

Week Ending Friday, April 26, 1996

**Exchange With Reporters in
St. Petersburg, Russia**

April 19, 1996

Q. Mr. President, can I ask you—anything you wanted to see in particular?

The President. I saw the Impressionists paintings. I wanted to see them. And I wanted to see the living quarters of Catherine the Great. *[Laughter]*

Q. How did it compare to yours?

The President. I like mine just fine. *[Laughter]*

Q. *[Inaudible]*—house, Mr. President?

The President. Well, she didn't have to run for election. *[Laughter]*

Q. Are you going to see the Rembrandts here?

The President. Perhaps, yes. I love the desks. The thing that strikes me is the woodwork. I hadn't counted on seeing all that. You ought to go back and see all the secret chambers in the desk back there. He put everything he had in there.

Q. Mr. President, you've seen some religious symbols today that have been opened in the last few years to the Russian people. What are your thoughts on seeing things that didn't used to be open during the Soviet era?

The President. That's a very good thing, not only making it available to the people, but also making religious expression legitimate again and making it—encouraging and nourishing it. I think it's a real sign of the health of the Russian democracy that religion is respected and people are free to pursue it and express their honest convictions.

NOTE: The exchange began at approximately 2:30 p.m. in the White Hall Room at the Hermitage Museum. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

**Proclamation 6887—Jewish Heritage
Week, 1996**

April 19, 1996

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

The Jewish experience in America has been a mutually rewarding one for this country and for the Jewish people. Jewish Americans have made great contributions in such fields as the arts and sciences, business, government, law and medicine, enriching America's heritage with the resonant tradition of an ancient people. And America, for its part, has been a land of opportunity for its Jewish citizens.

In many ways, the Jewish experience is unique, freighted with the anguish of frequent persecution, but ennobled by an unyielding spirit that has always found a way to turn darkness into light. In the crucible of sorrow, the Jewish people have reaffirmed, time and again, the basic human values of faith, community, justice, and hope.

On the tolerant soil of American democracy, the Jewish people have flourished. We will be forever grateful for the remarkable contributions of our Jewish citizens, and it is fitting that we set aside a week to give thanks for their inestimable gifts and to honor the traditions of their remarkable religion and heritage.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 21 through April 28, 1996, as Jewish Heritage Week. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this week with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this nineteenth day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and nine-