

Exchange With Reporters During a Tour of the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia

May 25, 2002

President's Visit to Russia

Q. Mr. President, allow me to ask you—[*inaudible*]*—summarize results of your—*[*inaudible*]. And the second part of that question, the expectation of the Moscow summit—how do you think—

President Bush. Well, first, the hospitality has been magnificent. The time we spent last night with the Putins in their beautiful home was very relaxing for Laura and me. It gave us a great chance to see how the Putins live, a very good sense of their values. I think the thing that struck me the most was how they have raised their daughters. They've got two beautiful daughters who are incredibly talented young ladies. It is clear their mom and dad love them a lot, and that was impressive to Laura and me.

The other good piece of news is, I got to go actually run outside—[*laughter*]*—*which is a difficult thing for me to do when I'm on the road and in Washington as well. I ran on beautiful grounds; it's such a spectacular piece of property. And then we had a wonderful breakfast—special Russian foods. It's been a wonderful, relaxing experience.

I was very touched that the President took time yesterday, after going to the Kremlin—after going to Red Square, to take us to his office. And I thought it was a great personal touch; that was important, to see the private side of this man's life. It meant a lot.

Secondly, I think the summit was—met expectations; it met my expectations. I hope it met the President's expectations. We not only signed a very important treaty, we signed a—you know, a very important protocol of how our relations ought to go forward, and I'm really glad that—I'm glad that all the hard work on both sides has

paid off. And this will be good for the Russian people. This agreement will be good for the people of Russia, and it'll be good for the people of America.

You know, at the St. Petersburg cemetery today, the lady who gave us a tour spoke about peace and how it was important for everybody who walked those hallowed grounds to remember the ravages of war and to remember the importance of peace. And I explained to her that this visit was a visit of peace, where we cast aside the old ways of suspicion and now embrace peace.

Sorry about the interpreter. [*Laughter*]

Q. [*Inaudible*]*—interpretation.*

President Bush. Okay. Well, good luck. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, a question was asked in Russian, and no translation was provided.*]

President Vladimir Putin of Russia. As far as the staying of Mr. President and his wife in our home yesterday, I would like you to know two things. For one thing, our personal relations to—have been greatly strengthened. They're very happy to know that I'm dealing with very honest and upward and straight people. That is one.

And then there is something else, which is by no means a political thing. Yesterday, when we had our dinner and I was treating my guests, of course, to the Russian caviar, and I told him how some of the caviar is produced. The experts would take the fish and open up the fish and then take the caviar and then throw out the fish again—and throw it back into the water. [*Laughter*] Everybody was laughing, thinking that I was really inventing things on the spot, something really improbable. [*Laughter*] But I was trying to convince them—I was really trying to tell them that

I was telling the truth; that's how we treated the environment. [Laughter]

The Secretary of State, the Russian Foreign Minister, Dr. Rice, Mr. Ivanov, and also both wives—my wife and Mr. President's wife—all laughed at me. And there was only one person who wouldn't laugh and said, "I do believe you, Mr. President," and that was the President of the United States. [Laughter] And I want to confirm it here and now; that's the truth, ladies and gentlemen. [Laughter]

And one more thing. The dinner, the supper was over somewhere around midnight, because we were supposed to go to St. Petersburg early in the morning. Of course, we got up very early; we didn't have enough sleep this morning. And when last night, before going to bed, Mr. President told me that he would be jogging in the morning, I wouldn't believe him. [Laughter] But he was doing that, just that.

Well, on a serious note, as far as the results of this visit are concerned, I would like to say that myself and my experts, all my experts, we have been discussing the results of the visit this morning, and we have officially agreed that we are satisfied, and all the goals of this visit have been achieved.

I thank you.

President Bush. One question, Ron [Ron Fournier, Associated Press], go ahead.

Pakistan-India Relations

Q. If I could ask you real quickly, sir, is there anything personal you can do to ease tensions between Pakistan and India? And do you think President Musharraf is doing enough to crack down on terrorism in Kashmir?

President Bush. We are spending a lot of time on this subject—"we" being the administration. And we're making it very clear to both parties that there is—there's no benefit of a war, there's no benefit of a clash that could eventually lead to a broader war.

We're deeply concerned about the rhetoric. It is very important for President Musharraf to stop—do what he said he's going to do to in his speech on terror, and that is stop the incursions across the line—the line of control. It's important that the Indians know that he is going to fulfill that promise.

Vladimir and I have talked about this, and he's got—he as well as the United States and Great Britain and other countries have got influence in the region, and he is going to meet soon at a conference where we believe Prime Minister Vajpayee and President Musharraf will both be attending.

My point is, is that there's a lot of diplomatic efforts going into bringing some calm and reason to the region.

President Putin. An international event is planned for the early June this year in Kazakhstan, where both President Musharraf and Prime Minister Vajpayee have been invited. I do hope they will come, and there would be an opportunity for us to discuss things. And we have covered that ground with the President of the United States.

Of course, the testing, while there is escalating tension, really aggravates the situation, and Russia is concerned and sorry about that. I'm sorry about that. And we shall be working together to take steps in order to prevent the escalation of the conflict.

President Bush. Thank you all.

NOTE: The exchange began at 1:05 p.m. In his remarks, President Bush referred to President Putin's daughters, Masha and Katya, and his wife, Lyudmila; President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan; and Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee of India. President Putin referred to Minister of Foreign Affairs Igor Sergeevich Ivanov and Minister of Defense Sergey Borisovich Ivanov of Russia. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the closing remark of President Putin. A tape was not

available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With Students at
St. Petersburg State University in St. Petersburg
May 25, 2002

President Vladimir Putin of Russia. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for having me here. It's a great pleasure, as always, to be with young people, but especially here since I graduated from this university; it's a double pleasure for me to be here. But this university played a dual role in my career. The first time, when they basically gave me a present—they just gave me the degree that I earned—that was the one important part. [*Laughter*]

The second very important facet in my life was when I worked here for the rector of the university as an assistant, helping him in the area of international contacts between and among various universities. And what I was doing was doing the same thing the rector was just talking about; I was setting up the initial contacts between our university and various other universities around the world. So what we did once, we invited the president of a midsize college from St. Petersburg, Florida, to come here and pay us a visit, since they had the same name. So then, what I did is I talked the former mayor, Mr. Sobchak, to receive this president of this college. So he, in turn, invited him to come to the United States. And this Mr. Carter, who was the head of this college in St. Pete, arranged a visit with one of the Presidents of the United States at the time, and I think his name was Bush. [*Laughter*] After that, he invited me to come to work for him, and the rest of my career is history, as they say. [*Laughter*]

Well, to be very, very serious now, it's really a great pleasure to have business and dealings with students because students are

very direct, as you know. And they also feel the rhythm of civilization as it's changing.

When we were guests of the Bushes in Crawford, Texas, we also were given an opportunity to meet with young people. I think this will become a very fine tradition.

President Bush. That's right.

President Putin. And I think Mr. Bush also was waiting for this opportunity, because he asked me several times about this possibility. Well, George Bush and I don't know each other for that long; I think it's a little bit less than 2 years. But what we're trying to do is establish the environment which would be very conducive to having people in both of our countries meet, have opportunities to make contacts, and get along better.

I don't want this to sound like a major report here, but I just want to inform you that we have just signed two major agreements between our two countries. One of them is having to do with the reduction in strategic arms of the two countries, and the other one is called an agreement on a new strategic relationship between the two countries. As we all know, people are divided into two groups, optimists and pessimists, and the pessimists will always find something wrong. Optimists, however, will find in these two documents that we signed a lot of things that are very useful and beneficial.

But it's wonderful to deal with young people because, by their very nature, they're optimists and they look into the future. And that's why we're here, among other things.