

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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(Martinique, F.W.I.)

THE WHITE HOUSE

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

THE PREFECT'S RESIDENCE

9:51 P.M. (Martinique Time)

PRESIDENT d'ESTAING: Mr. President, a meeting between France and the United States is always a rendezvous of freedom and friendship and what could be a better place for it than this island of Martinique which cherishes the proud memory of having served as a Naval base for the French Fleet during the American War of Independence and in two years' time, we will be celebrating together the successful outcome of that event.

It was in the name of freedom that our friendship was born and we shall celebrate its 200th anniversary at the same time as the Bicentennial of American independence.

It was also in the name of freedom that twice in the course of this century the active solidarity of the United States enabled France to preserve or to regain her independence.

Different as we may be, what appeals so much to us, the French, is all that in the United States symbolizes and means freedom: Your vast spaces, your openness to new ideas and bold endeavors, your mastery of technology which gives man his power over nature and lightens his burden.

Freedom and friendship have stamped their mark on the relations between our two countries. Freedom allows for their frankness and independence; friendship demands mutual understanding and cooperation.

This spirit of free dialogue and trust between partners who recognize the equality of their rights and duties, even if they are not equal in terms of resources or power, is characteristic of Franco-American relations and there is nothing to prevent that the same spirit be applied to solving the major problems of the world today.

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For our part, we express the wish that this spirit inspire the relations between the United States and the Europe that we are striving patiently -- and we are bound to say slowly -- to build.

It is only on condition that it can exist by its own accord that Europe will be for the United States a firm and reliable partner and for the world a factor of balance and peace.

We also wish that this spirit of dialogue should govern our thinking on the profound changes in the world scene.

As you were mentioning, you, yourself, Mr. President, on your arrival here, the path of consultation which is as far removed from that of confrontation as it is from that of capitulation is the only one which is in keeping with the political, economic and human needs of our time.

It is the path we followed when it was time to emerge from the cold war and on our war-torn continent to organize detente, entente and cooperation, while maintaining actively our desire for independence in safeguarding our security. It is the path we recommend be followed in the Middle East where in spite of the remarkable efforts of American diplomacy and the useful progress it has achieved the situation remains a threatening one.

A just and lasting settlement must, in our view, take into account the three legitimate aspirations of all parties concerned, those of the State of Israel, to live in peace within secure and guaranteed boundaries; those of the Arab States to recover their territorial integrity, and those of the Palestinian people to have, as all peoples, a homeland.

It is also through consultation that we shall succeed in finding a solution to the problem caused by the increase in oil prices. This, in no way, excludes a prior harmonization of the positions within each of the major categories involved.

It, however, presupposes that the purpose of this harmonization process be to prepare the meeting at the same table and at a fixed date of countries willing to reconcile their respective points of view in the peaceful interest of the world.

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Mr. President, we shall be having talks in a climate of mutual trust on all these subjects of concern to the world today. These talks will once again demonstrate that the frankness of our discussions draws us together much more than it divides us, as should be between partners and allies when they have for each other, as I have for your country, a sense of fair dignity and their sovereignty.

Mr. President, we all deeply regret the absence of Mrs. Ford and I would like to ask you to be kind enough to convey to her our very warm and respectful wishes for a prompt recovery.

I drink this toast in your honor, Mr. President, as well as to the great people of the United States, to whom the French people, through me, extend their greetings in testimony of our two centuries' old and ever young friendships like our two countries.

Thank you.

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THE PRESIDENT: Mr. President, the hospitality extended to me has reflected in the warmth of the climate of this most remarkable island and the spirit of your kind words of welcome, and I am deeply grateful.

I am very, very proud to be the first American President in office to visit this part of the Caribbean and I would like to express again my appreciation to you personally for suggesting Martinique as the location of our first meeting.

The United States and France, we all know, have been very, very close. We have been extremely close friends for over two centuries. From our American revolution through the darkest days of World War II our countries have stood together in moments of crisis. And today, of fundamental importance to our countries and to the West, a strong Atlantic Alliance safeguards our security.

As old friends and allies, Mr. President, we have much to talk about. On many, many points we shall agree. On others we may differ. But it is of the greatest importance, in my judgment, that we will talk with full candor since we share the same ideals. A relationship of confidence is absolutely essential. It is only through such a relationship, Mr. President, that our common objectives can best be served and our differing views reconciled.

As in the past, we jointly face, Mr. President, major challenges. This time the immediate danger is not war but the problems of peace: inflation, balance of payments deficits, energy shortages, and for many throughout the world shortages of food itself. These problems unfortunately accentuate the interdependence of nations and the need for communication and cooperation.

At stake is the stability of every economy, the welfare of every nation. Unilateral measures, Mr. President, can no longer suffice in solving problems of such universal dimension.

Mr. President, you recently described this situation very vividly when you said the world is unhappy. Indeed the world is troubled, but if we are to transcend our difficulties and successfully meet our challenges, we, France and the United States, must cooperate.

We face a major problem in the field of energy. In dealing with it on the basis of consumer solidarity we seek constructive dialogue, not confrontation. The United States is convinced that cooperation and solidarity among the consumer nations mark the surest ways to reach understanding with the producer nations which we all desire.

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I am also looking forward, Mr. President, to exchanging impressions on East-West relations and on our recent meetings with General Secretary Brezhnev. I am sure we will all agree that all of us in the West will benefit from close relationships as the policy of detente continues to develop.

Our interdependence requires that we -- together with our friends and our partners -- join in concerted measures or responses to the dangers which confront us all.

Let us continue our historic relationship with renewed spirit and redoubled effort as good and responsible friends.

Our common heritage gives me confidence that we will continue our joint endeavors for peace and stability in the world. Mr. President, it is with this objective that I look forward to our discussions tomorrow. I have every hope that our talks will strengthen the friendships between us, both in a bilateral sense and also as members of the alliance which Americans regard as the cornerstone of our foreign policy.

Ladies and gentlemen, in the spirit of strengthening our historic ties, I ask all of you to stand and to raise your glasses in honor of the President of the French Republic and his lovely wife.

END (AT 10:12 P.M. Martinique Time)