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THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF TOASTS
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT
AND
GASTON THORN
PRIME MINISTER OF LUXEMBOURG

THE STATE FLOOR

9:03 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Prime Minister, our distinguished guests:

Let me say to you, Mr. Prime Minister, it is a great pleasure to welcome you to our country and to Washington, and to this evening with your many friends, as well as others. This is, of course, a continuation of the first meetings we had in Brussels last spring.

I was just saying that I had the impression then, and I am even more impressed now, of your able spokespersonship on behalf of not only your country, but the views we share and the feelings that we have, and I congratulate you on the strong positions and the firm views that you have taken in your new role at the United Nations.

I spoke to you this morning, and I wondered how even a young person like yourself could handle all of your responsibilities -- Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Minister of Commerce, President of the United Nations General Assembly, upcoming President as of January 1976 of the Council of Ministers of the European community.

If I was going to take a vacation, Mr. President, (Laughter) I am sure I would not volunteer for your responsibilities. (Laughter)

I also understand that on the side you are the Minister of Physical Education and Sports of Luxembourg. (Laughter) Can I volunteer for that? (Laughter)

Mr. Prime Minister, we admire your talent and your versatility, your energy, and obviously your accomplishments. I am honored to consult with you on the issues we discussed this morning of such great importance to our countries and to the mutual interests of our nations.

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As we discussed in Brussels, and as we discussed subsequently, the ties and the bilateral relationships between Luxembourg and the United States are very close. As far as I know, there are no problems whatsoever, and we are most grateful for this close and, I think, successful relationship between our countries.

The meetings we had this spring in Brussels of the NATO nations brought our respective allies together more closely than we had seen in the past, and it is, I hope, only a building stone and a step forward to greater solidarity in the months ahead.

The new responsibilities, of course, that you have in New York I don't envy. (Laughter) We strongly support, despite some of the recent problems, the United Nations. As you may have noticed, I said the United States, despite disappointments and losses, ought not to, under any circumstances, leave the United Nations.

We believe that it is better to fight within than to stand on the outside without participating. So, our good Ambassador is going to fight within (Laughter) with restraint (Laughter) and success. But we support what you represent, Mr. President, and Mr. Prime Minister.

What I would like to do is just to commend you for your great leadership at home, your great leadership in the community, your fine performance as head of the General Assembly and your overall rapport that our countries have, and I am proud and privileged to have you as our guest in the White House on this occasion.

Let me assure you that the American people support what you believe in and the things that you represent and those that your country represent.

So, may I offer a toast, Mr. President, to the Prime Minister, to our continued close ties and to His Royal Highness, the Grand Duke Jean.

AMBASSADOR MEISCH (For Prime Minister Thorn):
Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen:

Let me thank you, first of all, for your kind words and the warm reception you have given me on my first visit to Washington as Prime Minister of Luxembourg.

Your long experience in politics, as well as your frank and sympathetic approach, greatly facilitate a common understanding and create a rapport which I felt was most helpful in our discussions this morning.

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Since then, I had the privilege to meet with other prominent politicians, and I was pleased to see on all these occasions how closely our two countries are linked together. Those ties are not only based on the identity of our political, economic and security interests, but also on the interplay of cultural and historical developments that have been of such great importance to us.

It gives me particular pleasure to be in the United States on the threshold of the great jubilee of its history, the Bicentennial.

You are the only country in the world with 200 years of uninterrupted Republic and democratic traditions, a country which for two centuries has made liberty and equality for all citizens its law of life.

Those ideals remain today the most important, the most topical and the most vital for all of us.

Over the last centuries, many Luxembourg emigrants have come over the Atlantic Ocean. There are now almost as many descendants of Luxembourg in the United States as there are citizens in the Grand Duchy, a unique record indeed.

My country, of course, owes a tremendous debt to the United States. The Luxembourg people will never forget that it was the American Army which liberated them during the last World War, that it was the Marshall Plan that enabled it to close its terrible wounds.

This great deed of peace is unique in the history of international cooperation, and remains forever a testimony to the generosity of the American people.

Democratic freedoms and prosperity can, however, only be preserved if they are linked with readiness to defend them both internally and externally. That is precisely the purpose of the Atlantic Alliance in which we are united, the purpose of the Atlantic partnership to which we again committed ourselves at the NATO Council six months ago in Brussels.

The Alliance shields us not only against aggression, but it provides us also with a framework within which our countries can develop their cooperation amongst themselves. It constitutes the indispensable basis for successful detente.

We all know that a nation's external strength is only as great as its internal strength. A free society cannot pursue a positive and convincing foreign policy if its internal structure is not sound and well-organized.

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That is why it is absolutely essential for our democracies to keep their own house in order.

In this respect, I want to stress the outstanding role of the economy. Indeed, I do think that we can no longer isolate the political and security questions from the economic and monetary problems.

Within the framework of the Atlantic Alliance, we must be aware that the economic and social evolution is having a direct bearing on our defense efforts and our willingness to defend our democratic ideals.

I am convinced that our democracies can cope with the present economic and social causes if they act in solidarity. I am no less convinced that the economic and political cooperation of the nine Western European States will be of major significance in this field, as in others.

European union, to which we have committed ourselves, has not yet been completed and, to be frank, in this respect we are still a long way behind our hopes and promises. But, a united Europe is essential, and we shall build it.

In doing so, we need the understanding of the United States. One thing is certain, only through close cooperation between North America and Europe, and by harmonizing our interests have we any prospect of mastering the great challenges with which the world confronts us today.

If anything can fill us with courage to face this tremendous task, it is a belief in the inalienable dignity and freedom of man which inspired the founders of your mighty country 200 years ago.

Mr. President, by offering a toast to you, I think I pass.

PRIME MINISTER THORN: Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen:

Mr. President, may I thank you for your hearty welcome and for all your comprehension. It was your doctor who two hours ago didn't allow me to deliver myself the speech, but he allowed me to make a toast.

May I propose first that it would be the greatest honor for my country if the President of the greatest country of NATO could come one day, one hour, to visit the tiny, the baby partner of NATO.

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It would be a great honor for my country and, Mr. President, may I drink a toast to your health, to the prosperity of the American people and to our good, friendly and everlasting cooperation.

END (AT 9:14 P.M. EST)

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