

and take care of our problems within our borders.

*Q.* I'm a journalist. Mr. Clinton, what would you like the historians to say about you once you finish your tenure as President?

*The President.* I would like them to say that I restored a sense of hope and optimism to my country, that I strengthened the economy and made it possible for my people to lead the world economically into the 21st century, and that I restored the sense of community in America, that we came back together as a people even though we are very diverse now. And I would like it to be said that I helped to lead the world to more peaceful cooperation, into a future very different from the bloody and divided past of the 20th century.

*Q.* I'm a journalist also. Mr. President. If at a dinner table, let's say, President Yeltsin would ask you to switch places with him, would you make such a risk? Would you risk doing that?

*The President.* No, I like the job I have. [*Laughter*] And I wouldn't do it because I'm just as proud to be an American as he is to be a Russian. But if I asked him to switch places with me, he wouldn't do it either.

You know, I'll tell you, the one thing I believe about President Yeltsin, he's just like me. We make mistakes, and we're not perfect, and we don't have all the answers. But I'll tell you one thing about him, he at least gets up every day and tries to make a difference. He is trying to do something. The world is full of politicians who in times of change only worry about maintaining their popularity instead of making decisions. At least he is trying to make decisions and move generally in the right historical direction.

So if you disagree with him, you should get in here and contribute to this great democratic debate and try and help develop better policies. But it is a good thing, I think, that you have a President who is willing to wade into the tides of history and make decisions.

*Q.* You've been talking about the future of our nation, that we must look into another future, but the nearest future is 2 years for the new Presidential elections. And Mr. Yeltsin with whom you personally indicate—[*inaudible*]—Russian democracy, will not run for reelection because he leaves. And we can see at the moment he leaves is the moment democracy leaves. So it means in 2 years we'll have a different President. He could be either a Communist or

a nationalist. Is America ready or getting ready to deal with this situation? And again, in concern with this, why are not you willing to give protections to the nations who seek it? For instance, the Baltic nation?

Thank you.

*The President.* Wait, stand up. First of all, one of the things you've learned now that you have these elections all the time is that 2 years is an eternity in a democracy. Just because there's nobody on the scene now doesn't mean there won't be somebody on the scene that none of you have ever heard of 2 years from now that a majority of the people will fall in love with and make President of the country. So you cannot assume that.

On the other hand, I would say this not only to the forces of reform but to any other blocs: One of the most important responsibilities of political parties in a democracy is to always be grooming new leaders and to never treat anyone, no matter how great he or she may be, as totally indispensable. So this is something that all of these groups will have to learn. You have to always be grooming new people for leadership. But I wouldn't assume that there would be no future leaders besides out of the other two blocs you mentioned.

Now, on the Baltics, we have not denied them the right to protection. In fact, we have invited them to be part of this Partnership For Peace. And in order to be part of it—and keep in mind, Russia has agreed to be part of it—they will participate in joint military planning, joint military operations. And as we do the exercises, the only way you can be part of it is if you promise to respect the territorial boundaries of all of the other countries that are part of this. So we are giving them a great deal of protection. It just means that they're not members of NATO right away.

The other NATO members will tell you that, to be part of NATO, you have to be in a position to assume certain responsibilities as well as just ask for the security guarantee. But there are significant increases in security just for being part of the Partnership For Peace.

Before we go to the screen again, to St. Petersburg, I would like to introduce the most important person in this audience to me, my wife, Hillary, who just came to Russia this morning. Stand up. [*Applause*] A very large number of the people I have met in the last 2 days, especially young women, have asked me about