

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev of Russia

March 24, 1993

Russia

Q. Will you answer a couple of questions? Do you have any reaction to what Mr. Kozyrev suggested this morning as to the future economic relations between us and Russia?

The President. Well, we haven't had a conversation about it yet. Let me just say that I'm delighted to have him here. I'm glad to have a firsthand account of what's going on in Russia. And I want to reaffirm my support for democracy and for reform and say I'm looking very much forward to the Vancouver summit with President Yeltsin.

Q. Mr. President, apparently you seem to oppose aiding Russia. What will you do to try to sell your program for Russian aid?

The President. Well, I would tell the American people what I've been saying for well over a year now, that it is very much in our interest to keep Russia a democracy, to keep moving toward market reforms, and to keep moving toward reducing the nuclear threat. It will save the American people billions of dollars, in money we don't have to spend maintaining a nuclear arsenal, if we can continue to denuclearize the world. It will make the American people billions of dollars in future trade opportunities. And it will make the world a safer place. So, I think this is a good investment for America. I've always believed that. And I hope I can persuade the American people and the United States Congress that it is.

Q. Do you think there's still a chance for a compromise in Russia?

The President. That's something the Russians will have to work out among themselves. I presume there is, but that's obviously something that has to be decided by the Russian people. The United States can't dictate that.

Q. Mr. Kozyrev, can you tell us, did the meetings go poorly this morning, because it seems as though the line was harder when they came out from those meetings?

Foreign Minister Kozyrev. [Inaudible]—well, I think the people will pass final judgment. As President just said, it is for Russians and Russian people to pass final judgment, and President calls for vote, popular vote. And I think this will be the decisive event. But on the—President, as always, is open to compromise where there are those political forces who are not apt to just reverse the reform and advance the democracy.

Q. Will you support the idea of Russia joining G-7 as soon as possible?

The President. I wouldn't rule out or in anything particular. We're going to be dealing with a whole broad range of issues between the United States and Russia and with the G-7. And let's just see what happens.

NOTE: The exchange began at 1:10 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With Members of the Council of Churches

March 24, 1993

Russia

Q. Mr. President, did you and Mr. Kozyrev reach any kind of agreement on the type of aid package that might be most helpful for Russia?

The President. No, we discussed what I was thinking about and what our people are working on. And I told him it would be a good and specific package, and I was looking forward to having the opportunity to discuss it with President Yeltsin.

Q. Did he give you any encouragement, sir, that the current political crisis could be resolved?

The President. I think he's hopeful.

Q. Any specifics as to how it might be resolved, sir?

The President. No, he's been here with me.

NOTE: The exchange began at 3:50 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. A tape

was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Interview With Dan Rather of CBS News

March 24, 1993

The President's Schedule

Mr. Rather. How's your golf game?

The President. Not very good. I've only played twice. The first time it was about 35 degrees with a whipping wind, and the second time, I had a very good second nine holes. But I haven't gotten to play very much.

Mr. Rather. We were talking about your sleep or lack of same over in the Oval Office. You mentioned something about a nap. Are you trying to nap these days?

The President. If I can take a nap, even 15 or 20 minutes in the middle of the day, it is really invigorating to me. On the days when I'm a little short of sleep, I try to work it out so that I can sneak off and just lie down for 15 minutes, a half an hour, and it really makes all the difference in the world.

The White House

Mr. Rather. We're in the Library now, where President Roosevelt made his fireside chats. Is this among your favorite rooms?

The President. I love this room. And this is a highly public room. It is actually a lending library. People who work around here can come in here and check out these books just like any other library. It's also a public room that's open to everyone who comes in the White House on a tour. So people get to see this wonderful library of America, great old portrait of George Washington, and as I was telling you a moment ago, the little-known anonymous design for the White House by Thomas Jefferson. He tried to become the architect of the White House anonymously, and his design was rejected in favor of this one.

Mr. Rather. You were mentioning that certain Presidents dominate this house, as opposed to how they may be viewed in history. What did you mean by that?

The President. What I meant was most of the Presidents who are dominant here were very important Presidents, or all of

them. Lincoln is plainly the dominant presence here: a bedroom named for him, the room where he signed the Emancipation Proclamation, his statues and portraits everywhere. But Andrew Jackson is very important here. He put both of the round porches on the White House and changed the front to the back of the White House and the back to the front. Theodore Roosevelt built both the wings, and his portraits are everywhere and his vigor and youth. Franklin Roosevelt lived here longer than everyone else, but he has just a couple of portraits here in the house and a very modest presence, considering the fact that he was plainly the dominant personality in terms of the length of time that he dominated here. So it's just sort of interesting who dominates, because of the contributions they made to the house itself, I think.

Mr. Rather. What are the chances that Bill Clinton can be one of those dominant Presidents in this house?

The President. Well, I don't know. Probably not much. I think this house is in good shape; I don't know that I can do anything to it that would improve it. I imagine that I will enjoy living here and that I will reverse the responsibility about as much as anybody who's ever been here.

The Presidency

Mr. Rather. What's been your biggest disappointment so far?

The President. How hard it is to do everything I want to do as quickly as I want to do it, that the pace of change, although they say we're keeping quite a brisk pace—the House of Representatives adopted the budget resolution and my jobs stimulus package last week in record time—but I still get frustrated. I have a hard time keeping up with everything and keeping it going forward. I'm an impatient person by nature, and I want to do things. That's been disappointing.

But I've been pleased that my staff has worked like crazy, my Cabinet's worked hard. We've had a minimum so far of the kind of backbiting and factionalism and all that you hear about.