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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