. It is not only the morally right thing for America; it is the right thing for our security interests over the long run. It is the vision for which the veterans in this room struggled so valiantly, for which so many others have given their lives.

With your example to guide us, and with our Allies beside us, it is a vision that will prevail. And it is very, very much worth standing for.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11 a.m. in Eisenhower Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Thomas A. Pouliot, commander in chief, Veterans of Foreign Wars; Brig. Gen. Scott Van Cleef, USAF, commander, 52d Air Expeditionary Wing; and President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

Statement on the Death of Meg Greenfield

May 13, 1999

Hillary and I were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Meg Greenfield. In her work for the Washington Post and Newsweek, Meg perfected the art of the newspaper column. Her essays were invariably tightly reasoned, forcefully stated, and deeply felt. She called on those of us who work in Government to pursue far-

sighted public policy and bipartisan solutions. Her voice of eloquence and reason will be sorely missed. Our thoughts and prayers are with her family in their time of mourning.