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it is a season of new hope and new beginnings. And as we look anew at our neighbors, our children, and our own communities, as well as the world around us, we must seize the possibilities inherent in this exhilarating moment, to face our challenges, to exercise our responsibilities, and to rejoice in them.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:50 a.m. at the U.S. Botanic Gardens.

Remarks at a Reception Honoring the Opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

April 21, 1993

Thank you so much for that magnificent statement and for the kind introduction. Ladies and gentlemen, Hillary and I, and the Vice President and Mrs. Gore are deeply honored to welcome all of you here to the White House this afternoon to mark the opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

All of us are honored to be joined by the heads of state of so many distinguished nations: of Israel and Portugal, Croatia and Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, Albania and Moldova. These fine people, as you heard, and I had a lot of conversations this afternoon and we are a little late, and for that I apologize. I do want to say that for a while some of my friends in the audience were speculating, as Mandy had to stand up and sing again and again, that I was really testing the proposition that he has not only the best voice but the strongest lungs in the United States of America.

This afternoon I was interrupted on a couple of occasions to go back and work with the Congress in our attempt to create more jobs for the American people, but I spent a great deal of time talking to these world leaders about things that concern us all and that are very relevant to the occasion which has brought all of you here today. I was honored to see the President of Israel on this day when we announce the resumption of peace talks in the Middle East starting next week. We know this is the beginning, not the end of the process; but what a fine day it is to begin.

I was honored to talk with the leaders of these other nations about things of profound concern to the Jewish community in America. How can we keep democracy alive in Russia and the other republics of the former Soviet Union and throughout Eastern Europe? How can we stand against the awful principle of ethnic cleansing which has too much currency in the world today, given the experiences of so many people in a world so recently gone by?

I want to thank Benjamin Meed, not only for what he said but for what he has done. I want to thank Bud Meyerhoff and Bill Lowenberg who made a very significant contribution to this week's events through their services as Chair and Vice-Chair of the Museum Council. I understand that we have here in this audience two half-siblings of Raoul Wallenberg: Nina Lager and Guy von Dardel. And I want to recognize them and all the rest of you whose generosity and dedication and determination never to forget has helped make this day a reality. I want to recognize the members of the Cabinet and the distinguished Members of the United States Congress who are here and thank them for their presence and their dedication. Finally, there are many friends of the Gores and the Clintons who are here tonight whom I've not seen since the election. And I want to thank you and say that we're going to take more time shaking hands on the way out than we did on the way in, and I hope we'll be able to see all of you.

We've gathered here to mark the opening of this Holocaust Museum. We do so to help ensure that the Holocaust will remain ever a sharp thorn in every national memory, but especially in the memory of the United States, which has such unique responsibilities at this moment in history. We do so to redeem in some small measure the deaths of millions whom our nations did not, or would not, or could not save. We do so to help teach new generations the dangers of antidemocratic despots, racist ideologies, and ethnic hatreds.

Late Monday night, I walked through the museum with the museum's Director,

Jeshajahu Weinberg. He did a brilliant job of telling me about the incredible work in the relatively brief time of 2 hours and 10 minutes. And I say that in all seriousness. When the Vice President went through the museum, he said, if you go back there you ought to allow at least 2 hours so that you can really absorb what you will see and feel. I can personally now attest to how darkly it teaches and how deeply it moves all who step inside with their ears, their eyes, and their hearts open. It is the testament not only to the worst and most depraved examples of human conduct but also to the best, the bravest, and the most loving in the human soul. I hope that all of you who are here and all of the many visitors who come to Washington from now on will take the opportunity to visit and be touched by this wonderful place.

Many of the leaders who join us today are from countries now making bold transitions toward democracy, as I have said. As a Nation that's been struggling with it for more than 200 years now, we understand some of the challenges of that transition. Even after 200 years there are parts of it we have trouble getting right. The Holocaust Museum will stand as a stark reminder that, of the many tasks of democracy, the most imperative perhaps, are those of fostering tolerance for ethnic and religious and racial differences, of fostering religious freedom and individual right and civic responsibility; each of us to take responsibility for the welfare of all of us.

The event we have joined to commemorate is one of immeasurable sorrow; yet today we speak of hope, as others have said. For while the faces pictured within the museum remind us of the worst of an old Europe, the faces I see within this tent suggest the best of a new Europe and a new world: a Europe no longer divided by ideology, no longer braced for all-consuming war, where freedom is replacing repression, where people can devote less of their resources to preparation for hostilities and more for investment for prosperity. We know, of course, that the new Europe is not yet free of old cruelties and that contemporary horrors like the slaughter of innocents in Bosnia have not disappeared. Indeed, one of the eternal lessons to which this museum bears strong witness is that the struggle against darkness will never end and the need for vigilance will never fade away.

Still, we have grounds to hope that the seeds of democracy in Europe will one day soon bear the fruit of a more peaceful civic culture in which neighbor no longer lifts up sword against neighbor, within countries or across national borders. Our own people have long waited and too often have had to fight for that kind of Europe. Now that these historic transitions are underway, I want you to know that the United States will remain fully engaged in Europe and in its transitions toward a new and better future. For, as we vow never to forget the dark days of a half-century ago when all humanity fell apart, we can also celebrate in this event the process of coming together by rededicating ourselves to making sure that the process works, that this time all of us will get it right. It is a coming together of Israel and those nations that saw much of the worst persecution of the Jews. A coming together of Western Europe and Central Europe and Eastern Europe and, indeed, the first coming together of those regions ever as democratic states. It is a coming together among free peoples determined to confront and remember the horrors that befell past generations so that we can create a world of justice and peace for our generation and for the children to come.

I thank all of you for coming here today. But more than that, I thank you for living the lives that brought you here today. God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:43 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to entertainer Mandy Patinkin and Benjamin Meed, president, American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors.

Exchange With Reporters en Route to the Blair House

April 21, 1993

Stimulus Package

Q. Mr. President, any reaction to the——