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The President's Radio Address

May 7, 2005

Good morning. On Sunday and Monday, I will attend ceremonies in the Netherlands and Russia to commemorate the 60th anniversary of V–E Day.

These events will celebrate a great triumph of good over evil. We will never forget the acts of courage that made possible the liberation of a continent or the heroes who fought in the cause of freedom. And we honor the brave Americans and Allied troops who humbled tyrants, defended the innocent, and liberated the oppressed. By their courage and sacrifice, they showed the world that there is no power like the power of freedom and no soldier as strong as a soldier who fights for that freedom.

The defeat of Nazi Germany brought an end to the armed conflict in Europe. Unfortunately, for millions of people on that continent, tyranny remained in a different uniform. In Latvia, where I'm also visiting on this trip, free people were taken captive by another totalitarian empire. Germany was split into free and unfree halves. And countries like Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary were cut off from liberty by an Iron Curtain. The people of these countries survived the cold war through great courage, and then they took history into their own hands and reclaimed their freedom.

The result is, the continent of Europe, wounded by decades of conflict and oppression, is today whole, free, and at peace for the first time in its history. The wave of democracy that swept Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 has now swept to nations like Georgia and Ukraine. And the victory for freedom represented by V–E Day has become a reality for millions of people.

On my trip, I will visit Freedom Square in Tbilisi, Georgia, to applaud the people there for the Rose Revolution that advanced democracy in their land. Georgia has survived oppression, fought for liberty, and taken its place among free nations. America is proud to call Georgia our partner in freedom, and we will help the people of that country enhance prosperity, improve security, and spread liberty at home and abroad.

The new democracies of Europe still have much work to do. Free elections are a significant achievement, yet they are only part of a fully functioning democracy. Democratic governments must be committed to providing full and equal rights for minorities, resolving conflicts peacefully, encouraging a vibrant political opposition, and ensuring the rule of law. As the nations of Central and Eastern Europe work to build up the institutions necessary for a free society, America will stand by their side.

Today, these nations are standing with us as we defend liberty abroad. Freedom has no better friends than those with a fresh memory of tyranny. That is why countries like Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Georgia have been partners in our coalition in Iraq and Afghanistan. We're grateful for their contributions and especially for the example they are setting for other aspiring democracies.

America and these new democracies are bound together by history, by the universal rights we have defended together, and by our deepest convictions. All of us understand that the advance of freedom is the concentrated work of generations, from the brave Americans who fought against Nazi Germany 60 years ago to those who struggle for liberty today. And by working together, we will ensure that the promise of liberty and democracy won on V–E Day will one day reach every person and every nation in the 21st century.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 2:55 p.m. e.d.t. on May 5 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. e.d.t on May 7. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 6 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. Due to the 7-hour time difference, the radio address was broadcast after the President's news conference and before his remarks in Riga. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks in Riga

May 7, 2005

Sveiki Draugi. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the warm welcome. Madam

President, Laura and I thank you for your kind words of introduction. We thank you for your principled leadership. I thank you for your friendship, and we thank you for the hospitality that you and Dr. Freibergs have shown us.

I want to thank the people of the Republic of Latvia for being such gracious hosts for my visit here. And I want to also thank the Prime Minister for joining us, and members of the Government. Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister.

Laura and I are so pleased to make this second journey to the Baltic States and our first visit to the great land of Latvia. We're honored as well to be in the company of President Ruutel of Estonia and President Adamkus of Lithuania. Thank you both for coming. These are good friends to Latvia and good friends to America.

The Baltic countries have seen one of the most dramatic transformations in modern history, from captive nations to NATO Allies and EU members in little more than a decade. The Latvian, Estonian, and Lithuanian people showed that the love of liberty is stronger than the will of an empire. And today, you're standing for liberty beyond your borders, so that others do not suffer the injustices you have known. The American people admire your moral courage in the cause of freedom.

This week, nations on both sides of the Atlantic observe the 60th anniversary of Hitler's defeat. The evil that seized power in Germany brought war to all of Europe and waged war against morality, itself. What began as a movement of thugs became a Government without conscience and then an empire of bottomless cruelty. The Third Reich exalted the strong over the weak, overran and humiliated peaceful countries, undertook a mad quest for racial purity, coldly planned and carried out the murder of millions, and defined evil for the ages. Brave men and women of many countries faced that evil and fought through dark and desperate years for their families and their homelands. In the end, a dictator who worshiped power was confined to four walls of a bunker, and the fall of his squalid tyranny is a day to remember and to celebrate.

Causes can be judged by the monuments they leave behind. The Nazi terror is remembered today in places like Auschwitz, Dachau, Rumbula Forest, where we still hear the cries of the innocent and pledge to God and history: Never again. The Alliance that won the war is remembered today in carefully tended cemeteries in Normandy, Margraten, St. Petersburg, and other places across Europe where we recall brief lives of great honor, and we offer this pledge: We will always be grateful.

The Baltic States had no role in starting World War II. The battle came here because of a secret pact between dictators. And when the war came, many in this region showed their courage. After a puppet government ordered the Latvian fleet to return to port, sailors on eight freighters chose to remain at sea under the flag of free Latvia, assisting the United States Merchant Marine in carrying supplies across the Atlantic. A newspaper in the State of South Carolina described the Latvian crew this way: "They all have beards and dressed so differently . . . They are . . . exhausted, but full of fighting spirit."

By the end of the war, six of the Latvian ships had been sunk and more than half the sailors had been lost. Nearly all of the survivors settled in America and became citizens we were proud to call our own. One American town renamed a street Ciltvaira to honor a sunken ship that sailed under a free Latvian flag. My country has always been thankful for Latvia's friendship, and Latvia will always have the friendship of America.

As we mark a victory of 6 days ago—six decades ago, we are mindful of a paradox. For much of Germany, defeat led to freedom. For much of Eastern and Central Europe, victory brought the iron rule of another empire. V–E Day marked the end of fascism, but it did not end oppression. The agreement at Yalta followed in the unjust tradition of Munich and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Once again, when powerful governments negotiated, the freedom of small nations was somehow expendable. Yet this attempt to sacrifice freedom for the sake of stability left

a continent divided and unstable. The captivity of millions in Central and Eastern Europe will be remembered as one of the greatest wrongs of history.

The end of World War II raised unavoidable questions for my country: Had we fought and sacrificed only to achieve the permanent division of Europe into armed camps? Or did the cause of freedom and the rights of nations require more of us?

Eventually, America and our strong allies made a decision: We would not be content with the liberation of half of Europe, and we would not forget our friends behind an Iron Curtain. We defended the freedom of Greece and Turkey and airlifted supplies to Berlin and broadcast the message of liberty by radio. We spoke up for dissenters and challenged an empire to tear down a hated wall.

Eventually, communism began to collapse under external pressure and under the weight of its own contradictions. And we set the vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace, so dictators could no longer rise up and feed ancient grievances, and conflict would not be repeated again and again.

In these decades of struggle and purpose, the Baltic peoples kept a long vigil of suffering and hope. Though you lived in isolation, you were not alone. The United States refused to recognize your occupation by an empire. The flags of free Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania, illegal at home, flew proudly over diplomatic missions in the United States. And when you joined hands in protest and the empire fell away, the legacy of Yalta was finally buried, once and for all. The security and freedom of the Baltic nations is now more than a noble aspiration. It is the binding pledge of the alliance we share. The defense of your freedom—in defense of your freedom, you will never stand alone.

From the vantage point of this new century, we recognize the end of the cold war as part of an even broader movement in our world. From Germany and Japan after World War II to Latin America to Asia and Central and Eastern Europe and now to the broader Middle East, the advance of freedom is the great story of our age. And in this history, there are important lessons.

We have learned that free nations grow stronger with time, because they rise on the creativity and enterprise of their people. We have learned that governments accountable to citizens are peaceful, while dictatorships stir resentments and hatred to cover their own failings. We have learned that the skeptics and pessimists are often wrong, because men and women in every culture, when given the chance, will choose liberty. We have learned that even after a long wait in the darkness of tyranny, freedom can arrive suddenly, like the break of day. And we have learned that the demand for self-government is often driven and sustained by patriotism, by the traditions and heroes and language of a native land.

Yet we've also learned that sovereignty and majority rule are only the beginnings of freedom. The promise of democracy starts with national pride and independence and elections, but it does not end there. The promise of democracy is fulfilled by minority rights and equal justice under the rule of law and an inclusive society in which every person belongs. A country that divides into factions and dwells on old grievances cannot move forward and risks sliding back into tyranny. A country that unites all its people behind common ideals will multiply in strength and confidence. The successful democracies of the 21st century will not be defined by blood and soil. Successful democracies will be defined by a broader ideal of citizenship, based on shared principles, shared responsibilities, and respect for all.

For my own country, the process of becoming a mature, multiethnic democracy was lengthy and violent. Our journey from national independence to equal injustice [justice] * included the enslavement of millions and a 4-year civil war. Even after slavery ended, a century passed before an oppressed minority was guaranteed equal rights. Americans found that racial division almost destroyed us, and the false doctrine of "separate but equal" was no basis for a strong and unified country. The only way we found to rise

* White House correction.

above the injustices of our history was to reject segregation, to move beyond mere tolerance, and to affirm the brotherhood of everyone in our land.

Latvia is facing the challenges that come with ethnic diversity, and it's addressing these challenges in a uniformly peaceful way. Whatever the historical causes, yours is now a multiethnic society, as I have seen on my visit. No wrongs of the past should ever be allowed to divide you or to slow your remarkable progress. While keeping your Latvian identity and language, you have a responsibility to reach out to all who share the future of Latvia. A welcoming and tolerant spirit will assure the unity and strength of your country. Minorities here have a responsibility as well, to be citizens who seek the good of the country in which they live. As inclusive, peaceful societies, all of the Baltic nations can be models to every nation that follows the path of freedom and democracy.

In recent months, the Baltic Governments gave assistance during the election in Ukraine, and the people of that country chose a wise and visionary leader. As President Yushchenko works to strengthen the rule of law and open Ukraine's economy, the United States will help that nation join the institutions that bind our democracies.

Later on this trip, I'll travel to Georgia, another country that is taking a democratic path and deserves support on its journey. My country will stand by Georgian leaders who respect minority rights and work to peacefully unify their country and grow closer to the free nations in Europe.

We're also committed to democratic progress in Moldova, where leaders have pledged to expand freedom of the press, to protect minority rights, and to make Government institutions more accountable.

All of us are committed to the advance of freedom in Belarus. The people of that country live under Europe's last dictatorship, and they deserve better. The Governments of Latvia and Lithuania have worked to build support for democracy in Belarus and to deliver truthful information by radio and newspapers. Together we have set a firm and confident standard: Repression has no place on this continent. The people of Minsk deserve the same freedom you have in Tallinn and Vilnius and Riga.

All the nations that border Russia will benefit from the spread of democratic values, and so will Russia, itself. Stable, prosperous democracies are good neighbors, trading in freedom and posing no threat to anyone. The United States has free and peaceful nations to the north and south of us. We do not consider ourselves to be encircled; we consider ourselves to be blessed. No good purpose is served by stirring up fears and exploiting old rivalries in this region. The interests of Russia and all nations are served by the growth of freedom that leads to prosperity and peace.

Inside Russia, leaders have made great progress over the last 15 years. President Putin recently stated that Russia's future lies within Europe, and America agrees. He also stated that Russia's democratic future will not be determined by outsiders, and America agrees as well. That nation will follow its own course according to its own history. Yet all free and successful countries have some common characteristics: Freedom of worship, freedom of the press, economic liberty, the rule of law, and the limitation of power through checks and balances. In the long run, it is the strength of Russian democracy that will determine the greatness of Russia. And I believe the Russian people value their freedom and will settle for nothing less.

For all the problems that remain, it is a miracle of history that this young century finds us speaking about the consolidation of freedom throughout Europe. And the stunning democratic gains of the last several decades are only the beginning. Freedom is not tired. The ideal of human dignity is not weary. And the next stage of the world democratic movement is already unfolding in the broader Middle East.

We seek democracy in that region for the same reasons we spent decades working for democracy in Europe, because freedom is the only reliable path to peace. If the Middle East continues to simmer in anger and resentment and hopelessness, caught in a cycle of repression and radicalism, it will produce terrorism of even greater audacity and destructive power. But if the peoples of that region gain the right of self-government and find hopes to replace their hatreds, then the

security of all free nations will be strengthened.

We will not repeat the mistakes of other generations, appeasing or excusing tyranny and sacrificing freedom in the vain pursuit of stability. We have learned our lesson: No one's liberty is expendable. In the long run, our security and true stability depend on the freedom of others. And so, with confidence and resolve, we will stand for freedom across the broader Middle East.

In this great objective, we need a realism that understands the difficulties. But we must turn away from a pessimism that abandons the goal and consigns millions to endless tyranny. And we have reason for optimism. When the people of Afghanistan were finally given the vote, they chose humane rulers and a future of freedom. When the people of the Palestinian Territories went to the polls, they chose a leader committed to negotiation instead of violence. When Iraqi voters turned out by the millions, they repudiated the killers who hate and attack their liberty. There's much work ahead, but the direction of events is clear in the broader Middle East: Freedom is on the march.

Recent elections have brought a tremendous catalyst for change, and more are on the way. Elections are set to start at the end of this month in Lebanon, and those elections must go forward with no outside interference. The people of Lebanon now have the opportunity to bridge old divides and build an independent government. Egypt will hold a Presidential election this fall. That election should proceed with international monitors and with rules that allow for a real campaign.

As in other parts of the world, the work of democracy is larger than holding a fair election. It requires building the structures that sustain freedom. Selective liberalization—the easing of oppressive laws—is progress, but it is not enough. Successful democracies that effectively protect individual rights require viable political parties, an independent judiciary, a diverse media, and limits on executive power. There is no modernization without democracy. Ultimately, human rights and human development depend on human liberty.

As in other parts of the world, successful democracies in the broader Middle East must also bridge old racial and religious divides, and democracy is the only force capable of doing so. In Iraq, the new Cabinet includes members of all of Iraq's leading ethnic and religious groups who, despite their differences, share a commitment to democracy, freedom, and the rule of law. The new President of Iraq is a member of a minority group that was attacked with poison gas by the former regime. Democracy is fostering internal peace by protecting individual rights while giving every minority a role in the nation's future. Iraq's free Government is showing the way for others and is winning the respect of a watching world.

In the Middle East, we are seeing the rule of law—the rule of fear give way to the hope of change. And brave reformers in that region deserve more than our praise. The established democracies have a duty to help emerging democracies of the broader Middle East. They need our help, because freedom has deadly enemies in that region, men who celebrate murder, incite suicide, and thirst for absolute power. By aiding democratic transitions, we will isolate the forces of hatred and terror and defeat them before violence spreads.

The Baltic States are members of a global coalition, and each is making essential contributions every day. Lithuania is preparing to deploy a reconstruction team to western Afghanistan and has troops in Iraq conducting patrols and aiding in reconstruction. Estonians are serving in Afghanistan. They're detecting and removing explosives, and Estonian troops serve side by side with Americans in Baghdad. Latvia has a team in Kabul, Afghanistan, clearing mines and soldiers in Iraq providing convoy security and patrols.

Your commitment to freedom has brought sacrifice. We remember Lieutenant Olafs Baumanis, who was killed in Iraq. We ask for God's blessings for his family, and we're honored that his wife, Vita, is here with us today.

It's no surprise that Afghanistan and Iraq find strong allies in the Baltic nations. Because you've recently known tyranny, you are offended by the oppression of others. The men and women under my command are

proud to serve with you. Today I'm honored to deliver the thanks of the American people.

Sixty years ago, on the 7th of May, the world reacted with joy and relief at the defeat of fascism in Europe. The next day, General Dwight D. Eisenhower announced that "history's mightiest machine of conquest has been utterly destroyed." Yet the great democracies soon found that a new mission had come to us, not merely to defeat a single dictator but to defeat the idea of dictatorship on this continent. Through the decades of that struggle, some endured the rule of tyrants; all lived in the frightening shadow of war. Yet because we lifted our sights and held firm to our principles, freedom prevailed.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, the freedom of Europe, won by courage, must be secured by effort and good will. In our time, as well, we must raise our sights. In the distance we can see another great goal, not merely the absence of tyranny on this continent but the end of tyranny in our world. Once again, we're asked to hold firm to our principles and to value the liberty of others. And once again, if we do our part, freedom will prevail.

Thank you, and God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:09 p.m. at the Small Guild Hall. In his remarks, he referred to President Vaira Vike-Freiberga of Latvia and her husband, Imants Freibergs; Prime Minister Aigars Kalvitis of Latvia; President Arnold Ruutel of Estonia; President Valdas Adamkus of Lithuania; President Viktor Yushchenko of Ukraine; President Vladimir Putin of Russia; President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; and President Jalal Talabani of the Iraqi Transitional Government.

Remarks With Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende at a Youth Roundtable in Valkenburg, the Netherlands

May 8, 2005

Prime Minister Balkenende. Well, ladies and gentlemen, good morning. It's very good that you're here. But in the first place, I would like to say to the President of the United States, be welcome in the Netherlands. We really enjoy that you're here. It's an important day that you're in the Netherlands today, because on the 6th of May—that's what we call our Liberation Day—and we always think about our freedom. And at your last event, you said a lot about importance of freedom and democracy, and you realize what Americans meant for the European countries after the Second World War. During the Second World War, your people were here, but after, you helped us.

And it's very important that you're here today and that you'll have the meeting in Margraten. It's so important to be there and also for us to show our respect and to say thanks for what all the Americans have done for the Netherlands.

We already had a breakfast meeting. We talked about some very important issues. We talked about the Middle East peace process. We talked about the struggle against terrorism because we are—we have the same position. It's a threat to world society. We have to work together. We talked about the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan. We talked about China and some other issues. We talked about political situation in the Netherlands and the United States. It was a very fruitful and interesting meeting.

Mr. President, it's great that you're in the Netherlands. We appreciate very much that you're here today and that we have the meeting in Margraten. But also today we have a meeting with students, and we thank you for being here and be willing to have a discussion with these young people. It's very important. It's always challenging and encouraging if you have the meeting with the students.

And now, Mr. President, I give you the floor.

President Bush. Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister. It's an honor to be in the Netherlands. Laura and I have been really looking forward to coming to your beautiful country. I want to thank you for the meeting we just had. It was a fruitful discussion. I appreciate your leadership, appreciate your friendship.

You know, I will be honoring a generation that made enormous sacrifices so that my generation could grow up in a free world. I'm really looking forward to going to the cemetery and paying homage to those who fought for freedom. It will be a solemn occasion but an important moment to reflect upon. And I look forward to talking to the