

that he will work with the Baltics in a cooperative way, because it really is in Russia's interest to have free countries and democracies on her border. The more democracies on the border of a country, the more peaceful the country will be.

And so this is a bittersweet moment for a lot of people in America who are from the Baltics—a lot of Lithuanian Americans here, by the way—who, on the one hand, are really happy the United States defeated nazism, on the other hand, saw their homeland taken over by a repressive communist regime.

President's Previous Visit to Lithuania

Q. Mr. President, thank you. It was a pleasure.

The President. Great. And listen, I want to say one other thing: I want to thank the people of Lithuania for the warm reception Laura and I received the last time we were there. It was one of the great visits of my Presidency. I remember sitting in the town—standing in the town square, and it was very interesting, seeing a lot of older Lithuanians with tears in their eyes. I guess they never thought they'd see the day where the American President came. It touched my heart a lot. And then I saw a lot of young Lithuanians wondering what the heck the American President was all about—you know, they kind of—so it was a very touching visit.

Thank you.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 2:14 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast and was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 5. In his remarks, the President referred to President Valdas Adamkus of Lithuania; and President Vladimir Putin of Russia.

Interview With Estonian Television

May 4, 2005

60th Anniversary of the End of World War II in Europe

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for joining our viewers. Mr. President, do you understand and accept the reasons and explanations that two Baltic Presidents are not attending the celebrations in Moscow, 9th May?

The President. Yes, absolutely. First of all, I can understand the decision by your President and the President of Lithuania, as well as the President of Latvia. These are difficult decisions because—and they reflect the difficult times. And I honor those decisions. But I understand.

There's a lot of Americans who came—whose families were in the Baltics. And this is a bittersweet moment for them when you think about it. On the one hand, our country helped defeat fascism, and upon the defeat of fascism, they saw their homelands be taken over by a repressive ideology. And so I fully understand and, matter of fact, understood it to the point where I brought it up to President Putin when I saw him in Slovakia and just said, "You've got to understand this is going to create some sensitivities among our friends, among America's friends, Estonia and Lithuania and Latvia."

Democracy in the Baltic States

Q. It's quite strange situation now. The war is over for 60 years, and it's not still over. Whose fault is it? Whose represented—

The President. No, I appreciate that. Look, it's—I think it's time to move beyond fault and focus on the future. Now, that's easy for me to say because I didn't have any family members that were repressed or families divided. I didn't have to live under the yoke of communism. But I do believe that time will help heal the wounds.

And listen, the Baltics are doing great. Their economies are growing. They're getting stronger. Freedom is working. People are able to express themselves in the public square. Independent media can come and interview the President in the White House. I mean, it is a—these are exciting times. But I readily understand why it takes time to heal the wounds of the past.

Democracy in Russia

Q. Democracy and the human rights situation in Russia is quite worrying. Are you going to discuss this item during your visit to Moscow?

The President. Oh, of course. I have—first of all, I've got a relationship with President Putin that enables me to be able to have a frank discussion. He gave an interesting

speech the other day. The press tend to focus on a comment about the Soviet times, and of course, that obviously riled emotions in the Baltics. I understand that. But he also went on to talk about democracy. I thought it was interesting that he spent a lot of time on his big speech to the nation on democracy. I believe Russia's interest lie to her west. I believe that Russia, by embracing the values that we share, will be able to deal with the many problems that she has. Russia has got enormous problems.

And so, yes, of course, I'll talk to President Putin about that. And I will do so in a cooperative way, in a cooperative spirit. This is not an antagonistic relationship. And I don't think you want the relationship to be antagonistic. After all, Russia is your neighbor. I think you would want your friend the United States to be in a position where I can go in and have a constructive, direct dialog. And I think one people—one thing people have learned about me is I'm a pretty direct person. I say what's on my mind; I try to do so diplomatically. But yes, I will. And I do so for the interests of the United States and for our friends and for the world.

War on Terror

Q. Mr. President, I can't let you go from here without a question of terrorism.

The President. Sure.

Q. Latest surveys show that the numbers of terrorism are increasing, not decreasing.

The President. Yes.

Q. Why is that?

The President. Well—

Q. You have made a lot of efforts.

The President. Yes, that's why. If we weren't trying to find the enemy and bring them to justice, the world would look relatively peaceful. But we're on the offense. And so when you engage the enemy, when you try to bring them to justice, they don't like to be brought to justice.

I've always told the American people here, "It's best to find them where they try to hide so that we don't have to deal with them here at home." And so part of the reasons why there's—activity is up is because we're chasing them down. As a matter of fact, today a big news report came out that I would say one of the top Al Qaida leaders, a person

very close to Usama bin Laden, was brought to justice in Pakistan by the Pak Government, with our help, but nevertheless, the Pak Government did the hard work—Abu Faraj al-Libbi. That's a very important part of defeating the Al Qaida.

But no, we'll stay on the offense. And we'll be relentless and tireless in doing so. The best way to defeat terrorism in the long run, though, is by spreading freedom, is by giving people a chance to live in a free society.

Q. How long it takes to curb, finally?

The President. Yes, that's a good question. However long—it takes as long as necessary. I just don't know. I don't have a—I can't give you a timetable. But whatever it takes, so long as I'm the President and there's a threat to the United States of America and to our people—you see, a lot of people in Europe, for them, September the 11th was a date, a passing moment. No question they expressed deep sympathy, for which the United States is grateful. But for us, it was a change of attitude. It was a change of foreign policy. And I told the people when I ran for office the second time, I said, "If you put me in office, every day I'm in office, I'll be relentless in chasing down the enemy." And so, for however long it takes.

It takes a while for freedom to take hold. I know that. Look at Iraq. Iraq is going from a tyranny to a free society, and it's not easy. But they're getting there. This country is beginning to—it's getting on its feet. The security forces are beginning to work better. The terrorists are more desperate. But that free society will be an important part of sending a message to others. And free societies are peaceful societies. And that's the great example of Estonia, for which the United States is grateful, and we're proud to call you friend.

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President. My honor.

Q. Very much, indeed.

The President. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 2:23 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast and was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 5. In his remarks, the President referred to President Vaira Vike-Freiberga of Latvia; President Valdas Adamkus of Lithuania; President Arnold Ruutel of Estonia; President Vladimir Putin of Russia; Usama bin

Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and Abu Faraj al-Libbi, senior Al Qaida associate arrested in Pakistan on April 30.

Remarks on the National Day of Prayer

May 5, 2005

The President. Good morning, and welcome to the White House. Laura and I are honored to join you on this important occasion.

I want to thank Shirley Dobson, the chairman of the National Day of Prayer. Thank you for organizing this event, and thank you for your wonderful comments. I'm glad to see you brought your husband, Jim, with you. [Laughter] It's good to have Vonette Bright with us; welcome. I appreciate my fellow Texan, Max Lucado, for his wonderful prayer. Thank you very much; welcome. I'm glad you and Denalyn are with us. Rabbi, thank you for your reading of the psalm. It's good to have your family here; welcome. I appreciate Father Charles Pope, pastor of St. Thomas More Catholic Church, here in DC. Kind of sounded more like a Baptist preacher to me. [Laughter]

Laura and I are proud Methodists, and we're pleased to be here with Bishop Peter Weaver, who is the president of the Council of Methodist Bishops, who will deliver the closing prayer. Thank you.

It's such an honor to be here with the St. Olaf Choir led by Anton Armstrong. You've got such beautiful music. Thank you for sharing with us. I'm sure they're having a prayerful moment right now—[laughter]—praying that I hurry up and finish because they have been standing for quite a while. [Laughter]

The National Day of Prayer is an annual event established in 1952 by an Act of the United States Congress. Yet, this day is part of a broader tradition that reaches back to the beginnings of America. From the landing of the pilgrims at Plymouth Rock to the launch of the American Revolution, the men and women who founded this Nation in freedom relied on prayer to protect and preserve it.

Today, prayer continues to play an important part in the personal lives of many Americans. Every day, millions of us turn to the

Almighty in reverence and humility. Every day, our churches and synagogues and mosques and temples are filled with men and women who pray to our Maker. And almost every day, I am given a special reminder of this great generosity of spirit when someone comes up and says, "Mr. President, I'm praying for you."

Prayer has been an important part of American public life as well. Many of our forefathers came to these shores seeking the freedom to worship. The first Continental Congress began by asking the Almighty for the wisdom that would enable them to settle things on the best and surest foundation. And when our Founders provided that sure foundation in the Declaration of Independence, they declared it a self-evident truth that our right to liberty comes from God.

And so we pray as a nation for three main reasons. We pray to give thanks for our freedom. Freedom is our birthright because the Creator wrote it into our common human nature. No Government can ever take a gift from God away. And in our great country, among the freedoms we celebrate is the freedom to pray as you wish or not at all. And when we offer thanks to our Creator for the gift of freedom, we acknowledge that it was meant for all men and women and for all times.

Second, we pray for help in defending the gift of freedom from those who seek to destroy it. Washington prayed at Valley Forge. Franklin Roosevelt sent American troops off to liberate a continent with his D-day prayer. Today, we pray for the troops who are defending our freedom against determined enemies around the globe. We seek God's blessing for the families they have left behind, and we commit to Heaven's care those brave men and women he has called home.

Audience members. Amen.

The President. Finally, we pray to acknowledge our dependence on the Almighty. Prayerful people understand the limits of human strength. We recognize that our plans are not always God's plans. Yet, we know that a God who created us for freedom is not indifferent to injustice or cruelty or evil. So we ask that our hearts may be aligned with His and that we may be given the strength to do what is right and help those in need.