

The third thing I would like to mention is the lady who talked about cultural diversity. I think we think about culture in two different ways. One is popular culture—you know, not just art and theater, but movies and music. My view is that countries should preserve their popular culture but not shut out other countries' culture. But in the deeper sense that you mentioned, it seems to me that we're not seeing the abolition of culture, but what we are in danger of is either people losing their culture or protecting it in an exclusive way that leads them into hostility with others—that's what you see in Kosovo or Bosnia.

And what I think we have to find a way to do is to actually preserve in multiethnic, multiracial settings the language, the culture, the history, the uniqueness of people in a way that is unifying, not divisive. I said this last night—I will close with this: People crave coherence in life. We want to believe that we can work hard and provide in a material sense for our families and still be animated by higher impulses. We want to believe we can be proud of being Irish or Brazilian or French or whatever and still know it's more important that we're members of the human race.

And I think the answer is not to get rid of cultural diversity but to extol it, to protect it, to preserve it, to celebrate it as a particular manifestation of our common humanity. I still think—and I will end with this—that's our most important responsibility.

We haven't talked much about that, but it seems to me that the real essence of what we're saying is if you want a unifying approach to politics, then every person who advocates that has a far higher level of personal responsibility for citizenship than we on the left of the political equation have traditionally acknowledged. And the good news is that we'll have more fulfilling lives if we can pull it off.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:05 p.m. in the Room of Five Hundred at the Palazzo Vecchio. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema of Italy; Prime Minister Lionel Jospin of France; and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the 1999 Uniform Crime Report

November 21, 1999

The preliminary 1999 Uniform Crime Report released by the FBI today shows that we are making enormous progress in our national strategy to fight crime. America continues to experience the longest continuous decline in crime on record. Overall crime fell another 10 percent in the first 6 months of this year as compared to the first half of 1998—twice as much as any other 6-month period over the last decade. We have the lowest crime rate in 25 years. We have the lowest homicide rate in over 31 years. In every region of our Nation, neighborhoods are safer now, and American families are more secure than they have been in a generation.

But to keep crime rates down we must remain vigilant. Since I took office, my administration has focused on a simple but effective crime-fighting strategy: 100,000 more police officers and fewer guns in the hands of criminals. Today's report shows that our strategy is making a difference. That is why I am pleased that the budget agreement reached last week will extend our successful COPS initiative into the 21st century—helping put up to 50,000 more police officers on our streets, creating new community prosecutors, and providing more resources for crime fighting technologies. Congress must now do its part to reduce gun violence and crime, by making the passage of commonsense gun laws the first order of business when it reconvenes.

NOTE: This statement was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 19 but was embargoed for release until 6 p.m., November 21.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With President Petar Stoyanov of Bulgaria in Sofia

November 22, 1999

President Clinton. Good morning.

Q. How are you, Mr. President?

President Clinton. I'm fine. I'm delighted to be here, very pleased.

Situation in Chechnya

Q. Mr. President, the events in Chechnya in the last 2 days, has that raised doubts about the Russian commitment to a political dialog?

President Clinton. Well, I think they made clear that they were going to try to continue their military offensive. What we've done at the OSCE is, it got them to agree that the internal affairs of Russia or any other country is a proper subject of world discussion and world opinion. We got them to agree to take the OSCE mission there. I think it's very important to do that. And I hope that we've gotten an increased amount of concern for civilian casualties. So we'll have to see, but I think it's very important we follow up on the commitments made earlier at the OSCE meeting in Istanbul.

Q. Mr. President, Bulgarian national television. Are you going to discuss with our President different ways for compensating Bulgaria for our losses during the embargo against Yugoslavia and Iraq, about \$10 billion?

President Clinton. Well, first of all, let me say I'm very grateful for the support we received, the Allies received during the conflict in Kosovo, and for the direction taken by Bulgaria under this President and this Government. And we are committed to supporting Bulgaria over the long run—economically, politically, militarily. And I think we will be doing it for many years, and I'm looking forward to that.

Situation in Kosovo

Q. Mr. President, in Kosovo tomorrow, will you urge ethnic Albanians to stop their reprisal attacks against Serbs?

President Clinton. In Kosovo tomorrow I will make a very strong statement about the importance of everybody getting over this ethnic hatred and going beyond it. And we have all made a big commitment to Kosovo as an economic and political reconstruction. But I think it's very important that Kosovo, in effect, not become the mirror image of Serbia. It's hard not to, but it's important not to. And we'll keep working on it.

But I wouldn't overreact to the stories, you know, and the facts—a lot of good things have happened there since the end of the

war. And it hasn't been very long, and there is a long, long history in Kosovo and throughout Serbia, throughout the Balkans, that we're trying to get beyond.

Again, I'd say Bulgaria is a very good example of the direction we ought to take, and I hope we can have a positive impact in Kosovo. I think we can.

President Stoyanov. It's important that we, through the American people, through the eyes of the American President, the American people will realize that the Bulgarian people have embarked upon a new road and chosen a new policy, that of democracy, of respect for human rights and that, also, through its wonderful relations with all its neighbors and its excellent ethnic—the absence of ethnic problems whatsoever, Bulgaria will be an example of stability on this continent and will continue to be so.

NATO Bases in Bulgaria

Q. Will you inform us if you discuss the issue of NATO bases in this country?

President Stoyanov. We'll inform you about anything with pleasure, with the greatest of pleasure.

President Clinton. Thank you.

NOTE: The exchange began at 11 a.m. in the Anteroom at the Presidency. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Ivan Kostov of Bulgaria and an Exchange With Reporters in Sofia

November 22, 1999

Prime Minister Kostov. I have just asked the President to say a few words before he goes out of the Council of Ministers. He was kind to respond, and I thank him for that.

President Clinton. Well, first, I want to say again how pleased and honored I am to be in Bulgaria and how strongly I support and admire the political, economic, and military reforms that the Government has undertaken and how grateful I am for the support that Europe and the United States received during the recent difficulties in Kosovo.

I think it is very important for the United States to support Bulgaria's aspirations for