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JUNE 2, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

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THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF REMARKS  
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT  
AND  
KING JUAN CARLOS I OF SPAIN

THE SOUTH GROUNDS

10:43 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Your Majesties, on behalf of the American people I take great pleasure in welcoming you to the United States. Your first visit as King and Queen of Spain to the United States renews the historic and deep ties between our two countries.

Nearly five hundred years ago Spain was a leader in the great age of exploration that opened this continent to settlement and to development. Now in this Bicentennial year the people of Spain and America can recall with pride a group of brave Spaniards led by Bernardo de Galvez, who helped 200 years ago in our struggle for national independence.

In 1776 de Galvez, then Governor of Louisiana, provided needed arms and supplies to those struggling for freedom in the American colony. Later his expeditions near Pensacola, Mobile and Natchez helped to keep the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico open protecting Southwestern flanks of the Americas.

The formal entrance of Spain into our War of Independence in 1779 brought valuable support to the American cause. The City of Galveston, Texas, today honors the name of Bernardo de Galvez. The City of Washington soon will have a statue of de Galvez, a generous Bicentennial gift of the Spanish people to commemorate the contribution of this gallant Spanish soldier-statesman to the independence of the United States.

The understanding and traditional friendship between our two countries continues to endure. Today we look forward to even closer cooperation with Spain.

I last visited Spain just over a year ago. I was deeply moved by the warm welcome accorded by the Spanish people and particularly by you, Your Majesties.

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Since then great changes have taken place. Your country has entered a new era under your wise and able leadership. It holds great promise for the future of Spain and for the western community of nations. I am confident that your leadership will prove more than equal to the great task ahead and that the promise of the future will be fulfilled.

Both of our countries today face very complex challenges. We look to our own future with confidence and we take great confidence from the assurance that the Spanish people will meet these challenges with the qualities they have shown in their long and illustrious history, courage, dignity, strength and pride.

Our bilateral relationship as confirmed in the recently concluded Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation is excellent. I stated last year and I reaffirm today that Spain, through its bilateral defense cooperation with the United States, makes a major contribution to the western world. We are agreed on the interests of our two countries, share in common objectives, and common burdens promoting the prosperity, security of the Atlantic and Mediterranean region.

We are very proud of our historic ties with Spain. We are encouraged by Spanish progress under your leadership. We look forward to building and strengthening our relationship. Your Majesties, I am privileged to extend to you the sincere welcome of the people of the United States.

KING CARLOS: Mr. President, Mrs. Ford, the Queen and I thank you most sincerely for your invitation, for your hospitality, which at this moment we are beginning to enjoy, and for your words of welcome.

Mr. President, I should like you to consider this visit -- the first we have made overseas since my proclamation as King of Spain -- as a proof of our personal interest and a confirmation of the affection and friendship that the Spanish people feel toward the United States of America.

It is, for the Queen and myself, very gratifying that this visit should coincide with the celebration of the Bicentennial of the independence of the United States. It rounds off, so to speak, the part that Spain has wished to play in the ceremonies of this commemoration which will enable the American people to assess the importance of the assistance that Spain gave to their country's struggle for independence and will make them show, I hope, an even greater interest in the history and in the presence of Spain.

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Our two countries are bound by so many ties that it may well be said that in certain ways your history and geography have been, to a large extent, ours too. This explains the numerous invitations which the Queen and I have received as a result of our visit to the United States and which, unfortunately, it has been physically impossible for us to accept.

Allow me, Mr. President, to take advantage of this opportunity to place on record our gratitude for these kind invitations. The time of transition that the world is living through demands clarity of thought, a firm purpose, a resolute acknowledgement of the supremacy of spiritual values and a constant exercise of the virtue of prudence, a virtue which is so particularly extolled in your declaration of independence. But this objective could not be achieved without the certainty of being able to rely, should the need arise, on the many benefits derived from all good friendships.

At this moment my greatest wish is that our visit should contribute to reinforcing these bonds of friendship between us for the good of our two countries and all those who aspire to attain the same ideals of faith, freedom and justice.

Mr. President, once again receive our sincerest thanks for your invitation.

END (AT 10:55 A.M. EDT)