

The opportunities for co-operation between Russia and Canada in world affairs are greater now than ever before. We must not let them slip by at this of all times.

Ladies and gentlemen, throughout history merchants have preceded diplomats. Such was the case in Russia before 1917. The first treaties were trade treaties. And economic co-operation occupies centre stage in Russian-Canadian relations. Our people have goods to trade, and there are areas for co-operation. Russia is rich. All that is needed is an unbiased approach unhindered by preconceptions. Given such an approach, Russian-Canadian co-operation offers substantial benefits to both parties.

For three hours yesterday and an hour today, Prime Minister Mulroney and I took part in discussions. The Government of Canada proposed a very interesting idea for developing our relations, an idea that could serve as an example for other countries as well. We particularly appreciate this, knowing that Canada too is experiencing difficulties at present. I feel that the high degree of mutual trust which characterizes our personal relations with the Prime Minister allows us to feel confident that this co-operation, these new ideas will be realized.

Russia has set a firm course toward economic reform. We realize that every last market mechanism was eradicated over a period of more than 70 years. After three generations, we have lost the historical instincts we once had for business and private ownership. No one remembers what they mean. We introduced private ownership only half a year ago, including private ownership of land and ownership by foreign private investors.

Practically no one is left who remembers life before the revolution. We realize that the economy is being overhauled during a serious economic crisis, and consequently at a time when the civil peace is highly vulnerable. But it cannot be denied that substantial progress has been achieved in half a year. There have been real changes both in the economy itself and, more important, in people's consciousness.

The people are gradually rediscovering the creativity that was crushed by Communist ideas and ideologies.

Of course, we are currently going through the most painful period, especially this year. This is bitter medi-

cine. Unpopular measures, including price increases, must be adopted in order to shift from a planned economy to a market economy. However difficult this may be, we will not retreat.

Russians are a patient, stubborn people. With gritted teeth, they will overcome these temporary difficulties. They trust their President. They trust their government. They trust their Parliament. And that is very important.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Yeltsin: Every month, I find myself in various districts, regions and republics of Russia. There are 20 republics in Russia. And we have succeeded in signing a federative treaty. Blood is being spilled on Russia's doorstep, but inside Russia we have signed a treaty and preserved the civil peace without spilling a single drop of blood. Russia has remained united and indivisible throughout this period. That is very important to us.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Yeltsin: Russia's young government of reformers the President of the Russian Federation will support to the end. And it is practically impossible now to force him into retirement. I will not resign until my term expires in 1996. You will never catch me sick. I am extremely healthy. I will therefore support this government of reformers to the end.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Yeltsin: We took our first steps toward a market economy on January 1 of this year. The main one was the freeing of prices, and the government is prepared to take the reforms further. You know that before leaving on this official visit, I asked Parliament to confirm Mr. Gaidar, who is currently acting in my place, as Prime Minister of the Head of State of the Russian Federation. And he is only 36 years old. He is a bold, young reformer.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Yeltsin: One of the main principles for choosing people to serve in the government, as ministers or vice-president, besides considering their professional or business skills, is to select democrats and ensure that none of them is older than the President.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.