

Remarks at the Arrival Ceremony for President Boris Yeltsin of Russia

June 16, 1992

Mr. President and Mrs. Yeltsin, distinguished members of the Russian delegation, welcome to the United States of America. Also, a welcome to all of you who have come here to welcome President Yeltsin and Mrs. Yeltsin. Welcome to the White House.

Mr. President, today marks the beginning of a new era, a new kind of summit, not a meeting between two powers struggling for global supremacy but between two partners striving to build a democratic peace. From this summit we see a new horizon, a new world of peace and hope, a new world of cooperation and partnership between the American and Russian people. Our hope is that this partnership will end forever the old antagonisms that kept our people apart, that kept the world in confrontation and conflict.

Mr. President, your nation is embarked on a great experiment, a new Russian revolution with freedom as its goal. The progress that Russia has made and the promise of more to come owes much to the courage and vision of President Boris Yeltsin. Mr. President, like Peter the Great, you are redefining Russia's understanding of itself, redefining Russia's role in the world. But for the first time in modern Russian history, a leader claims as his authority not the dispensation of history but a democratic mandate. You come here as an elected leader, elected by the people in free and fair elections. And we salute you.

Already, Mr. President, together we're transforming our relations with benefits not simply to our two nations but to the entire world. Today the threat of a cataclysmic conventional war has vanished with the Warsaw Pact and the rise of democracy in Russia. Today the threat of a nuclear nightmare is more distant now than at any time since the dawn of the nuclear age.

Mr. President, I say this with a sense of pride, a sense of awe, and above all, a sense of history. There is no greater gift to the people of America, to the people of Russia,

to the people all over the world than an end to the awful specter of global war. And think for just a minute about what that means not for presidents, not for heads of state or historians but for parents and for their children. It means a future free from fear.

This first U.S.-Russia summit gives us a chance to lay the foundation of a more peaceful and prosperous future for all of our citizens. We'll discuss Russia's historic transition to the free market, its integration into the world economy, and our commitment to support those reforms. We will seek new ways to expand trade between our two nations; to create wealth and growth and jobs; new levels of military cooperation to reduce further the risk of war; and finally, new agreements to reduce nuclear arms and to remove from our arsenals the most destructive weapons.

But this morning I want to focus on our ultimate goal, on the challenge we face to forge a new peace, a permanent peace between two nations who must never again be adversaries. Right now, the people of Russia are waging a valiant struggle for the very same rights and freedoms that we Americans prize so deeply. The fate of that revolution, the future of democracy in Russia and other new nations of the old Soviet empire is the most important foreign policy issue of our time. The United States and its democratic allies must play a key role in helping forge a democratic peace.

That is why I urge the Congress of the United States once again to pass the "FREEDOM Support Act" to strengthen democratic reform in Russia and the other new nations of the old Soviet Union. And yes, the aid that I've requested from the Congress is significant, but it is also a tiny fraction of the \$4 trillion that this Nation spent to secure peace during the long cold war. The resources we devote now are an investment in a new century of peace with Russia.

History offers us a rare chance, a chance

to achieve what twice before this century has escaped our grasp. It is the vision that perished twice in the battlefields of Europe, the vision that gave us hope through the long cold war, the dream of a new world of freedom.

Mr. President, when we think of the world our children and theirs will inherit, no single factor will shape their future more than the fate of the revolution now unfold-

ing in Russia. Your Russian revolution, like our American Revolution, simply must succeed.

Once again, my friend, welcome to the White House. And may God grant a peaceful future to the American and the Russian people. Welcome, sir. Glad you're here.

Note: The President spoke at 10:11 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With President Boris Yeltsin of Russia

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POW-MIA's

Q. Mr. President, do you think there are any POW's in the Soviet Union, Americans? This to President Bush first and then Yeltsin.

President Yeltsin. It is possible.

Q. Are they alive?

President Yeltsin. An investigating commission is working, led by Mr. Volkogonov. Many things have been revealed after the examination of the archives of the KGB and the Central Committee of the Communist Party. But that work is continuing both in the archives and in the places where the POW's were. We shall try to investigate each individual case. And all the information will be, of course, handed over to the American side. The initial information has been handed over to the Senate.

Q. Would you expect more information this week?

President Bush. Let me just thank President Yeltsin for this because this is a matter of grave concern to the American people. He has made these observations, pledged full cooperation and support. I think this really expresses as well as anything else this new era that we were both talking about on the lawn. And I have every confidence that what he says here is true, that they will get to the bottom of it. And if any single American is unaccounted for, they will go the extra mile to see that that person is accounted for. And I think that's what the American people need to know. I think

that's what President Yeltsin has clearly pledged to do. So we are grateful to him for that.

Q. Does it come as a complete surprise to you, Mr. President?

President Bush. Yes, it comes as a—

Q. You had no idea?

President Bush. Thank you all very much.

Q. Have you got an arms agreement yet?

President Bush. Out of here, Helen [Helen Thomas, United Press International].

[*At this point, one group of reporters left the room, and another group entered.*]

Q. —additional information on the American POW's.

President Yeltsin. As I just answered that question.

Q. We were behind the doors.

President Yeltsin. The commission headed by Volkogonov was working and is continuing to work, and they're opening up all the data. If they said this issue doesn't exist, that there are no POW's there now, there are a lot of factors being opened up and discovered. And it's very possible that there are a few of them still left alive, even on our own territory perhaps. So the commission is continuing its work, and we are going to carry this all the way to the very ground to find out the fate of every single last American who might be on our territory.

Q. How much time will that require? What new ideas and projects were you talk-