

Your presence in these precincts testifies to your faith in the solid basis of the friendly relations between our two countries and to our confidence in your courageous leadership.

We are all the more touched by your presence here today in that we know very well that you are required to be ubiquitous in order to respond to the exigencies of your post on the national and international levels.

As president of the young Russian federation, your leadership has been and remains preponderant to your people, as it does for the collectivity of nations.

Your remarks to us today confirm your indefatigable will to succeed in attaining your goals.

[Translation]

Mr. President, we are all aware of the balancing act you have to perform, caught as you are between attraction for the West and respect for the Russian soul.

Your great writers of the last century made us keenly aware of these differences between the two societies, both so rich in virtues and so laden with an uncounted heritage.

We remember Dostoyevsky, in particular, who in search of a fair balance between the pro-Western and pro-Slavic forces agreed to modernization for Russia if it respected the nation's traditions.

Like you, he worked for understanding of different cultures. In his tribute to Pushkin, he wrote, "Our vocation is European and universal. Is not being Russian, perfectly Russian, the same perhaps as being a brother to all men?"

[English]

In a historical continuity, Tolstoy and Chekov both called for the rejection of a completed past but on the condition that the characteristics of their ancestral customs be preserved. Then, as in our own century, it was the political system in place that was seen as bearing the blame for stagnation and frustrated hopes.

You, Mr. President, have had the courage to confront and repudiate the doctrinaires who were so mistaken about the nature of man.

Without renouncing for the people of your federation their rooted national traditions, you are bringing them into a universal current of liberty.

All the world remembers how you stood up (in every sense of the word) in front of the White House in Moscow, not quite a year ago, to defend liberty and democracy when they were threatened. We are convinced that the same democratic and courageous spirit will carry you forward in the future.

To borrow the language of a sport at which you excel, tennis, we want to wish you, in all your battles with adversity, a final score of game, set, and match.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker Charbonneau: Once more, Mr. President, we congratulate you on the eminent and challenging role to which you dedicate yourself in these critical years and we are grateful to you for sharing with us your main concerns and your intention to continue your work in space and time. We thank you and wish you good luck.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[English]

Mr. Speaker Fraser: Mr. President, Madam Yeltsina, Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker of the Senate, members of the Senate and the House of Commons, honoured and distinguished guests:

On behalf of all members of the House of Commons I take great pleasure in welcoming you today to this august Chamber.

[Translation]

The momentous changes which have reshaped the global political landscape over the last several years have left us facing new and daunting challenges. Perhaps no country is more acutely aware of this than the Russian Federation.

[English]

We are seeing today in Russia and the other new republics of the former Soviet Union one of the most remarkable transformations in history.

Communism is now a fading memory, and in its place have been planted the seeds of democracy. Among the new republics, Russia is taking the lead in sowing these seeds.

You have shown tremendous courage, Mr. President, in introducing bold economic reforms.