

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON *HRC*

CC: SECRETARY OF STATE MADELEINE ALBRIGHT
NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR SANDY BERGER
USAID ADMINISTRATOR BRIAN ATWOOD

RE: REPORT ON TRAVEL TO CENTRAL ASIA, RUSSIA AND
UKRAINE

I recently returned from a 9 day trip to Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Ukraine which I made at the request of the President and the State Department. The purpose of the trip was to bring a message of hope and solidarity from the American people that we will stand by the people of these countries during their historic transition, and to strengthen the ties between our country and these developing democracies. I also sought to stress the importance of people-to-people, grassroots efforts in building democracy throughout the region by fostering the development of a strong civil society, the establishment of democratic institutions, the promotion of non-governmental organizations, educational opportunity and a responsive social safety net. I also underscored the importance of the full participation of women in all sectors of society, and particularly as participants in creating and sustaining a strong civil society from the ground up.

The countries I visited in Central Asia have made remarkable strides to establish themselves as independent states with effective governing institutions. No longer tied solely to Moscow, these countries are now establishing links with one another and their neighbors, as well as with the broader international community. It was very clear during my visit, both in meeting with leaders and with the broader community, that relations with the United States are viewed as pivotal to these countries' development and progress.

In Russia and Ukraine, I did not visit the capitals (where I had previously traveled), but instead went to Yekaterinburg and Novosibirsk in Russia and Lviv in Ukraine -- thereby recognizing the importance of regional and local institutions in developing democratic governance and vibrant economies. The generational process of the transition was starkly illustrated when I met with a three-generation family in Siberia. The representatives of the older

generation had been long associated with the "Academic City;" the grandfather was employed as a mathematician -- respected for his academic achievement -- and he and his wife had traveled throughout the former Soviet Union. He told me that he had heard my speech earlier at the University and noted that he agreed with the point I had made about a survey which showed that the majority of Russians over the age of 65 think that things had gotten worse over the past year, while younger people think that they have gotten better. He felt that his life was now less predictable and his wife added that educational and intellectual achievement are no longer valued. Now, she said, "everyone is trying to sell something and only a few are buying." Their daughters, on the other hand, had traveled to the U.S., spoke English and were anticipating a brighter future. I believe the transition will require patience on the part of citizens of the NIS countries and the U.S. To underscore this point, I said in Ukraine:

As Americans have learned through the years, democracy is a never-ending struggle. We became a 'newly independent state' in 1776, and for the past 221 years our democracy has been a work in process. It took us more than 10 years to draft a constitution; 89 years to rid our nation of slavery; 144 years to give women the vote; and 188 years to make all our citizens equal under the law.

The critical difference, of course, is that the modern world is much less forgiving. With global communications and with a global economy, everything moves at a much faster pace; and countries and societies must reform more quickly in order to take their rightful place in such a new world.

KEY CONCLUSIONS

Before I provide details of my trip on a country-by-country basis, I would like to share some general conclusions.

Importance of U.S. Assistance

The trip reaffirmed many of the basic principles of our assistance programs. We must continue to recognize that despite the progress that has been made, the transition has been difficult and painful for many, particularly women. Different sectors of the society, including health care, education, and the environment are seriously stressed. The U.S. cannot expect democracy to take root in the region without a serious commitment of public and private resources. As with previous trips I have been privileged to take, I saw firsthand how American assistance through USAID, USIA and NIS programs contribute to improving the lives of people and to achieving our broader foreign policy objectives. Again I saw how effective USAID's hospital partnership program is in leveraging a small public contribution into significant contributions in American medical assistance and medical training and equipment. In Almaty and Tashkent -- where hospitals have partnerships with American hospitals in Tucson and

Chicago respectively -- I inaugurated women's wellness clinics which are providing comprehensive health care to women for the first time. In Lviv, I met a mother who thanked America, through me, for saving her baby daughter's life, because of a neonatal resuscitation center made possible by a partnership with the Henry Ford Health Center in Detroit.

In Kyrgyzstan, I heard firsthand how USAID support to FINCA (the Foundation for International Community Assistance) was providing microcredit to hundreds of people and transforming their lives by enabling them to start small businesses and provide for their families. In Uzbekistan, I had a discussion with Bradley Scholars and met with Uzbek students in Bukhara who attended a Peace Corps-assisted school. In both cases, I saw what living in and learning about the U.S. can mean to the development of a new generation of leaders for these societies.

As we stay engaged in this region, I believe that we must focus our programs in even greater emphasis on having direct impact on people to ease their transitional difficulties; to increase our credibility as a caring people; and to give hope and confidence to those going through this process. We should gear our programs to women, youth and small business enterprise, all of which are critical to democratic transformation. We should also build on and expand the "Partnership for Freedom" initiative which is designed to promote economic growth, particularly through small business in the regions and to develop civil society through humanitarian assistance, partnerships, work with non-governmental organizations, exchanges and training.

U.S. foreign policy goals in the NIS will be served if we work to create a broader consensus for engagement by Americans and American organizations in the NIS. Greater engagement could bolster reforms and reformers in the NIS, and increase support for American policies and priorities. USG assistance and private American activities already foster deepened engagement, but we can better leverage USG assistance to the extent even more private American entities and persons get engaged on their own.

Public Education at Home

I hope my trip will in some small way help to educate the American people about the importance of America's active and sustained engagement. We need to remind ourselves that only 6 years ago the countries I visited were living under stifling Soviet rule. I am convinced that one of the most important things the Administration can do to ensure a successful transition to democracy in the NIS to help the American public, Congress and the corporate and non-profit sectors to understand why American engagement by all sectors of our society in this region is critical to the interests of the United States.

Americans need to be reminded that after having spent trillions of dollars to defend ourselves against communism, we must do what is necessary to maximally insure the transformation of NIS countries to market democracy. This is as much a national security interest as any dollar we spend as part of our defense budget. Building long-term durable ties

between our peoples will help ensure the transition to market democracy and thereby contribute to our own national security.

Women

Women are central to efforts to build democracy, support economic reform and provide for responsive social structures, particularly through NGO development. Women's participation in all sectors of these societies must remain a priority for us.

In Russia, at a town meeting with women-run NGOs, the women plead for opportunities to meet with their American counterparts to learn how to address the challenges of building a civil society. In Kazakhstan, I addressed Central Asian women gathered for a conference on women in politics; who are the "vital voices" of democracy. I saw precisely how such gatherings, co-sponsored by our government, can play a catalytic role in empowering NGOs. I was pleased to be able to announce a new U.S. partnership for an upcoming conference in Moscow on family violence and a new initiative to fight the trafficking of women in Ukraine. Both initiatives will help citizens learn how to address pressing social problems.

Democracy without the full participation of women is a contradiction in terms. Too often, in this region, the transition to democracy has placed severe burdens on women. Too many women have been the first to lose their jobs and the last to get new ones.

In Tashkent, Uzbekistan, I spoke to a group of women leaders. One woman I met was Marfua Tokhtahodjeva, the President of the Women's Resource Center, which provides legal support and educates women on their rights. Her organization has received grant support from USAID through the Counterpart Consortium and the Eurasia Foundation. She told me, "I've learned that the more active you are as a citizen, the more empowered you will be; and the country will be better off as well." As I said in my address to the Central Asian Conference on Women in Politics in Almaty:

Because this conference is about women and politics, I want to speak with you about how politics can help us bring about this new world. But I want to discuss politics in a very specific way. When I say politics, I don't just mean electing women to every level of government -- although that is vitally important. I'm talking about the most important role of politics in a democracy, that is, our role as citizens. The contributions we make to civil society. After all, politics at its most basic is what we do when we come together to accomplish common goals. Whether we gather in non-governmental organizations, voluntary organizations, or in each other's homes, we make it clear that the most important person in a democracy is the citizen.

Religious Freedom and Ethnic Tolerance

Democracy depends also on freedom of religion and respect for people of different religions - another theme I stressed during my trip.

In Uzbekistan and Ukraine, I visited Jewish synagogues and met with members of the congregations. The Jewish community in Bukhara traces its roots to ancient times and is the world's oldest community outside the Middle East. The Government of Uzbekistan has restored religious freedom and has encouraged religious and cultural tolerance. Bukhara is also the seat of Naqshandi Sufism and Muslim is the dominant religion. I met with children at a school in Bukhara who were of Uzbek, Tajik and Russian backgrounds.

In Ukraine I visited the Gilad Synagogue and was impressed with the attitude of the Ukrainian government and people who are supporting such a strong commitment to religious freedom. And after decades of hardship, the Jewish community in Lviv opened a Jewish school that now serves almost 200 children.

Next Steps

I have already met with members of the Administration who lead our foreign policy and assistance efforts in the region. We have discussed a series of future options, including the establishment of an interagency effort to develop initiatives to strengthen USG engagement and to encourage more involvement by American NGOs, foundations, businesses and academic institutions for the development of civil society in the NIS, in all dimensions. I hope some of the issues this effort will examine will include: 1) what aspects of civil society in the NIS can best be fostered with U.S. support, and how; 2) how potential U.S. constituencies might be encouraged to engage more actively to help strengthen civil society, reform, and enduring partnerships; and 3) how USG technical assistance, public diplomacy, and educational and cultural exchanges can work together more effectively with private U.S. organizations and businesses to serve this goal.

I hope that when the President travels to Russia this year that consideration will be given for him to address a convening of Russian NGOs to stress the importance of building civil society and to travel outside of Moscow.

KAZAKHSTAN

My activities in Almaty, Kazakhstan (on November 11-12) reinforced the twin-fold message that women and NGOs are important components of civil society and that America cares about women and children and others who have been most severely affected by the transition to the market economy.

My first stop in Almaty was a meeting with youth leaders who are involved in a democracy-building project through peer education, leadership training and political participation. One young man told me that he never thought he could make a difference, but now, after working with the group, "I can see how much I can do." Because teachers and schools play an indispensable role in transmitting knowledge and values -- the currency of democracy -- I was glad to announce a new partnership between the governments of Kazakhstan and the U.S. to recognize outstanding teachers of English and American studies from around Kazakhstan. Award recipients will travel to the U.S. to learn about the U.S. educational system and American educators will travel to Kazakhstan.

I also helped inaugurate the Women's Wellness Center, the result of a partnership between USAID, the American International Health Alliance, the Tucson Medical Center in Arizona, and their counterparts in Almaty. The center focusses on education, screening and prevention. It will help the women of Kazakhstan safeguard themselves against sexually transmitted diseases, provide critical screening for cervical and breast cancer, provide pre-natal and counseling services for women in all stages of the reproductive health cycle, and offer a wide range of family planning services, helping Kazakhstan to continue to reduce its high rate of abortion (down 25% since 1992, when USAID began to work here). It will also provide resources to deal openly and candidly with the risks of alcohol, tobacco, poor nutrition, narcotics, and violence against women inside and outside the home. We know that better health for women also means better health for children, families and their communities. The USG's Operation Provide Hope was also responsible for an airlift of medical supplies that went to this center and others in Kazakhstan.

In Almaty, I had the opportunity to give the keynote speech to the Central Asian Conference on Women in Politics, which was co-sponsored by a local NGO, USIA and USAID. I talked about the lessons of democracy that women are teaching all over Central Asia and how vital these efforts are. Because a country's progress depends on the progress of women, the strength of its political system depends on the inclusion of women, the vibrancy of its economy depends on the full contributions of women, and the richness of a country's civic life depends on the participation of women. I told the participants:

We in the U.S. understand that the transition from communism to free markets and democracy has not been painless for women here or around the world, and that it would be unrealistic to pretend otherwise. Right now, too many women are the first to lose their jobs and the last to get

new ones. Too many women are barred by law, by tradition, or by ignorance from exercising their rights. Too many women are trapped in an endless cycle of poverty, unable to get access to education and credit. Too many women are overwhelmed by the stresses they have in their lives, as they try to do more and more with fewer and fewer hours. Too many women live in fear of violence, including violence at the hands of family members. For them, home offers no refuge, the law no protection, and public opinion no sympathy. And, through all of this, not enough women are sitting at the table when decisions are made about their lives and their families.

This must change. Yet, while the oppressive structures of communism have been torn down, the political, judicial and economic organizations that protect women's rights in a democracy are just now being constructed. That is why this conference comes at such an important time. It is enabling us to share practical ideas to advance the role of women in the political, economic and social lives of their countries. It is showing us that when we embrace our rights and live up to our responsibilities, when we confront problems head on, we find solutions. And the United States is proud to be your partner as you face these challenges.

At the Conference, I was pleased to be able to announce that the U.S. would be increasing our support to women's NGOs working to build democracy in the region.

While in Almaty, I also had the opportunity to meet with President Nazarbayev.

KYRGYZSTAN

Although my visit to Kyrgyzstan was sandwiched between stops in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, I believe the visit was vitally important to future relations between our two countries. My first event, at the airport in Bishkek, highlighted the arrival of the Operation Provide Hope airlift, which carried tons of humanitarian aid donated by U.S. businesses and NGOs. The airlift coincided with my visit and brought more than \$2 million in pharmaceuticals for hospitals in Bishkek and Osh, as well as clothing for children in these communities. In the audience at the event were Peace Corps volunteers stationed in KYRGYZSTAN who would deliver the supplies, as well as representatives of U.S. NGOs like CitiHope, who made significant contributions to the airlift. Mrs. Akayev, the First Lady of KYRGYZSTAN, welcomed me at the airport and in her remarks underscored the importance of the airlift and expressed her country's gratitude to the American people. I also met with representatives of NGOs working in Kyrgyzstan; in my remarks I mentioned their importance in building a strong

civil society.

During my meeting with President Akayev, we were joined by women leaders active in his cabinet and in the Parliament. He was anxious to express to me his recognition of the important role women need to play in the life of their country. At a private lunch that followed, President Akayev talked about the challenges his country confronts, given its geography and the economic transition. He also talked about the importance of cooperation with the U.S. and the potential for fundamentalist activity, which at this point does not pose a problem.

In the village of Novo Puvlovka, I visited an open-air market run by local shopkeepers. Most of the merchants were women and most had been the recipients of micro-credit from the Village Bank and Finca International (which in turn is funded in part by a grant from USAID). I met with several representatives of village groups that had received loans. As state-supported employment has collapsed in the transition to democracy and a market economy, women have been the first to lose their jobs and often the last to be re-employed. However, the women I met (including a teacher who had to give up her profession because she, like so many educators, had not been paid for some time) were able to provide for themselves and their families, thanks to the availability of micro-credit. The micro-lending system has worked successfully in Kyrgyzstan where over 600 "Village Banks" have lent over \$2 million since 1994, with a repayment rate of 98% that would be the envy of any commercial bank. Once again, I saw firsthand the power of micro enterprise and the importance of USAID's investment in micro-credit, and the role it is playing in poverty alleviation, the creation of small businesses and economic reform.

Because education is central to building civil society, to the health of democracy and for the success of a country's economy, I participated in a ceremony with President Akayev at the Kyrgyz-American University to lay the groundwork for an independent university. The Soros Foundation and the U.S. government, through USIA, have supported this project. Prior to my participation, there were concerns raised by the Soros Foundation that the independence of the University was being compromised by the government. In my remarks I stressed the importance of a truly independent university:

We look forward to reaching a framework agreement with you that will define the university's independence -- and thereby assure its continued support. It is only as an independent center of learning that a university can fulfill its mission to open the minds of students, teach them to think critically, and inspire them to make a difference in the future.

We strongly endorse the role of the Open Society Institute as a strong and effective advocate for democracy in Kyrgyzstan and throughout the world. We are hopeful that we can work together with the Open Society Institute in the context of a truly independent university.

We hope that the Kyrgyz-American University grows into a place that

nourishes the bedrock values of free thought and expression, respect for human rights, support of strong and independent community institutions and opportunity for all citizens.

The Soros Foundation was pleased with the outcome of our visit, including a decree from the government of Kyrgyzstan announcing that the Kyrgyz-American University is now an independent institution. Further steps to ensure compliance will be carefully followed.

I also talked about the alliance between Kyrgyzstan and the U.S. to recognize excellence in teaching through the Teaching Excellence Awards, which I announced -- a program that brings teachers from our two countries together.

UZBEKISTAN

In Tashkent I had the third of my meetings with Central Asian leaders on the same day, this one with President Karimov (who would accompany me on much of my visit, including my trip to Samarkand). President Karimov stressed the "great importance" of my visit, and how much Uzbekistan appreciated U.S. interest in their country and America's leading role in the world. Uzbekistan attached importance to having a "strategic relationship" with the U.S. and a broader and deeper U.S. presence, with continued U.S. assistance. With its unique position along the ancient Silk Road, Uzbekistan confronts the challenge of preserving its rich cultural and religious heritage, as well as the challenge of building a new democracy.

During my visit, I sought to highlight the importance of programs between the governments of our two countries, which are providing the tools of opportunity to the Uzbek people, particularly women and young people.

I was privileged to inaugurate the Women's Wellness Center in Tashkent, a partnership between the Tashkent Medical Institute and the University of Illinois at Chicago. The partnership, supported by the American International Health Alliance and USAID, includes neonatology and perinatal medicine as well as education and hospital management. I told the audience gathered there that a few months ago I had the opportunity to launch the 500th American humanitarian airlift to the NIS. That airlift brought \$22 million in supplies to Uzbekistan, of which \$2 million went to the Tashkent Medical Institute.

I also held a roundtable with professional and business women in Tashkent to learn about the important work they were doing through NGOs on a range of issues from small business development to combating domestic violence.

At the University of World Economy and Diplomacy, I participated in an exchange with students who had taken part in the Bradley High School Exchange Program. The program, which is remarkably cost-effective and significant in building a new generation of democratic

leaders, provides the opportunity for thousands of students from the NIS to come to America each year to live with American families, to attend American schools and deepen their understanding of American culture and society. The program yields immeasurable results; in my "Q&A" exchange with the students, I saw first-hand the confident, committed, articulate friends of America that the program has created.

In visiting Samarkand and Bukhara, I sought to promote the importance of cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, and to underscore religious freedom. I told the people of Samarkand that I had come to learn about their rich past and rich culture, and also about the deeply rooted traditions of respect for religious and ethnic differences which have enabled this culture to flourish for so many generations. I was struck during my visit by the beauty of Uzbekistan's places of worship. What made the sharpest impression on me, however, was their proximity. Muslims, Christians and Jews following their faith in the same neighborhoods.

I visited the Jewish synagogue in Bukhara -- home of the world's oldest Jewish community outside the Middle East. The rabbi told me that the government had restored religious freedom and encouraged religious and cultural tolerance. Bukhara is also the seat of Naqshbandi Sufism, a Muslim movement that respects other traditions while at the same time rejecting extremism. I was very touched and honored when I met the mullah at the mosque in Bukhara and he expressed the hope that the relations between our two countries would grow deeper and stronger.

In Bukhara, I also met with a group of high school students of Uzbek, Tajik and Russian backgrounds in a school where Peace Corps volunteers are working. Like the Bradley Scholars, these young people spoke in flawless English and exhibited great confidence and interest in the U.S.

After my visit to Bukhara, President Karimov joined me on a tour of the ancient monuments of Samarkand and introduced me at my speech to religious leaders on cultural respect. President Karimov spoke movingly as a Muslim about the importance of religious freedom and ethnic tolerance and the lessons of this ancient place where people of many different traditions live peacefully. President Karimov, who grew up in Samarkand, said people often took for granted the numbers of different peoples living together.

I concluded my own speech by saying:

I'm confident that the tradition of respect and tolerance that has stood this land so well for so many generations has better prepared you to face the challenges that lie ahead... You have much to teach the world about diversity. For centuries, the ancient Silk Road took the people of Central Asia to new worlds rich in commerce and culture. Today, you're traveling this road again, only this time in a different direction. For new worlds of freedom and democracy. Though the journey is hard and the horizon may

at times seem distant, I hope you will take faith in the fact that the President and people of the United States will walk with you every step of the way. We are proud to be your friends and partners on this journey to democracy.

RUSSIA

Yekaterinburg

Much of my schedule in Yekaterinburg was designed to accommodate Mrs. Yeltsin's preferences. Mrs. Yeltsin accompanied me throughout my visit to this city where she and the President were students and lived the greater part of their married lives. I toured the Bonum Center, which provides rehabilitation programs for disabled children, participated in a lunch at the Governor's Residence, and attended the opening performance of the Urals Philharmonic (which, thanks to the intervention of our consulate, participated in a U.S. program on arts management to help them learn how to diversify their support, including gaining corporate support). At a private dinner with Mrs. Yeltsin and members of our delegation, there was a warm exchange extended over several rounds of toasts and candid conversation that reinforced our friendship and commitment to Russia's success as a democracy.

My major public event in Yekaterinburg was a "town meeting" sponsored by the Urals Women's Association at the Urals Polytechnic University. Mrs. Yeltsin and I met with several hundred representatives of women's NGOs and university students. In what was a rare opportunity for them, the women peppered Mrs. Yeltsin with questions and criticisms about the pace of reform and the lack of social supports. Mrs. Yeltsin conducted herself impressively and stayed on for a lengthy period to speak individually to the women. In my remarks, I underscored the importance of NGOs and civic participation:

I am a very big supporter of non-governmental organizations and the roles they play in building and sustaining strong democracies. I think women's organizations are especially important in the world today, because so many women are facing new and different challenges than the ones faced by our mothers and grandmothers. We think that these women's 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... 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 efforts that bring

women together to do all kinds of work at what we call the grass-roots level, person to person.

I also announced that USAID will be increasing funds to support NGOs that are combating domestic violence. In addition, a joint U.S.-Russian conference will be convened sometime in 1998 to share models about how our countries can best work together to confront domestic violence.

I was struck by the plea from one of the women for more opportunities to interact with American NGOs so they could learn about programs that would serve as models to promote greater women's political participation. Another woman, who represented the Methodist Church, wanted to know of ways that churches could be more effectively engaged to help disadvantaged families. Grass-roots programs supported by our government serve a pressing need and should be expanded to develop greater local NGO capabilities and sustainability.

Novosibirsk

I hoped that my visit to Siberia would send a strong signal about the importance of the region in building Russia's democracy and new economy. Everywhere I went, I was greeted by large crowds of friendly Russian families who appeared genuinely thrilled that I had come to Siberia.

In a speech at Akademgorodok, I highlighted the fact that while the academic institution had previously focused on winning the Cold War, our two countries are now working side by side to use science, technology and education in the service of freedom, prosperity and democracy. I told them that:

I know that this time of transition...has not been easy for any sector of society. And I know that here in Siberia and...here in this academic complex it has caused great difficulty for many. Scientists and researchers with expertise and years of education that earned them status and security now face uncertain futures. The questions that I am sure are being asked within these halls include: whether or not the skills that were acquired in the past will sustain in life and profession tomorrow.

We see the same questions being asked in our education system in my country as well as yours. In my country, we are struggling with how we try to provide higher education opportunities to all of our students, regardless of their backgrounds, 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 text books and modernize classrooms for the information

age, how to ensure that teachers receive the pay and 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.

...Those of you in this room -- scientists 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.

I also talked about how our government is working in partnership with Russia's to carry out educational reforms:

Through the United States Information Agency, my country supports a wide range of educational initiatives -- from providing updates textbooks for students to backing educational exchange programs to sharing teaching techniques from American schools. We offer training programs in business, law and journalism. Peace Corps volunteers are helping teach English and an American business center is working to train managers.

We've joined with Russian and Ukrainian aeronautics companies to produce commuter aircraft, the first of which rolled off the assembly line this month. I am pleased that this effort also had the support of the Trade Development Agency and the Export-Import Bank.

I later met with three generations of a family (which I referenced above) and learned how the changes taking place in Russian society were greeted more negatively by the older generation and far less so by their children and grandchildren. Again, I heard first-hand how important exchange programs are enabling Russians to visit the U.S. and learn important values about democracy, technical skills and our partnership to take home.

I also visited the Archeology and Ethnography Museum in Novosibirsk which includes in its holdings the preserved bodies and clothes of a prehistoric mummified Siberian couple. The museum is hoping to mount an exhibition at the Reading Pennsylvania Public Museum; the American museum, however, has not raised adequate levels of funds to date. Ambassador Collins has encouraged assistance to this worthy joint project and we are helping to explore options.

My last meeting in Novosibirsk was with Governor Mukha, who told me about his efforts to enhance the lives of the youth in Siberia.

UKRAINE

My last stop was the city of L'viv in the western region of Ukraine, the region to which large numbers of Ukrainian-Americans trace their roots. Again, my schedule was designed to highlight America's commitment to Ukraine's democratic transformation, our commitment to grassroots NGO development, especially among women, our helping to meet emergency health care needs, and the importance of religious tolerance. Mrs. Kuchma accompanied me for most of my visit.

At the Neonatal Resuscitation Center I was able to show the critical difference that the USAID hospital partnership program is making, in this case with the Henry Ford Health Center in Detroit. Since the partnership began, infant mortality has been reduced by 30%. Clearly, this is a wonderful model that works. I was pleased to learn that the Ministry of Health is working with USAID, AIHA and the Henry Ford Health Center to establish centers like the one in L'viv throughout Ukraine. Such efforts are critical, especially given the serious deterioration of the health care system in Ukraine. I was also pleased that our government intervened through Operation Provide Hope, working with the U.S.-based Children of Chernobyl Relief Fund and others, to make possible an airlift of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies, including two ambulances equipped with neonatal resuscitation equipment.

At the Gilad Synagogue, I witnessed a revitalized, strong Jewish community that recently opened a school for the growing number of Jewish children in L'viv. The Nazis had turned the temple into a horse stable and left a signature of bullet holes -- still visible -- in the ceiling of the beautiful building. The Soviets had used it as a warehouse. Today, people can once again pray and worship freely. I told the members of the community gathered there:

One of the most important values of any democracy is the freedom of religion and respect for people of different religious faiths. I'm very impressed at the attitude of the Ukrainian government and people who are supporting such a strong commitment to religious freedom in this country. And so we can see the enthusiastic faces of the children who are learning and studying here -- and as the Rabbi so profoundly said, becoming both Jewish and Ukrainian, with great pride.

In a visit to the Memorial Honoring Victims of Communist Repression, I spoke to thousands of people gathered and told them that in their fight for freedom and for democracy, the American people would stand by them:

Even in the face of unspeakable horrors, the people of Ukraine -- and others living under Soviet domination -- did not give up. Instead you found the best shield against communist oppression. You started down the road to democracy, including free and fair elections. But, the journey is

far from over. Because democracy does not end with a constitution or a right to vote. As we have learned in my country, democracy is a never-ending struggle that we must grapple with every day...But, if we want democracy and freedom to thrive, then we must build a civil society where democratic values live in our hearts and minds, where people stand up for what's right, and where the rule of law, not the rule of crime and corruption, prevails.

Democracy will thrive only if we use our ethnic diversity as a force not to pull us apart, but rather to bring us together -- as you have done in Ukraine. It will thrive if women are full participants in every aspect of society...and if the people of Ukraine continue to forge an alliance of values with the democratic community of nations.

After I finished speaking, the crowd erupted into spontaneous singing of "Mnohaya Lita" ("May you have a long life"), which is usually reserved for family and close friends. It is worth noting that in his remarks the Mayor of L'viv publicly praised the work of USAID in Ukraine and said that L'viv is where it is today due to the help of USAID.

I also visited St. George's Cathedral -- the seat of Ukrainian Catholicism. For decades during Soviet rule, the church had been driven underground, but today it is a vibrant community which houses a special ministry to people with disabilities who were once relegated to the margins of society. The Bishop told me that the reference in my speech to the important role that women must play in all spheres of Ukrainian society was critical to the future of the country and he thanked me.

My final appearance was a speech to a capacity crowd at the L'viv Opera House, where I was introduced in Ukrainian by my Chief of Staff. Her appearance provided Ukraine with a tangible symbol of the contributions of Ukrainian-Americans to American society, as well as their efforts to help in Ukraine's democratic transition. The theme of my speech was the voices of women and young people, the voices of people throughout Ukraine who were speaking the new language of freedom and democracy, and turning their ideas into concrete action. I spoke particularly about the importance of building a civil society:

Neither the rule of law nor the free market can be sustained in isolation. If we do not have democracy, we cannot rest. If we do not have a free market, we cannot rest. And if we do not have the space between what the market does and what the government should not do -- the civil society -- we cannot rest. All are indispensable to the blessings of liberty and prosperity.

In this space resides family and community life, religious traditions, and participation in voluntary associations. For democracy depends on

individuals truly believing that they have a role to play in the life of their country. It depends on people choosing -- not being compelled to -- but choosing to participate. And it depends on seeing to it that these habits of the heart are passed from one generation to the next.

Whether you are gathering in civic associations, voluntary efforts to help others, places of worship, or even in your neighbor's home, you are strengthening civil society and making it clear that the most important person in any democracy is the citizen. Governments cannot be serious about democracy unless they recognize and work with non-governmental organizations.

And I concentrated on the role of women:

Clearly, democracy depends on people's choosing to participate, but it also depends on their being allowed to participate. And that's especially important for women. This is a concern all over the world, but it has a particular sharpness here. For the legacy of communism has placed special strains on women. Especially in the old state structures, too many women are the first to lose their jobs and the last to get new ones. Too many women often live in fear of violence at the hands of family members. For them, home provides no refuge, the law no protection, and public opinion no sympathy. Too many women are prevented from getting proper health care -- either because quality care is not available or because they are simply unable to find the time, between family and work obligations, to care for themselves.

A country's progress depends on the progress of women. The strength of its political system depends on the inclusion of women. The vibrancy of its economy depends on the full contributions of women. Simply put, human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights.

I noted that it is a violation of human rights when women are trafficked and I announced that the United States Government, in cooperation with the European Union, will be working with NGOs in Ukraine to launch a new information campaign:

We want to reach women who may be in danger. And we want to inform law enforcement, consular officers and international organization so they can be on the look-out for and ultimately put a stop to this crime against humanity.

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To Melanne (Pam)

- ① Good job - Changes marked
- ② Did we already send photo album to leaders/others?

January 7, 1997

- ③ Review and standardizing quotation marks as used in quoting from my speeches

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

CC: SECRETARY OF STATE MADELEINE ALBRIGHT
NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR SANDY BERGER
USAID ADMINISTRATOR BRIAN ATWOOD

RE: REPORT ON TRAVEL TO CENTRAL ASIA, RUSSIA AND UKRAINE

I recently returned from a 9 day trip to Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Ukraine which I made at the request of the President and the State Department. The purpose of the trip was to bring a message of hope and solidarity from the American people that we will stand by the people of these countries during their historic transition, and to strengthen the ties between our country and these developing democracies. I also sought to stress the importance of people-to-people, grassroots efforts in building democracy throughout the region by fostering the development of a strong civil society, the establishment of democratic institutions, the promotion of non-governmental organizations, educational opportunity and a responsive social safety net. I also underscored the importance of the full participation of women in all sectors of society, and particularly as participants in creating and sustaining a strong civil society from the ground up.

The countries I visited in Central Asia have made remarkable strides to establish themselves as independent states with effective governing institutions. No longer tied solely to Moscow, these countries are now establishing links with one another and their neighbors, as well as with the broader international community. It was very clear during my visit, both in meeting with leaders and with the broader community, that relations with the United States are viewed as pivotal to these countries' development and progress.

In Russia and Ukraine, I did not visit the capitals (where I had previously traveled), but instead went to Yekaterinburg and Novosibirsk in Russia and Lviv in Ukraine -- thereby recognizing the importance of regional and local institutions in developing democratic governance and vibrant economies. The generational process of the transition was starkly illustrated when I met with a three-generation family in Siberia. The representatives of the older

generation had been long associated with the "Academic City;" the grandfather was employed as a mathematician -- respected for his academic achievement -- and he and his wife had traveled throughout the former Soviet Union. He told me that he had heard my speech earlier at the University and noted that he agreed with the point I had made about a survey which showed that the majority of Russians over the age of 65 think that things had gotten worse over the past year, while younger people think that they have gotten better. He felt that his life was now less predictable and his wife added that educational and intellectual achievement are no longer valued." Now, she said, "everyone is trying to sell something and only a few are buying." Their daughters, on the other hand, had traveled to the U.S., spoke English and were anticipating a brighter future. I believe the transition will require patience on the part of citizens of the NIS countries and the U.S. To underscore this point, I said in Ukraine:

"As Americans have learned through the years, democracy is a never-ending struggle. We became a 'newly independent state' in 1776, and for the past 221 years our democracy has been a work in process. It took us more than 10 years to draft a constitution; 89 years to rid our nation of slavery; 144 years to give women then vote; and 188 years to make all our citizens equal under the law.

The critical difference, of course, is that the modern world is much less forgiving. With global communications and with a global economy, everything moves at a much faster pace; and countries and societies must reform more quickly in order to take their rightful place in such a new world."

KEY CONCLUSIONS

Before I provide details of my trip on a country-by-country basis, I would like to share some general conclusions.

Importance of U.S. Assistance

The trip reaffirmed many of the basic principles of our assistance programs. We must continue to recognize that despite the progress that has been made, the transition has been difficult and painful for many, particularly women. Different sectors of the society, including health care, education, and the environment are seriously stressed. The U.S. cannot expect democracy to take root in the region without a serious commitment of public and private resources. As with previous trips I have been privileged to take, I saw firsthand how American assistance through USAID, USIA and NIS programs contribute to improving the lives of people and to achieving our broader foreign policy goal objectives. Again I saw how effective USAID's hospital partnership program is in leveraging a small public contribution into significant contributions in American medical assistance and medical training and equipment. In Almaty and Tashkent -- where hospitals have partnerships with American hospitals in Tucson and Chicago respectively -- I inaugurated women's wellness clinics which are providing comprehensive health care to women for the first time. In Lviv, I met a mother who thanked

America, through me, for saving her baby daughter's life, because of a neonatal resuscitation center made possible by a partnership with the Henry Ford Health Center in Detroit.

In Kyrgyzstan, I heard firsthand how USAID support to FINCA (the Foundation for International Community Assistance) was providing microcredit to hundreds of people and transforming their lives by enabling them to start small businesses and provide for their families. In Uzbekistan, I had a discussion with Bradley Scholars and met with Uzbek students in Bukhara who attended a Peace Corps-assisted school. In both cases, I saw what living in and learning about the U.S. can mean to the development of a new generation of leaders for these societies.

As we stay engaged in this region, I believe that we must focus our programs in even greater emphasis on having direct impact on people to ease their transitional difficulties; to increase our credibility as a caring people; and to give hope and confidence to those going through this process. We should gear our programs to women, youth and small business enterprise, all of which are critical to democratic transformation. We should also build on and expand the "Partnership for Freedom" initiative which is designed to promote economic growth, particularly through small business in the regions and to develop civil society through humanitarian assistance, partnerships, work with non-governmental organizations, exchanges and training.

U.S. foreign policy goals in the NIS will be served if we work to create a broader consensus for engagement by Americans and American organizations in the NIS. Greater engagement could bolster reforms and reformers in the NIS, and increase support for American policies and priorities. USG assistance and private American activities already foster deepened engagement, but we can better leverage USG assistance to the extent even more private American entities and persons get engaged on their own.

Public Education at Home

I hope my trip will in some small way help to educate the American people about the importance of America's active and sustained engagement. We need to remind ourselves that only 6 years ago the countries I visited were living under stifling Soviet rule. I am convinced that one of the most important things the Administration can do to ensure a successful transition to democracy in the NIS to help the American public, Congress and the corporate and non-profit sectors to understand why American engagement by all sectors of our society in this region is critical to the interests of the United States.

Americans need to be reminded that after having spent trillions of dollars to defend ourselves against communism, we must do what is necessary to maximally insure the transformation of NIS countries to market democracy. This is as much a national security interest as any dollar we spend as part of our defense budget. Building long-term durable ties between our peoples will help ensure the transition to market democracy and thereby contribute to our own national security.

Women

Women are central to efforts to build democracy, support economic reform and provide for responsive social structures, particularly through NGO development. Women's participation in all sectors of these societies must remain a priority for us.

In Russia, at a town meeting with women-run NGOs, the women plead for opportunities to meet with their American counterparts to learn how to address the challenges of building a civil society. In Kazakhstan, I addressed Central Asian women gathered for a conference on women in politics, who are the "vital voices" of democracy. I saw precisely how such gatherings, co-sponsored by our government, can play a catalytic role in empowering NGOs. I was pleased to be able to announce a new U.S. partnership for an upcoming conference in Moscow on family violence and a new initiative to fight the trafficking of women in Ukraine. Both initiatives will help citizens learn how to address pressing social problems.

Democracy without the full participation of women is a contradiction in terms. Too often, in this region, the transition to democracy has placed severe burdens on women. Too many women have been the first to lose their jobs and the last to get new ones.

In Tashkent, Uzbekistan, I spoke to a group of women leaders. One woman I met was Marfua Tokhtahodjeva, the President of the Women's Resource Center, which provides legal support and educates women on their rights. Her organization has received grant support from USAID through the Counterpart Consortium and the Eurasia Foundation. She told me, "I've learned that the more active you are as a citizen, the more empowered you will be; and the country will be better off as well." As I said in my address to the Central Asian Conference on Women in Politics in Almaty,

"Because this conference is about women and politics, I want to speak with you about how politics can help us bring about this new world. But I want to discuss politics in a very specific way. When I say politics, I don't just mean electing women to every level of government -- although that is vitally important. I'm talking about the most important role of politics in a democracy, that is, our role as citizens. The contributions we make to civil society. After all, politics at its most basic is what we do when we come together to accomplish common goals. Whether we gather in non-governmental organizations, voluntary organizations, or in each other's homes, we make it clear that the most important person in a democracy is the citizen."

Religious Freedom and Ethnic Tolerance

Democracy depends also on freedom of religion and respect for people of different religions - another theme I stressed during my trip.

In Uzbekistan and Ukraine, I visited Jewish synagogues and met with members of the congregations. The Jewish community in Bukhara traces its roots to ancient times and is the world's oldest community outside the Middle East. The Government of Uzbekistan has restored religious freedom and has encouraged religious and cultural tolerance. Bukhara is also the seat of Naqshandi Sufism and Muslim is the dominant religion. I met with children at a school in Bukhara who were of Uzbek, Tajik and Russian backgrounds.

In Ukraine I visited the Gilad Synagogue and was impressed with the attitude of the Ukrainian government and people who are supporting such a strong commitment to religious freedom. And after decades of hardship, the Jewish community in Lviv opened a Jewish school that now serves almost 200 children.

Next Steps

I have already met with members of the Administration who lead our foreign policy and assistance efforts in the region. We have discussed a series of future options, including the establishment of an interagency effort to develop initiatives to strengthen USG engagement and to encourage more involvement by American NGOs, foundations, businesses and academic institutions for the development of civil society in the NIS, in all dimensions. I hope some of the issues this effort will examine will include: 1) what aspects of civil society in the NIS can best be fostered with U.S. support, and how; 2) how potential U.S. constituencies might be encouraged to engage more actively to help strengthen civil society, reform, and enduring partnerships; and 3) how USG technical assistance, public diplomacy, and educational and cultural exchanges can work together more effectively with private U.S. organizations and businesses to serve this goal.

I hope that when the President travels to Russia this year that consideration will be given for him to address a convening of Russian NGOs to stress the importance of building civil society and to travel outside of Moscow.

KAZAKHSTAN

My activities in Almaty, Kazakhstan (on November 11-12) reinforced the twin-fold message that women and NGOs are important components of civil society and that America cares about women and children and others who have been most severely affected by the transition to the market economy.

My first stop in Almaty was a meeting with youth leaders who are involved in a democracy-building project through peer education, leadership training and political participation. One young man told me that he never thought he could make a difference, but now, after working with the group, "I can see how much I can do." Because teachers and schools play an indispensable role in transmitting knowledge and values -- the currency of democracy -- I was glad to announce a new partnership between the governments of Kazakhstan and the U.S. to recognize outstanding teachers of English and American studies from around Kazakhstan. Award recipients will travel to the U.S. to learn about the U.S. educational system and American educators will travel to Kazakhstan.

I also helped inaugurate the Women's Wellness Center, the result of a partnership between USAID, the American International Health Alliance, the Tucson Medical Center in Arizona, and their counterparts in Almaty. The center focusses on education, screening and prevention. It will help the women of Kazakhstan safeguard themselves against sexually transmitted diseases, provide critical screening for cervical and breast cancer, provide pre-natal and counseling services for women in all stages of the reproductive health cycle, and offer a wide range of family planning services, helping Kazakhstan to continue to reduce its high rate of abortion (down 25% since 1992, when USAID began to work here). It will also provide resources to deal openly and candidly with the risks of alcohol, tobacco, poor nutrition, narcotics, and violence against women inside and outside the home. We know that better health for women also means better health for children, families and their communities. The USG's Operation Provide Hope was also responsible for an airlift of medical supplies that went to this center and others in Kazakhstan.

In Almaty, I had the opportunity to give the keynote speech to the Central Asian Conference on Women in Politics, which was co-sponsored by a local NGO, USIA and USAID. I talked about the lessons of democracy that women are teaching all over Central Asia and how vital these efforts are. Because a country's progress depends on the progress of women, the strength of its political system depends on the inclusion of women, the vibrancy of its economy depends on the full contributions of women, and the richness of a country's civic life depends on the participation of women. I told the participants:

"We in the U.S. understand that the transition from communism to free markets and democracy has not been painless for women here or around the world, and that it would be unrealistic to pretend otherwise. Right now, too many women are the first to lose their jobs and the last to get new ones. Too many women are barred by law, by tradition, or by

ignorance from exercising their rights. Too many women are trapped in an endless cycle of poverty, unable to get access to education and credit. Too many women are overwhelmed by the stresses they have in their lives, as they try to do more and more with fewer and fewer hours. Too many women live in fear of violence, including violence at the hands of family members. For them, home offers no refuge, the law no protection, and public opinion no sympathy. And, through all of this, not enough women are sitting at the table when decisions are made about their lives and their families.

This must change. Yet, while the oppressive structures of communism have been torn down, the political, judicial and economic organizations that protect women's rights in a democracy are just now being constructed. That is why this conference comes at such an important time. It is enabling us to share practical ideas to advance the role of women in the political, economic and social lives of their countries. It is showing us that when we embrace our rights and live up to our responsibilities, when we confront problems head on, we find solutions. And the United States is proud to be your partner as you face these challenges.

At the Conference, I was pleased to be able to announce that the U.S. would be increasing our support to women's NGOs working to build democracy in the region.

While in Almaty, I also had the opportunity to meet with President Nazarbayev.

KYRGYZSTAN

Although my visit to KYRGYZSTAN was sandwiched between stops in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, I believe the visit was vitally important to future relations between our two countries. My first event, at the airport in Bishkek, highlighted the arrival of the Operation Provide Hope airlift, which carried tons of humanitarian aid donated by U.S. businesses and NGOs. The airlift coincided with my visit and brought more than \$2 million in pharmaceuticals for hospitals in Bishkek and Osh, as well as clothing for children in these communities. In the audience at the event were Peace Corps volunteers stationed in KYRGYZSTAN who would deliver the supplies, as well as representatives of U.S. NGOs like CitiHope, who made significant contributions to the airlift. Mrs. Akayev, the First Lady of KYRGYZSTAN, welcomed me at the airport and in her remarks underscored the importance of the airlift and expressed her country's gratitude to the American people. I also met with representatives of NGOs working in KYRGYZSTAN; in my remarks I mentioned their importance in building a strong civil society.

During my meeting with President Akayev, we were joined by women leaders active in his cabinet and in the Parliament. He was anxious to express to me his recognition of the

important role women need to play in the life of their country. At a private lunch that followed, President Akayev talked about the challenges his country confronts, given its geography and the economic transition. He also talked about the importance of cooperation with the U.S. and the potential for fundamentalist activity, which at this point does not pose a problem. ~~<<Add other points which may be useful>>~~

In the village of Novo Puvlovka, I visited an open-air market run by local shopkeepers. Most of the merchants were women and most had been the recipients of micro-credit from the Village Bank and Finca International (which in turn is funded in part by a grant from USAID). I met with several representatives of village groups that had received loans. As state-supported employment has collapsed in the transition to democracy and a market economy, women have been the first to lose their jobs and often the last to be re-employed. However, the women I met (including a teacher who had to give up her profession because she, like so many educators, had not been paid for some time) were able to provide for themselves and their families, thanks to the availability of micro-credit. The micro-lending system has worked successfully in KYRGYZSTAN where over 600 "Village Banks" have lent over \$2 million since 1994, with a repayment rate of 98% that would be the envy of any commercial bank. Once again, I saw firsthand the power of micro enterprise and the importance of USAID's investment in micro-credit, and the role it is playing in poverty alleviation, the creation of small businesses and economic reform.

Because education is central to building civil society, to the health of democracy and for the success of a country's economy, I participated in a ceremony with President Akayev at the Kyrgyz-American University to lay the groundwork for an independent university. The Soros Foundation and the U.S. government, through USIA, have supported this project. Prior to my participation, there were concerns raised by the Soros Foundation that the independence of the University was being compromised by the government. In my remarks I stressed the importance of a truly independent university:

"We look forward to reaching a framework agreement with you that will define the university's independence -- and thereby assure its continued support. It is only as an independent center of learning that a university can fulfill its mission to open the minds of students, teach them to think critically, and inspire them to make a difference in the future.

We strongly endorse the role of the Open Society Institute as a strong and effective advocate for democracy in KYRGYZSTAN and throughout the world. We are hopeful that we can work together with the Open Society Institute in the context of a truly independent university.

We hope that the Kyrgyz-American University grows into a place that nourishes the bedrock values of free thought and expression, respect for human rights, support of strong and independent community institutions and opportunity for all citizens."

The Soros Foundation was pleased with the outcome of our visit, including a decree from the government of KYRGYZSTAN announcing that the Kyrgyz-American University is now an independent institution. Further steps to ensure compliance will be carefully followed.

I also talked about the alliance between KYRGYZSTAN and the U.S. to recognize excellence in teaching through the Teaching Excellence Awards, which I announced -- a program that brings teachers from our two countries together.

UZBEKISTAN

In Tashkent I had the third of my meetings with Central Asian leaders on the same day, this one with President Karimov (who would accompany me on much of my visit, including my trip to Samarkand). President Karimov stressed the "great importance" of my visit, and how much Uzbekistan appreciated U.S. interest in their country and America's leading role in the world. Uzbekistan attached importance to having a "strategic relationship" with the U.S. and a broader and deeper U.S. presence, with continued U.S. assistance. With its unique position along the ancient Silk Road, Uzbekistan confronts the challenge of preserving its rich cultural and religious heritage, as well as the challenge of building a new democracy.

During my visit, I sought to highlight the importance of programs between the governments of our two countries, which are providing the tools of opportunity to the Uzbek people, particularly women and young people.

I was privileged to inaugurate the Women's Wellness Center in Tashkent, a partnership between the Tashkent Medical Institute and the University of Illinois at Chicago. The partnership, supported by the American International Health Alliance and USAID, includes neonatology and perinatal medicine as well as education and hospital management. I told the audience gathered there that a few months ago I had the opportunity to launch the 500th American humanitarian airlift to the NIS. That airlift brought \$22 million in supplies to Uzbekistan, of which \$2 million went to the Tashkent Medical Institute.

I also held a roundtable with professional and business women in Tashkent to learn about the important work they were doing through NGOs on a range of issues from small business development to combating domestic violence.

At the University of World Economy and Diplomacy, I participated in an exchange with students who had taken part in the Bradley High School Exchange Program. The program, which is remarkably cost-effective and significant in building a new generation of democratic leaders, provides the opportunity for thousands of students from the NIS to come to America each year to live with American families, to attend American schools and deepen their understanding of American culture and society. The program yields immeasurable results; in my "Q&A" exchange with the students, I saw first-hand the confident, committed, articulate friends

of America that the program has created.

In visiting Samarkand and Bukhara, I sought to promote the importance of cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, and to underscore religious freedom. I told the people of Samarkand that I had come to learn about their rich past and rich culture, and also about the deeply rooted traditions of respect for religious and ethnic differences which have enabled this culture to flourish for so many generations. I was struck during my visit by the beauty of Uzbekistan's places of worship. What made the sharpest impression on me, however, was their proximity. Muslims, Christians and Jews following their faith in the same neighborhoods.

I visited the Jewish synagogue in Bukhara -- home of the world's oldest Jewish community outside the Middle East. The rabbi told me that the government had restored religious freedom and encouraged religious and cultural tolerance. Bukhara is also the seat of Naqshbandi Sufism, a Muslim movement that respects other traditions while at the same time rejecting extremism. I was very touched and honored when I met the mullah at the mosque in Bukhara and he expressed the hope that the relations between our two countries would grow deeper and stronger.

In Bukhara, I also met with a group of high school students of Uzbek, Tajik and Russian backgrounds in a school where Peace Corps volunteers are working. Like the Bradley Scholars, these young people spoke in flawless English and exhibited great confidence and interest in the U.S.

After my visit to Bukhara, President Karimov joined me on a tour of the ancient monuments of Samarkand and introduced me at my speech to religious leaders on cultural respect. President Karimov spoke movingly as a Muslim about the importance of religious freedom and ethnic tolerance and the lessons of this ancient place where people of many different traditions live peacefully. President Karimov, who grew up in Samarkand, said people often took for granted the numbers of different peoples living together.

I concluded my own speech by saying:

"I'm confident that the tradition of respect and tolerance that has stood this land so well for so many generations has better prepared you to face the challenges that lie ahead... You have much to teach the world about diversity. For centuries, the ancient Silk Road took the people of Central Asia to new worlds rich in commerce and culture. Today, you're traveling this road again, only this time in a different direction. For new worlds of freedom and democracy. Though the journey is hard and the horizon may at times seem distant, I hope you will take faith in the fact that the President and people of the United States will walk with you every step of the way. We are proud to be your friends and partners on this journey to democracy."

RUSSIA

Yekaterinburg

Much of my schedule in Yekaterinburg was designed to accommodate Mrs. Yeltsin's preferences. Mrs. Yeltsin accompanied me throughout my visit to this city where she and the President were students and lived the greater part of their married lives. I toured the Bonum Center, which provides rehabilitation programs for disabled children, participated in a lunch at the Governor's Residence, and attended the opening performance of the Urals Philharmonic (which, thanks to the intervention of our consulate, participated in a U.S. program on arts management to help them learn how to diversify their support, including gaining corporate support). At a private dinner with Mrs. Yeltsin and members of our delegation, there was a warm exchange extended over several rounds of toasts and candid conversation that reinforced our friendship and commitment to Russia's success as a democracy.

My major public event in Yekaterinburg was a "town meeting" sponsored by the Urals Women's Association at the Urals Polytechnic University. Mrs. Yeltsin and I met with several hundred representatives of women's NGOs and university students. In what was a rare opportunity for them, the women peppered Mrs. Yeltsin with questions and criticisms about the pace of reform and the lack of social supports. Mrs. Yeltsin conducted herself impressively and stayed on for a lengthy period to speak individually to the women. In my remarks, I underscored the importance of NGOs and civic participation:

"I am a very big supporter of non-governmental organizations and the roles they play in building and sustaining strong democracies. I think women's organizations are especially important in the world today, because so many women are facing new and different challenges than the ones faced by our mothers and grandmothers. We think that these women's 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... 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 efforts that bring women together to do all kinds of work at what we call the grass-roots level, person to person."

I also announced that USAID will be increasing funds to support NGOs that are combating domestic violence. In addition, a joint U.S.-Russian conference will be convened sometime in 1998 to share models about how our countries can best work together to confront domestic violence.

I was struck by the plea from one of the women for more opportunities to interact with American NGOs so they could learn about programs that would serve as models to promote greater women's political participation. Another woman, who represented the Methodist Church,

wanted to know of ways that churches could be more effectively engaged to help disadvantaged families. Grass-roots programs supported by our government serve a pressing need and should be expanded to develop greater local NGO capabilities and sustainability.

Novosibirsk

I hoped that my visit to Siberia would send a strong signal about the importance of the region in building Russia's democracy and new economy. Everywhere I went, I was greeted by large crowds of friendly Russian families who appeared genuinely thrilled that I had come to Siberia.

In a speech at Akademgorodok, I highlighted the fact that while the academic institution had previously focused on winning the Cold War, our two countries are now working side by side to use science, technology and education in the service of freedom, prosperity and democracy. I told them that:

I know that this time of transition...has not been easy for any sector of society. And I know that here in Siberia and...here in this academic complex it has caused great difficulty for many. Scientists and researchers with expertise and years of education that earned them status and security now face uncertain futures. The questions that I am sure are being asked within these halls include: whether or not the skills that were acquired in the past will sustain in life and profession tomorrow.

We see the same questions being asked in our education system in my country as well as yours. In my country, we are struggling with how we try to provide higher education opportunities to all of our students, regardless of their backgrounds, 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 text books and modernize classrooms for the information age, how to ensure that teachers receive the pay and 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

...Those of you in this room -- scientists 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."

I also talked about how our government is working in partnership with Russia's to carry out educational reforms:

"Through the United States Information Agency, my country supports a wide range of educational initiatives -- from providing updates textbooks for students to backing educational exchange programs to sharing teaching techniques from American schools. We offer training programs in business, law and journalism. Peace Corps volunteers are helping teach English and an American business center is working to train managers.

We've joined with Russian and Ukrainian aeronautics companies to produce commuter aircraft, the first of which rolled off the assembly line this month. I am pleased that this effort also had the support of the Trade Development Agency and the Export-Import Bank.

I later met with three generations of a family (which I referenced above) and learned how the changes taking place in Russian society were greeted more negatively by the older generation and far less so by their children and grandchildren. Again, I heard first-hand how important exchange programs are enabling Russians to visit the U.S. and learn important values about democracy, technical skills and our partnership to take home.

I also visited the Archeology and Ethnography Museum in Novosibirsk which includes in its holdings the preserved bodies and clothes of a prehistoric mummified Siberian couple. The museum is hoping to mount an exhibition at the Reading Pennsylvania Public Museum; the American museum, however, has not raised adequate levels of funds to date. Ambassador Collins has encouraged assistance to this worthy joint project and we are helping to explore options.

My last meeting in Novosibirsk was with Governor Mukha, who told me about his efforts to enhance the lives of the youth in Siberia.

UKRAINE

My last stop was the city of L'viv in the western region of Ukraine, the region to which large numbers of Ukrainian-Americans trace their roots. Again, my schedule was designed to highlight America's commitment to Ukraine's democratic transformation, our commitment to grassroots NGO development, especially among women, our helping to meet emergency health care needs, and the importance of religious tolerance. Mrs. Kuchma accompanied me for most of my visit.

At the Neonatal Resuscitation Center I was able to show the critical difference that the USAID hospital partnership program is making, in this case with the Henry Ford Health Center.

in Detroit. Since the partnership began, infant mortality has been reduced by 30%. Clearly, this is a wonderful model that works. I was pleased to learn that the Ministry of Health is working with USAID, AIHA and the Henry Ford Health Center to establish centers like the one in L'viv throughout Ukraine. Such efforts are critical, especially given the serious deterioration of the health care system in Ukraine. I was also pleased that our government intervened through Operation Provide Hope, working with the U.S.-based Children of Chernobyl Relief Fund and others, to make possible an airlift of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies, including two ambulances equipped with neonatal resuscitation equipment.

At the Gilad Synagogue, I witnessed a revitalized, strong Jewish community that recently opened a school for the growing number of Jewish children in L'viv. The Nazis had turned the temple into a horse stable and left a signature of bullet holes -- still visible -- in the ceiling of the beautiful building. The Soviets had used it as a warehouse. Today, people can once again pray and worship freely. I told the members of the community gathered there:

"One of the most important values of any democracy is the freedom of religion and respect for people of different religious faiths. I'm very impressed at the attitude of the Ukrainian government and people who are supporting such a strong commitment to religious freedom in this country. And so we can see the enthusiastic faces of the children who are learning and studying here -- and as the Rabbi so profoundly said, becoming both Jewish and Ukrainian, with great pride."

In a visit to the Memorial Honoring Victims of Communist Repression, I spoke to thousands of people gathered and told them that in their fight for freedom and for democracy, the American people would stand by them:

"Even in the face of unspeakable horrors, the people of Ukraine -- and others living under Soviet domination -- did not give up. Instead you found the best shield against communist oppression. You started down the road to democracy, including free and fair elections. But, the journey is far from over. Because democracy does not end with a constitution or a right to vote. As we have learned in my country, democracy is a never-ending struggle that we must grapple with every day...But, if we want democracy and freedom to thrive, then we must build a civil society where democratic values live in our hearts and minds, where people stand up for what's right, and where the rule of law, not the rule of crime and corruption, prevails.

Democracy will thrive only if we use our ethnic diversity as a force not to pull us apart, but rather to bring us together -- as you have done in Ukraine. It will thrive if women are full participants in every aspect of society...and if the people of Ukraine continue to forge an alliance of values with the democratic community of nations."

After I finished speaking, the crowd erupted into spontaneous singing of "Mnohaya Lita" ("May you have a long life"), which is usually reserved for family and close friends. It is worth

noting that in his remarks the Mayor of L'viv publicly praised the work of USAID in Ukraine and said that L'viv is where it is today due to the help of USAID.

I also visited St. George's Cathedral -- the seat of Ukrainian Catholicism. For decades during Soviet rule, the church had been driven underground, but today it is a vibrant community which houses a special ministry to people with disabilities who were once relegated to the margins of society. The Bishop told me that the reference in my speech to the important role that women must play in all spheres of Ukrainian society was critical to the future of the country and he thanked me.

My final appearance was a speech to a capacity crowd at the L'viv Opera House, where I was introduced in Ukrainian by my Chief of Staff. Her appearance provided Ukraine with a tangible symbol of the contributions of Ukrainian-Americans to American society, as well as their efforts to help in Ukraine's democratic transition. The theme of my speech was the voices of women and young people, the voices of people throughout Ukraine who were speaking the new language of freedom and democracy, and turning their ideas into concrete action. I spoke particularly about the importance of building a civil society:

"Neither the rule of law nor the free market can be sustained in isolation. If we do not have democracy, we cannot rest. If we do not have a free market, we cannot rest. And if we do not have the space between what the market does and what the government should not do -- the civil society -- we cannot rest. All are indispensable to the blessings of liberty and prosperity.

In this space resides family and community life, religious traditions, and participation in voluntary associations. For democracy depends on individuals truly believing that they have a role to play in the life of their country. It depends on people choosing -- not being compelled to -- but choosing to participate. And it depends on seeing to it that these habits of the heart are passed from one generation to the next.

Whether you are gathering in civic associations, voluntary efforts to help others, places of worship, or even in your neighbor's home, you are strengthening civil society and making it clear that the most important person in any democracy is the citizen. Governments cannot be serious about democracy unless they recognize and work with non-governmental organizations."

And I concentrated on the role of women:

"Clearly, democracy depends on people's choosing to participate, but it also depends on their being allowed to participate. And that's especially important for women. This is a concern all over the world, but it has a particular sharpness here. For the legacy of communism has placed special strains on women. Especially in the old state structures, too many women are the first to lose their jobs and the last to get new ones. Too many

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

January 14, 1997

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON *HRC*

CC: SECRETARY OF STATE MADELEINE ALBRIGHT
NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR SANDY BERGER
USAID ADMINISTRATOR BRIAN ATWOOD

RE: REPORT ON TRAVEL TO CENTRAL ASIA, RUSSIA AND
UKRAINE

I recently returned from a 9 day trip to Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Ukraine which I made at the request of the President and the State Department. The purpose of the trip was to bring a message of hope and solidarity from the American people that we will stand by the people of these countries during their historic transition, and to strengthen the ties between our country and these developing democracies. I also sought to stress the importance of people-to-people, grassroots efforts in building democracy throughout the region by fostering the development of a strong civil society, the establishment of democratic institutions, the promotion of non-governmental organizations, educational opportunity and a responsive social safety net. I also underscored the importance of the full participation of women in all sectors of society, and particularly as participants in creating and sustaining a strong civil society from the ground up.

The countries I visited in Central Asia have made remarkable strides to establish themselves as independent states with effective governing institutions. No longer tied solely to Moscow, these countries are now establishing links with one another and their neighbors, as well as with the broader international community. It was very clear during my visit, both in meeting with leaders and with the broader community, that relations with the United States are viewed as pivotal to these countries' development and progress.

In Russia and Ukraine, I did not visit the capitals (where I had previously traveled), but instead went to Yekaterinburg and Novosibirsk in Russia and Lviv in Ukraine -- thereby recognizing the importance of regional and local institutions in developing democratic governance and vibrant economies. The generational process of the transition was starkly illustrated when I met with a three-generation family in Siberia. The representatives of the older

generation had been long associated with the "Academic City;" the grandfather was employed as a mathematician -- respected for his academic achievement -- and he and his wife had traveled throughout the former Soviet Union. He told me that he had heard my speech earlier at the University and noted that he agreed with the point I had made about a survey which showed that the majority of Russians over the age of 65 think that things had gotten worse over the past year, while younger people think that they have gotten better. He felt that his life was now less predictable and his wife added that educational and intellectual achievement are no longer valued. Now, she said, "everyone is trying to sell something and only a few are buying." Their daughters, on the other hand, had traveled to the U.S., spoke English and were anticipating a brighter future. I believe the transition will require patience on the part of citizens of the NIS countries and the U.S. To underscore this point, I said in Ukraine:

As Americans have learned through the years, democracy is a never-ending struggle. We became a 'newly independent state' in 1776, and for the past 221 years our democracy has been a work in process. It took us more than 10 years to draft a constitution; 89 years to rid our nation of slavery; 144 years to give women the vote; and 188 years to make all our citizens equal under the law.

The critical difference, of course, is that the modern world is much less forgiving. With global communications and with a global economy, everything moves at a much faster pace; and countries and societies must reform more quickly in order to take their rightful place in such a new world.

KEY CONCLUSIONS

Before I provide details of my trip on a country-by-country basis, I would like to share some general conclusions.

Importance of U.S. Assistance

The trip reaffirmed many of the basic principles of our assistance programs. We must continue to recognize that despite the progress that has been made, the transition has been difficult and painful for many, particularly women. Different sectors of the society, including health care, education, and the environment are seriously stressed. The U.S. cannot expect democracy to take root in the region without a serious commitment of public and private resources. As with previous trips I have been privileged to take, I saw firsthand how American assistance through USAID, USIA and NIS programs contribute to improving the lives of people and to achieving our broader foreign policy objectives. Again I saw how effective USAID's hospital partnership program is in leveraging a small public contribution into significant contributions in American medical assistance and medical training and equipment. In Almaty and Tashkent -- where hospitals have partnerships with American hospitals in Tucson and

Chicago respectively -- I inaugurated women's wellness clinics which are providing comprehensive health care to women for the first time. In Lviv, I met a mother who thanked America, through me, for saving her baby daughter's life, because of a neonatal resuscitation center made possible by a partnership with the Henry Ford Health Center in Detroit.

In Kyrgyzstan, I heard firsthand how USAID support to FINCA (the Foundation for International Community Assistance) was providing microcredit to hundreds of people and transforming their lives by enabling them to start small businesses and provide for their families. In Uzbekistan, I had a discussion with Bradley Scholars and met with Uzbek students in Bukhara who attended a Peace Corps-assisted school. In both cases, I saw what living in and learning about the U.S. can mean to the development of a new generation of leaders for these societies.

As we stay engaged in this region, I believe that we must focus our programs in even greater emphasis on having direct impact on people to ease their transitional difficulties; to increase our credibility as a caring people; and to give hope and confidence to those going through this process. We should gear our programs to women, youth and small business enterprise, all of which are critical to democratic transformation. We should also build on and expand the "Partnership for Freedom" initiative which is designed to promote economic growth, particularly through small business in the regions and to develop civil society through humanitarian assistance, partnerships, work with non-governmental organizations, exchanges and training.

U.S. foreign policy goals in the NIS will be served if we work to create a broader consensus for engagement by Americans and American organizations in the NIS. Greater engagement could bolster reforms and reformers in the NIS, and increase support for American policies and priorities. USG assistance and private American activities already foster deepened engagement, but we can better leverage USG assistance to the extent even more private American entities and persons get engaged on their own.

Public Education at Home

I hope my trip will in some small way help to educate the American people about the importance of America's active and sustained engagement. We need to remind ourselves that only 6 years ago the countries I visited were living under stifling Soviet rule. I am convinced that one of the most important things the Administration can do to ensure a successful transition to democracy in the NIS to help the American public, Congress and the corporate and non-profit sectors to understand why American engagement by all sectors of our society in this region is critical to the interests of the United States.

Americans need to be reminded that after having spent trillions of dollars to defend ourselves against communism, we must do what is necessary to maximally insure the transformation of NIS countries to market democracy. This is as much a national security interest as any dollar we spend as part of our defense budget. Building long-term durable ties

between our peoples will help ensure the transition to market democracy and thereby contribute to our own national security.

Women

Women are central to efforts to build democracy, support economic reform and provide for responsive social structures, particularly through NGO development. Women's participation in all sectors of these societies must remain a priority for us.

In Russia, at a town meeting with women-run NGOs, the women plead for opportunities to meet with their American counterparts to learn how to address the challenges of building a civil society. In Kazakhstan, I addressed Central Asian women gathered for a conference on women in politics, who are the "vital voices" of democracy. I saw precisely how such gatherings, co-sponsored by our government, can play a catalytic role in empowering NGOs. I was pleased to be able to announce a new U.S. partnership for an upcoming conference in Moscow on family violence and a new initiative to fight the trafficking of women in Ukraine. Both initiatives will help citizens learn how to address pressing social problems.

Democracy without the full participation of women is a contradiction in terms. Too often, in this region, the transition to democracy has placed severe burdens on women. Too many women have been the first to lose their jobs and the last to get new ones.

In Tashkent, Uzbekistan, I spoke to a group of women leaders. One woman I met was Marfua Tokhtahodjeva, the President of the Women's Resource Center, which provides legal support and educates women on their rights. Her organization has received grant support from USAID through the Counterpart Consortium and the Eurasia Foundation. She told me, "I've learned that the more active you are as a citizen, the more empowered you will be; and the country will be better off as well." As I said in my address to the Central Asian Conference on Women in Politics in Almaty:

Because this conference is about women and politics, I want to speak with you about how politics can help us bring about this new world. But I want to discuss politics in a very specific way. When I say politics, I don't just mean electing women to every level of government -- although that is vitally important. I'm talking about the most important role of politics in a democracy, that is, our role as citizens. The contributions we make to civil society. After all, politics at its most basic is what we do when we come together to accomplish common goals. Whether we gather in non-governmental organizations, voluntary organizations, or in each other's homes, we make it clear that the most important person in a democracy is the citizen.

Religious Freedom and Ethnic Tolerance

Democracy depends also on freedom of religion and respect for people of different religions - another theme I stressed during my trip.

In Uzbekistan and Ukraine, I visited Jewish synagogues and met with members of the congregations. The Jewish community in Bukhara traces its roots to ancient times and is the world's oldest community outside the Middle East. The Government of Uzbekistan has restored religious freedom and has encouraged religious and cultural tolerance. Bukhara is also the seat of Naqshandi Sufism and Muslim is the dominant religion. I met with children at a school in Bukhara who were of Uzbek, Tajik and Russian backgrounds.

In Ukraine I visited the Gilad Synagogue and was impressed with the attitude of the Ukrainian government and people who are supporting such a strong commitment to religious freedom. And after decades of hardship, the Jewish community in Lviv opened a Jewish school that now serves almost 200 children.

Next Steps

I have already met with members of the Administration who lead our foreign policy and assistance efforts in the region. We have discussed a series of future options, including the establishment of an interagency effort to develop initiatives to strengthen USG engagement and to encourage more involvement by American NGOs, foundations, businesses and academic institutions for the development of civil society in the NIS, in all dimensions. I hope some of the issues this effort will examine will include: 1) what aspects of civil society in the NIS can best be fostered with U.S. support, and how; 2) how potential U.S. constituencies might be encouraged to engage more actively to help strengthen civil society, reform, and enduring partnerships; and 3) how USG technical assistance, public diplomacy, and educational and cultural exchanges can work together more effectively with private U.S. organizations and businesses to serve this goal.

I hope that when the President travels to Russia this year that consideration will be given for him to address a convening of Russian NGOs to stress the importance of building civil society and to travel outside of Moscow.

KAZAKHSTAN

My activities in Almaty, Kazakhstan (on November 11-12) reinforced the twin-fold message that women and NGOs are important components of civil society and that America cares about women and children and others who have been most severely affected by the transition to the market economy.

My first stop in Almaty was a meeting with youth leaders who are involved in a democracy-building project through peer education, leadership training and political participation. One young man told me that he never thought he could make a difference, but now, after working with the group, "I can see how much I can do." Because teachers and schools play an indispensable role in transmitting knowledge and values -- the currency of democracy -- I was glad to announce a new partnership between the governments of Kazakhstan and the U.S. to recognize outstanding teachers of English and American studies from around Kazakhstan. Award recipients will travel to the U.S. to learn about the U.S. educational system and American educators will travel to Kazakhstan.

I also helped inaugurate the Women's Wellness Center, the result of a partnership between USAID, the American International Health Alliance, the Tucson Medical Center in Arizona, and their counterparts in Almaty. The center focusses on education, screening and prevention. It will help the women of Kazakhstan safeguard themselves against sexually transmitted diseases, provide critical screening for cervical and breast cancer, provide pre-natal and counseling services for women in all stages of the reproductive health cycle, and offer a wide range of family planning services, helping Kazakhstan to continue to reduce its high rate of abortion (down 25% since 1992, when USAID began to work here). It will also provide resources to deal openly and candidly with the risks of alcohol, tobacco, poor nutrition, narcotics, and violence against women inside and outside the home. We know that better health for women also means better health for children, families and their communities. The USG's Operation Provide Hope was also responsible for an airlift of medical supplies that went to this center and others in Kazakhstan.

In Almaty, I had the opportunity to give the keynote speech to the Central Asian Conference on Women in Politics, which was co-sponsored by a local NGO, USIA and USAID. I talked about the lessons of democracy that women are teaching all over Central Asia and how vital these efforts are. Because a country's progress depends on the progress of women, the strength of its political system depends on the inclusion of women, the vibrancy of its economy depends on the full contributions of women, and the richness of a country's civic life depends on the participation of women. I told the participants:

We in the U.S. understand that the transition from communism to free markets and democracy has not been painless for women here or around the world, and that it would be unrealistic to pretend otherwise. Right now, too many women are the first to lose their jobs and the last to get

new ones. Too many women are barred by law, by tradition, or by ignorance from exercising their rights. Too many women are trapped in an endless cycle of poverty, unable to get access to education and credit. Too many women are overwhelmed by the stresses they have in their lives, as they try to do more and more with fewer and fewer hours. Too many women live in fear of violence, including violence at the hands of family members. For them, home offers no refuge, the law no protection, and public opinion no sympathy. And, through all of this, not enough women are sitting at the table when decisions are made about their lives and their families.

This must change. Yet, while the oppressive structures of communism have been torn down, the political, judicial and economic organizations that protect women's rights in a democracy are just now being constructed. That is why this conference comes at such an important time. It is enabling us to share practical ideas to advance the role of women in the political, economic and social lives of their countries. It is showing us that when we embrace our rights and live up to our responsibilities, when we confront problems head on, we find solutions. And the United States is proud to be your partner as you face these challenges.

At the Conference, I was pleased to be able to announce that the U.S. would be increasing our support to women's NGOs working to build democracy in the region.

While in Almaty, I also had the opportunity to meet with President Nazarbayev.

KYRGYZSTAN

Although my visit to Kyrgyzstan was sandwiched between stops in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, I believe the visit was vitally important to future relations between our two countries. My first event, at the airport in Bishkek, highlighted the arrival of the Operation Provide Hope airlift, which carried tons of humanitarian aid donated by U.S. businesses and NGOs. The airlift coincided with my visit and brought more than \$2 million in pharmaceuticals for hospitals in Bishkek and Osh, as well as clothing for children in these communities. In the audience at the event were Peace Corps volunteers stationed in KYRGYZSTAN who would deliver the supplies, as well as representatives of U.S. NGOs like CitiHope, who made significant contributions to the airlift. Mrs. Akayev, the First Lady of KYRGYZSTAN, welcomed me at the airport and in her remarks underscored the importance of the airlift and expressed her country's gratitude to the American people. I also met with representatives of NGOs working in Kyrgyzstan; in my remarks I mentioned their importance in building a strong

civil society.

During my meeting with President Akayev, we were joined by women leaders active in his cabinet and in the Parliament. He was anxious to express to me his recognition of the important role women need to play in the life of their country. At a private lunch that followed, President Akayev talked about the challenges his country confronts, given its geography and the economic transition. He also talked about the importance of cooperation with the U.S. and the potential for fundamentalist activity, which at this point does not pose a problem.

In the village of Novo Puvlovka, I visited an open-air market run by local shopkeepers. Most of the merchants were women and most had been the recipients of micro-credit from the Village Bank and Finca International (which in turn is funded in part by a grant from USAID). I met with several representatives of village groups that had received loans. As state-supported employment has collapsed in the transition to democracy and a market economy, women have been the first to lose their jobs and often the last to be re-employed. However, the women I met (including a teacher who had to give up her profession because she, like so many educators, had not been paid for some time) were able to provide for themselves and their families, thanks to the availability of micro-credit. The micro-lending system has worked successfully in Kyrgyzstan where over 600 "Village Banks" have lent over \$2 million since 1994, with a repayment rate of 98% that would be the envy of any commercial bank. Once again, I saw firsthand the power of micro enterprise and the importance of USAID's investment in micro-credit, and the role it is playing in poverty alleviation, the creation of small businesses and economic reform.

Because education is central to building civil society, to the health of democracy and for the success of a country's economy, I participated in a ceremony with President Akayev at the Kyrgyz-American University to lay the groundwork for an independent university. The Soros Foundation and the U.S. government, through USIA, have supported this project. Prior to my participation, there were concerns raised by the Soros Foundation that the independence of the University was being compromised by the government. In my remarks I stressed the importance of a truly independent university:

We look forward to reaching a framework agreement with you that will define the university's independence -- and thereby assure its continued support. It is only as an independent center of learning that a university can fulfill its mission to open the minds of students, teach them to think critically, and inspire them to make a difference in the future.

We strongly endorse the role of the Open Society Institute as a strong and effective advocate for democracy in Kyrgyzstan and throughout the world. We are hopeful that we can work together with the Open Society Institute in the context of a truly independent university.

We hope that the Kyrgyz-American University grows into a place that

nourishes the bedrock values of free thought and expression, respect for human rights, support of strong and independent community institutions and opportunity for all citizens.

The Soros Foundation was pleased with the outcome of our visit, including a decree from the government of Kyrgyzstan announcing that the Kyrgyz-American University is now an independent institution. Further steps to ensure compliance will be carefully followed.

I also talked about the alliance between Kyrgyzstan and the U.S. to recognize excellence in teaching through the Teaching Excellence Awards, which I announced -- a program that brings teachers from our two countries together.

UZBEKISTAN

In Tashkent I had the third of my meetings with Central Asian leaders on the same day, this one with President Karimov (who would accompany me on much of my visit, including my trip to Samarkand). President Karimov stressed the "great importance" of my visit, and how much Uzbekistan appreciated U.S. interest in their country and America's leading role in the world. Uzbekistan attached importance to having a "strategic relationship" with the U.S. and a broader and deeper U.S. presence, with continued U.S. assistance. With its unique position along the ancient Silk Road, Uzbekistan confronts the challenge of preserving its rich cultural and religious heritage, as well as the challenge of building a new democracy.

During my visit, I sought to highlight the importance of programs between the governments of our two countries, which are providing the tools of opportunity to the Uzbek people, particularly women and young people.

I was privileged to inaugurate the Women's Wellness Center in Tashkent, a partnership between the Tashkent Medical Institute and the University of Illinois at Chicago. The partnership, supported by the American International Health Alliance and USAID, includes neonatology and perinatal medicine as well as education and hospital management. I told the audience gathered there that a few months ago I had the opportunity to launch the 500th American humanitarian airlift to the NIS. That airlift brought \$22 million in supplies to Uzbekistan, of which \$2 million went to the Tashkent Medical Institute.

I also held a roundtable with professional and business women in Tashkent to learn about the important work they were doing through NGOs on a range of issues from small business development to combating domestic violence.

At the University of World Economy and Diplomacy, I participated in an exchange with students who had taken part in the Bradley High School Exchange Program. The program, which is remarkably cost-effective and significant in building a new generation of democratic

leaders, provides the opportunity for thousands of students from the NIS to come to America each year to live with American families, to attend American schools and deepen their understanding of American culture and society. The program yields immeasurable results; in my "Q&A" exchange with the students, I saw first-hand the confident, committed, articulate friends of America that the program has created.

In visiting Samarkand and Bukhara, I sought to promote the importance of cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, and to underscore religious freedom. I told the people of Samarkand that I had come to learn about their rich past and rich culture, and also about the deeply rooted traditions of respect for religious and ethnic differences which have enabled this culture to flourish for so many generations. I was struck during my visit by the beauty of Uzbekistan's places of worship. What made the sharpest impression on me, however, was their proximity. Muslims, Christians and Jews following their faith in the same neighborhoods.

I visited the Jewish synagogue in Bukhara -- home of the world's oldest Jewish community outside the Middle East. The rabbi told me that the government had restored religious freedom and encouraged religious and cultural tolerance. Bukhara is also the seat of Naqshbandi Sufism, a Muslim movement that respects other traditions while at the same time rejecting extremism. I was very touched and honored when I met the mullah at the mosque in Bukhara and he expressed the hope that the relations between our two countries would grow deeper and stronger.

In Bukhara, I also met with a group of high school students of Uzbek, Tajik and Russian backgrounds in a school where Peace Corps volunteers are working. Like the Bradley Scholars, these young people spoke in flawless English and exhibited great confidence and interest in the U.S.

After my visit to Bukhara, President Karimov joined me on a tour of the ancient monuments of Samarkand and introduced me at my speech to religious leaders on cultural respect. President Karimov spoke movingly as a Muslim about the importance of religious freedom and ethnic tolerance and the lessons of this ancient place where people of many different traditions live peacefully. President Karimov, who grew up in Samarkand, said people often took for granted the numbers of different peoples living together.

I concluded my own speech by saying:

I'm confident that the tradition of respect and tolerance that has stood this land so well for so many generations has better prepared you to face the challenges that lie ahead... You have much to teach the world about diversity. For centuries, the ancient Silk Road took the people of Central Asia to new worlds rich in commerce and culture. Today, you're traveling this road again, only this time in a different direction. For new worlds of freedom and democracy. Though the journey is hard and the horizon may

at times seem distant, I hope you will take faith in the fact that the President and people of the United States will walk with you every step of the way. We are proud to be your friends and partners on this journey to democracy.

RUSSIA

Yekaterinburg

Much of my schedule in Yekaterinburg was designed to accommodate Mrs. Yeltsin's preferences. Mrs. Yeltsin accompanied me throughout my visit to this city where she and the President were students and lived the greater part of their married lives. I toured the Bonum Center, which provides rehabilitation programs for disabled children, participated in a lunch at the Governor's Residence, and attended the opening performance of the Urals Philharmonic (which, thanks to the intervention of our consulate, participated in a U.S. program on arts management to help them learn how to diversify their support, including gaining corporate support). At a private dinner with Mrs. Yeltsin and members of our delegation, there was a warm exchange extended over several rounds of toasts and candid conversation that reinforced our friendship and commitment to Russia's success as a democracy.

My major public event in Yekaterinburg was a "town meeting" sponsored by the Urals Women's Association at the Urals Polytechnic University. Mrs. Yeltsin and I met with several hundred representatives of women's NGOs and university students. In what was a rare opportunity for them, the women peppered Mrs. Yeltsin with questions and criticisms about the pace of reform and the lack of social supports. Mrs. Yeltsin conducted herself impressively and stayed on for a lengthy period to speak individually to the women. In my remarks, I underscored the importance of NGOs and civic participation:

I am a very big supporter of non-governmental organizations and the roles they play in building and sustaining strong democracies. I think women's organizations are especially important in the world today, because so many women are facing new and different challenges than the ones faced by our mothers and grandmothers. We think that these women's 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...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 efforts that bring

women together to do all kinds of work at what we call the grass-roots level, person to person.

I also announced that USAID will be increasing funds to support NGOs that are combating domestic violence. In addition, a joint U.S.-Russian conference will be convened sometime in 1998 to share models about how our countries can best work together to confront domestic violence.

I was struck by the plea from one of the women for more opportunities to interact with American NGOs so they could learn about programs that would serve as models to promote greater women's political participation. Another woman, who represented the Methodist Church, wanted to know of ways that churches could be more effectively engaged to help disadvantaged families. Grass-roots programs supported by our government serve a pressing need and should be expanded to develop greater local NGO capabilities and sustainability.

Novosibirsk

I hoped that my visit to Siberia would send a strong signal about the importance of the region in building Russia's democracy and new economy. Everywhere I went, I was greeted by large crowds of friendly Russian families who appeared genuinely thrilled that I had come to Siberia.

In a speech at Akademgorodok, I highlighted the fact that while the academic institution had previously focused on winning the Cold War, our two countries are now working side by side to use science, technology and education in the service of freedom, prosperity and democracy. I told them that:

I know that this time of transition...has not been easy for any sector of society. And I know that here in Siberia and...here in this academic complex it has caused great difficulty for many. Scientists and researchers with expertise and years of education that earned them status and security now face uncertain futures. The questions that I am sure are being asked within these halls include: whether or not the skills that were acquired in the past will sustain in life and profession tomorrow.

We see the same questions being asked in our education system in my country as well as yours. In my country, we are struggling with how we try to provide higher education opportunities to all of our students, regardless of their backgrounds, 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 text books and modernize classrooms for the information

age, how to ensure that teachers receive the pay and 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.

...Those of you in this room -- scientists 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.

I also talked about how our government is working in partnership with Russia's to carry out educational reforms:

Through the United States Information Agency, my country supports a wide range of educational initiatives -- from providing updates textbooks for students to backing educational exchange programs to sharing teaching techniques from American schools. We offer training programs in business, law and journalism. Peace Corps volunteers are helping teach English and an American business center is working to train managers.

We've joined with Russian and Ukrainian aeronautics companies to produce commuter aircraft, the first of which rolled off the assembly line this month. I am pleased that this effort also had the support of the Trade Development Agency and the Export-Import Bank.

I later met with three generations of a family (which I referenced above) and learned how the changes taking place in Russian society were greeted more negatively by the older generation and far less so by their children and grandchildren. Again, I heard first-hand how important exchange programs are enabling Russians to visit the U.S. and learn important values about democracy, technical skills and our partnership to take home.

I also visited the Archeology and Ethnography Museum in Novosibirsk which includes in its holdings the preserved bodies and clothes of a prehistoric mummified Siberian couple. The museum is hoping to mount an exhibition at the Reading Pennsylvania Public Museum; the American museum, however, has not raised adequate levels of funds to date. Ambassador Collins has encouraged assistance to this worthy joint project and we are helping to explore options.

My last meeting in Novosibirsk was with Governor Mukha, who told me about his efforts to enhance the lives of the youth in Siberia.

UKRAINE

My last stop was the city of L'viv in the western region of Ukraine, the region to which large numbers of Ukrainian-Americans trace their roots. Again, my schedule was designed to highlight America's commitment to Ukraine's democratic transformation, our commitment to grassroots NGO development, especially among women, our helping to meet emergency health care needs, and the importance of religious tolerance. Mrs. Kuchma accompanied me for most of my visit.

At the Neonatal Resuscitation Center I was able to show the critical difference that the USAID hospital partnership program is making, in this case with the Henry Ford Health Center in Detroit. Since the partnership began, infant mortality has been reduced by 30%. Clearly, this is a wonderful model that works. I was pleased to learn that the Ministry of Health is working with USAID, AIHA and the Henry Ford Health Center to establish centers like the one in L'viv throughout Ukraine. Such efforts are critical, especially given the serious deterioration of the health care system in Ukraine. I was also pleased that our government intervened through Operation Provide Hope, working with the U.S.-based Children of Chernobyl Relief Fund and others, to make possible an airlift of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies, including two ambulances equipped with neonatal resuscitation equipment.

At the Gilad Synagogue, I witnessed a revitalized, strong Jewish community that recently opened a school for the growing number of Jewish children in L'viv. The Nazis had turned the temple into a horse stable and left a signature of bullet holes -- still visible -- in the ceiling of the beautiful building. The Soviets had used it as a warehouse. Today, people can once again pray and worship freely. I told the members of the community gathered there:

One of the most important values of any democracy is the freedom of religion and respect for people of different religious faiths. I'm very impressed at the attitude of the Ukrainian government and people who are supporting such a strong commitment to religious freedom in this country. And so we can see the enthusiastic faces of the children who are learning and studying here -- and as the Rabbi so profoundly said, becoming both Jewish and Ukrainian, with great pride.

In a visit to the Memorial Honoring Victims of Communist Repression, I spoke to thousands of people gathered and told them that in their fight for freedom and for democracy, the American people would stand by them:

Even in the face of unspeakable horrors, the people of Ukraine -- and others living under Soviet domination -- did not give up. Instead you found the best shield against communist oppression. You started down the road to democracy, including free and fair elections. But, the journey is

individuals truly believing that they have a role to play in the life of their country. It depends on people choosing -- not being compelled to -- but choosing to participate. And it depends on seeing to it that these habits of the heart are passed from one generation to the next.

Whether you are gathering in civic associations, voluntary efforts to help others, places of worship, or even in your neighbor's home, you are strengthening civil society and making it clear that the most important person in any democracy is the citizen. Governments cannot be serious about democracy unless they recognize and work with non-governmental organizations.

And I concentrated on the role of women:

Clearly, democracy depends on people's choosing to participate, but it also depends on their being allowed to participate. And that's especially important for women. This is a concern all over the world, but it has a particular sharpness here. For the legacy of communism has placed special strains on women. Especially in the old state structures, too many women are the first to lose their jobs and the last to get new ones. Too many women often live in fear of violence at the hands of family members. For them, home provides no refuge, the law no protection, and public opinion no sympathy. Too many women are prevented from getting proper health care -- either because quality care is not available or because they are simply unable to find the time, between family and work obligations, to care for themselves.

A country's progress depends on the progress of women. The strength of its political system depends on the inclusion of women. The vibrancy of its economy depends on the full contributions of women. Simply put, human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights.

I noted that it is a violation of human rights when women are trafficked and I announced that the United States Government, in cooperation with the European Union, will be working with NGOs in Ukraine to launch a new information campaign:

We want to reach women who may be in danger. And we want to inform law enforcement, consular officers and international organization so they can be on the look-out for and ultimately put a stop to this crime against humanity.

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