

the Russian leader but the British and American leader were at the table and agreed on the agreement.

Baltic States

Q. In Russia, we're very concerned on the rise of neo-nazism in Baltic States when Russian war veterans are humiliated publicly, when monuments to Russian soldiers are vandalized, and at the same time, where, on May 8th, there is a plan to open the monument to Nazi Brigade, that is well known only for fighting—not only for fighting against Russians but also for quite ugly things that were common for SS troops.

The President. Yes. Well, look, there is—I've got a message when I go to the Baltics, and that is it's important to respect democracy but, also, the respect of democracy is respect for minority rights. In other words, a true democracy is one that says minorities are important and that the will of the majority can't trample the minority.

And as to whether or not nations are honoring nazism, I mean, of course that should be rejected. Nazism was defeated. We're celebrating the defeat of nazism. We don't want to see nazism return. It's an extremist point of view that believes that you should be able to trample the rights of minorities. It was the Nazis who annihilated millions of Jews, for example, and there's a classic example of the rights of minorities being trampled. And we must never forget the lessons of why we fought together in World War II. And so I'm looking forward to delivering that message of tolerance.

Gasoline Prices

Q. There is a question that has nothing to do with your visit to Russia but is very important to our country as an oil-producing country. Once you mentioned that you'll be happy to find a magic wand and to cut the price on oil. So what oil price will be acceptable for the United States, and what do you think is the chance of finding this magic wand?

The President. Well, I appreciate—no, there is no magic wand. A soldier asked me, he said, "Why don't you lower gasoline prices," as if the government controlled price. And in our country, the Government

doesn't control price. And I told him, I said, "If I had a magic wand, I would wave it and lower your price." But I—that's not the way it works. This is a world based—the price based upon supply and demand. And demand has been going up relative to supply, which has been beneficial for oil-producing countries like Russia.

And I don't know what the right price is. Obviously, the lower the better for our economy, because every time the money—the dollars go up on the gasoline price, money leaves the pocketbooks of the working people. But that's the way the economy works. Hopefully, higher price will stimulate more production. More production will then help the price reach an equilibrium.

And the market is what it is. That's—the markets decide, not governments. I would hope that Russia would encourage a lot of investment, to open up the vast reserves she has. We need to do more exploration here. I spoke to the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia who assured me that he is trying to put more—to find more oil. And that's what high prices do. But people who have got oil have got to understand if the price gets too high, it could wreck economies, which will mean there's less purchasing power for the product.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, and welcome to Moscow.

The President. Looking forward to it. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 9:58 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast and was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 6. In his remarks, the President referred to Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia.

Interview With Rustavi 2 Television of Georgia

May 5, 2005

President's Upcoming Visit to Georgia

Q. Mr. President, let me thank you very much for this opportunity to interview you. And on behalf of Georgian people, let me welcome you to Georgia.

Why have you decided to visit Georgia? None of the American Presidents have visited this country before.

The President. You know, I got to know your President, and I can remember him urging me to come to Georgia. He's got such enthusiasm about life and about the future of Georgia. And I have been most impressed by the aftermath of the Rose Revolution, that I said, "I want to go. I want to see—I want to feel the sense of a new democracy. I want to be there to thank the Georgian people for setting such a good example for other countries that have followed." And so I'm really looking forward to the trip.

Georgian Economy/Georgia-Russia Relations

Q. Mr. President, Georgia faces a lot of problems, among them two unresolved conflicts, quite difficult economic situation, Russian military presence in the country. How do you see resolving all those problems?

The President. Peacefully. And I think they will be resolved peacefully. But you're right. It's difficult to go from a country of—a communist country to a free country. It's not easy. I think the President understands that and his Government understands that.

On the economic front, there's a lot of work to be done, but by routing out corruption and insisting upon rule of law and transparency, that will help to attract investment and capital.

Secondly, in terms of the regional disputes or the bases, I can help some. But the best way to do this—deal with this issue is to do it peacefully between Russia and Georgia. And I think we've got a very good chance of seeing these issues resolved in a peaceful way. It just takes time sometimes to deal with old disputes.

Russia and Democracies in Eastern Europe

Q. The latest developments of the Eastern European region, I mean, the Georgia's Rose Revolution and Orange Revolution—

The President. Yes.

Q. —in Ukraine and elections in Moldova and revolution in Kyrgyzstan, caused Russia's negative reaction. And relations between Moscow and these countries

are getting worse. So how is U.S. going to support these transitional democracies in the future?

The President. No, that's a great question, and the first thing is, is that when I see President Putin, I will remind him again that democracies on his border will make it easier for Russia to grow in a peaceful way. Democracies are peaceful. Democracies don't like war, and democracies are the best form of government to deal with animosities and concerns.

And so I will remind him that this is not a plot by anybody or any nation. This is just the inevitable course of humankind because all humans want to be free. And as Georgia's economy begins to grow and pick up, Russia will have a trading partner; Russia will realize that a prosperous democracy in her south is good for the people of Russia.

Cooperative Response to Pankisi Gorge Terrorists

Q. U.S. Department's annual report on terrorism raised some questions about the stability in Pankisi Gorge.

The President. Yes.

Q. But Georgian Government, with support of U.S., was successful in cleaning this gorge of military elements. So how will relations—I mean, military cooperation between Georgia and the United States in the future?

The President. Well, I appreciate that. No, it's going to be very close, obviously at the request of the Georgian Government. And I—the Georgian Government asked for help in routing out the terrorists who had lodged themselves in the Pankisi Gorge—training help. We were more than happy to provide it. But remember what was interesting about some of those operations: There was close cooperation with the Russians. And I thought that was very helpful and very instructive about what can happen, because it's in Russia's interest, it's in the United States' interest, and more importantly, it's in Georgia's interest to make sure the Pankisi Gorge is clear of terrorist traffic or terrorist safe haven. No country wants terrorists who are willing to cause harm living within their border. And so I found this to be a very instructive and interesting cooperative arrangement.

Georgia's Possible NATO Membership

Q. Georgia is seeking NATO membership.

The President. Yes.

Q. How big is chance?

The President. It's good. But remember, this is a performance-based criterion. In other words, there's a way to get into NATO. And I will tell President Saakashvili that there's—to look at the countries that have recently been admitted and see what decisions they made and how they—what they did. And I would hope it's good. But just remember, it's a process. It just doesn't happen overnight. And that's not only what I have told your President, but I've told the President of Ukraine and other countries that are interested in joining NATO.

Q. Thanks for your precious time, Mr. President.

The President. Glad you're here. Looking forward to going to Georgia. It's going to be an exciting trip.

Q. I wish you a successful and safest trip.

The President. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 10:07 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast and was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 6. In his remarks, the President referred to President Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia; President Vladimir Putin of Russia; and President Viktor Yushchenko of Ukraine.

**Digest of Other
White House Announcements**

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

April 30

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

May 2

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Oval Office,

he and Mrs. Bush met with 2005 Preserve America Presidential Award recipients.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Mrs. Bush participated in an interview with Al Roker of NBC television for later broadcast.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Abel Pacheco of Costa Rica, President Leonel Fernandez of the Dominican Republic, President Elias Antonio Saca of El Salvador, President Oscar Berger of Guatemala, President Ricardo Maduro of Honduras, and President Enrique Bolanos of Nicaragua to the White House for a meeting on May 12.

The President announced his intention to nominate R. Thomas Weimer to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior (Policy, Management, and Budget).

The President announced his intention to designate David A. Sampson as Acting Deputy Secretary of Commerce.

May 3

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Canton, MS, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Ruth Wilson.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his designation of the following individuals as members of the Presidential delegation to the Czech Republic to attend the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Pilsen, on May 6: Jim Nicholson (head of delegation); William J. Cabaniss; Maj. Gen. Patrick Brady, USA (Ret.); Linda Maynor; and Julian Niemczyk.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert M. Kimmitt to be Deputy Secretary of the Treasury.

May 4

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy to express his regret concerning the death of an Italian intelligence agent who was killed at a U.S. checkpoint in Iraq on March 4. He then had a telephone conversation with President Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia to discuss his upcoming visit to Georgia and other issues.