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PRESS

E. A. Gallagher, President

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President Ford arrived at the State Department auditorium with Ambassador ~~Robert Dobrynin~~ Dobrynin about 15 minutes before the liftoff of the Soyuz. They were accompanied by NASA administrator James C. Fletcher and ~~Undersecretary~~ Undersecretary of State Robert Ingersoll. Dobrynin, quoting Brezhnev, hailed the cooperative effort, saying ~~many~~ cosmonauts who have seen the earth from space found the planet "big enough for us to live peacefully on it, but but too small to be threatened by nuclear war." He wished the crews from both countries "a good start, smooth docking, and a soft landing on earth." The President called the launch "a truly historic occasion," said he had told the U. S. astronauts they will be "blazing a brand new trail." Both countries, he said, have prepared for the venture with cooperation, skill and success.

Mr. Ford and the Ambassador watched from second row seats until about nine minutes after launch when the mission control announcer in the USSR announced "the spacecraft Soyuz has now been inserted into orbit. Orbital flight has been achieved."

~~Mr. Ford~~ The President congratulated Dobrynin and the two cosmonauts, telling reporters as he left the state department, "We wish them as well as our own the very best."

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