

Address Before the Appeal of Conscience Foundation  
by Strobe Talbott  
Ambassador-at-Large  
and Special Advisor to the Secretary of State  
for the New Independent States  
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Mr. Greenberg, Mr Zarb, Ambassador Duke, ladies and gentlemen, Your Eminences and Your Excellencies, thank you for the chance to join in this deeply moving event this evening. Let me also add, Mr. Whitehead, a word of thanks for that kind introduction. It is a special honor to share the podium with you this evening. Because as a government official and as a private citizen, you have contributed substantially to our country's dealings with both the old Soviet Union and the new Russia.

Mr. Whitehead, has, I am afraid stolen at least one bolt of my thunder this evening. Because I am indeed here on behalf of President Clinton from whom I bring greetings. I also bring greetings from our Secretary of State, Warren Christopher. I might add that I am joined by two colleagues from the administration, Nicholas Burns, Special Assistant to the President of the United States, and Senior Director of the National Security Counsel Staff for the New Independent States, and Ints Silins, our very able Ambassador to Latvia. And if you will pardon me, one other personal introduction. I'm told, although I haven't had a chance actually to see him this evening, that Jack Matlock is in the room. Jack was our Ambassador to the Soviet Union during the final days of that country, and was extraordinarily skillful in helping to guide US policy during that critical period. All of these colleagues join me in paying special homage to his Holiness Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia. As the spiritual leader of some 60 million believers, the Patriarch has the huge task of

helping his people define a new culture worthy of the great values of the Russia's Orthodox tradition. We wish him well in what truly is the Lord's work.

I also bring greetings from the President and the Secretary of State to Rabbi Arthur Schneier. He has devoted his life to the pursuit of religious freedom and respect for human rights among the people's of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

I would propose, that at the very core of what we are celebrating is a new harmony between what Rabbi Schneier and the Appeal of Conscience Foundation stand for, and what is happening in Russia today. Now that said, we all recognize that these are obviously suspenseful days, indeed suspenseful hours in Moscow. Many of you as you were preparing to come to this event tonight, heard, as I did, broadcast reports of gun fire around the Russian White House. Preliminary, and I stress, preliminary reports from our Embassy are that the situation remains tense, but stable. We can only hope that in the hours, days, weeks, months and indeed years ahead, the tension will recede and peace, civic peace will prevail. For civic peace is the necessary condition for civil rights, and for the free and fair elections that President Yeltsin has promised his people. For it is on that basis that our President, Bill Clinton, supports President Yeltsin. In no field has President Yeltsin's commitment to reform been more apparent and more significant than in the field of human rights. Under his leadership, the Russian government has made great progress in promoting respect for freedom of religion, expression, and movement. Scores of churches, synagogues and mosques have been returned to those who would worship there. New religious

schools are opening across the country to train the next generation of spiritual leaders. In the country-side, the village church -- with fresh coats of white-wash, gilt-work and icons restored -- has become, once again, a bulwark of community life.

Jewish culture, too, is also enjoying a renaissance in Russia. Rabbi Schneier is playing a key role in America and around the world in garnering support for this rebirth.

Now, we all recognize, of course, that much remains to be done. The Clinton Administration is working with the Russian Government to resolve remaining refusenik cases and to encourage the development in Russia of legal and bureaucratic mechanisms to guarantee for all Russian citizens the right to free emigration. Both President Clinton and Vice-President Gore, from their very first days in office, have committed themselves as an issue, both of principle and of policy objective to the return of the Lubavitcher archives to their rightful owners, the Schneerson family and the Lubavitch community.

It is good news and a great credit to Russia's reformists leaders, that anti-Semitism is no longer a policy sponsored subtly or otherwise by the State. However, we all recognize that that curse upon all humanity is stubborn and all too resilient. We recognize the potential for violence against Jews, and other minorities if economic conditions worsen in Russia or the other new states. Indeed that is one of many reasons why our administration has given such priority to the economic dimension of our partnership with the reformers. But while uncertainties, difficulties, and indeed, dangers clearly remain. I want to stress the positive point that for the first time in

history, we are able to work closely with, rather than against, the government in Moscow on all of these issues. And that is a great thing. I'd even say taking my cue from Arthur, that it is a miraculous thing. Now, one doesn't use the word miracle lightly, especially in the world of politics, and most especially, in the presence of rabbis and bishops, who are supposed to actually know something about these things. But it is, I think, the right word nonetheless.

Let me say just a bit more in a secular vein, which is where I should concentrate in any event. The Appeal of Conscience Foundation is truly an ecumenical organization. That word, "ecumenical", comes from the Greek meaning "of or from the whole world." President Clinton, Secretary Christopher and several of us who helped them in the conduct of their policies are here in New York for that most ecumenical of diplomatic events, the United Nations General Assembly.

Moreover, ecumenicalism is, roughly speaking, a synonym from the vocabulary of religion for a phrase that we use frequently when talking about politics, particularly the politics of Russia and the other New Independent States of the former Soviet Union. And that phrase is "inclusive democracy." The noun is, of course, the single most important word in the American language. That same word in Russian, "demokratiya", acquires new meaning and relevance with every passing day -- notably including, we hope, in the momentous seven days that have just passed, since last Tuesday when President Yeltsin took such bold action on behalf of democratization in Russia. Now, democracy you might say, is such a big idea -- such a difficult ideal to make real -- that it does not require any modifiers or qualifiers. Nonetheless, in

our dialogue with the New Independent States of the former Soviet Union, we do speak of inclusive democracy. We have added the adjective inclusive to express our hope that as the process of democratization continues, it will also continue to include, rather than exclude, minorities of all kinds, particularly ethnic and religious minorities.

Naturally, we were concerned in July when Russia's Supreme Soviet passed a bill that would restrict the ability of foreign religious groups to operate in Russia. We immediately made clear that such restrictions, if enacted, would violate Russia's international commitments to uphold freedom of religions and freedom of expression. In fact, we believe that those restrictions would also endanger democracy itself. Why? Because in a multi-ethnic, culturally and religiously diverse, melting-pot state like the Russian Federation -- or like the United States of America -- intolerance of any kind, especially institutionalized, officially sanctioned intolerance, is a threat not just to humanitarian values, but to social harmony; and therefore to the viability of the political system itself.

Fortunately, that was not just our view, but Boris Yeltsin's as well. He showed great courage in vetoing the original version of that bill on August 4th. And last week, he went several steps further and vetoed the entire Parliament. We all hope that by doing so, he has set the stage for the adoption of a new Russian constitution. That document already exists in draft, and what it says about freedom of religion is most encouraging. Article 27 guarantees to all citizens freedom of conscience and the right to profess any faith. It is our hope that once there is a new parliament,

President Yeltsin will be able to secure the passage of laws that will give legal force to those guarantees in the new constitution. We hope that a reformed Russian legal code will enshrine not only the freedom of religion, but respect for diversity in all of its manifestations, notably including ethnic diversity.

By the way, this is a point that we stress in our dialogues with all the New Independent States of the former Soviet Union, not just with Russia. As this Foundation knows, the United States has long considered the fate of non-Russians inside Russia to be an important item of business on the official agenda between Washington and Moscow. The Clinton Administration considers the fate of ethnic Russians outside of Russia also to be a legitimate part of our diplomatic agenda -- an appropriate as a subject for discussion with the governments of the other states that have emerged from the old USSR. Secretary Christopher stressed that point when he met for the first time with Foreign Minister Kozyrev in Geneva this past February.

Minister Kozyrev deserves more than a passing reference this evening, not just because he is here with us. He, like his President, has been a champion of what this Foundation, this Administration, and this country stand for. I think you had a vivid reminder of what he stands for just a few moments ago when he spoke from this lectern. Nor, is what you heard a few minutes ago, anything new from this splendid statesman and humanitarian. Almost exactly a year ago in an address before the General Assembly of the United Nations here in New York, Mr. Kozyrev proclaimed respect for human rights and religion to be a central principle of national and international life. Last May, at a crucial moment, he threw down the gauntlet to

racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism as, and I quote: "enemies of a 'stable civil society,' a rule-of-law state, such as Russia aspires to be."

Last April, just before meeting with Mr. Yeltsin in Vancouver, Bill Clinton, described our policy toward Russia, Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia and all the other New Independent States as that of building a "strategic alliance with post-Soviet, post-Communist reform." In this respect, Warren Christopher has a superb ally in Andrei Kozyrev, and Bill Clinton has a superb ally in Boris Yeltsin. We recognize that we are allied with them in a struggle that will last for a long time, that will have it ups and downs, zigs and zags, and set-backs, as well as its advances. A struggle that will proceed across a broad front, notably indeed centrally on the issues that are so important to this Foundation.

Last Tuesday, within hours of President Yeltsin's dramatic speech suspending the Supreme Soviet, President Clinton telephoned his friend, his ally, Boris. He did so for two purposes: first, to express America's support for Russian reform in this latest moment of truth; and second, to seek President Yeltsin's assurances that in this critical, difficult period ahead, the Russian Government will observe, protect and advance the principles of democracy. President Yeltsin provided those assurances with unmistakable sincerity and conviction, and in terms that I thought appropriate to share with you tonight, for they are a fitting conclusion, I believe, for my remarks.

"There will be no discrimination, said Boris Nikolayavich over the phone last Tuesday. Bill, I promise you there will be no discrimination." In the context of that particular conversation, President Yeltsin was referring to the freedom and openness

of the political process that will lead up to the elections on December 11/12. But in the context of the larger drama being played out in his country today, he might also have been expressing an overarching hope and an overarching promise -- not just for a new parliament but for a new Russia, in which truly there will be no discrimination. We share that hope and applaud that promise and we pray for its realization.