

upon Senate confirmation, will become the U.S. Ambassador to Spain.

Mi amigo, el juez del sur de Texas, Ricardo Hinojosa. The U.S. Surgeon General and his wife, Diane—Dr. Richard Carmona.

El Embajador de Mexico, welcome.

El Embajador de Estados Unidos a Mexico, Tony Garza, *y su esposa nueva, Maria.* Welcome.

I want to thank Congressman Henry Bonilla and Sheryl for joining us today—welcome, Congressman. Congressman Henry Cuellar *de Texas,* welcome.

Josefina Vazquez Mota, Mexico's Secretary for Social Development, welcome.

I want to thank Christian Castro, recording artist, who is going to perform tonight. I appreciate Jaci Velasquez; where's Jaci? Jaci is somewhere. There she is. Thanks. She's going to emcee. I want to thank Mariachi Sol de Mexico.

Cinco de Mayo commemorates a joyful moment in Mexican history. Tonight we're proud to celebrate that moment together. The United States and Mexico are united by ties of family, faith in God, and a deep love for freedom.

More than 25 million men and women of Mexican origin now make their homes in the United States. And they're making our Nation more vibrant and more hopeful every day. Mexican Americans have enriched the American experience with contributions to music and dancing and the arts. Latino entrepreneurs are starting their own businesses all across America and are creating jobs and trading in freedom with businesses across borders. More Hispanic Americans own their own homes today than ever before. And Mexican Americans are firmly committed to leaving no child behind in America.

Mexican Americans are also strengthening our country with their patriotism and service. Thousands of Mexican Americans have sacrificed in the Armed Services for our freedom. And more than 8,700 men and women born in Mexico now wear the uniform of the United States military. These dedicated men and women are making America safer, and they're making the world safer. And they're carrying on the courage and devotion that inspired an outnumbered band of Mexican

soldiers to victory in the Battle of Pueblo on the cinco de Mayo, 1862.

Here at the White House, the triumph of Cinco de Mayo was recognized by President Abraham Lincoln. And through the generations, Americans have continued to look on our neighbor to the south with fondness and deep respect. Tonight we look to the future with confidence in our warm and growing friendship.

And so now it is my pleasure to offer a toast: May God bless the people of Mexico and all the sons and daughters of Mexico who call America home. *Que Dios los bendiga.*

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:01 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Commerce Carlos M. Gutierrez and his wife, Edilia; Treasurer of the United States Anna Cabral and her husband, Victor; Ricardo H. Hinojosa, chair, U.S. Sentencing Commission; Ambassador to the U.S. Carlos Alberto de Icaza Gonzalez of Mexico; U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Antonio O. Garza, Jr., and his wife, Maria; Congressman Henry Bonilla and his wife, Sheryl; and entertainers Jaci Velasquez and Mariachi Sol de Mexico. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Interview With Lithuanian National Television

May 4, 2005

Lithuanian Support for Freedom in Ukraine

Q. Mr. President, you thanked President Valdas Adamkus for his efforts spreading the freedom in neighboring countries. What else could Lithuania do spreading the freedom in this region?

The President. Well, first, I did thank the President for his good work in the Ukraine. I thought it was a really great moment when the head of Lithuania got involved and encouraged the whole world to take notice of the freedom movement in the Ukraine. And by the way, that's a—the second election was a really important moment in the liberty movement. And I thanked him for that, genuinely so. And I want to say it again: I thank him for that.

Lithuania serves as a great example of what is possible. After years of being subjugated to harsh rule, the Lithuanians are now free, and they're showing they can grow the economy and that people have a chance to express themselves and there's a vibrant society when you're free. And it has been hard; the transition from communism to a free democracy is a hard transition. And it's very important for the Lithuanians and the Government to share that experience with others who will be going through the same thing. And so I am very proud of Lithuania, and I'm proud to call her friend.

Democracy in Belarus

Q. Mr. President, you showed a strong support for democracy cause in Belarus. And what is your administration planning to do, given the fact that Belarus Presidential election is planned next year?

The President. Well, first of all, we'll work with you, countries in the neighborhood, countries around—the free countries of the world, to insist there be free elections and make sure there's free elections. This is the last remaining dictatorship in Europe. And Condi Rice was in the neighborhood recently, as you know, Secretary of State Rice, and she brought up the subject. She met with people who are embracing the freedom movement in Belarus. I did as well when I was in Slovakia.

And so one of the roles that the United States can play is to speak clearly about the need for Belarus to be free and to work with people to insist that Belarus be free and, when the elections come, make sure the elections are free and have monitors and international observers. As you know, that made a big difference in the Ukraine, for example. No, it's—and I think—listen, I believe everybody wants to be free, and I believe if the world works together to achieve that, many people will be free.

Lithuania's Role in Afghanistan

Q. Lithuania is taking a concrete role in the reconstructing of Afghanistan.

The President. Yes.

Q. What kind of specific support do you ask—offer Lithuania?

The President. Well, as you know, we've got for our partners in Iraq and—we've got some solidarity funds. We want to work through the foreign aid money to help Lithuania in her efforts to help build a better world. Again, I applaud the President. I thank the people of Lithuania for the support in Afghanistan.

It's important that Afghanistan be free and peaceful; it will serve as an example for others. Again, I keep saying this to people, but you've just got to—the people of Lithuania have got to know how I feel. I believe everybody desires to be free, and I believe everybody deserves to be free. And societies will grow up around different customs and habits. I don't expect people to look like American form of government, but I do believe the world ought to work together to enable people to live free lives and then help countries, once they've become liberated from a tyrant, in the case of Afghanistan.

And that's what Lithuania is doing. And I'm confident the President is doing so because—for the same reason I am, because he understands that free societies, in the long run, will make the world peaceful. And that's what we want for our children and our grandchildren; we want there to be peace.

President's Upcoming Meeting With Russian President Putin

Q. You're going to meet Mr. Putin. Will you repeat your words to him that the Second World War has brought the Soviet occupation to the Baltic States?

The President. Yes, of course I'll remind him of that. I told him in Slovakia that I felt it was important for him to understand that my friends the leaders of the Baltics are upset. In other words, they don't view the end of World War II as a great moment of celebration, and there's a reason why. He took it in. Your President has decided not to go to Moscow. I respect him for that decision. Each leader in the Baltics has to make the decision they're comfortable with. And it was a very difficult period, and so this is a hard decision. And I respect the decisions of the three leaders.

But I did make it clear to President Putin that there is great angst—people don't view this as a liberating moment—and hopefully

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