

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

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THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF REMARKS  
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT  
AND  
LIAM M. COSGRAVE  
PRIME MINISTER OF IRELAND

THE SOUTH GROUNDS

10:45 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Prime Minister, it is a particular honor and a pleasure to welcome you on this very special day, when the American spirit and the Irish spirit are in such close harmony.

I welcome you not only as Prime Minister of Ireland, but as a kinsman, very distant in genealogy but very close in affinity. My mother proudly told me one time I am partially Irish in heritage, and I can assure you I am fully Irish in spirit.

Your visit, Mr. Prime Minister, symbolizes the warm friendship and excellent relations between our two countries. We have joined to face the great challenges of our times, to insure peace, prosperity and liberty for all our peoples.

Mr. Prime Minister, I convey the appreciation of the American people to the people of Ireland for your participation in our Bicentennial. Throughout our history -- beginning with the many Irish-Americans who fought for freedom in 1776 and the 11 who signed the Declaration of Independence -- men and women from your country have brought Irish courage, Irish energy, Irish strength, Irish devotion and Irish genius to the United States of America.

In addition to the bonds of history and family, our nations share a deep devotion to independence, democracy, religious liberty and individual freedom.

Ireland, which became a free nation only in this century, is part of the new, as well as the old. You have the confidence of many of the world's new and developing nations which, like Ireland, have gained independence in our lifetime.

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You also have the mature values and culture of an ancient civilization which started before history books were written. The problems confronting the entire world, the attainment of peace and security, of justice and human dignity, must be met by nations working together.

Only by cooperation can the countries of the world confront the complexity of the new age. Through your effective contributions to the United Nations, especially to the United Nations peace-keeping forces, Ireland has shown profound appreciation of humanity's interdependence.

As a member of the European Community, Ireland has creatively fostered relations between the community and the United States during the Irish Presidency of the European Community. Just as we value Ireland's constructive and distinguished role in international relations, we greatly appreciate our own ties with your country, Mr. Prime Minister.

We cherish our cultural and historical associations and the steady expansion of mutually beneficial trade. Our economic cooperation is increasing, and American investment in Ireland is substantial and growing.

We meet today to honor our long and mutual tradition of Irish-American friendship and to build upon it for the future. I look forward to our discussion, and I am delighted to welcome you on this magic day.

Mr. Prime Minister, the top of the day to you, and Mrs. Cosgrave, and to all of your party and to all the Irish everywhere.

PRIME MINISTER COSGRAVE: Mr. President, Mrs. Ford:

My wife and I would like to express our sincere gratitude to you and Mrs. Ford for the very gracious welcome that you have given us.

We are deeply honored to receive your invitation to make an official visit to the United States to be with the people of America as they celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

It is particularly appropriate that our visit should commence on St. Patrick's Day, which has an especial significance for Ireland and, indeed, also for the United States. It is also a great personal pleasure for us to be here in this beautiful city of Washington, where we have so many friends.

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For me, Mr. President, today has a further personal significance. Almost half a century ago, in 1928, my father, W. T. Cosgrave, then head of the Irish Government, visited this country, accompanied by his Minister for Defense, Mr. Desmond Fitzgerald, whose son, Dr. Garrett Fitzgerald, is Foreign Minister in my Government and is here with me today.

I wonder whether in the history of such visits to this great country there has been any parallel. I am indeed gratified that history should repeat itself on this auspicious occasion. We are indeed greatly honored to have been invited here during your Bicentennial year, a year which highlights the remarkable achievements of this truly great nation.

We are proud that throughout American history the Irish people have been closely identified with your endeavors. What you have accomplished and the ideas for which you stand have served as a source of inspiration to us and to other nations. Indeed, the ties that were forged between us in the early years have not lessened with time. On the contrary, I believe they are today stronger and firmer than ever.

Mr. President, on this St. Patrick's Day in this historic year it is, I think, appropriate for me to bring you a special message from the Government and people of Ireland.

Today, when the challenges which confront us in almost every field of our activities -- both nationally and internationally -- appear daunting, it is timely to reflect on this dedication of our forebearers, to whom we owe so much. In Ireland, we look back over 1,000 and more years to the work of St. Patrick, and those who followed him, who kept alight in Europe during the centuries of the dark ages the torch of civilization.

They were men of peace in times of violence. Their principles of freedom, justice and truth are part of our heritage. They remain the values by which we must seek to conduct our affairs today. Those principles are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and Ireland has pledged its endeavors towards their observance throughout the world.

Mr. President, I am deeply touched by your warm welcome, and I am certain our visit will further strengthen the warm bonds of special friendship which have always characterized our two countries.

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Mr. President, there are many ancient traditions associated with St. Patrick's Day, and one of the best known of these is the wearing of the shamrock, which has a special significance for the Irish people, both at home and in the countries of their adoption.

Today, which is symbolic of so much that the Irish and American people share in common, it is a great source of pleasure to me to have been able to present this shamrock to you, to pin it on the President's lapel as a symbol of the friendship and the close ties which bind our two countries together.

Mr. President, I thank you.

END (AT 10:53 A.M. EST)