



For Immediate Release  
Office of the Press Secretary  
July 14, 2006

## President Participates in Roundtable Discussion with Civil Society in Russia

Counsel General's Residence  
St. Petersburg, Russia

### [President's Trip to Germany and Russia](#)

4:06 P.M. (L)

THE PRESIDENT: Ambassador, thank you for setting up this meeting. I've just had a really interesting meeting. I've been meeting with young, vibrant Russian activists who, first, love their country, secondly, care deeply about the form of government of the country, and, third, care deeply about the human condition in their country.

These folks come from a variety of different NGOs and civic groups, representing a variety of issues -- all bound together to be involved in their governments, in their countries, so that it's the best it can possibly be.

I spent a lot of time listening to their concerns. I assured them that the United States of America cares about the form of government in Russia, that we believe in the universal values embedded in democracy. We believe in rule of law, we believe in human rights, we believe everybody has a right to be treated equally.

I explained to them that our own government and our country took a while to evolve, but, nevertheless, it's important to be aiming toward a better tomorrow.

I hope my visit here was encouraging to them; it certainly was instructional for me. I explained to them my strategy of dealing with Vladimir Putin, who is my friend. Some asked me to deliver messages, which I'd be more than happy to do. I explained to them that it's in the U.S. interests to remain engaged with Russia. Russia is a great country, with a fantastic future, and that the foreign policy of my administration will be to work with Russia to



solve common problems, and, at the same time, be in a position where we can have a frank exchange of ideas and philosophies and views.

I told the young leaders here that this has been a very enriching experience for me. I shared the thought -- shared the idea that I'm the father of 24-year-old twin daughters, I'm looking at some folks here at the table who are their age. I'm impressed by their courage and their idealism and their desire to make their societies a better place.

So I want to thank you all for your visit. Thank you for your frank exchanges. I will you all the very best, and I ask for God's blessings on the people of Russia.

END 4:08 P.M. (L)

---

**Return to this article at:**

[http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/  
releases/2006/07/20060714-5.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/07/20060714-5.html)

 [CLICK HERE TO PRINT](#)

