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OCTOBER 13, 1975

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF REMARKS
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT
AND THE
SOVIET COSMONAUTS
AND
UNITED STATES ASTRONAUTS

THE ROSE GARDEN

12:49 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Obviously, I am extremely delighted to have the opportunity to greet each of the astronauts and cosmonauts this time on earth. As I recall, we talked together last July. At that time you were making great history and our conversation was at the range of about 140 miles from the earth itself.

It was a great occasion with the Apollo and the Soyuz being linked at the same time, but let me say that this was a great demonstration, what took place, because it shows that there can be and there is cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union in the area of space. But, actually, the handshake, in my opinion, was far, far more significant than the talk that had been going on prior to the operation.

But even more significant, of course, was the activity of literally thousands and thousands of scientists, technicians and others in putting together over a three-year period a successful effort which shows what can be done between the people and the Governments of two great nations.

And this joint effort, I hope and trust, will be but a forerunner of what we can do on an expanded basis, not only in space and science, but in many other areas.

Now, when the space shuttle becomes operational at the turn of the decade, we will be on the threshold of even greater opportunities, a new era in space activity. These reusable space vehicles will provide effective as well as economic means to utilize and build upon our capabilities in space. Already there are commercial as well as scientific interests involved in making use of what this potential shows for us.

The history books, of course, that will be written in the years ahead will recognize that these five individuals were really great pioneers in an effort between these two countries. And it indicates, of course, or the history books will indicate, that this was the beginning, and hopefully a good beginning, of this new era of space exploration.

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Now, as a token of this mission, we have a rather unique presentation to be made by General Stafford to the cosmonauts and at this point, General Stafford, would you proceed with the ceremony?

GENERAL STAFFORD: Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. President.

To start with, we have one minor presentation before that. When we linked together, we had plaques made, aluminum, for the United States and the Soviet Union, one on each side, and we have put those together. So at this time, sir, to start with, both crews would like to present you with the plaque that was put together.

THE PRESIDENT: Let me express to all five of you my deep personal gratitude for this wonderful symbol of what you all can do in space and what you have achieved. I am sure that General Secretary Brezhnev values this, cherishes this as much as I do.

I will certainly have this in the office in a very prominent place, and I thank both of you as well as our own three astronauts for the wonderful thoughtfulness in making this presentation.

GENERAL STAFFORD: To Aleksey and Valeriy, President Ford wanted to make a presentation that was symbolic of the mission. I think it is very unique in its symbolic effort, it is the communications and power cables between the Command Module over to the Docking Module and on these was carried the voice communications right after our hookup and through most of the television transmissions you saw.

First to Aleksey and then to Valeriy Kubasov.

THE PRESIDENT: Let me say, again, General Stafford, that I know that all of you from the United States had a wonderful visit in the Soviet Union. You traveled extensively and were warmly received by the people of the Soviet Union.

I am certain that the two Russian cosmonauts will be equally and very warmly welcomed throughout the United States. I recall vividly the warmth that you received in the welcome when we went over to Alexandria, Virginia here a little over a year ago and enjoyed the crab feast. But as you travel around the United States, you will find all Americans will respect the great achievements that were accomplished by the five of you, that they will welcome you into their cities, into their homes, and I am sure when you return to the Soviet Union, you will have a warm and friendly feeling toward 214 million Americans.

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COSMONAUT LEONOV: (As translated) Mr. President, we very often remember our wonderful visit with you at the last occasion when we flew together to Alexandria and have seen the extremely warm hospitality that you showed us. These were agreeable moments in our preparation for the flight.

We remember with pleasure your conversations with each one of us during the flight. These, at this time, were the pleasant minutes during the flight itself. Your words joined us together and one group of people representing all of the people on earth. So, therefore, please allow me in the name of our crew to thank you very much for all of the attention you have shown us.

Valeriy Kubasov and I have been entrusted with a great honor of transmitting a letter from Secretary Brezhnev to you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very, very much.

COSMONAUT LEONOV: Mr. President, the last time that we were here, we gave you a small, modest little pin of Apollo-Soyuz. Right now, the crews of Soyuz and Apollo feel that they should give you a little bit better present as a symbol of the flight.

Thank you very much for your attention.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, sir.

I still have the model of the Apollo and the Soyuz in the office. I took that little memento that you gave me and had it put on the base of the model and we will somehow find a way that this is appropriately displayed as well.

Thank you, again, very, very much.

END

(AT 12:49 P.M. EDT)