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**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
BRIEFING ON CENTRAL ASIA, RUSSIA AND UKRAINE**

Department of State

Thank you Secretary Albright, for that introduction. Although I wish you hadn't included any references to my slide show abilities. Anyone who knows me knows that I am a technical illiterate on many counts and I have this marked with a big arrow by my staff, 'this is the button you push' (laughter). I am delighted to be here, and I want to thank the Secretary for taking time out of a very busy day. I know she cannot stay with us for long, and I thank you for coming. And please, that your work and your words mean so much to all of us. (applause) And I want to thank the ambassadors who are with us and I want to thank Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur. I appreciate very much Ambassador Morningstar and Brian Atwood for their remarks. And I am particularly pleased that so many of you could join us for this occasion which is really meant to celebrate the countries with whom I was privileged to visit and also to make clear how important those countries are in America's foreign policy. And to send a message to the American public that these are countries and peoples who have so much in common with us that we need to extend the hands of friendship and partnership and look for ways to do all that we can make to make our relations even stronger.

When I went to the countries that we will discuss, at the request of the President and the Secretary of State, I hoped to bring a message of hope and solidarity, from the American people, that we will stand by the people and governments of these countries during their historic transition and that we wanted to strengthen the ties between us. I also hoped to stress the importance of people-to-people, grassroots efforts; I have seen that with my own eyes. And you will see some examples in the slides. And I know in this auditorium there are many who have participated directly in these grassroots efforts.

I also hoped to be able to stress the importance of civil society, and what it means to the future of our societies around the world. The establishment of democratic institutions, the promotion of non-governmental organizations are all part of building a strong civil society. I also hoped to encourage the full development of educational opportunities for boys and girls and the creation of a responsive social safety net. It was also essential, as I try to do everywhere I travel, to underscore the importance of the full participation of women in all sectors of society, and particularly as participants in creating and sustaining a strong civil society from the ground

up.

The countries that I visited have made remarkable strides in building democratic states with effective governing institutions, and establishing links with one another and their neighbors, as well as with the broader international community. I hope that part of the message of today's event would be to tell the American people about the progress that has been made. All too often, we only see headlines about the setbacks. All too often, we only see headlines about our own country, sometimes, about setbacks or difficulties. With the larger truth, which lies below the surface and doesn't get the attention it deserves, that there has been extraordinary progress for all to see.

I believe the transition to democracy and free market economies requires patience and persistence. To underscore this point, I said in Ukraine:

As Americans have learned through the years, democracy is a never-ending struggle. We became a 'newly independent state' in 1776, and for the past 221 years our democracy has been a work in process. It took us more than 10 years to draft a constitution; 89 years to rid our nation of slavery; 144 years to give our women the vote; and 188 years to make all our citizens equal under the law.

The critical difference, of course, is that the modern world is much less forgiving. With global communications and with a global economy, everything moves at a much faster pace; and countries and societies must reform more quickly in order to take their rightful place in such a new world.

The trip also reaffirmed many of the basic principles of our assistance programs. We must continue to recognize that despite the progress that has been made, the transition has been difficult and painful for many, particularly women and pensioners. Different sectors of the society, including health care and education, in many of the countries in Eurasia and the ones I visited, are seriously stressed. The U.S. cannot expect democracy to take root in the region without a serious commitment of public and private resources. As with previous trips I have been privileged to take, I saw firsthand how American assistance through USAID, USIA, Peace Corps and NIS programs, as well as partnerships with American NGOs including American high schools and universities, contribute to improving the lives of people and to achieving our broader foreign policy objectives. I also saw again and again how critical women were to any efforts to build democracy, support economic reform and provide for responsive social structures, particularly through the development of a strong NGO community.

I hope that this trip and all of your being here today will help convince the American people about the importance of America's active and sustained engagement. We need to remind ourselves that only 6 years ago the countries I visited were living under totalitarian rule. I am

convinced that one of the most important things the Administration can do is to help ensure the successful transition to democracy by helping to persuade the American public, Congress and the corporate and not for profit sectors to understand why American engagement by all sectors of our society in this region is critical, not only with those with whom we are partners and friends, but to the interests of the United States, as well.

Americans need to be reminded that after having spent trillions of dollars to defend ourselves against communism, we must do what is necessary to insure the successful transformation of all of these countries to market democracy. This is as much a question of national security interest as any dollar we spend as part of our defense budget. Building long-term durable ties between our peoples is in all of our national interests. So, with those introductory remarks, I am going to attempt to make the slide work. To show you some of what I was privileged to see, and to encourage even more Americans to visit the countries I visited. And particularly, with respect to a very large country like Russia, to get beyond the well known cities, Moscow or St. Petersburg and out into more of that beautiful country

KAZAKHSTAN

Now, the first country that I visited was Kazakhstan. And, I was delighted to be able to go to this very large country that Americans don't yet know very well. Unfortunately, my trip was delayed because my airplane had to turn back because of some mechanical problems that you might have heard about. They were not as dramatic as they were made to seem, but it did shorten the time that I was able to spend in Almaty. My activities in Almaty reinforced the two-fold message that women and NGOs are important components in building a civil society. I was able to take my entire schedule and compress it and here I am being greeted by some of the most beautiful people I've ever seen, as I traveled through this region of the world. And, I hope that you will see the way that traditions and culture in these countries coexist with so much that is happening, today.

My first stop in Almaty was a meeting with youth leaders who are involved in a democracy-building project through peer education, leadership training and political participation. One of the great challenges in Kazakhstan, like others of the countries in this region, are helping people to understand what it means to be a citizen. One young man told me that before he worked with this group he didn't really know what that meant. Now he can see what he as an individual can do. Because teachers and schools play an indispensable role in transmitting knowledge and values, which are, after all, the currency of democracy, I was very pleased to announce a new partnership between the governments of Kazakhstan and the United States to recognize outstanding teachers of English and American studies from around Kazakhstan. Award recipients will travel to the U.S. to learn about the U.S. educational system and American educators will travel to Kazakhstan to learn more about this important and very strategically placed county.

After my visit with the young people, I was able to go to the Central Museum, and was

able to see first hand how this country is preserving its cultural heritage. During the turmoil of this century, Kazakhstan's culture was somehow kept alive in all of its richness and diversity. Here I am inside of a yurt and I'm being shown a wolf skin and a whip that I was informed every well-dressed man in Kazakhstan used to wear. I was given one to give to my husband and I can tell you that he has certainly enjoyed having it around the last several weeks. (Laughter) I was also privileged to hear some musicians and performers who sang and played traditional instruments. I always try to incorporate into my visits some cultural event that demonstrates the historic culture or the current artistic culture because I believe it is very important. I think one of the great gifts that we all can give each other around the world is recognition and respect for our respective cultures.

I also helped to inaugurate the Women's Wellness Center, the result of a partnership between USAID, the American International Health Alliance, the Tucson Medical Center in Arizona, and their counterparts physicians, nurses, and others in Almaty. This center focusses on education, screening and prevention. It will help the women of Almaty safeguard themselves against sexually transmitted diseases, provide critical screening for cervical and breast cancer, provide pre-natal and counseling services for women. And I must say I'm very pleased to learn that because of the wide range of family planning services made available through this partnership there has been a reduction since 1992, when US AID began working here, of 25 % in the high rate of abortion and I think it is very important that we recognize how working across the lines that provide opportunities for physicians, nurses and others to cooperate, we can make a real impact on the lives of people. This Wellness Center means better health, not only for the women who are served, but for their children and their communities. And as we heard earlier from the Secretary, the U.S. Government's Operation Provide Hope was responsible for an airlift of medical supplies that went to this center and others in Kazakhstan.

In Kazakhstan, I also was able to address a gathering of women from throughout Central Asia, who are the "vital voices" of democracy. I saw how such gatherings, co-sponsored by the United States Information Agency and a local NGO, can play a catalytic role in empowering NGOs. And I was pleased to announce a new U.S. partnership for an upcoming conference in Moscow on family violence. That is an issue that is getting more attention around the world and is one that is very important in terms of giving women an opportunity to lead full and healthy lives. Democracy without the full participation of women is a contradiction in terms and that is becoming more obvious throughout the world. As I said in my address to this Conference:

We in the U.S. understand that the transition from communism to free markets and democracy has not been painless for women here or around the world, and that it would be unrealistic to pretend otherwise. They are often the first to lose their jobs and the last to get new ones. Too many are barred by law, by tradition, or by ignorance from exercising their rights, trapped in an endless cycle of poverty, unable to get access to education and credit. Too many women are overwhelmed by the stresses they have in their lives, as they try to do more and more with fewer and fewer hours. And too many live in fear of violence, including violence at the hands of family members.

This must change. Yet, while the oppressive structures of communism have been torn down, the political, judicial and economic organizations that protect women's rights in a democracy are just now being constructed. That's why bringing women together, as this conference did, is an important part of building lines of communication and networks among women in the public sector and the private sector and particularly increasing NGO activity on behalf of women's causes and interests.

I was delighted to have an opportunity to meet with President Nazarbayev and to have a chance to discuss with him some of his aspirations for the country and to convey the warm greetings of my husband. He was to meet with my husband not long after I had my opportunity to visit Kazakhstan. In my meeting with President Nazarbayev, we discussed a variety of issues and I raised with him a number of those matters that I would be talking about throughout the remainder of my trip, including the role and importance of NGO's and the role and importance of women. This would constitute the first of three meetings I had on one day with Presidents of Central Asian countries, so it was a very active day since it had to be telescoped into a much shorter period because of my airplane trouble. But I certainly hope that more Americans will have an opportunity to visit this important and very interesting country.

KYRGYZSTAN

From Kazakhstan, I went to Kyrgyzstan and again was greeted by tradition - women wearing traditional clothes - and giving me an opportunity to engage in the breaking of bread and the dipping in salt that is the traditional welcome. I also was greeted by a large group of children who had come to the airport in part to greet me but also to support an effort that the United States government has engaged in to provide supplies through Operation Provide Hope. I happened to arrive at the airport at the time of an airlift and was able to thank everyone concerned, both our government and from the United States, as well as Kyrgyzstan.

The airlift brought more than \$2 million in pharmaceuticals for hospitals in Bishkek and Osh, as well as clothing for children in those communities. In the audience at the event were Peace Corps volunteers stationed in Kyrgyzstan who would deliver the supplies, as well as representatives of U.S. NGOs like CitiHope. Mrs. Akayev, the First Lady of Kyrgyzstan, welcomed me at the airport and in her remarks underscored the importance of the airlift and expressed her country's gratitude to the American people.

I also met with representatives of NGOs working in Kyrgyzstan and thanked them for the important work they were doing.

I drove from the airport to a village outside Bishkek, where I visited an open-air market run by local shopkeepers. Most of the merchants were women who had been the recipients of

micro-credit from the Village Bank and Finca International (which is funded in part by a grant from USAID). I absolutely loved my time at this market. I met with several representatives of village groups who had received loans and I heard first-hand about the changes in the lives of these women. One woman, who had been a teacher, was supplementing her income through micro-credit.

The micro-credit lending system has worked successfully in Kyrgyzstan where over 600 "Village Banks" have lent over \$2 million since 1994, with a repayment rate of 98%. Now that would be the envy of any commercial bank! Here I am talking with some of the women who have received loans from this micro-enterprise effort, and it reinforced what I have seen around the world. This is a very cost-effective, smart way to assist people, particularly women, in creating their own small businesses and thereby adding to the incomes of families and communities, alleviating poverty. Microcredit helps to create small businesses and economic reform. I spent time visiting with a lot of the people, many of whom, like this woman, were older and talking through interpreters about what their experience had been. I was able to report my experience when I met with President Akayev.

I was very pleased in my meeting with the President to learn from him about the many women who hold important positions in his government and in various other sectors in this society. Key women include the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Labor and Social Welfare, and the head of the Constitutional Court. At a private lunch that followed, the President talked about the challenges facing his country, given its geography and the economic transition and about the importance of cooperating with the United States and other countries in order to develop his society. I must say I was quite impressed with his young son who was at the lunch, Ilum, who told me he spends most of his time on the Internet talking with people all over the world and has a special friendship with a young person in Hawaii. It struck me how much the world has changed, certainly since I was his age, and even within the last ten years. The change which is occurring and puts a young man in Kyrgyzstan in instantaneous touch with a young person in Hawaii gives us great opportunities if we're able to take advantage of them.

I next went to inaugurate the American University in Kyrgyzstan and was pleased to meet John Clark, an American who serves as an associate dean of the university. Because education is central to building civil society, to the health of democracy and for the success of a country's economy, I participated in a ceremony with the President at the Kyrgyz-American University. The Soros Foundation and the U.S. government, through USIA, have supported this project. Prior to my participation, there were concerns raised that the independence of the University was being compromised by the government. In my remarks I stressed the importance of a truly independent university and was very pleased that the government issued a decree that the university is an independent institution. It is essential that all of these institutions of higher learning in countries such as Kyrgyzstan be given the maximum amount of independence and freedom because, as we know, certainly information now cannot be kept out by any barriers. It will flow across any national boundary.

And in my remarks I strongly endorsed the role of the Open Society Institute in assisting, in advocating for democracy in Kyrgyzstan and throughout the world because it is our hope that this university can grow into a place that nourishes the bedrock values of free thought and expression, respect for human rights, support of strong and independent community institutions, and opportunity for all citizens.

I was very impressed by the students whom I met. They were lively, they were very well-informed and I came away with an extremely positive impression of what is happening in Kyrgyzstan and the opportunities that are there for young people if the course is stayed for democracy and free markets. They certainly have the talent in the people whom I met to make the most of every opportunity given them.

As a result of our visit, the government of Kyrgyzstan issued a decree that the Kyrgyz-American University is now an independent institution.

UZBEKISTAN

From Kyrgyzstan, I went on to Uzbekistan and it was the last of the three Central Asian countries that I would visit during my trip. I was very pleased that I was able to visit the capital of Tashkent, as well as Bukhara and Samarkand, that serve as cultural capitals of the country.

In Tashkent, I had the third of my meetings with Central Asian leaders on the same day, this time with President Karimov. He stressed how much Uzbekistan appreciated U.S. interest in their country and how important it is that we have a very strong presence and relationship. Uzbekistan has a unique position as it straddles the ancient Silk Road, and confronts the challenge of preserving its rich cultural and religious heritage, as well as building a new democracy.

During my visit, I sought to highlight the importance of programs between the governments of our two countries, and between the peoples of our two countries. I met with a group of professional and business women in Tashkent to learn about what they were doing in their private businesses. They were creating small businesses through the NGOs with which they worked.

One woman I met was the President of the Women's Resource Center, which provides legal support and educates women on their rights. Her organization has received grant support from USAID through the Counterpart Consortium and the Eurasia Foundation. She told me something that I thought summed up much of what I saw happening as I traveled. She said, "I've learned that the more active you are as a citizen, the more empowered you will be; and the country will be better off as well."

I was also privileged to help inaugurate, with Mrs. Karimova, the Women's Wellness Center in Tashkent. This is another one of these hospital partnerships that I have tried to highlight throughout the NIS region. This one is a partnership between the Tashkent Medical Institute and the University of Illinois at Chicago. It is supported by the American International Health Alliance and US AID. It is focusing on neonatology and perinatal medicine as well as education and hospital management. I was pleased that I had been able to participate a few months previous with those who were launching the 500th American humanitarian airlift to the NIS. That airlift brought \$22 million in supplies to Uzbekistan, of which \$2 million went to the Tashkent Medical Institute.

In my travels I have met many doctors and nurses at various hospitals throughout Russia and the Ukraine and here in Uzbekistan who are extremely dedicated, very well-educated, but do not at the moment have the resources to do the job that they know they should be doing. Yet they are very able to be full partners in these partnerships because there are a lot of things that they know about which they are able to share with their counterparts so I am a very big supporter of these hospital partnerships and wish we could do even more of them because I have seen first-hand what difference they make. I was also given a chance to meet with a number of the people who came to the unveiling of this Women's Wellness Center and could see how much friendship and excitement there was about the relations between our two countries.

I next visited the University of World Economy and Diplomacy, where I participated in a discussion with students who had taken part in the Bradley High School Exchange Program. Again, just as I had been in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, I was very impressed by the young men and women whom I was able to meet and I was particularly impressed because so many of these young people were very well informed, they spoke excellent English, certainly better than my Uzbek, and I was very honored that they had translated my book into Uzbek. Of course I have no idea what the introduction said, but they assured me that there was a lot in the book about how we need to cooperate and help each other, which they've found very much in their own experience. I not only spoke with the students, but I was able to engage in a question and answer that I think could have gone on for the rest of the day. The articulate questions that these young people asked illustrated to me how confident they were and how important a program like the Bradley High School Exchange Program is in helping young people know more about our country, the United States, and to have a chance to live here and study here so that they bring back to their own countries some first-hand information.

I went from Tashkent to Bukhara, and I met with a group of high school students. They had Uzbek, and Tajik and Russian backgrounds and they attend a school where Peace Corps volunteers are working. Like the Bradley Scholars, these young people spoke excellent English, exhibited great confidence and asked me innumerable questions, sometimes falling over each other to ask questions about the United States, about young people in the United States. Again I was extremely impressed and told the young people that I visit classrooms all over the world and had rarely seen better-prepared, brighter, more articulate students than I did in my visit to the

countries of central Asia.

I was also very privileged to be able to visit some of the extraordinary sights that Bukhara holds for the world. Bukhara celebrated its 2,500th birthday last fall. It has been a major trading, cultural and educational center for much of its history. Today, it is a city of 300,000 inhabitants. With its ancient history and beautiful architecture, it is a natural focus for efforts to promote preservation of cultural heritage.

The Kalyan Ensemble is a classic example of the medieval architecture famous throughout Central Asia. It was probably the tallest building in the world when it was completed in 1127. I was told that the minaret is sometimes called the "Tower of Death," because criminals were sometimes hurled to their deaths from it. But it also was a light for those caravans that were on the Silk Road to see, to find their way to Bukhara.

Mrs. Karimov and I had a wonderful time with their daughter visiting and seeing some of these sights, including going into the mosque and meeting the mullah who was there and seeing one of the most beautiful sights that I've seen anywhere in the world. There is this ancient mulberry tree there which is thought to be older than a thousand years. It has grown unmolested in the courtyard through all of those years and all of the changes. And I was able to talk to the mullah about his hopes for cooperation and friendship among people of all religious faiths throughout the world.

I was also happy to visit some of the old cities, the places along the Silk Road where vendors would bring their wares hundreds and hundreds of years ago. You could almost feel the history as you walked the streets, as you talked to some of the merchants who had for generations been making and selling some of the same crafts and objects that I saw here when I visited. I think it's also very significant that under the government of Uzbekistan there has been an emphasis on religious freedom and the next day I was able to visit a very old synagogue. The Jewish synagogue in Bukhara is home to the world's oldest Jewish community outside the Middle East. The rabbi told me specifically that this government and President Karmiov had restored religious freedom and encouraged religious and cultural tolerance. And I could tell from the sincerity of his remarks and his very strong conviction and talking about how different it was now to practice his religion now that there was a government that respected all religions. This is something that is making a very big difference in Uzbekistan and it is certainly an example for the entire world. I had to put in a close-up of the rabbi--I loved his hat and I loved his moustache and I also loved his eyes which twinkled a lot. But I saw so many people throughout my trips, through these countries, who had that spirit, that positive energy and optimism which you cannot fake, there is no way to pretend. And I was pleased that I could see first-hand what a difference democracy and freedom and tolerance are making.

Next, we flew to Samarkand. This is the crew of the C-130 which took me and my party. I don't know how many of you have been on a C-130 but it is quite an experience and inside,

since I'm always having pictures taken of me, I took some pictures of some of our guests for a memento of this trip we took together. I was so pleased that President Karimov was able to meet me when we landed in Samarkand, which, of course, is his home town and a place that he was particularly looking forward to showing personally to me. He joined me on a tour of some of the ancient monuments of Samarkand. Like Bukhara, Samarkand is also 2,500 years old and celebrated its anniversary last year. It was already a major urban center when it was conquered by Alexander the Great, it was a stop for virtually every caravan traveling the Silk Road. I think its important for Americans as we look toward the new century and will be celebrating the new millennium, to have a broader historic context. Visiting countries, such as the ones that I have visited, gives you some of that context which to put into perspective some of the issues that we're dealing with even today.

The first of the many cultural sites I visited in Samarkand were these Mausoleums, the Shah-I-Zindi Mausoleums, and it was originally part of an ancient city that pre-dated even what is now known as Samarkand. The Mausoleums were lined with sepulchers from Tamerlane's dynasty. I was pleased to learn how much emphasis the Uzbekistan government, particularly the President, is placing on tourism and cultural heritage because it is a story that certainly deserves to be told as widely as possible.

Registan Square is being renovated as a tourist attraction. The mosque and two madrasas that are there are beautifully preserved and work is continuing. Here you can see just a shot of the square. There are performers in the center of the square. They were young men who performed traditional music and dance for us and I was particularly impressed at their dedication and their enthusiasm about conveying their culture to visitors and I hope many Americans have a chance to visit Samarkand and Bukhara.

Again I was pleased to see how the President talked with these young men and asked them about their personal lives and experiences because I think that one of the great lessons that all democratic leaders have to learn and learn again: how important it is to stay in touch with one's own people. And in an authoritarian or totalitarian state it's not important to spend time with one's citizens and so there hasn't been a tradition, but in the countries which I visited I saw very clearly how democracy and the importance of the individual is changing the way leadership is conducted.

In visiting both Samarkand and Bukhara, I sought to impress upon our audiences there the importance of cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity and to underscore the importance of religious freedom.

When I was privileged to speak at Samarkand, I was introduced by the President, who spoke movingly as a Muslim about the importance of religious freedom and ethnic tolerance and he spoke about the lessons that this ancient place could teach all of us because for many many generations, people of different traditions lived peacefully together: Muslims, Christians, Jews

others following their faiths in the same neighborhoods. And that is something the President had experienced first-hand, growing up in Samarkand. And I wanted to emphasize how important it is to a democracy, and how important it is to the United States, that this tradition of respect and tolerance, which has stood the land of Uzbekistan for so many generations so well, has helped prepare them to face the challenges that lie ahead and that in fact this tradition of religious tolerance can be used to teach the world about diversity. For centuries the ancient Silk Road took the people of Central Asia to new worlds rich in commerce and culture and today the peoples of this region are traveling again down the road to freedom and democracy and I'm very pleased that the United States stands ready to be a partner in supporting important values like religious freedom.

We enjoyed a delicious lunch and then were able to share some more visiting together by going to Tamerlane's tomb and to see this absolutely magnificent architecture. Tamerlane, also known as Amir Timur (the "iron emir"), chose Samarkand as his capital and revived the city soon after it was destroyed by Genghiz Khan in 1220. He and his male heirs are buried in the crypt here at the tomb. It was a very moving experience because the architectural magnificence of what I saw in Bukhara and Samarkand may not be as well known as it should be in our country and I was very impressed at the efforts being made to preserve it.

Also impressive were the efforts that were being made to preserve the ancient crafts and arts which I saw when I visited the Artisans Development Center. The center is run by an Uzbek NGO which receives funding from USAID and technical assistance from an American NGO called Aid to Artisans. This center is helping to preserve the ancient crafts and arts of the people of Uzbekistan. The Center is also undergoing renovations with support from Mercy Corps International using funds from a U.S. Department of Agriculture's "Food for Progress" grant. It was exciting to meet the artisans because of their enthusiasm and again without any real prompting, several of the artisans talked about how important it was that the government was encouraging the revival of these ancient crafts, that there was an understanding of how important it was to preserve the past while moving into the future. I want to commend the government of Uzbekistan for making cultural heritage such a priority. I was sorry to leave Uzbekistan and sorry to leave Central Asia. I wished I had more time to visit much longer in all three of the countries and to meet more people first-hand. But I came away with a very positive impression and a hope that more Americans will get to know these countries and their neighbors and understand more of the history and potential for the future that they represent. I was, however, very excited because I was going on to Russia and I was looking forward to seeing Mrs. Yeltsin, who was going to be my guide on a visit to Yekaterinburg.

RUSSIA

I have become very fond of both President and Mrs. Yeltsin and have had a lot of enjoyable times with both of them. Mrs. Yeltsin and I have enjoyed visits both in the United States and in Russia, as well as in other locations around the world.

I was particularly reminded how, when Mrs. Yeltsin accompanied President Yeltsin to the GA meeting in Denver this past summer, we took a train ride up into the beautiful Rocky Mountains and I don't think anybody on the train was more excited than Mrs. Yeltsin because some of the scenery she saw reminded her of her home in the Urals. So I told her that if I ever had a chance, I wanted to come to Yekaterinburg and have her show me this city where she and President Yeltsin were students and where they lived the greater part of their married lives.

We started with a visit to one of Mrs. Yeltsin's favorite charities and one of the very important facilities doing work with children with birth defects. Mrs. Yeltsin and I have spent a lot of time working with each other, helping each other on issues affecting children and their health. The Bonum Center provides rehabilitation programs for disabled children. It specializes in surgical reconstruction and therapy for children with congenital facial and palatal defects. Here we can see one of the babies with the baby's mother. There are many parents who are able, because of the very creative and far-sighted work of this center, to stay with their children while they undergo treatment, and the center also treats orphans.

In the six years since Yekaterinburg has been open to foreigners, the Bonum Center has established ties to U.S. charitable organizations, including the Frank Foundation and the "Face to Face" program sponsored by the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, which pays for American surgical teams to come to the Center and work with the excellent doctors and nurses who staff the Center. Mrs. Yeltsin and I were both very moved by the children we met, many who are in these pictures have had their surgery and rehabilitation and have a much brighter future because of this wonderful facility and what it's been able to do for children.

I was then privileged to go to a luncheon hosted by Governor Russell at his beautiful renovated residence. As I traveled through the city, Mrs. Yeltsin eagerly pointed out places where she and President Yeltsin used to go to the theater, even an apartment they lived in at one time. And you could just see how much joy she took in remembering their time as a young married couple, starting their lives together.

I was especially pleased that the major public event I participated in was a "town meeting" sponsored by the Urals Women's Association at the Urals Polytechnic University. We were able to meet with several hundred representatives of women's groups, NGOs, businesses, university students and faculty members. And I was extremely impressed that Mrs. Yeltsin joined me on the podium, where she was entertaining questions and making comments as people in the audience asked her about various events going on in the country. She was very impressive and not only did she answer the questions that were directed at her, she spoke individually to women, she stayed after the session was over to discuss various matters that were brought up to her. I don't think that she could have done any better if she'd been doing this all of her life. She told me that she's not accustomed to speaking in public but I told her that she is certainly very well equipped to do so and made a very positive impression on behalf of her husband and on

behalf of what his government is attempting to do.

Both of us stressed the importance of women and women's roles in building a strong democracy and talked about how difficult the challenges are that women face in Russia and in many countries around the world. And I stressed how important women's organizations are in helping women achieve the goals that they set for themselves, in bringing women together and in giving them the resources they need to advance in the business world or the academic world or any particular sector of society.

To that end, I announced that US AID will be increasing funds to support NGOs that are combating domestic violence. In addition, a joint U.S.-Russian conference will be convened sometime in 1998 to share models about how our countries can best work together to confront an issue like domestic violence. I was very moved by the remarks of a number of women about how they wished we had more exchanges among women and women's groups in the United States and that we could learn from each other. Many of the women that I met were doing work that was very creative and overcoming lots of obstacles and they were looking for more support and I hope we're able to provide that. One woman, who represented the Methodist Church, wanted to know of ways that churches could be more effectively engaged to help disadvantaged families now that the state is no longer providing all sorts of social safety net resources. Just as in our country with the end of welfare as we have known it, churches, private citizens, other organizations are going to have to be working with governments to make sure that disadvantaged people get the help that they need.

Now as I was walking down the corridor, I saw this picture and I have to say that I thought it was Vice President Gore (laughter). I had a picture of it taken and I brought it back to the Vice President and of course it's a distinguished former faculty member and leader of the university, but I must say that it struck me that the Vice President has certainly gotten around more than I thought. (laughter.)

That evening, Mrs. Yeltsin and I went to the opening performance of the Ural Academic Philharmonic Orchestra. The evening marked the re-opening of the newly renovated interior of one of the city's premiere cultural institutions. I was pleased to learn that the Philharmonic in Yekaterinburg has sent to the United States some representatives to learn how orchestras and other cultural institutions in Russia can fund themselves now that they cannot count wholly on government assistance. They are now doing a lot of what, I think, predicts a very successful future for them. They are selling season tickets, they are providing all kinds of opportunities for different audiences to come and I was pleased to learn that these close ties between our two countries and this orchestra were very much the work of Sarah Caldwell, who now serves as Artistic Director and Conductor of the Boston Opera Company but has spent a great deal of time in Yekaterinburg over the last several years. This is another area where I think American not-for-profit institutions, NGOs, and cultural institutions can work closely with their counterparts in Russia and elsewhere just to convey the result of our experience of how to keep and build audiences without government support.

We also met with representatives of the American-Russian Youth Orchestra. Mrs. Yeltsin and I have served as honorary co-chairs for several years and I was very pleased at the progress that has been made.

We ended the evening with a private dinner with Mrs. Yeltsin, the Governor and members of our delegation. It was a very warm dinner with several rounds of toasts and candid conversations. I think everyone had a fabulous personal time. I felt that, as I told my husband later, I had enjoyed drinking a lot of vodka for our relationships between our countries but I came away even more impressed with Mrs. Yeltsin and the others I had met during my short stay there and the work that is going on in cities outside of Moscow to build economic opportunity and to create other kinds of changes that are so necessary.

From there I flew to Novosibirsk and we took these pictures from the plane because I was very struck, even from the air, at the beauty, the kind of eerie beauty of Siberia. I wanted to visit Siberia because I wanted to send a strong signal on behalf of the President and our country about the importance of this region in building Russia's democracy and new economy. And how vast it is, how extraordinary the physical landscape is, and as I quickly learned upon landing, how warm and hospitable the people are, as well.

I drove from the airport to visit Akademgorodok, one of the premiere universities in Russia. It had been a closed university for most of the history of the Soviet Union but now it is a place where there are many very well-trained intellectuals, scientists, and others who are looking for new ways to make a contribution in this new economy and democracy.

My first stop and a personal highlight of the trip for me was a visit to the Archeology and Ethnography Museum in Novosibirsk. This is at the university and I wanted to see the preserved bodies and clothes of a prehistoric mummified Siberian couple. I had read about this discovery in National Geographic and I knew that the find was extraordinary because the climate in Siberia in Altay, south of where we were, had preserved the bodies as you can see. You could still see the decorative tattoos that the man and the woman had on their bodies and also preserved their clothes. So you could actually see the fur coats and the boots that they were wearing. Again it was a reminder of how long and deep and rich the civilization in this part of the world is. It's something that we need to remind ourselves of as we look at what is happening in the world today and have some historic context into which to put current events. I immediately was embraced by a large crowd of people who were outside the museum. I had a chance to talk with a number of them. I think partly because they are in a university academic setting many of the people with whom I spoke had traveled outside the country even in Soviet times and were quite familiar with much of what was going on around the world.

In my talk, which was at the university, I got a briefing about the university, I highlighted the fact that while an academic institution such as this one had previously focused on winning

the Cold War, now our institutions of higher learning, in both of our countries, should be working side by side to use science, technology and education in the service of freedom, prosperity and democracy. I knew from my briefing for this trip that the transition had been very difficult for many in this academic complex. Scientists and researchers with expertise and years of education had earned status and security. They now faced uncertain futures and they were trying to decide how to use those skills that they had acquired. I told them that we faced some of the same problems in our own country with our education system, but that given the extraordinary brain power that was amassed in such an institution there was a great opportunity to make a transition from a Cold War academic environment to a new global one. And I was very confident that it was people like the scientists and researchers and students in the audience that I met who would help ensure that Russia remained a leader in intellectual and academic pursuits.

One of the great opportunities that I had was to meet personally with some of the members of this community, not only in conversation before and after the speech, but by visiting the home of a family, three generations, who represented very clearly some of the challenges that Russians are facing as they make this transition. The grandfather was employed for his entire working life as an applied mathematician -- respected for his academic achievement -- his wife was a research librarian. They had traveled throughout the former Soviet Union. And they were very well acquainted with what was happening with the world despite they're being in a closed city. He had heard my speech at the University, in which I had said that many surveys of public opinion showed that the majority of Russians over the age of 65 think that things had gotten worse over the past year, while younger people think that they have gotten better. He said that he certainly understood those findings. He felt that his life was now less predictable and his wife added that educational and intellectual achievement are no longer valued, as they used to be. She said something very striking, she said, "everyone is trying to sell something and only a few are buying."

Yet their daughters, both of whom are very fluent in English and their son-in-law and their two grandchildren are very optimistic about the future. When I talked with the younger members of the family, they told me about their visits to Europe and the United States in flawless English. They were anticipating many opportunities not only for themselves, but for their children. While the grandfather seemed somewhat pessimistic about present conditions particularly because, as he said, crime was on the rise, and his bicycle had been stolen, something which has never, ever happened before. His daughters and son-in-law reminded him that they didn't have to stand in line for butter any more. In that exchange with this one family, I saw many of the pressures and tensions at work in any kind of transition period as Russia is undergoing. I came away, again, extremely impressed with the thoughtfulness and the attitudes of the entire family. They are people with very strong intellectual backgrounds who understand what this transition requires. And I think it is imperative that the United States and Americans individually continue to support democratic change and a free market economy because it is certainly people like this family who will prosper and lead the way because of their extraordinary intellectual capacity if given the opportunity to do so.

My last meeting in Novosibirsk was with the Governor Mukha and he explained to me about his efforts to enhance the lives of young people in Novosibirsk. And he was particularly articulate about his efforts to give young performers broader training and exposure. Some of the extraordinary young people performed for me. Their success is the result of some very concentrated effort in Novosibirsk to help young people with talent be successful so that the cultural traditions that used to be state supported continue because there are so many talented people.

As I departed from Siberia although I was extraordinarily impressed by the birch forests and the beautiful physical surroundings and impressed by the adults whom I met at the university and in whose home I visited, the lasting images I take with me are of the children. Because after all the changes that Russia is going through and the efforts that are being undertaken by President Yeltsin and his government, they are really aimed at providing greater opportunities to young people like this young girl and this very attractive young boy who was looking out the window as our car left. And time and time again, I find it useful as I travel and even here as I travel around my own country to ask myself about any decision that is being contemplated by a government or a business or any adult institution, will this decision help enhance the opportunities for children? Will it give a young boy like this the chance to go as far as his talent and motivation can take him? And if we ask that question, I think, about a lot of decisions facing us, we will be making the right decision. And I came away again from this trip to Russia very encouraged and impressed by the energy and the good nature and the optimism and the intelligence of the people whom I was privileged to meet.

UKRAINE

I went from Russia to Ukraine. My last stop was the city of L'viv in the western region of Ukraine. And that is a region that many Ukrainian Americans trace their roots to. And my schedule was designed to highlight America's commitment to Ukraine's democratic transformation as well as our commitment to grassroots NGO development especially among women and to helping meet emergency health care needs and to stress again the importance of religious tolerance. Mrs. Kuchma accompanied me for most of my visit and here we are at my first stop which was, appropriately, the monument to Shevchenko, known as the "Bard of Ukraine." Born a serf, and later exiled to St. Petersburg, his works glorified Ukrainian history. During the Soviet period, no monuments to him were allowed, although one was built in Washington, DC, in 1964. Following Ukraine's independence, a statue of Lenin was removed to make way for this magnificent monument. And standing behind the statue is the "Ukrainian Wave," which was added several years later to depict Ukraine's historic figures and events.

We went from that very moving monument to a hospital where, again, I was able to highlight one of the important partnerships that work so well. At the Neonatal Resuscitation Center I was able to show the critical difference that the US AID hospital

partnership program is making. In this case, the partnership is with the Henry Ford Health Center in Detroit. Since the partnership began, infant mortality has been reduced by 30%. This is an effective program. I wish I could tell every American about how effective so many of our aid programs are and what a difference they are making. I was pleased to learn that the Ministry of Health is working with US AID, AIHA and the Henry Ford Health Center to establish centers like this one throughout Ukraine. Such efforts are critical, as the doctors and nurses and hospital administrators explained in the discussion we had because there has been a serious deterioration of the health care system.

I was particularly moved by one mother who spoke about how her child's life had been saved because of the emergency services now available at this hospital. I was also pleased that our government intervened through Operation Provide Hope, working with the U.S.-based Children of Chernobyl Relief Fund and others, to make possible an airlift of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies, including two ambulances equipped with neonatal resuscitation equipment.

I also visited the historic Gilad Synagogue and was impressed with the attitude of the Ukrainian government and people who are supporting a very strong commitment to religious freedom. And after decades of hardship, the Jewish community in L'viv opened a Jewish school that now serves almost 200 children. The Nazis had turned this synagogue into a horse stable and left a signature of bullet holes -- still visible -- in the ceiling of the beautiful building. The Soviets had used it as a warehouse. Today, people can once again pray and worship freely.

And in my remarks I again stressed how important it is in a democracy is to have freedom of religion and respect for people of different religious faiths. I'm very impressed at the attitude of the Ukrainian government and the Ukrainian people in supporting such a strong commitment to religious freedom. We can see the enthusiastic faces of the children who are learning and studying here -- that it is making a difference. The Rabbi so profoundly said, during my visit, that the children are becoming both Jewish and Ukrainian, with great pride.

I then went to visit the Memorial Honoring Victims of Communist Repression, I spoke to thousands of people gathered and told them that in their fight for freedom and democracy, the American people would stand by them. I told them:

Even in the face of unspeakable horrors, the people of Ukraine -- and others living under Soviet domination -- did not give up. Instead you found the best shield against communist oppression. You started down the road to democracy, including free and fair elections. But, the journey is far from over. Because democracy does not end with a constitution or a right to vote. As we have learned in my country, democracy is a never-ending struggle that we must grapple with every day...But, if we want democracy and freedom to thrive, then we must build

a civil society where democratic values live in our hearts and minds, where people stand up for what's right, and where the rule of law, not the rule of crime and corruption, prevails.

Democracy will thrive only if we use our ethnic diversity as a force not to pull us apart, but rather to bring us together -- as you have done in Ukraine. It will thrive if women are full participants in every aspect of society...and if the people of Ukraine continue to forge an alliance of values with the democratic community of nations.

The crowd, which was very large standing in a cold rain, included many children and many older people. I was particularly impressed by the young mayor who publicly praised the work of US AID in Ukraine and said that L'viv is where it is today due to the help of US AID. After I finished speaking, the crowd erupted into spontaneous singing of "May you have a long life" -- which is usually reserved for family and close friends. And I felt the extraordinary warmth and positive feelings that the people have toward the United States which I was privileged to represent on that occasion. And it reminded me of my many Ukrainian-American friends and the stories they have told me for years about how they never lost faith that Ukraine would be free.

Mrs. Kuchma hosted a lovely lunch for me at our hotel. And I discovered over lunch that Mrs. Kuchma and my husband share a love of jazz. I have since sent her some of his and her favorite CD's. I think that jazz may be the most universal language of all.

After lunch, we went to the Icon Restoration Center, founded in 1984. It is responsible for research, restoration and preservation of these ancient and beautiful works of fine art and wooden sculpture. The staff at the Center has restored and saved hundreds of works.

And I must say that the Director of the Center was even brave enough to allow Mrs. Kuchma and me to attempt a little bit of restoration ourselves.

I also visited St. George's Cathedral -- the seat of Ukrainian Catholicism. From 1945-1989, in Soviet Ukraine, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church was forced underground and most of its Bishops were imprisoned. One of its most famous exiled leaders, Metropolitan Slipyj, is buried in the crypt and I was able to go and visit the crypt and then to see first-hand the beautiful restoration. Probably the most moving moment in the church was meeting some of the survivors of the Underground Church, priests and nuns who had kept faith alive and who are still by their presence and their example reminding not only but all people about the importance of religious freedom.

After decades of being driven underground, the Church today is a vibrant community which houses a special ministry to people with disabilities who were once relegated to the outskirts of society. The Bishop told me that the reference in my speech to the important role

that women must play in all spheres of Ukrainian society was critical to the future of the country and he thanked me because so much of the work, whether it is promoting religious freedom or caring for people with disabilities, is being done by women who deserve the recognition and support of their society. And I certainly was impressed at what I saw in the cathedral and the kind of commitment to inclusiveness that leaves no citizen out of society that programs such as this represent.

My final appearance was a speech to a capacity crowd in the absolutely beautiful L'viv Opera House. I was introduced in Ukrainian by my Chief of Staff. Now many of you know Melanne Starinshak Verveer and what you may not know is that she went to a Ukrainian school, she often spoke Ukrainian growing up, she sang the Ukrainian national anthem of freedom every morning in school. During the state visit of President and Mrs. Kuchma, I introduced Melanne and my husband immediately interceded because of course he's known Melanne from Georgetown far longer than I have. And he told President Kuchma that even when he knew Melanne as a student she told him "Ukraine will be free." And so this was for me a special opportunity to see my friend and Chief of Staff returning to a place her grandparents had come from and introducing me to this audience. Her appearance provided Ukraine with a tangible symbol of the many contributions of Ukrainian-Americans to American society, as well as the continuing efforts of Ukrainian-Americans to help in Ukraine's democratic transition. The theme of my speech was the voices of women and young people, the voices of people throughout Ukraine that needed to be heard because they were speaking the new language of freedom and democracy. I spoke particularly about the importance of building a civil society:

Neither the rule of law nor the free market can be sustained in isolation. If we do not have democracy, we cannot rest. If we do not have a free market, we cannot rest. And if we do not have the space between what the market does and what the government should not do -- the civil society -- we cannot rest. All are indispensable to the blessings of liberty and prosperity.

In this space resides family and community life, religious traditions, and participation in voluntary associations. Democracy depends on individuals truly believing that they have a role to play in the life of their country. It depends on people choosing -- not being compelled to -- but choosing to participate. And it depends on seeing to it that these habits of the heart are passed from one generation to the next.

I want to make a particular comment about women and women's roles, because:

This is a concern all over the world, but it has a particular sharpness here. For the legacy of communism has placed special strains on women. In the old state structures, too many women are the first to lose their jobs and the last to get new ones. Too many women are prevented from getting proper

health care and from doing what they know they need to do on behalf of their families. Too many women often live in fear of violence at the hands of family members.

A country's progress depends on the progress of women.

I particularly noted that it is a violation of human rights when women are trafficked and I announced that the United States Government, in cooperation with the European Union, will be working with NGOs in Ukraine to launch a new information campaign. We have seen many stories in the last few months about women being tricked into, sold into, in some way pushed into prostitution from Russia, Ukraine, and other NIS countries. In part because they are desperate, in part because they are being abused by people who are taking advantage of them. And we want to inform law enforcement, consular officers and international organizations to join together to put a stop to this crime against humanity. I was very pleased that I was able to meet with some of the members of the audience after the speech at the opera house and that I was then able to see the crowd that was waiting outside before I left. This was the end of a very exciting and personally satisfying trip for me.

We found that just as our trip had begun, it ended with plane trouble because we had to de-ice the plane. But that did not in any way dampen the high spirits that we were bringing back to the United States. Despite our airplane logistical mishaps, I was struck during my trip with the sense of renewal and transformation throughout the region. This renewal cannot be measured by statistics. But there is a new generation of reform-minded leaders coming to power. There is a new awareness among citizens about what they have at stake in creating democracy and free markets.

To be sure, the region faces formidable challenges. Many of these democracies are fragile. Yet, I believe there is far more cause for hope than despair. And the credit goes to the people of these countries who have endured so much and come so far. And the United States wants to be a partner with these new democracies to ensure their peace and prosperity into the 21st century. America has a stake in their success. Their hope is ours, too. Based on what I saw and heard in my very short visit, hope is alive and well and the United States should do all that we can to nurture it and help it grow in the soils of these very impressive, historic countries. Thank you very much.