

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DECEMBER 15, 1974

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY
(Martinique, F.W.I.)

THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF TOASTS
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT
AND
VALERY GISCARD d'ESTAING
PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

SWIMMING POOL TERRACE
MERIDIEN HOTEL

AT 9:38 P.M. (Martinique Time)

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. President, Madame Giscard d'Estaing, our distinguished guests:

Let me say with great personal conviction and strong feelings, we have enjoyed being here in a part of France. The warmth of the welcome of the people, the superb atmosphere created by the beauties of nature have made this trip a wonderful experience for all of us.

Mr. President, the United States within a relatively few months is going to be celebrating our 200th anniversary. Whenever we think about that anniversary, we can't help but feel the participation that France played in the achievement of our independence.

July 4th, 1976, will bring back many, many memories of the help and assistance that France gave to our country at a very difficult and controversial period in our early history in America.

It is my understanding, Mr. President, that one of your ancestors, Admiral d'Estaing, did have an interest in and did help us at a period when we, the United States, were in our formative years. For that we thank you, and for all of the other great Frenchmen who were assisting America in our early days.

It is my understanding, Mr. President, that France is making a very meaningful contribution to our 200th anniversary with the "Sight and Sound" program that will be a highlight in Washington for the many, many thousands who will visit the Nation's Capital.

We thank you for this contribution and we are grateful for your feeling that France should participate in this way.

If I might now turn to our own personal relationship which I say without any hesitancy or qualification, it was a pleasure to meet you and to have the opportunity of broadening a relationship and developing a friendship.

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It seems to me this can be meaningful in our relations between France and the United States. But even more meaningful, on a far broader basis, I am grateful for your statesmanship; I am most appreciative for your views that we have exchanged here on this occasion in a part of France.

And so, Mr. President, may I offer a toast to you and Madame Giscard d'Estaing and to the Republic of France. It is a pleasure and a privilege.

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PRESIDENT GISCARD: Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen:

Mr. President, we have both come into office very recently, only a few months ago, and so -- this is a source of deep satisfaction -- we are both extremely young. Indeed, one can say it is a secret of youth, in fact, to be elected President.

Now, we are, however, young Presidents of countries whose relations are very longstanding, indeed, as you, yourself just mentioned. And indeed, all you have to do is to look behind you at Fort-de-France -- Fort-de-France, which has carried that name for three centuries and two centuries ago harbored the French fleet that sailed off to the coast of the young and new United States.

I would add that the relations between France and the United States are not merely a matter of what you might call the picturesque site of history or simply a matter of stories on the subject. No, it is something which reflects a deep and reciprocal, mutual interest. It is something which has been born out in numerous circumstances. For instance, when at the time of the First World War the United States came to the defense of France, the landing of the Americans on French territory was met with tremendous enthusiasm on the part of the French population.

And so, when, at the end of the Second World War, I, myself, was involved in the last stages of the war, the unit that I served in was a part of the First French Army which, itself, was under the Seventh United States Army.

But the great problems of our times -- even to those of us who, like ourselves, are deeply attached to tradition -- the big problems of our time, I say, are in fact ahead of us and will call for considerable imagination and action.

And that is why it was very important for me, Mr. President, to know whether these new problems and tasks could in fact be tackled, with the very great country that you represent, in a spirit of openness and mutual understanding.

And so, it was important for me to establish this personal contact with you, yourself, sir, and the distinguished persons accompanying you. And yesterday morning when I was meeting you at the airport, it occurred to me that during these two days, we were in fact going to perhaps take initiatives and perform actions which would lead to solutions which could well have a lasting effect, not only on our own relations, but also, perhaps on world affairs.

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The results of our talks will be embodied in a communique which will be issued at the end of tomorrow morning and if I were to divulge right now what the results of our talks have been, this would deprive the members of our staff from the pleasures of the late evening and early morning during which they would engage in the arduous task of preparing the suitable form of words.

But what I can say something about is the atmosphere of our talks and what I would like to mention is their very cordial nature, the very simple way in which our talks have proceeded, the great frankness and the clarity of your positions and the great competence with which you have had our discussions.

Now, on international gatherings or occasions such as this, people tend to wonder, in fact, who won, who came out on top, who gave the concessions, who, in fact, was the victor. But at the very outset, you will recall that I said it was my hope that, in fact, there would be neither a matter of concessions nor victors in a case like this, but we should both emerge from these talks with the feeling that we had, in fact, achieved something useful, realistic and worthwhile in furthering the solutions of the problems that we are in fact discussing.

And could I say very sincerely, Mr. President, how very much Madame Giscard d'Estaing and myself deeply regret the absence of Mrs. Ford. We had been looking forward very much to meeting her here on this occasion and I may say that some of the arrangements that had been made had been made precisely in anticipation of the pleasure of, for instance, having her with us today at lunch.

Now, there is one great advantage of this situation and that is that the rights of international affairs dictate that one cannot, twice running, invite the same Head of State. That means, therefore, that despite the great pleasure that this would afford us, it would not be possible for us to invite you, sir, again so soon, but we could, of course, invite Mrs. Ford. And we would very much hope that she would accept and that you would be kind enough to accompany her.

Now, people in this world of ours very often asked themselves all sorts of questions and indeed, one of the things they often wonder about, apparently, is why statesmen, in fact, are statesmen and why they accept to sacrifice many aspects of their existence to the responsibilities of State.

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Now, as far as you are concerned, and I have seen this during our talks, and as far as I am concerned, the reason, perhaps, for which we do so is that we feel we have, perhaps, a contribution to make in furthering the affairs of the world.

Now, the fact that the responsibilities that we have to shoulder at this particular time in history are particularly heavy at the same time means that our contribution will be a significant contribution.

Now, it is clear, however, that the affairs of mankind and the peace of the world do not depend solely on the action or the efforts of one country alone, however big that country may be, but will always depend on the combination, on the conjunction of the efforts of several, and I now know that it is quite clear that we will be able to work together.

Mr. President, when the French Fleet left these waters two centuries ago for the North American Continent, there were doubtless, at the time of departure, great festivities on board and I can well imagine that my ancestor may well have offered a toast on that occasion which would probably have had something to do with the wishes that he would have expressed concerning the continent that they were about to discover and would have expressed their hopes and their expectations.

Now, this evening, today, the situation, to some extent, is the other way around in that it is we who are hosting you here in Martinique, but the French Martinique of two centuries ago and the French Martinique of today, Mr. President, are deeply proud of having here the visit today of the President of the United States, our friend the President.

END (AT 9:55 P.M. Martinique Time)