Secretary of State Warren Christopher Delivers Major U.S. Foreign Policy Address

On Wednesday, March 29, Indiana University was singularly honored to have been chosen as the site for a major foreign policy address by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who spoke about Russia and the Newly Independent States. Christopher acknowledged choosing IU's Bloomington campus because of its renowned area studies programs, particularly in Russian and East European studies. He also paid tribute to the foreign policy leadership of Indiana's congressional members, Senator Richard Lugar and Representative Lee Hamilton.

Christopher's address represents the first time that the Clinton administration has so clearly enunciated to the nation the reasons why the U.S. government must continue its relationship with Russia and the new republics and remain engaged in the process of their transformation into democratic states. In a thirty-minute speech delivered to a capacity audience in Indiana Memorial Union's Alumni Hall and televised live for a national audience, Christopher outlined the five major objectives in U.S. strategy toward the former Soviet republics.

First, the U.S. must be active in resolving a number of important security issues and proceed with the ratification of the START II treaty before the summit meeting in May. He stressed the importance of funding the Nunn-Lugar program to dismantle nuclear weapons and fight nuclear smuggling, stating that "full funding for Nunn-Lugar is vital to our nation's security," and adamantly cautioned against any nuclear cooperation between Russia and Iran. A second goal was to join with Russia in addressing such new global, transnational concerns as international crime, restricted energy resources, and environmental damage, and to work cooperatively in furthering such significant global ventures as space exploration.

Emphasizing the vital importance of democratic and economic reform and free elections, Christopher called on both the U.S. Senate and House to fully fund requests for carefully-targeted assistance programs promoting these interests. As his fourth point, he stated that the U.S. would reinforce the independence of the former Soviet states as peacefully emerging democracies, and deal with Russia as a pluralistic state. Finally, he outlined the President's strategy for building a stable, peaceful, and integrated Europe in which NATO would expand, with the relationship between Russia and NATO strengthened. "It is in Russia's interest," Christopher emphasized, "to participate constructively in the process of European integration."

At the conclusion of his address, the Secretary of State answered a number of questions from the audience, read by IU Student Association President Jeff Nowak, which had been collected and screened in advance. Later, Christopher praised the caliber of the questions, which he described as being every bit as tough as those asked by the Washington press corps.

IU President Myles Brand, who opened the auspicious occasion with a formal introduction of the secretary, closed the event by presenting Christopher with an IU sweatshirt and an invitation to return. Prior to his speech, Christopher was honored at a special reception hosted by President Brand and an official party composed of top IU administrators, IU trustees, and area studies directors and faculty, from whom he heard brief presentations of ongoing research in international studies.

Dina Spechler, an expert on Russian foreign policy, called the speech a balanced presentation of American policy, but cautioned on NATO expansion. Owen Johnson, Director of the Russian and East European Institute, spoke of the afterglow effect: "His visit calls attention to IU's general international strengths that have not been as much appreciated on the East Coast as they should be. . . . and it sheds positive light on IU." Dean for International Programs Patrick O'Meara stressed the benefits for the IU community to be able to hear such leaders in person and expected to see more prominent international figures coming to IU in the future.