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THE WHITE HOUSE
EXCHANGE OF REMARKS
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT
AND
HER MAJESTY MARGRETHE II
QUEEN OF DENMARK

THE STATE FLOOR

2:35 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Ladies and gentlemen:

It is a very great privilege and pleasure for Mrs. Ford and me to have you with us on this occasion in the White House.

On your first visit to our country since ascending the throne, I welcome you very warmly on behalf of all of the Americans.

Americans have a historic affinity and a special friendship for Denmark and we want your stay in our country to be as joyous and rewarding as possible. There are no less than 22 cities and towns in the United States called Denmark. (Laughter) I think this is somewhat indicative of the Danish influence in America's heartland where I understand you are visiting, and those of us who come from that part of the country, of course, feel it is the heartland of America.

I am tremendously delighted that you will visit many, many parts of the United States and that our people have an opportunity to meet you and to treat you as hospitably as I know they will.

I am especially pleased that you will visit the Virgin Islands because of the very special ties flowing from those historic islands.

Your visit is very timely in this Bicentennial year because our two countries have maintained uninterrupted diplomatic relations with each other longer than America has had such relations with any other country. Our relations began in 1801 and they have never been severed by war or for any other reason.

In your American travels you will meet millions of Danish ancestry. We are extremely proud of the contributions to our progress by those who have your cultural heritage and the moral and spiritual values that are important to both of our peoples.

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The traditional ties between Denmark and the United States are reinforced by a common dedication to the freedom and the dignity of the individual and to the economic and social progress which is important to us all. It is these shared commitments that make us not only close friends but steadfast allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

In these shared commitments we, of course, feel that the rich culture is a vitally important part. And Denmark has given, not only to NATO but to Western Europe, much to humanity. Committed to the objective of peace among nations, the Danes have made that goal a reality by serving in the United States' (Nations') peacekeeping activities and efforts in the Middle East, the Congo as well as Cyprus.

As a member of the European community, Denmark enhances contacts between the community and the United States. The United States has attached a very great importance to our relationship with Denmark, and I note that these relations are excellent at the present time and I am confident that those relations will continue. We will understand each other's views on various international problems, on peace, security and economic progress.

As President, I welcome the outstanding contributions which the Danish Government, the Danish Bicentennial Committee and the Danish people are making to the observance of our 200th anniversary.

In addition to the visit of Your Majesty and His Royal Highness, Danish programs for the Bicentennial encompass a very broad range of activities in the field of music, art, education and history. They include the tours by the Royal Danish Ballet and the Copenhagen Boys' Choir, exhibits, presentations of books and musical anthologies to various American universities and conservatories and very generous gifts to the Kennedy Center and the Government of the Virgin Islands. All of us are very deeply grateful for this thoughtfulness and this generosity.

Denmark perhaps is the only other country which for years has celebrated July 4. A Danish society has met on July 4 for many, many years to reaffirm the very friendly ties between Denmark and the United States.

Your Majesty, Your Royal Highness, once again we bid you a sincere and very hearty welcome.

Ladies and gentlemen, I ask you to join me in a toast to Her Majesty and to His Royal Highness. May the friendship between Denmark and the United States continue to grow and may our two nations move toward one another on common objectives of peace, progress and liberty for all peoples.

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QUEEN MARGRETHE: Mr. President, the Prince and I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for your very kind words of welcome and for the warm and generous reception which you and Mrs. Ford have given us at the White House.

Coming to Washington for the first time as I do, I am at once attracted by the beautiful white buildings in their peaceful setting of green lawns and flowering trees. And it is a striking feature of Washington that the seat of power of so vast a country as the United States, the White House, is not only the center of administration but also a charming home.

Though my husband and I have both visited the United States before, we have never been here together, and this is yet another reason why we have looked forward to this visit and to meeting you and Mrs. Ford. This year is the Bicentennial of the United States and we are happy to contribute our congratulations on this great occasion on behalf of the people of Denmark.

The United States, or America, as we often say in Denmark, occupies a very special place in the imagination of my countrymen. This is vividly illustrated by a children's story in verse, which first appeared in 1830 and has been read to this very day.

It tells the story of a small disenchanted boy who has received bad grades at school, a scolding from his mother for having torn his trousers, and whose girlfriend has let him down. (Laughter) So he decides to run away to America (Laughter) because America, as he explains: The horse has silver shoes I'm told, the carriage has wheels to match; the streets and roads are paved with gold, you may bend and keep what you catch. Chocolates and sweets from the bushes drop, and the trees have candy flowers, it rains and snows with lemon pop and hail is peppermint showers. (Laughter)

This may be rather a fanciful picture of the United States (Laughter), but I fully agree with the boy when he goes on to say: But once you've safely reached that land, you'll never regret the voyage. (Laughter)

Thousands of Danes will agree with these lines, for especially during the latter half of the 19th century many Danes were among the millions of people who settled in the United States, attracted by the opportunities of the New World and the challenge of shaping a living for themselves in a country where initiative and hard work were the great requirements and the prime virtues. That these Danes dared and succeeded is the pride of their old country.

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During the turbulent times in Europe around the year 1800 Denmark was among the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with the United States. Thus, this year the United States and Denmark have maintained unbroken diplomatic relations for 175 years. I believe that we are justified in boasting a longer relationship with the United States than any other country. A fruitful background for that strong and intimate relationship which has been forged between our two governments and our peoples during more recent times and which is strengthened by bonds both cultural and commercial and by our common membership of world-wide alliances and organizations.

I can assure you, Mr. President, that Denmark has not forgotten and never will forget the decisive contribution of the United States one generation ago in the confrontation with the forces that were about to destroy our democracy and our right to live in a society based on liberty and justice. Nor shall we forget the generosity of the United States when it came to the tremendous task of reconstructing our economies in Western Europe.

The formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1949 opened up an area for very close cooperation between Denmark and the United States based on our mutual security interests. The arrangement between our two countries with regard to Greenland is a specific expression of our common interest in the security field.

The alliance has given us the necessary background for attempts to establish a more secure and confident relationship between East and West. You have yourself, Mr. President, expressed your ideas about this relationship in your eloquent address at the Helsinki summit meeting last year. It is a major achievement of the Alliance to which your contribution is so vital that it has been possible to maintain peace in Europe since the end of the Second World War.

In this long period of peace, new ideas for European cooperation have come up. In 1972 Denmark, the United Kingdom, and the Irish Republic decided to join the Community, and Denmark, together with our eight fellow members, is now striving to develop this community which vitally affects all aspects of life in our society.

In Denmark we are convinced that the construction of Europe is of importance not only to the members of the European Community, and that the traditional close relations between the United States and Europe will continue and develop further as part of a greater pattern involving all countries of the world. This is but one of the ways of practical international cooperation, and one of the ways in which the interdependence of all countries may be realized and greater stability and peace achieved.

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In former times people went to America to settle and only came back on brief visits if at all, so that what we knew about the American way of life was sketchy and often inaccurate. In more recent times, however, more and more young people have been to the United States to study and have brought back new ideas and fresh knowledge which they have put to good use and which has been instrumental in rebuilding Europe since the war.

It would be difficult to imagine where Danish science, business and industry would be today, were it not for the contribution of that generation of young people who received a large part of their training in the United States.

I hope and believe that the warm friendship between our two countries will endure and that this Bicentennial year will be yet another link in the long chain of years through which the good relationship between Denmark and the United States has existed.

The Prince joins me when I raise my glass in honor of the President of the United States of America and Mrs. Ford, for the friendship between our two countries, and for the prosperity and happiness of the people of the United States.

END (AT 2:47 P.M. EDT)