

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters in Vancouver, Canada April 3, 1993

The President. Thank you very much. I want to begin by thanking the Prime Minister and Canada for hosting this meeting between President Yeltsin and me. I want to thank also the Prime Minister for his leadership in support of the process of democracy and reform in Russia and the Canadian effort to support that process, which has recently been announced. We have worked together very, very closely in the last few weeks to mobilize support among the G-7 for the process of democracy and reform. And he deserves a good share of credit for many of the positive actions which will be taken in the days and weeks ahead. I thank him for that and for hosting this. And I look forward to the meeting with President Yeltsin.

Aid to Russia

Q. Mr. President, there's some concern that any U.S. aid or any Western aid that may pour into Russia now could be wasted. Is there a danger at this point that you could actually give Russia too much Western aid?

The President. Well, I guess there are two concerns that you might have. One is that any aid itself might not be well spent. The other is that future political events might undermine the impact of the aid. As far as the second risk is concerned, that is there, it is clear. But you could say that about any effort we might make anywhere, including in our own country, that future events might undermine the impact of present action. We are proposing to take action to support democracy and to support economic reform.

Now, in terms of making sure the money is spent properly, that it's the right kind of aid, I have spent a significant amount of time on this. We have put together a very good team. I will be consulting in significant detail with President Yeltsin about this. I think that the kinds of things we propose to do are likely to have lasting and tangible impact, and the way we propose to do it will minimize the chance that the money will be squandered.

Q. Does that mean control, sir, control on how the money is spent?

The President. No. You'll see. We're working on it. I think you'll like it.

Q. Mr. President, on the way over here, President Yeltsin mentioned a figure of \$100 billion in connection with the cost that Germany had to pay for East Germany. Is that a realistic figure in your mind?

The President. Well, he didn't mention it. I know what he said when he got here, and he went out of his way to say that the amount of money wasn't as important as the kind of support. Germany had to spend a lot of money on Germans to integrate their country. It's a different and I don't think entirely analogous situation.

I believe what you will see building up over the next few weeks is a very significant effort by the G-7 and perhaps by other countries as well to support a long-term process of development in Russia. To go back to the first question, it is important that the efforts that are made be targeted and be designed to produce and support reform and lasting and tangible benefits to the people in Russia in ways that help the security and the economy of all the countries that are helping. So I think I look at this as a long-term effort, and I think it would be a mistake to put a short-term dollar figure on it.

Yes, Mark [Mark Miller, Newsweek].

Q. How much pressure do you feel under going into this 2-day event? And what are the big unanswered questions in your mind, the things that, despite all your preparation, you still don't know the answers to?

The President. I don't feel under any pressure. I'm glad that this day has arrived. I welcome the chance that the United States has to support the millions of courageous people in Russia who have stood up for democracy and have had the courage to go through some very difficult times and, I might add, to support the people in the other newly independent states of the former Soviet Union who are going through equally difficult economic times and striving hard for democracy. I welcome that opportunity.

The only unanswered questions I have are the same ones that you have. I don't know what's going to happen. None of us do. But I think that, I would just remind you all—it's something I said in my speech at Annapolis—in 1776 the United States adopted the Declara-

tion of Independence. It was well over a decade before we actually settled on a Constitution and got around to electing a President.

And the Russians are trying to undertake three fundamental changes at once: moving from a Communist to a market economy; moving from a tyrannical dictatorship to a democracy; and moving to an independent nation state away from having a great empire. And these are very difficult and unsettling times. But I think that the direction is clear, the direction that they ought to take, and I think we ought to support the direction. And I'm not troubled by the fact that I can't control that process or that I don't know the outcome of it. We just need to weigh in and do what we can to do what's right.

Q. Mr. President, why don't the majority of Americans think we should be sending more aid to Russia?

The President. I think there are probably two or three reasons. First of all, historically in our country, foreign aid has never been popular. And that's why I have gone out of my way to show that this is the establishment of a partnership which will be mutually beneficial. This is not in any way an act of charity that we are engaged in. It doesn't have anything to do with that.

Secondly, the American people are pre-occupied with their own problems. We've got one million fewer jobs in the private sector than

we had 3 years ago. Unemployment is high. Incomes have been stagnant for years. We have serious challenges at home, and they want to know that we're putting those first.

Then I think the third thing is the question that you asked in the beginning. They want to know that if we are going to do something, they want us at least to go to extra efforts to make sure that the money is well spent and is in the long-term benefit of both countries.

Yes.

Japan

Q. Are both of you confident that you can get Japan on side with some big bucks for this venture and to ignore the Northern Islands issue?

The President. Well, let me say this. I had a very good talk with Prime Minister Miyazawa last night. The Japanese have been very forthcoming as the leaders of the G-7. This is their year to lead, and they are leading. They are hosting this meeting of the finance and foreign ministers on the 14th and 15th, and I believe that they will fulfill their leadership role. I'm encouraged.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:39 a.m. at the Mackenzie House at the University of British Columbia.

Exchange With Reporters With President Boris Yeltsin of Russia in Vancouver

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Russia-U.S. Relations

Q. President Yeltsin, will American aid make a difference to the political situation in Russia?

President Yeltsin. You know, it's always useful to help a friend, especially if a friend goes through a difficult period. And we are partners, and we are friends.

Q. Go ahead, Mr. President, you can talk.

President Clinton. I just was going to say, I don't view this as a—this is not a talk about aid; this is a talk about a long-term partnership. The United States has a great deal to gain from a strong, successful, democratic Russia. It is in

our interest. And I'm very encouraged by the things that President Yeltsin has stood for, and the fight that he's waging now.

President Yeltsin. And the rest of the world, too.

NOTE: The exchange began at 1:55 p.m. at the MacKenzie House at the University of British Columbia. President Yeltsin spoke in Russian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.