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REINHOLD A. WILHELM & JACOBSON  
LITHO

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PRESERVATION

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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REMARKS OF THE FIRST LADY  
AT WOMEN'S LUNCHEON  
LATVIA

MRS. CLINTON: Well, let me first thank all of you for coming and for bringing to this table so much accomplishment in the arts and business and journalism and government and law, and for being willing to talk with me about your country and the partnership that America has had for so long with Latvia.

I first learned about Latvia and Estonia and Lithuania when I was in high school. I was fortunate to be part of a group of students studying history who focused on Europe and had a particular interest in the Baltic states.

And as part of that group, I was privileged to meet people who had been forced to leave Latvia and Lithuania and Estonia, and who had come to America, much as your parents or grandparents. And I was able as a young girl to talk with them about their countries and to learn about what they hoped for in the future for Latvia and the other Baltic states.

So I have vivid memories of those individuals whom I was able to meet and visit. And then I, like so many Americans, have followed with great hope and much interest what you have been doing in Latvia.

And my husband feels very fortunate to be the first American President to be able to visit, particularly now, as you are forwarding your country and reawakening all of the greatness that you referred to, both by women and men, for a new and even more vigorous Latvia in the future.

So although I do not know very much specifically about the history of women in Latvia, I do know a little about Latvian history, and I know a little about the role women have played in every country and the opportunities that

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exist for women today in Latvia or in America. And those opportunities are ones that I believe will benefit not only the individual woman but the nation of which she is a part.

So what I would hope we could discuss and I could learn more about are the opportunities and the challenges confronting women. Because as Ms. Johnson said, the women in this country have endured a great deal under occupation, historically, having to take care of families, raise children, take care of older relatives, and help make a living.

But even today, we have to balance those responsibilities. We do have the responsibility for our families and often for our friends, for knitting together our community, yet, at the same time, wanting to make a professional contribution and a patriotic one to the building of our country.

So that is one of the many reasons why I am personally so pleased to be here in Latvia and to have a chance to hear from and visit with all of you. And that is something I'm looking forward to.

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