

Remarks in a Call-In Show on Shanghai Radio 990

June 30, 1998

President Clinton. First of all, I want to thank the mayor for welcoming me to Shanghai, and say I very much enjoyed my first morning here. We did go to the library, my wife and I did, and we met with a number of citizens from in and around Shanghai who are involved in one way or another in China's remarkable transformation. And they helped us a lot to understand what is going on in China.

I also want to say a word of appreciation to President Jiang for the very good meeting we had in Beijing and for making it possible for me to reach out to the people of China through televising our press conference together. And then, of course, I went to Beijing University yesterday, "Beida," and spoke with the students there and answered questions. And that was also televised.

And then to be here in Shanghai, one of the very most exciting places in the entire world, to have the chance to begin my visit here with this radio program is very exciting. So I don't want to take any more time. I just want to hear from the questioners and to have a conversation, so that when it's over, perhaps both the American people and the people of China will understand each other better.

Program Host Zuo Anlong. Mr. President, you already can see our TV screen—right in front of you there are so many people waiting in line to talk to you. We're really happy about this. How about we just start right here, okay?

President Clinton. Let's do it.

Asian Financial Crisis

[The first caller asked about the Asian financial crisis and increasing cooperation between China and the United States.]

President Clinton. First of all, Mr. Fong, that is a very good question, and it has occupied a major amount of my time since last year, when we saw the difficulties developing in Indonesia, in the Philippines, in Thailand, in Korea, and of course, in Japan.

I would like to begin by saying I believe that China has done a very good job in holding its currency stable, in trying to be a force of stability during the Southeast Asian crisis. Secondly, we are working together, the U.S. and China, and we are working through the IMF to try to help all these countries stabilize their economies and then restore growth.

But I think the last point I'd like to make is that we cannot see growth restored in Asia unless it is restored in Japan. Now, in Japan the people are about to have an election for the upper house of the Diet, so this is not an easy time for them. But the Government is

going to disclose in the next couple of days what it intends to do in the area of financial reform.

If it is a good proposal and the confidence of the investors of the world is raised, then I believe you will see the situation begin to turn around, and the pressure will be eased in China, and we can see some economic growth come back to Japan and these other countries. It is very important to the United States and very important to China. We're working hard on it.

[Mr. Zuo noted that China has been working hard not to devalue its currency, and he asked Mayor Xu Kuangdi of Shanghai about trade between the U.S. and Shanghai. Mayor Xu noted that trade with the U.S. was up 30 percent in the first 5 months of this year, with imports and exports fairly balanced because Shanghai imports a lot of U.S. high-tech products, and he expressed his hopes that this would continue. The next caller, an employee of the Shanghai Library which the President had toured, asked about increasing exchanges between American libraries and the Shanghai Library.]

China-U.S. Library Cooperation

President Clinton. Well, first of all, I think that we need to make sure that all of our major libraries are connected through the Internet, so that we can ship information back and forth over the Internet that is not available in the libraries themselves. For example, if you have total Internet connection with the New York Public Library, which is our largest public library, then there would be things that you have they don't have, but you could send them over the Internet. There would be things that they have that you don't have that could be shared.

So what I will do, since you have asked this question, is, when I get home, I will ask the people who are in charge of our major libraries, the Library of Congress, which is the biggest library in Washington, DC—it's our national library—and the New York Public Library, and perhaps one or two others, to get in touch with the Shanghai Library and see whether we can establish a deeper partnership.

I was very impressed that the Shanghai Library has 300,000 members who actually pay the annual membership fee, 10 yuan. And I think that—we have many people using our libraries, too. I would also like to figure out, if I might, how these big libraries in America and China can better serve the small libraries in the rural areas, where people are so hungry for information and they don't have as much as we do, those of us who live in the bigger areas. So I will work on this.

[Mr. Zuo agreed on the importance of library outreach to rural areas.]

President Clinton. But as you know, you now have the computers with the Internet hookups, and if you have printers there, then people all over China can order articles out of the Shanghai Library and just print them out on the computer. So that all you have to have now is a hookup with a printer in the small libraries, in the smallest villages, and

anything in the Shanghai Library can be sent to them. Of course, it's more expensive if it's a book. But if it's just an article, it's easy to print out, takes just a couple of minutes.

[Mayor Xu discussed the challenge of getting computer technology out to the countryside, noting that a lot of people there still don't have electricity. He also pointed out that Shanghai Library memberships funded only 5 percent of the library budget and that the government must make up a lot of the rest, but that he was willing because investment in education is important. Another caller then noted that both the President and Mayor Xu had a history of involvement with education issues and asked each of them to discuss the future of China-U.S. educational exchanges.]

Educational Opportunity

President Clinton. Well, first of all, let me say that we are working very hard in America to make sure that more of our own people go on to university and also acquire the skills necessary to operate in the computer age. So, I have worked very hard to open the doors of universities to more people, to make sure that the cost of the education is not a bar to people going.

Now, in addition to that, we want to promote more exchanges of students. I want more American students to go to other places in the world, including China, to study, to learn the language, to learn the culture, to understand the nation. And I very much want to bring even more students from around the world to the United States to study. So perhaps there's something we can do coming out of this trip, the mayor and I, to have more exchanges with people from the Shanghai area, because I believe it's very important. And I think it will only grow more important as we move into this new century.

[Mayor Xu agreed, noting that education in Shanghai is more universal than elsewhere in China. He said 60 percent of high school graduates in Shanghai get into colleges, and he wants to utilize radio, television, and adult education to make up the 40 percent gap. The mayor then discussed approaches to education, noting that the Chinese stress more discipline, which is good for order but can discourage open interaction, whereas American classrooms allow for more freedom, which in the opinion of Chinese educators creates chaos. The mayor said both approaches have value, and the two countries should learn from each other.]

President Clinton. Well, actually, here's a case where I think we would greatly benefit from working together, because there is no perfect system. If you just start with the issue of discipline, we know that without a certain amount of discipline and order in the classroom, it's impossible for learning to occur. We also know if there is too much order, where everything is structured, the child may close up and not be open to information and to learning. So we have tried all kinds of things.

In our country, for example, now many of our schools are going back to an older practice of requiring the students to wear uniforms every day, as is the case in many other countries, on the theory that it makes people more disciplined. It also gives a spirit of

equality. This is sweeping our country, really, and doing very well. On the other hand, we want enough freedom in the classroom so that the children have the confidence they need to participate in the class discussion.

Now, on the second matter, which I think is very important, does education emphasize drilling information into the head of the student, or should it emphasize sort of creative or critical thinking? I think the answer is, clearly, both. How can you be a creative thinker if you don't know something in the first place? First, you must know what you need to know. You must have the information.

On the other hand, if you look at how fast things are changing—in this information age, the volume of facts in the world is doubling every 5 years. That's a stunning thing. The volume of information is doubling every 5 years. Therefore, it's very important not only what you know today but what you are capable of learning and whether you can apply what you know to solving new problems.

So I think what we need is a careful balance between making sure our students have the bedrock information without which you can't make those decisions, but also learn to be creative in the way you think to deal with the exploding information of the world.

[Mayor Xu agreed on the need for a new consensus on concepts of education. He cited an example of Chinese parents, accustomed to the methods of Chinese education, who were dissatisfied with visiting American high school teachers because the teachers did not give enough tests.]

President Clinton. But, to be fair, we need more exchanges, too, because what sometimes happens in America is, if you don't have pretty high standards for measuring whether everybody knows what they should know, then the very best students may do better under our system and they go on and win the Nobel Prizes or they create the new companies, but we leave too many behind because we don't make sure they know.

So I think there's something we have to learn from each other, and we really should work on this. Because every advanced society—the Japanese could join with us in this; the Russians could join with us in this. We all have the same interests here in finding the right balance in our educational systems.

[Mr. Zuo asked if investment in education could be justified despite the long payback period.]

President Clinton. Well, it is a long payback period but it has the highest payback of any investment. If you invest in a child's education—maybe they're 5 years old when they start, and maybe they're in their early twenties when they get out of university—that's a long time. And you have to hire all these teachers along the way and pay for all the laboratory facilities and all that. But there's nothing more important. And then the young person gets out into a world in which ideas create wealth and gives back to society many times over.

So people shouldn't look at it just as one person investing in another. It ought to be China investing in its future, the United States investing in its future, together investing in a peaceful, stable, prosperous world.

Education, ideas, information—they give us the capacity to lift people out of poverty and to lift people out of the ignorance that make them fight and kill each other and to give us an understanding about how to solve the environmental problems of the world, which are great. This is worth investing in.

It's more important than everything else. Yes, it takes a long time to pay out in the life of one child, but the payouts for a country are almost immediate.

[Mr. Zuo agreed and suggested that in China-U.S. relations there must be investment for the future. Another caller then asked the President which sports he liked to play when he was in college, how he maintains his energy at work, and which soccer team he thought would win the World Cup.]

Mr. Zuo. Oh yes, so many questions. You threw a lot of questions at him all at once.

Sports

President Clinton. Well, when I was in college, I liked to play basketball, which is very popular in America, and I liked to jog. I have jogged—I am a runner, you know, and I did that for most of the last almost 30 years. Then about a year and half ago, I hurt my leg, and I couldn't run for several months, and I began to work on the Stairmaster—you know, it's the machine—you find them in a lot of these gyms. You walk up and down stairs. And I do that quite a lot now because it's quicker than running. And I play golf. I like golf very much. It's my favorite sport. Even though it doesn't burn a lot of calories, it makes my mind calm. So I like it.

Now, on the World Cup, it's hard for me to predict. I will say this, the World Cup is now becoming important to Americans in the way it's important to other countries, because soccer came rather late to America because we had football and basketball. Now, more and more of our children are playing soccer. And I think the World Cup is a great way of bringing people together. You know, the United States has been estranged from Iran for a long time, but we had this great soccer game and they beat us fair and square—it was heartbreaking for Americans, but they won a great, fascinating soccer match, and they eliminated us from the World Cup.

I'm not an expert in soccer, but I think the Brazilians are always hard to beat. I've watched them play a lot, and they're very good.

Iran-U.S. Relations

[Mr. Zuo asked about "soccer diplomacy" in the context of the Iran-U.S. World Cup competition.]

President Clinton. I think it could be possible. The Iranians like wrestling very much, and we have exchanged wrestling team visits. And they treated our American wrestlers with great respect and friendship, which meant a great deal to me. And then we were honored to receive their wrestlers.

So I think—the new President of Iran seems to be committed to not only lifting the economic and social conditions of his people but also having a more regular relationship with the rest of the world, in accordance with international law and basically just conditions of good partnership. So I'm hoping that more will come out of this.

But I think Americans were riveted by the soccer game. And they were impressed, because we were supposed to win the game and we had lots of chances and our players played very well. They played very well; they had lots of chances; they could have scored eight times or something. But the Iranians had two fast breaks and they played with such passion and they had those two chances and they capitalized on both of them. And we respect that. It was very good.

Automobiles and the Environment

[The next caller asked Mayor Xu if Shanghai's encouragement of private cars would make traffic conditions worse and contribute to environmental pollution. Mayor Xu responded that the city government had not encouraged private car ownership but had simply relaxed regulations related to it because Shanghai's growth had caused many to require transportation into the city from outlying areas. He acknowledged the need to focus on public transportation systems, develop a better understanding of roadway management, use unleaded gasoline, and require emissions filters.]

Mr. Zuo. Even though Mr. President is here, look at this—some of the people here are still interested in asking questions of the mayor about their city, because they're interested and they're excited.

President Clinton. Well, they should be. I mean, that's a very basic thing.

I would like to comment on one thing the questioner asked, because I was impressed that he is concerned that if everyone has a private car, the air pollution will grow worse. Let me say, this is a big problem everywhere in the world. But I once told President Jiang, I said, my biggest concern is that China will get rich in exactly the same way America got rich. But you have 4 times as many people, so no one will be able to breathe because the air pollution will be bad.

Now, one of the things that you need to know is that when a car, an automobile, burns gasoline, about 80 percent of the heat value of the gasoline is lost in the inefficiency of the engine. But they are now developing new engines, called fuel injection engines,

where the fuel goes directly into the engine and it is about 4 times more efficient. So I hope that within a matter of just a few years, in the U.S., in China, and throughout the world, all these engines will be much, much less polluting. And that will be very good for the health of the people of China and for the health of world environment.

Mayor Xu. Correct. That's a good thing. We right now are in the process of thinking about natural gas, LNG, that is, using it for cars, for taxis——

President Clinton. Very good.

Mayor Xu. ——for buses. And at the same time, even for personal motorcycles, we're thinking of making them electric instead of gasoline.

[Mr. Zuo suggested that China's automobile policy should suit conditions in China.]

President Clinton. Absolutely. I think, for one thing, you should be much more disciplined than we were about making sure you have good, high-quality mass transit, because in the cities where we have good mass transit, people use it. So if you have good mass transit, then I think people should be free to have cars, and it's a nice thing to have, but they won't have to drive them so much and you won't have the pollution problems.

Then I think the city, as the mayor said, can set a good example. You can have electric vehicles; you can have natural gas vehicles. And then, as I said, within a few years, I believe all of us will be driving cars that, even if they use gasoline, will be much, much more efficient. Otherwise, if we don't do these things, the air pollution will be terrible, and it will create public health problems that will cost far more than the benefits of the automobile. You don't want that. And you can avoid it. You can avoid the mistakes we made with technology and good planning.

Educational and Scientific Cooperation

[The next caller related his experience while studying in America for a 10-month period noting American teachers' confusion about the Chinese dialects of Mandarin and Cantonese, and asked about encouraging better understanding, cooperation, and interaction between the two nations.]

President Clinton. Well, first of all, I perfectly agree with you. I think that this is a very important point. That's why I came to China. That's why I am very pleased that the press conference I had with President Jiang was televised, and why I did a question-and-answer session at Beijing University yesterday, and why I'm doing this today. I think that we need more of this.

And as I said to an earlier caller, when I go home I intend to see what I can do about sending more Americans to China and trying to make it possible for more Chinese to come to America. Because the more we do these things, the more we will be able to work

through our differences and build a common future. And, besides that, it will make life more interesting and more fun.

[The next caller asked about China-U.S. cooperation in science and technology.]

President Clinton. We have had for many years a U.S.-China science and technology forum—[inaudible]—some research that has helped us to predict extreme weather events. And it has helped us to predict the coming of earthquakes.

We have also had scientific research which has helped us to uncover the cause of a condition in newborn babies, called spina bifida, that is caused in part by the mother's having not enough folic acid. And that has helped us to have more healthy children. My wife, 2 days ago, talked to a mother whose first child was born with this condition, and the second child was born perfectly normal because of the research done by our people together.

So we have made a commitment, President Jiang and I, to identify other areas where we will do more work. And if you or anyone listening to this program, if you have any ideas, you ought to send them to this station or the mayor; they will send them on to me—because I think we should do more science research together.

Response to President's Visit

[A questioner asked if the President would be able to convince people who opposed his visit that he had done the right thing.]

President Clinton. I believe that what the American people have seen already—that our media has reported back on my meeting with President Jiang, and the press conference, yesterday, the meeting with the students; today, the meeting with the citizens before I came over here, and this—it clearly shows that whatever differences we have in our systems and the differences of opinion we have about what human rights policy ought to be, what the scope of freedom of religion ought to be, any of these differences, that we still have a lot in common, and by working on the things we have in common we may also come to an understanding about how to manage our differences. And I believe that the forces of history will bring about more convergence in our societies going forward.

The mayor and I were talking earlier about the education systems and how, in the end, we need to educate young people with the same kinds of skills. And I believe, as I have said repeatedly, that high levels of personal freedom are quite important to the success of a society in the information age because you need people who feel free to explore, to state their views, to explore their own convictions, and then live out their own dreams, and that this will add to the stability of a society by enriching it. That's what I believe.

And we've been able to have these conversations here. And the Government and the people of China have been very open. Also, yesterday the students were very open in asking me some rather probing, difficult questions. And all of this, I think, is good. So I

think the American people will see when I go home that this was a good thing that I came here. And it's a good thing that we have a working relationship.

China and World Trade Organization

[The next caller asked about U.S. influence with regard to China and the World Trade Organization.]

President Clinton. Yes. First of all, obviously I think it is important for China to be a member of the World Trade Organization because China is a major economic power that will grow only larger over time. Secondly, it should be obvious that we in the United States want to support China's economic growth. After all, we are by far the largest purchaser of Chinese exports. No other country comes close to the percentage of exports that we purchase in the United States. So we support your growth.

But we believe that when China becomes a member of the WTO, it must do so on commercially reasonable terms; that is, you must allow access to your markets, not only of American products but of others as well, and there should be some open investment opportunities. And all of this should be done, however, in recognition of the fact that China is still an emerging economy, so you are entitled to have certain longer timetables and certain procedural help in this regard.

So what we're trying to do in America is to say, okay, China should be in the World Trade Organization, but it has to be a commercially realistic set of understandings when you have memberships, and yet we owe you the right to a reasonable period of transition as you change your economy. And I think we'll get there. I think we'll reach an agreement before long.

[Mayor Xu expressed his hope for such an agreement. Mr. Zuo then expressed his regret that time was running short. He noted that the program was the first such format the President had participated in outside the U.S. and asked him for his impressions.]

Closing Comments

President Clinton. Well, first of all, I have enjoyed it very much. I want to thank all the people who called in with their questions and tell you that I'm sorry we didn't get to answer more questions. But it's always the way. People everywhere want to engage their leaders in dialog. And so I thank you for your questions. They were very good ones. And if I didn't get to answer your question, I'm sorry. But this has been a historic occasion. And perhaps now when I travel to other countries, I will ask them if they will do the same thing. This was a very good idea.

[Mr. Zuo thanked the President, and Mayor Xu then commented that he had learned a lot from the President. Mr. Zuo closed the program by thanking the participants and the audience.]

President Clinton. Goodbye. Thank you.