

Remarks at a State Dinner in Kiev May 11, 1995

President and Mrs. Kuchma, to all of our hosts, on behalf of all the Americans here, let me say that we are glad to be here and we thank you, Mr. President, for your warm remarks.

Mr. President, on my first trip to the Ukraine, I only visited the lounge at Boryspil Airport, and you promised me when we met in November that the hospitality would be even better in Kiev. Thank you for keeping your word and for this wonderful welcome.

Mr. President and distinguished guests, we had a very good meeting here today, but perhaps the most important thing which happened today, which both of us worked on, occurred in New York where the nations of the world made history. By indefinitely extending the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, we have taken a critical step in making the American people, Ukrainian people, and the people of the world more secure. More important, this action will build a better future for our children, for future generations.

For 25 years, the NPT has been the cornerstone of global efforts to reduce the dangers of nuclear weapons. Making the treaty permanent opens a new and more hopeful chapter in our history, a time when all nations will be more secure. We owe a great debt of thanks to the men and women who've worked so hard to make this possible.

This achievement was key goal of our foreign policy in the United States this year. And I want to say a special word of thanks to the representatives of my Government who worked so hard for this day.

It is especially fitting that we celebrate this event in Kiev, for Ukraine has been at the forefront of those nations that have been striving to reduce the threat posed by nuclear weapons. By your decision to eliminate the nuclear arsenal on your territory, to bring the START I agreement into force, and to adhere to the NPT, Ukrainian people have made a major contribution to reducing the nuclear dangers in Europe and throughout the world.

I once again want to thank President Kuchma for his brave and wise leadership. Over the last few days, we have spoken a great deal about

the hardship and the heroism in the Great War of 50 years ago. This evening I would like to pay tribute to the courage and endurance of the Ukrainian people today. After a century of totalitarian rule, famine, and war, you have emerged to freedom and independence and set for yourselves the highest goals. In the face of a difficult, often wrenching transition, you have persevered and added honor to your nation.

I salute you, Mr. President, because you have played such an important role in maintaining the resolve of your people. Every democratically elected leader knows it is difficult to pursue a course that causes pain in the short run, even if it is best for the people in the long run. Mr. President, you have carried forth without wavering. An American President can look back on the experience of his predecessors over more than 200 years and know that others have walked this path before. But you are forging a new democratic tradition, untested and unknown but based on your judgment and your convictions. You have written a record of achievement and shown a determination that will be remembered long into the future.

This record should not and will not go unanswered. You have challenged us, and we are responding with strong support for Ukrainian reform. And we will continue to stand by you and work with Ukraine to fulfill its ambitions to become a prosperous democracy. Our legacy will not only be Government-to-Government programs but a genuine partnership between Ukrainian and American citizens, equal to the challenges of the coming century.

Ladies and gentlemen, let us raise a glass to the health and happiness of President and Mrs. Kuchma and to Ukraine, where one of Europe's oldest nations is building a vibrant new democracy, and to the growing friendship between our peoples.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 8:15 p.m. at Mariinsky Palace.

Remarks at the Menorah Memorial at Babi Yar in Kiev *May 12, 1995*

Thank you, Rabbi, to the people of Ukraine, and especially to the veterans of World War II and the children who are here.

Here on the edge of this wooded ravine, we bear witness eternally to the consequences of evil. Here at Babi Yar, almost 54 years ago, more than 30,000 men, women, and children were slaughtered in the first 3 days alone. They died for no other reason than the blood that ran through their veins. We remember their sacrifice, and we vow never to forget.

In late September 1941, the Nazi occupying army ordered the Jewish population of Kiev together, with their valuables and belongings. "We thought we were being sent on a journey," one survivor recalled. But instead they were being herded to the ravine, stripped, and shot down. By year's end, more than 100,000 Jews, 10,000 Ukrainian nationalists, Soviet prisoners of war, and gypsies had been exterminated here.

The writer Anatoly Kuznietzov was a child in Kiev during the war. He remembers the day the deportations began. "My grandfather stood in the middle of the courtyard straining to hear something. He raised his finger. 'Do you know

what?' he said with horror in his voice. 'They're not deporting them. They're shooting them.'"

Years later, Kuznietzov brought the poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko to Babi Yar. And that night, Yevtushenko wrote one of his most celebrated poems:

Over Babi Yar there are no memorials. The steep hillside, like a rough inscription. I am frightened. Today I am as old as the Jewish race. I seem to myself a Jew at this moment.

These words speak to us across the generations, a reminder of the past, a warning for the future.

In the quiet of this place, the victims of Babi Yar cry out to us still. Never forget, they tell us, that humanity is capable of the worst, just as it is capable of the best. Never forget that the forces of darkness cannot be defeated with silence or indifference. Never forget that we are all Jews and gypsies and Slavs. Never forget.

May God bless this holy place.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:12 p.m.

Remarks at Schevchenko University in Kiev *May 12, 1995*

Thank you very much.

I first would thank Olexiy Meleshchuk for that fine introduction. I thank Olena Sheveliova for her fine remarks and for representing the university students here. I thank the rector, Viktor Skopenko, for his remarks and for the honorary degree, which I will treasure and display in the White House.

I am delighted to be joined here by my wife and by ministers and other important members of our administration, by the mayor of Kiev and members of your National Government, and by former President Kravchuk. I am glad to see them all here, and I thank them for being here with me today. I am deeply honored to be the first American President to appear before the people of a free and independent Ukraine.

Today we celebrate the alliance of our peoples, who defeated fascism 50 years ago. We shared victory then, but the cost to your people of that victory was almost unimaginable. More than 5 million Ukrainians died in the conflict. I am pleased that now after all these years we can pay tribute to the extraordinary sacrifice here in the Ukrainian homeland.

It is fitting that we are meeting at this institution, named for Taras Schevchenko. More than 30 years ago, America recognized his passion for freedom by erecting a statue of Schevchenko in the heart of our Nation's Capital. Now, at last, America also honors this great champion of liberty in the heart of Ukraine's capital.

I am also glad that we are meeting here at this university because so much of your nation's