

Speech, Novosibirsk, Russia

PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

---

For Immediate Release

November 16, 1997

REMARKS BY FIRST LADY  
AT AKADEMGORODOK

Novosibirsk, Russia

MRS. CLINTON: (IN PROGRESS) -- Vice Rector, for your introductory remarks. I am delighted to be here and to have this opportunity to speak to such a distinguished audience of educators, professors, students and other citizen leaders of Siberia. I have enjoyed my opportunity to be here, but my regret is that my visit will be far too short. I wish I could see for myself many of the changes and the exciting events that are occurring here; and so I will have to, I hope, return at some future date.

Because Siberia has been that part of Russia that is closest to my country, even when our people in the past stood far apart from each other, we shared this part of the world. Together, we are now celebrating our new proximity -- this time measured not only in geographical distance, but in shared values.

I have come to Russia on behalf of my husband, the President of the United States, and on behalf of the American people to reinforce the expanding ties of friendship and cooperation between our two countries.

I was with a group of people last evening, in Ekaterinberg, including Mrs. Yeltsin, and I told them how, when I first met my husband when we were both students at the Yale University Law School, one of the first stories I remember him telling me is how, as a student when he was studying in England at Oxford, he did not have enough money to go home for Christmas one year, but he did have enough money to buy a student ticket on the railroad and go into Russia.

And so he went to Moscow. And he had long hair and he was quite poor, but he told me with such great enthusiasm how he felt he had so much in common with the Russian people whom he met. When he told me that story, it was in the early 1970s and there were many who thought

our people had nothing in common. But my husband knew better then. And he talked about how we had so many interests and values that we didn't even know we shared. And now, we have an opportunity to build on that common ground for ourselves and our children.

In the last few days and in the last several years since I've been privileged to travel to Russia with my husband on official trips, I have witnessed firsthand the historic transformation that is occurring, and I have learned about how different regions of your country are making their own contributions in advancing democracy and in creating economic opportunity.

When this academic complex was first founded, bringing together a great university and an extraordinary academy of sciences, there were probably very few in either of our countries that thought we could bridge the gap that divided us, and particularly among our scientists, we know and can remember that our best scientific minds were focused on our competition, not on cooperation.

And yet, when I look now, it seems like that was another lifetime ago. I can remember very well the darker side of those years when, as a young child in school, I and my classmates would be practicing drills in case of a nuclear attack by hiding under our desks. We all prayed in my country and yours that such a moment would never occur. And by the grace of God, it didn't, because of the courage and wisdom of our leaders and our people.

Soldiers who were once prepared to go to war against each other now stand side by side, securing a lasting peace together in Bosnia. When I visited our American troops in Tuzla, Bosnia, I was so pleased to be able also to meet some of the Russian troops who were stationed with the Americans on the same base. Astronauts and cosmonauts who once raced each other into space now work together high above our earth. And students who were once taught to mistrust each other now send messages to each other over the Internet.

Clearly, we now live in a remarkable age of possibility. The light of peace and freedom is spreading across the globe. Democracy is alive on all the continents of our world. And scientific breakthroughs seem to be occurring at a break-neck pace. Just think about what we've seen in the last few years alone. We are rapidly mapping the human genome. We've discovered genes linked to diseases such as hereditary breast cancer. Technology developed to fight the Cold War is now being used to map the ocean floor, protect the environment and save lives.

Consider this. There is now more computer power in a Ford Taurus automobile than there was in Apollo 11 when Neil Armstrong took it to the moon. Cell phones, computers, fax machines, pagers -- once the stuff of fiction, are now becoming a staple of everyday life. And yet, while we can recount the extraordinary developments that have occurred in this age of possibility, we also know that it is a time of real challenge for individuals and for nations. As individuals, we face the changes in our everyday life. The older we are, the more difficult change seems to be, especially at the pace that it is occurring.

In our nations, mine and yours, we face challenges about how we will move with confidence into the next century. But what you have accomplished in Russia in just a few short

years is truly extraordinary. After seven decades of totalitarian communist rule, you threw off your past and decided with extraordinary courage to chart a new course.

The architecture of that new freedom and opportunity may not yet be complete, but the outlines are clear to see for anyone willing to look. I know that this time of transition, based on conversations that I've had with Russian friends, has not been easy for any sector of society. And I assume that here in Siberia and here at this academic complex it has posed great difficulty for many.

Scientists and researchers whose expertise and years of education once earned them status and security, now face uncertain futures. The questions that I'm sure are being asked within these halls include whether or not the skills that were acquired in the past will sustain a life and a profession tomorrow.

We see the same questions being asked in our education systems, again in my country as well as yours. In my country, we are struggling with how we try to provide high education opportunities to all of our students, regardless of their background, regardless of how well or poorly their own family was educated, how we set high standards and then hold our young people to achieve them.

Here, I would imagine you also are asking how to update textbooks and modernize classrooms for the Information Age, how to ensure that teachers receive the pay and the respect in society they deserve, how to build up a system of both public and private education that will preserve what was beneficial about the old way, even as it educates young people to lead and live in a democracy.

The fact is that for nearly half a century, science, technology and education were used in both of our countries to fight the Cold War. Today, we have an unparalleled opportunity to put them in service of freedom, prosperity and democracy. Your education system has long been the envy of many of us elsewhere in the world. Your literacy rate, your scientific and research capacity have served as a model. I remember very well when Sputnik went up and I was in elementary school. All of my teachers told me I had to study even harder. They made me do mathematics that I was not very interested in. I think I secretly blamed Russian scientists for having to study so much Algebra.

But today, this heritage can enable you to surpass so many other societies, to leapfrog over developments that others have had to do incrementally. The rich depth of scientific capacity present right here gives you advantages that few other countries can claim.

But it is not only in the scientific arena that your heritage is as strong and varied as the landscape of Siberia. I have witnessed it in the private rooms of the Kremlin and in the museum of archaeology and ethnography that I just visited this morning. I have seen it in the works of literature and music that the entire world enjoys as part of our mutual cultural heritage.

So how do we take what each of our societies has and translate it into opportunity for the

greatest number of our fellow citizens? You have a very strong foundation on which to answer that question. Your challenge, it seems to us who are your friends and who are your advocates, is to harness this talent to a new free market economy and ensure that democracy and prosperity take root and grow in Siberia and throughout Russia.

Those of you in this room today, leaders and students alike, have the power to make that happen by creating economic progress, building a vibrant civil society, and ensuring that the new Russia becomes a leader in the democratic community of nations.

As I was preparing to come to Siberia, I learned about some of the activities that are already taking place -- building on the skilled work force that is already here, that will enable you to compete in the global economy. Building on the understanding that you have, which is that education is the bright line that divides those who will make it in the Information Age and those who will not. It may be unfair -- and I think about that in my own country -- it may be unfair that the demands of the new global economy, the knowledge society and the Information Age fall so disproportionately on some people; people who, for whatever combination of reasons, are ill-equipped, to find their way in this new time.

In my own country, I go into schools where I see state-of-the-art technology -- schools like the one that you have a relationship here, Phillips Andover, where the students will be equipped to work anywhere in the world, where their own futures are limitless, where their contributions to society will be very significant.

Then, I go into schools where the student are not being challenged, are not performing, are not up to the tasks that will await them when they enter this new economy. I imagine that Siberia and Russia are not so different from that experience. We already heard Anna introduce me in flawless English. As I was getting out of my car to go into the institute to see the extraordinary discoveries they have displayed there, a woman called me over across the street and said that her son had been a Bradley Scholar studying in the United States.

We know that we have here in Russia, just as I know I have in my own country, some of the finest young people anywhere in the world. The challenge, though, for people like us who are blessed with intelligence and are willing to use our energy to learn and get the best education we can is how we then take that and transform it into prosperity and opportunity for our broader society.

If we look at, for example, the year 2000 in my own country, 80 percent of the new jobs created will require post-high school education. These jobs will demand workers who are flexible and fluent in the Information Age. What we have tried to do in the United States as we have downsized our military since the end of the Cold War, closing many defense industries, putting many scientists, researchers, teachers out of work, is to take the energy and education and intelligence in that work force and find new outlets for it to be productive.

Some of you who have traveled to California where, the Vice Rector said, my daughter is now attending Stanford University, may remember that in the 1980s and early 1990s there was a

very high level of unemployment among some of our very best scientists, researchers and technicians. When my husband ran for the presidency in 1992, in place after place he met workers who had lost their jobs because of the changes that were going on as we reacted to the end of the Cold War and shut down so many of our plants, our factories, our research institutes.

So we understand some of what you are facing as well. How do we take those skills that were used in advanced technology on behalf of defense industries and put them to work in the private sector. That is what you are struggling with; that is also what we have addressed in our own way in the United States.

Now, these issues are important for everyone -- the entire society, for the individuals who are looking for ways to reclaim their future by using their skills differently. It's especially important for children that they be given the incentive to get the best educations possible, even though we are not sure even what jobs will be like in the years to come, because many of the jobs that the young people trained here will do have not yet even been invented.

It's also especially important for women who have traditionally held roles in science and technology in Russia. One of the great benefits that your education system has had over the years is the opportunities that it gave educated women. And yet, despite their education, too many women are still the first to get fired and the last to get hired -- in my country as well as yours. We have to make it clear that any economy that does not take full advantage of the contributions of women in the workplace will never live up to its maximum potential.

So these are just some of the challenges we face when it comes to making sure our education system and the already acquired skills of the educated will be preparing our people to take their places in the new economy. But you are not just creating a new economy. You are also creating and building a strong, sustainable democracy. And that means we have to be educating people to be citizens. Because, ultimately, democracy is about more than a new constitution or even the right to vote. It is built from the ground-up, not from the top-down. And it is a constant struggle.

We have been a democracy for more than 200 years now, and we still struggle -- against our flaws and our imperfections. We still struggle to make sure that all people are treated equally as citizens in our democracy. So you should not ever be discouraged at the progress that you have made. But you should know that the progress has got to be continuing, because the struggle is never-ending.

Part of what makes a democracy live and function despite whatever stresses come from the outside is that the space between the free market and the government is filled by so many associations and individuals who give their best to making their society a better place. We call that "the civil society." And I know that there are representatives in this auditorium who are working on behalf of disabled children, on behalf of the environment, on behalf of women's rights, on behalf of small businesses. You are building that critical civil society that is really the third part of the triangle of democracy: the free market, the government, and then what the citizens do on their own to make conditions better.

Education is critical to the functioning of all three; an education which challenges us, teaches us to think critically, enables individuals to make their contribution to civil society. In the United States, at the beginning of the 19th century, as some of you who have studied American history will know, we were visited by a Frenchman, Alexis de Tocqueville. He came to the United States, he traveled around, he spoke with people who were, themselves, finding their way in a democracy. They had come from monarchies and authoritarian regimes to find freedom in the United States, but they weren't quite sure exactly how one did that.

So they, like many people in Russia today, were doing it as they lived, day by day. But what de Tocqueville noticed is that they were forming into all kinds of informal associations -- associations of business and farmer people. People who were working on behalf of their own better futures. Church groups, education groups. And he pointed out something that is very important to our democracy -- and that is that what really mattered was what he called "the habits of the heart." What is it that we felt inside ourselves about the role of the individual, about respect for people who were not like ourselves.

That cannot be taught, that cannot be imposed. That has to be inspired from generation to generation. It has to be taught by mothers and fathers to their children. It is those habits of the heart that sustain a democracy through bad times.

I am pleased that the United States, both our government and so many private individuals, businesses and nongovernmental organizations is committed to working with Russia, working with Siberia, as you carry out your reforms. Particularly when it comes to education. The United States Information Agency supports a wide range of educational initiatives, from providing updated textbooks for students, to backing educational exchange programs, to sharing techniques from American schools.

We want to be your partners. That is why we are offering training programs in business and law, and journalism, and why Peace Corps volunteers are helping to teach English, and an American business center is working to train managers.

It is why, through our joint public-private efforts, the United States has joined with Russian and Ukrainian aeronautics companies to produce commuter aircraft, the first of which rolled off the assembly line this month in Siberia. This effort, which involves a private company, Allied Signal, also has the support of the United States Trade Development Agency and the Export-Import Bank. In supporting the International Science and Technology Center in Moscow, the United States is helping nuclear weapons specialists to adapt their highly sophisticated skills to civilian needs for state-of-the-art technology.

There are many ways in which we are working together. And I would imagine that, sometimes, as you look at the day-to-day challenges you face, the pace of change just may not seem fast enough. It would be easy to lose sight of how remarkable it has been to see what has been accomplished in a few years. Less than 40 years after Sputnik made me study algebra, who would have ever imagined that these kinds of alliances between our countries would have been

possible. Who would have ever imagined that I would be so honored to be here to talk about our shared future, and particularly the future of my daughter, Chelsea, and young women like Anna. That is not to say that the journey will not be hard, because the scientific process and democracy have a lot in common. Both ask that you sacrifice today for results tomorrow. Both demand patience, stamina and creativity. Both require faith. I have that faith, and I see it and hear about it in what you are doing as well -- faith in the talented and visionary people like those here and throughout Siberia. Faith because of the next generation and faith in the next generation.

I was told yesterday that 65 percent of Russians over 65 think things in Russia got worse over the past year. Sixty percent of people under 35 said they got better. This is one of those examples, I suppose, of where we stand on our life journey. As I get older, I also get more conservative. I also worry more about change. But I don't see that in the eyes of my daughter and her friends, and I don't see that in the eyes of the young people I saw in the university yesterday or today. Because it is these students in my country and yours who will determine the fate of both Russia and the United States, not just for the next few years, but in the millennium.

What young people everywhere are saying and what I believe they are saying here in Russia as well is that we want the opportunity to demonstrate our individual talents. We want to seize the opportunities that can be made available to us in a new and dynamic society. We want a nation that expects all of us to live up to our own potential.

And I think both of our young peoples in both of our countries want us who are older to give them nations where science, technology and research are never again used to divide us, but rather to unite us always in friendship and cooperation.

At the institute this morning I spoke with the director about how people from Siberia crossed the Bering Strait thousands of years ago to populate North America. Whenever I am in the company of archaeologists and ethnographers, I think about how much we have in common because of where we all came from. As we move through the centuries, we will either recognize that or ignore it at our peril. We will either appreciate that the differences that superficially divide us -- language or race or ethnicity, even country of origin -- are minor compared to the deep, common values we share as human beings.

In many ways, the decisions that the United States and Russia make, individually and together, will determine what happens in our world. And I have come to a place where I know many of those decisions will be thought about, debated and made. To stress how strongly we in the United States want Russia to succeed in every way possible and how much we look forward to the years ahead where our children will exchange ideas, information and learning as easily across our oceans as they do next door to one another here, and how we believe that because of our blessings in our respective countries and because of our traditions of education, we not only have an opportunity, but an obligation to spread the benefits of democracy and prosperity to all of our people.

I thank you for what you are doing here, but more than that, I thank you for what will be done here in the years to come. On behalf of peace, prosperity, democracy and friendship, thank

you all very much. (Applause.)

END