

**PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION**

Town Meeting, Yekaterinburg, Russia

The First Lady Participates in  
a Non-Governmental Organization Town Meeting,  
Hosted by the Urals Women's Association  
at the Urals State Technical University  
Yekaterinburg, Russia  
November 15, 1997

After the Governor of the Region, Eduard Rossel, and Mrs. Yeltsin made opening statements and thanked Mrs. Clinton for her participation, Mrs. Clinton made the following comments:

Thank you very much Mrs. Yeltsin. Ever since I met President and Mrs. Yeltsin they have been talking to my husband and me about the Urals. And they have also been talking to me about this great university and how they met here. I understand there is a legend they may have first kissed behind one of these columns. But that is a legend. I want to thank Mrs. Yeltsin for inviting me here. I want to thank the Governor for making me feel so very welcome. I have already enjoyed myself very much. I don't think there is a sunnier place on the entire planet than right here, right now.

I am also very honored to be here at this university which has so many ties with universities in my country and has produced so many important leaders for Russia. I also want to thank the Urals Women's Association and the many other women's organizations represented here in this audience and in the balcony along with the students who are here. I am a very big supporter of non-governmental organizations and the roles that they play in building and sustaining strong democracies. I think women's organizations are especially important in the world today, because so many of us women are facing new and different challenges that the ones faced by our mothers and grandmothers. We think that these women organizations in the United States are very important, and we believe they are important in countries around the world and especially in a country such as Russia that has so many well-educated women who are dealing with new challenges.

Whether they are women's organizations working on behalf of professions and business women or women's organizations working on behalf of children and education issues, or women's organizations working on behalf of health care and environmental issues, these organizations are bringing women together to give voice to our concerns and help to solve problems that we see in society. I am pleased that our government is supporting some of the efforts around the world even here in Russia that bring women together to do all kinds of work at what we call the grass roots level, person-to-person.

There are new issues that we will be confronting, in addition to the ones that I mentioned. The United States Agency for International Development will be increasing funds to support NGOs to combat family violence. We are looking forward to a joint conference between the United States and Russia sometime next year where we will share models about how we can best work together to confront domestic violence. But what I look forward to now is an opportunity to hear from you and learn more about what is happening here in your country about issues that I feel strongly about in my own country and to look for ways that women in the United States and women in Russia can find common ground and work together. Thank you very much.

Following Mrs. Clinton's statement several leaders of women's organizations discussed a range of problems in Russia and possible approaches to solve these problems, including joint projects with U.S. counterpart organizations. A Urals Technical University student from the fourth year also spoke, pointing to the particular problems of students in today's Russia. She concluded with the hope that Mrs. Clinton would help students from the U.S. and Russia meet and interact more. She also invited Mrs. Clinton and her daughter to the Spring Festival of the University.

The moderator, Chairperson of the Urals Women's Association, Deputy Minister of Labor Galina Karelova, then opened the floor to questions.

One woman asked both participants what they would wish for the women of Russia, those living not only in the great cities but in the smaller towns. Mrs. Clinton responded that she would wish for the women of Russia what she wished for the women of the United States. "... that is that each woman would have the opportunity to pursue her own desires and have the ability to achieve whatever she chooses, that she considers best for her life. That means that in my country like yours I would wish that each woman would be given the tools of opportunity: good education, good health care, access to credit, legal protections; that she have the love and support of her family, both the family into which she's born and if she chooses to marry the family into which she marries; and that society respect the decisions that each woman makes and not impose what we think is right for any woman, but instead celebrate and use the many talents that different women bring to their lives and to their respective countries." Mrs. Yeltsin added that she would wish that "women both here and in Washington give more warmth, more soul, more heart, more attention to their families, to their children."

One student asked if Mrs. Clinton regretted that she herself had not become an independent politician at the highest level. Mrs. Clinton responded decisively, "No! As important as the work my husband and President Yeltsin do, the most important person both in my country and in your country is the individual citizen. I do not believe that you have to run for or hold elected office, like the Governor or like our husbands, in order to make a contribution to your society. What I have tried to do, like what so many of you have tried to do, is through my voluntary work and through my professional involvement to try to make conditions better, particularly for children, but also for women and others.

A student posed the final question. She asked Mrs. Clinton about her educational experiences. Mrs. Clinton noted that she had received a very good education from Wellesley College, followed by four years of law study at Yale University. She said that the most memorable things were that she got her law degree so that she could be a lawyer and, like Mrs. Yeltsin, met her husband at university, "so I have many good memories about going to both college and law school. I hope that all of you who are students at this university are building up good memories as well as getting a good education."

Then Mrs. Clinton thanked the moderator and concluded: "Like Mrs. Yeltsin," she said, "I feel we could talk for a very long time about many, many ideas and concerns we have on our minds and our hearts. I want to thank you for coming here. I hope that this will be just one of many conversations that will take place not only among women working for causes here in Russia, but between American and Russian women working for the same kinds of goals and dreams. My husband wanted me to come to Russia to send a very clear message to all Russians that the United States will be a friend and a partner and will work together with you as you move your society forward. We look for the opportunity to learn from you ways that we can also improve our society. We have learned democracy is a never ending effort. You do not reach democracy and then say we have finished, you keep working on it every day. That is what we do and that is what I see you doing. And we want to be your friend and supporter on this effort that we are both working on together. So I want to thank Mrs. Yeltsin for being with me in her home town, which gives me a great warm feeling because of my very strong admiration for her. I want to thank the Governor who has been together with us during this entire session. And I want to thank the Womens' Associations and the university for allowing this to occur. Thank you very much."

**TEXT: U.S. FIRST LADY SPEAKS TO URALS WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION IN RUSSIA  
(November 15 remarks at town meeting in Yekaterinburg) (2360)**

Yekaterinburg, Russia -- Speaking at a non-governmental organization town meeting hosted by the Urals Women's Association here November 15, U.S. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton stressed the importance of women's organizations the world over in helping women face "new and different challenges than the ones faced by our mothers and grandmothers."

Such groups -- whether they work on behalf of professions and business women, on behalf of children and education issues, or health care and environmental issues -- "are bringing women together to give voice to our concerns and help to solve problems that we see in society," Mrs. Clinton said.

Governor Eduard Rossel and Mrs. Boris Yeltsin -- whose home town is Yekaterinburg, and who met her husband at Urals State Technical University -- made opening statements at the event.

Mrs. Clinton said women's organizations are very important in the United States and "in countries around the world, and especially in a country such as Russia that has so many well-educated women who are dealing with new challenges."

Answering questions from the audience, Mrs. Clinton said she did not regret seeking political office because "as important as the work my husband and President Yeltsin do, the most important person both in my country and in your country is the individual citizen. I do not believe that you have to run for or hold elected office, like the Governor or like our husbands, in order to make a contribution to your society."

She also said that President Clinton "wanted me to come to Russia to send a very clear message to all Russians that the United States will be a friend and a partner and will work together with you as you move your society forward. We look for the opportunity to learn from you ways that we can also improve our society."

Democracy, Mrs. Clinton added, "is a never-ending effort. You do not reach democracy and then say we have finished, you keep working on it every day. That is what we do and that is what I see you doing. And we want to be your friend and supporter on this effort that we are both working on together."

Following is the text of the Mrs. Clinton's remarks, which were prepared and released by USIS Moscow:

(Begin text)

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"Thank you very much, Mrs. Yeltsin. Ever since I met President and Mrs. Yeltsin they have been talking to my husband and me about the Urals. And they have also been talking to me about this great university and how they met here. I understand there is a legend they may have first kissed behind one of these columns. But that is a legend. I want to thank Mrs. Yeltsin for inviting me here. I want to thank the Governor for making me feel so very welcome. I have already enjoyed myself very much. I don't think there is a sunnier place on the entire planet than right here, right now.

"I am also very honored to be here at this university, which has so many ties with universities in my country and has produced so many important leaders for Russia. I also want to thank the Urals Women's Association and the many other women's organizations represented here in this audience and in the balcony along with the students who are here.

"I am a very big supporter of non-governmental organizations and the roles that they play in building and sustaining strong democracies. I think women's organizations are especially important in the world today, because so many of us women are facing new and different challenges than the ones faced by our mothers and grandmothers. We think that these women organizations in the United States are very important, and we believe they are important in countries around the world, and especially in a country such as Russia that has so many well-educated women who are dealing with new challenges.

"Whether they are women's organizations working on behalf of professions and business women, or women's organizations working on behalf of children and education issues, or women's organizations working on behalf of health care and environmental issues, these organizations are bringing women together to give voice to our concerns and help to solve problems that we see in society. I am pleased that our government is supporting some of the efforts around the world, even here in Russia, that bring women together to do all kinds of work at what we call the grass roots level, person-to-person.

"There are new issues that we will be confronting, in addition to the ones I mentioned. The United States Agency for International Development will be increasing funds to support NGOs to combat family violence. We are looking forward to a joint conference between the United States and Russia sometime next year, where we will share models about how we can best work together to confront domestic violence. But what I look forward to now is an opportunity to hear from you and learn more about what is happening here in your country about issues that I feel strongly about in my own country, and to look for ways that women in the United States and women in Russia can find common ground and work together. Thank you very much."

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She also invited Mrs. Clinton and her daughter to the Spring Festival of the University.

The moderator, Chairperson of the Urals Women's Association, Deputy Minister of Labor Galina Karelova, then opened the floor to questions.

One woman asked both participants what they would wish for the women of Russia, those living not only in the great cities but in the smaller towns. Mrs. Clinton responded that she would wish for the women of Russia what she wished for the women of the United States: "That each woman would have the opportunity to pursue her own desires and have the ability to achieve whatever she chooses that she considers best for her life. That means that in my country, like yours, I would wish that each woman would be given the tools of opportunity: good education, good health care, access to credit, legal protections; that she have the love and support of her family, both the family into which she's born, and if she chooses to marry the family into which she marries; and that society respect the decisions that each woman makes and not impose what we think is right for any woman, but instead celebrate and use the many talents that different women bring to their lives and to their respective countries."

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"What I find exciting in my own country, and what I see happening throughout Russia, is how many individual citizens are taking on these responsibilities and working to make their own lives better and working, as so many of you are, through non-governmental organizations to make your society better. During our more than 200 years as a democracy we have had many good leaders, and leaders that were not so good, but we have always had citizens that were willing to work hard to solve problems. I think that is the most important job in a democracy, and that is the job I enjoy doing."

The President of the regional organization, "Christian Woman," and a representative of the United Methodist Church's "Return to Christ," asked the next question. She said that her church had a sister relationship with a church in Little Rock, Arkansas and asked what Mrs. Clinton would suggest as the best way for churches to work with disadvantaged families.

Mrs. Clinton said she is a Methodist and knew the Little Rock church mentioned because the pastor was the one who had officiated at her wedding. "I believe," she said, "that there are many opportunities for not only Methodists but people of all religions to do more on behalf of the poor

in my country and in your country. Some of the work that my church and other churches that I know of have done include collecting clothes and food for poor people, both during the year and during the holiday season around Christmas; trying to be sure that families with children with disabilities or medical problems get the help they need; working for the old and the pensioners who cannot get out and do work for themselves, such as buy food and perform other errands that they need during their day; and generally seeing the poor among us as God's creations and being respectful and helpful whenever we can. So I wish you well in your work with your church."

A student leader asked Mrs. Clinton whether she would visit other regions of Russia, or could she stay longer in Yekaterinburg. Mrs. Clinton replied, "Thank you for that invitation. I wish I could stay longer here, but tomorrow I go to Novosibirsk. Since I have now received many kind invitations, I hope that I can return and that my husband and my daughter Chelsea can come with me.

"I agree with your fellow student. Many Americans do not know enough about Russia and what is going on in Russia today. So I want even more Americans to come to Russia and even more Russians to go to the United States so that we get to know each other on a very personal level, because we have so much in common, and we have much work to do on behalf of our countries and on behalf of the world. So I hope that all of you will get to visit my country, and I hope that more of my people and my friends will get to visit your country in the years ahead."

A woman from a veterans' organization asked if there were American women veterans' organizations. Mrs. Clinton thanked her for the question. "We do have many women veterans, and we have just in Washington, D.C. opened a very large monument to all our women veterans from all of our Services from the beginning of our country. We are trying to honor the contributions of women who have served in the military in the past, and my husband has worked hard to open up the United States military so that more women can do more jobs in the various branches of military service."

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"My husband wanted me to come to Russia to send a very clear message to all Russians that the United States will be a friend and a partner and will work together with you as you move your

society forward. We look for the opportunity to learn from you ways that we can also improve our society. We have learned democracy is a never-ending effort. You do not reach democracy and then say we have finished, you keep working on it every day. That is what we do and that is what I see you doing. And we want to be your friend and supporter on this effort that we are both working on together.

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(End text)