

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MARCH 19, 1975

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF TOASTS
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT
AND
DZEMAL BIJEDIC
PRIME MINISTER OF YUGOSLAVIA

STATE DINING ROOM

2:12 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Prime Minister, distinguished guests:

It is a pleasure to welcome you to Washington and to this historic house. I understand that in your birthplace of Mostar in Yugoslavia, there is a famous stone bridge which has been standing for a very long time. I hope, Mr. Prime Minister, the relationship between Yugoslavia and the United States will be as long as the history of that famous bridge.

The foundation, Mr. Prime Minister, as you well know, is the cooperative relationship between the United States and the People's Republic of Yugoslavia. It was built more than a quarter of a century ago. As a matter of fact, I was in the Congress of the United States at the time this new relationship began and developed, and is now flourishing.

This relationship, Mr. Prime Minister, is anchored, as I see it, in a strong mutual interest in Yugoslavia's independence, its integrity and its unity, as well as a mutual desire, Mr. Prime Minister, to maintain peace in Europe as well as in the rest of the world.

I think it symbolizes the cooperation between two countries with entirely different social and political systems.

Like the bridge in Mostar, Mr. Prime Minister, the one between our nations and our peoples has withstood the test of time. It has facilitated an impressive growth in trade, in business, in scientific and cultural cooperation, as well as tourism.

MORE

While the currents sometimes passing, Mr. Prime Minister, beneath this bridge, have ebbed and flowed, its basic structure has remained intact. The principles upon which it rests remain as sound today as two decades ago.

I look forward, Mr. Prime Minister, to the further strengthening of American-Yugoslav cooperation, and I know we are both aware that this will require a continuing commitment from both governments.

Bearing in mind our common interest in continued peace and security in the world, I think we must strive to eliminate misunderstandings and any narrow differences which sometimes, unfortunately, arise between us.

The history of this relationship indicates that we have made an excellent start. I am sure -- it is my conviction -- that it will be successful in the future.

I raise my glass to your health, Mr. Prime Minister, and to the bridge between our two countries. May it continue to facilitate cooperation, understanding and friendship between our two peoples.

PRIME MINISTER BIJEDIC: Mr. President, gentlemen:

Allow me to thank you for the words of welcome and friendship addressed to me and my associates. Our visit to the United States of America constitutes a further expression of mutual desire for the promotion of friendship and cooperation between our two countries, a friendship established upon longstanding tradition and alliance during two world wars.

Our visit to your country is taking place at the moment when you have started preparations for the Bicentennial of the United States, the anniversary of the day on which, as the result of the struggle of American people against colonialism and foreign domination, the Declaration of Independence was adopted.

Many years later my country, too, went through the liberation war and revolution. I accentuate this because both our peoples aspired toward the same objective -- to live in freedom and independence, to freely determine their destiny and vigilantly guard it.

I shall call forth, Mr. President, another date in the history of the relations between our two countries. That is the year 1881, the year in which the first interstate agreement was concluded -- the trade agreement between the United States of America and Serbia signed at Belgrade in October 1881, which is still in force.

MORE

Rare are today bilateral agreements which have stood the test of time. Our two countries have experienced together the most severe historic tests of this century, fighting as allies against the joint enemies.

Over the whole period following the Second World War, they have continually voiced their determination to promote all-round equitable cooperation and mutual relations, for their own benefit and in the broader interest.

Particularly important for the development of relations between Yugoslavia and the United States was the exchange of visits between the two Presidents in 1970 and 1971, and the visit of Secretary of State Dr. Kissinger to Belgrade a few months ago.

We are highly appreciative, Mr. President, of the message you have addressed to President Tito and in which you have clearly set forth the desire of the United States to continue the policy of good relations with Yugoslavia.

Likewise, we highly appreciate your acceptance of the invitation extended by President Tito to visit Yugoslavia in the course of this year.

We are confident that this confirms once again the preparedness of your government and your own, Mr. President, for the continuation and promotion of mutual friendly relations. We will welcome you in Yugoslavia as a dear guest.

I share, Mr. President, your view and that of your government that the relations between the United States and Yugoslavia have been developing successfully, regardless of the differences of stances and views in respect to some international issues.

It is our sincere desire that these differences, wherever it is possible, be reduced through mutual efforts, more frequent contacts, mutual understanding and respect for the positions of the other side.

Yugoslavia, as an independent, socialist and nonaligned country, has a constant interest in developing relations with the United States, based on the principles of the respect for sovereignty, equality and noninterference; that is, the principles that are outlined in the joint statement of the Presidents of Yugoslavia and the United States, signed at Washington in 1971.

MORE

Yugoslavia is particularly concerned that the solutions for the existing hotbeds of military conflicts, which at any moment may become sources of new and even more difficult large-scale international crises, be sought through negotiation and full respect for the Charter and resolutions of the United Nations, as well as through agreements reached between the parties concerned.

Mr. President, in expressing my thanks for the invitation extended to me to visit your beautiful country, the country of the people whose working energies and technological advances are admired throughout the world, I wish to emphasize our great satisfaction that we are coming here at a time when, in the relations between our two countries in many fields -- particularly the economic, scientific and cultural fields -- a significant upward trend has been registered.

The trade between the two countries -- and I mention this as an example -- has increased by almost 60 percent in the course of one year. Significant banking and credit arrangements have been concluded. Joint ventures and the volume of industrial cooperation have been stepped up.

The same applies to the scientific and technological cooperation, the cooperation among universities and the cultural exchange.

The celebration of the 200th anniversary of the United States, in respect of which preparations are in progress in Yugoslavia for participation in this historic jubilee, constitutes one more opportunity to display our constant concern for the continuation of our traditional cooperation and friendship with your country.

More than a million Americans of Yugoslav descent, loyal citizens of the United States, live here today. We feel proud that in the history of the United States, in its struggle for independence and the building up of its constitutionality, the names of many individuals of Yugoslav extraction have been inscribed, people who spared no effort and sacrificed their lives to contribute to the well-being of this country.

Allow me, esteemed Mr. President, to propose this toast to your health, to the health of your associates, for the progress and prosperity of the United States of America, for the strengthening and promotion of friendly relations and cooperation between our two countries, for peace and progress in the world, and for the same bridge that you mentioned before, which has already lived there for 410 years.

END (AT 2:31 P.M. EDT)