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the fact that you obviously have 1.2 million or however many there are of very determined people in Chechnya with a decades-long history of resentment against the central government makes this thing just sort of hanging there. It's like a thorn in their flesh.

Now, I believe that he has made the major policy decisions there. I think he is in control of the policy there. And I have dealt directly with him in urging a change and a moderation of policy there, and I will continue to do that. My confidence level in him is strong. If you ask me do I think he is still the effective President of Russia, and is he making those decisions, yes, that's what I believe is the case.

I'll take one more. Anne, and then I'll go.

1996 Election

Q. Back on politics, you say it's too early for you to become consumed by reelection talk. It might not be too early for someone within the Democratic Party who might choose to challenge you. Do you expect a challenge from within your own party, and do you think that would be destructive for Democrats?

The President. I don't expect it. I don't not expect it. I don't know what will happen. I hope there won't be one. I think it would be a mistake for the Democratic Party. And again, I would say what would the issue be? What would the issue be? The unemployment rate is lower. The inflation rate is lower. The growth rate is higher. The world is more peaceful. We have a slew of problems out there. We can stay here for 3 or 4 hours and talk about it. There are a bunch of problems out there. The country is in better shape than it was 2 years ago.

I get tickled—I laugh every time I see one of the Republican—when the Republicans have a big fundraiser, and they give them a bunch of money because a lot of them are angry that we raised income taxes on the top 1.2 percent of people to bring the deficit down. But I'll bet you almost everybody going to those fundraisers for those Republicans is doing better under our economic policies in the last 2 years than they were before.

So my job is just to do the best job I can, reward work, support families and communities, offer opportunity, demand responsibility in these changes, and keep moving forward. That's what I'm going to do. And this is a difficult, tumultuous time, but this country is doing better. And I am determined to keep fighting for the interests and the values of middle-class people. And I'm going to let the election take care of itself, as I believe it will.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President's 88th news conference began at 1 p.m. in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to civil rights leader Jesse Jackson; Henry Foster, Surgeon General-Designate; President Franco Tudjman of the Republic of Croatia; President Boris Yeltsin of Russia; and Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany.

Statement on the Death of Howard Hunter

March 3, 1995

Hillary and I were saddened to learn of the death of Howard Hunter and we extend our deepest sympathy to his family. President Hunter provided great moral and spiritual leadership to all Mormons as well as the entire country. His message of the need for greater kindness, gentleness, tolerance, and forgiveness is an important one for all of us.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

February 27

The President announced his intention to appoint Hector Villa III as the U.S. Representative to the Pecos River Commission.

February 28

The President announced his intention to appoint Harvey Gantt as a member and Chair and Robert Gaines as a member of the National Capital Planning Commission.