

I have to go. I'm sorry.  
Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11 a.m. on the South Grounds at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, who became Acting President on President Yeltsin's resignation; and Mr. Yeltsin's wife, Naina. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

### **Statement on the Resignation of President Boris Yeltsin of Russia**

*December 31, 1999*

Today President Yeltsin ends his historic tenure as Russia's first democratically elected President.

Under his leadership since 1991, the Russian people have faced the unprecedented challenge of creating new institutions and building a new life after decades of corrosive Communist rule. His lasting achievement has been dismantling that Communist system and building new political institutions under democratically elected leaders within a constitutional framework. The fact that Prime Minister Putin assumes responsibility today as acting President in accordance with the constitution is but the latest example of this achievement.

The relationship between the United States and Russia under President Yeltsin has produced genuine progress for both our people. Five thousand strategic nuclear weapons have been dismantled, and our nuclear weapons no longer are targeted at each other. We have worked together to eliminate nuclear weapons from the other states of the former Soviet Union. Russia has withdrawn its troops from the Baltic nations. Now its troops are serving alongside Americans to maintain the peace in the Balkans, and Russia was instrumental in achieving peace in Kosovo. We have also had our differences, such as on Chechnya. But President Yeltsin, and my starting point, has always been how Russia and America can work together to advance our common interests. In this spirit, I look forward to working with Acting President Putin as the Russian people begin the process of making the transition from one democratically elected President to another.

To President Yeltsin, let me convey my appreciation for the work we have done together. Hillary and I extend our warmest wishes to you and your family.

NOTE: In his statement, the President referred to Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, who became Acting President on President Yeltsin's resignation. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

### **Remarks at Opening Ceremonies of the "America's Millennium" Celebration**

*December 31, 1999*

Thank you very much. Thank you, good morning, Happy New Year. Thank you, Senator Daschle, to other Members of the Congress who are here. Thank you, Mayor Williams, for your kind comments to Hillary and to me and your outstanding leadership in this city. Thank you, Robert Pinsky, for being here today, and for opening the ears and eyes and hearts of so many young children to the wonders of poetry. Thank you, Dean Baxter. I want to thank the Children's Choir and the Military Band—they were wonderful today and the singing sergeants who have left. I want to thank Ellen Lovell and the members of our Millennial Council, and Terry McAuliffe and all those who made it possible for us to have all these wonderful events today. I also want to thank the Lord for this wonderful weather, so we all feel good being out here.

The New Millennium Choir sang "Rising Like the Sun." Their vitality and their voices are living proof that the light may be fading on the 20th century, but the Sun is still rising on America. Even though this is an opening ceremony, what we celebrate did not begin today, and it won't end tomorrow. Two years ago Hillary and I created the White House Millennium Council to bring Americans together, in her words, "to honor our past and imagine our future." Since then, she has hosted Millennium Evenings at the White House with some of our Nation's most gifted scholars and artists. And people all over the world have participated on the Internet. She has crisscrossed America to save our historical treasures, from Harriet Tubman's home