

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MAY 17, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF REMARKS
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT
AND
VALERY GISCARD D'ESTAING
PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

THE SOUTH GROUNDS

10:45 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. President, Madam Giscard d'Estaing, ladies and gentlemen:

On behalf of the American people, Mrs. Ford and I are very delighted to welcome you to the White House.

Mr. President, you have come to the United States at a very historic time -- the celebration of the 200th anniversary of our independence. Your visit is a very special and a very fitting gesture by France, which two centuries ago sent her sons, as well as her treasure, to help an infant republic win its independence.

In the last two decades of the 18th century the world was transformed by the American and the French Revolutions. Who could have predicted that these two new republics who came together in their infancy to establish freedom and independence 200 years later would remain steadfast friends and allies still depending and still defending these same ideals.

As in 1776 and 1789, our nations continued to champion liberty and democracy. We cooperate in peace as we have in war to preserve our revolutionary heritage of freedom. We welcome you today with the warm recollections Mr. President, of France's aid to a struggling young republic.

Within the past 30 years the number of independent nations has nearly doubled. As each new nation has declared its independence and set its political course, the world has become much more complex, more interdependent and demands from us ever greater in wisdom and the conduct of our foreign relations.

MORE

In such a world, the French-American relationship -- entering its third century -- stands out as an enduring symbol of common dedication to freedom, to the rights of man and to the increased well being of our peoples in a more peaceful and prosperous international environment.

Mr. President, the longstanding and close relationship between the United States and France has never been more important. In dealing with formidable economic, security, and political challenges, facing all democracies today, close cooperation is more crucial than ever.

We can successfully meet these challenges, Mr. President. Speaking for the American people, I salute the role of France in strengthening international economic cooperation and French contributions to international efforts to deal with the problems of energy, inflation, food and financial pressures.

We have many, many important issues to talk about, Mr. President, and I look forward to these talks in full confidence that they will contribute significantly to political and economic stability in the world.

Mr. President, Americans are most appreciative of the generous and thoughtful ways France has chosen to honor our Bicentennial. I know that your visit, Mr. President, to American towns and cities, and your participation in Bicentennial ceremonies at hallowed landmarks of our revolution will further strengthen the traditional and enduring friendship between the United States of America and France.

Mr. President, Madam Giscard d'Estaing, America bids you a most cordial welcome.

PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING: Mr. President, I feel especially fortunate to be the President of France, to whom it falls to come and celebrate with you the Bicentennial of your independence.

First, in calling to mind the imagination, initiative and courage of those great men whose successors we are and who on both sides of the Atlantic love the idea of liberty, first here in 1776 and then echoed, my friends, in 1789.

Secondly, because in the course of these two centuries our two countries have remained friends, this example is perhaps unique in history. We are fully aware of the role you played in defending our liberty. The French people have not forgotten. They thank you for it.

MORE

The real secret of our understanding springs from the principles which inspired it. Both countries have shown without a break and sometimes in dramatic circumstances an identical passion for independence and liberty.

Today, two centuries later, this principle remains at the center of the world's problems, the independence of peoples and the freedom of men. This is the reason why I have come to tell you, Mr. President, that the France of 1976 is as much committed to the struggle in the defense of liberty as she was along your side two centuries ago.

My sincere wish is that this Bicentennial meeting should be for our two countries, for the United States and for France a festival of liberty, that principle of democratic liberty which, if we have the determination, will continue to shape the destiny of the world.

Long live the United States and the great people of America.

END (AT 10:58 A.M. EDT)