

Remarks at the Arrival Ceremony in Xi'an, China

June 25, 1998

Mayor Feng, Governor Cheng, Secretary Li, nim men hao. Thank you for the key to your city and for this magnificent welcome.

Here in this ancient capital, China seems very young to me tonight, blessed with both a proud history and the promise of tomorrow. I am delighted to begin my journey in Xi'an, once the capital of China, still the heartland of the Chinese people. I was raised in the heartland of my country. I know that the character of a nation is determined by the hard-working people who live here.

Over 1,000 years ago, during the Tang Dynasty, which I have seen recreated tonight, Xi'an was perhaps the most open and culturally advanced city in the entire world. From this place, trade routes extended through Asia to Europe and Africa. And to this place, great thinkers came, spreading philosophy and new ideas that have contributed to the greatness of China.

Tomorrow, I look forward to seeing the Terra Cotta Warriors, the Old City walls, the Muslim quarter. I look forward to learning more about China's great contributions to the store of human knowledge, from medicine and printing to mathematics and astronomy, discoveries on which so much of the whole world's progress is based. And I want to see more of the new nation you are building on a scale even the emperors could not have foreseen.

The China that gave us printing now boasts fax machines, computers, and cell phones. Xi'an is home to filmmakers, Internet explorers, businesspeople of every description. Here in this city, famous for calligraphy, a new chapter in China's story is being written.

We Americans admire your accomplishments, your economy, your hard work, creativity and vision, your efforts against hunger and poverty, your work with us on peace and stability in Korea and South Asia. A new day is dawning for the Chinese people, for China's greatness lies, as always, with its people.

Our own history has convinced Americans that the greatness of any country is measured in its people, in their shared reverence for family and community, for work and learning, and in their individual thoughts, beliefs, and creativity.

Respect for the worth, the dignity, the potential, and the freedom of every citizen is a vital source of America's strength and success. In this global information age, where both economic growth and individual opportunity are based on ideas, a commitment to providing all human beings the opportunity to develop their full potential is vital to the strength and success of the new China, as well.

As I travel across China, I hope to learn as much as I can about the Chinese people, your history, and your dreams for the future. And I hope to help the Chinese people understand more of America's history, the lessons the American people have drawn from it, and the dreams we hold for the 21st century.

I believe both Chinese and Americans aspire to many of the same things, to provide for our families, to teach our children, to build our communities, to protect our Earth, to shape our own futures, and pass brighter possibilities on to our children.

There may be those here and back in America who wonder whether closer ties and deeper friendship between America and China are good. Clearly, the answer is yes. We have a powerful ability to help each other grow. We can learn much from each other. And as two great nations, we have a special responsibility to the future of the world. The steps we take over the next week can lead to far greater strides for our people in the years ahead.

Here in this city of your magnificent history, we must always remember that we, too, are ancestors. Someday our children and their children will ask if we did all we could to build just societies and a more peaceful world. Let our monument be their judgment that we did that. Let our progress include all people, with all their differences, moving toward a common destiny.

Let us give new meaning to the words written in the ancient "Book of Rites," what you call the "Li Shi": "When the great way is followed, all under heaven will be equal."

Xie xie. Thank you very much.