

*Russian Parliament*

Q. Given the composition of the new Parliament in Russia, do you believe that you will have some problem having the Parliament to ratify our agreement with some Western partners—maybe foreign policies will get tougher as approved by the Parliament? Do you believe that you as the President of this country are in some difficulty in dealing with your foreign partners?

*President Yeltsin.* I don't believe that this is the sort of Parliament that we have. I believe our Parliament is smarter, more intellectual, more experienced. The upper Chamber of the Parliament, I believe, will pursue policies shared by the President and by the Government, and state Duma, the lower Chamber, will get to that with time. They will realize that such major international agreements and treaties may not be delayed in terms of ratification; I mean agreements like the one we concluded on the destruction of chemical weapons and such like.

I don't believe they will do that. Otherwise they would show no respect for their own people. But I believe that there are Members of Parliament, and I mentioned that in my message, should be mindful of the fact that they are representatives of the people and the people told them how to behave in the Parliament. They should have a fine political sense. Of course, our Parliament is very young, but I'm still confident that the Parliament will proceed constructively.

Q. President Clinton, I wondered, what are your impressions after your firsthand experience here in Moscow? What is your assessment of the threat that the ultranationalist movement poses to the movement toward democracy?

*President Clinton.* Well, those who are in the Parliament are, after all, the product of democracy. And I think that there are two separate things here. I think we have to respect the democratic process. And in every democratic process, no one is satisfied with the outcome of all elections. I can testify to that. So in that sense, I don't think they present a threat to the democratic process.

Now, I think what is happening here is that Russia, which is and has been a very great country for a very long time, is doing what countries are required to do from time to time, they're having to redefine what greatness means, establish a vision for the future. And when times

are difficult, and the Russian people have been through some difficult times, there are those, always, in every age in time, who can generate some support by defining greatness in terms of the past. But in the end, the only people who really make it work are those who define greatness in terms of the future. And that's why I think the reform movement in the end will prevail. Because if you look at the nature of the global economy, if you look at the things that are happening that really move and change people's lives, I think history is on the side of the reformers.

And I also believe what will happen is—keep in mind you're going to have some interesting debates in this Duma. I wish I could—I enjoy watching the news every night. It's nice to be in a place where some other President's having trouble with his Parliament instead of me. [Laughter] President Yeltsin made a valuable point here: When these issues begin to be debated and when people move from the level of campaign rhetoric, which is always highly abstract, to the real problems of real people, you also may see a new consensus developing. And the only thing I would say to all of the people who are in this newly elected Duma is that you have an enormous opportunity and a responsibility. You are the product of the first genuinely democratic, constitutionally provided Parliament in the history of your country, and you ought to be willing to just listen and learn and grow and deal with the issues.

I don't think the United States or anybody else should overreact to this. These folks are just getting started on what will be a great and exciting journey. And I think we ought to wish them well and see what happens.

*President Yeltsin.* Due to the protocol commitments we have to limit the time of our press conference. Just one more question on the Russian and U.S. side.

*Partnership For Peace and NATO*

Q. I would like to get a more specific sense of your view, Mr. Clinton and Boris Nikolayevich. I'm talking about prospective admission of other states to NATO, and I am referring to states there on the borders of Russia. Do you believe that Russia will join NATO sometime in the future and on what conditions?

*President Yeltsin.* I believe that the initiative displayed by U.S. President Bill Clinton and by some European politicians, I mean in terms of