

Toasts of the President and President de Gaulle at a Dinner at the Elysee Palace in Paris.

February 28, 1969

Mr. President:

On behalf of all of us who are your guests this evening, I express my deep appreciation for your very gracious hospitality and for your eloquent remarks.

As I stand here in this place of honor, in this magnificent room, in the presence of this company, I realize that I stand here at a time in history which will long be remembered. I realize that it was just a few years ago that you entertained another American President, a young man against whom I had run for office and one who came here and sat in the chair that I now occupy. We were members of different parties. We disagreed on some issues. But we were completely agreed on what was important.

We were completely agreed, for example, in the importance of French-American friendship. And we were completely agreed in our dedication to the ideals, the ideals which your country stands for, the ideals that we share with you--ideals of freedom, of equality, of peace and justice for all nations.

And so I speak not just for myself, or for my party, but for the whole American people when I salute you, Mr. President, and your people, and when I say with regard to you that with reference to the fact that the United States is a powerful nation militarily and rich economically, we also recognize that there are other sources of great leadership. And that greatness of leadership can be seen in the character of a great man.

That character can be measured in three ways: the quality of courage, the quality of the ability to convince others of a point of view, and the quality of being able to bring a nation back after that nation has fallen on difficult days.

Mr. President, your life has been an example to millions of your countrymen and to millions throughout the world--an epic of courage, an epic also of leadership seldom equaled in the history of the world, leadership which now has brought this great nation to the rightful place that it should have in the family of nations.

And then there is one other quality we have found always in our visits with you and which we seek now and are finding now, and that is the quality of wisdom and vision--the vision that sees beyond the crisis of the moment, that sees the great forces that are at play in the world and, therefore, is able to have the perspective that leaders need to make the right decisions, the decisions that will stand well in history and not just in the headlines of tomorrow.

And so I ask all of you to raise your glasses to a nation and a people with whom the United States has had the longest uninterrupted friendship--200 years---of any nation in the world, and to a leader who has become a giant among men because he had courage, because he had vision, and because he had the wisdom that the world now seeks to solve its difficult problems: President de Gaulle.

Note: The President proposed the toast at 9:30 p.m. in response to a toast by President Charles de Gaulle, who spoke in French. The French Embassy translation follows:

Mr. President, you did very well to come, at all events, it will have been very pleasant and very useful for us. But it so happens that, at this very moment, the tremendous change accomplished by our universe in one generation and those that undoubtedly await it urgently engage the responsibility of the states once each one of them intends to assume its own responsibility. It happens, also, that

this is especially true for America, due to the present extent of its power and to the fact that, alone of all the major nations, it has emerged from the two terrible World Wars without major wounds. So, nothing is more natural and more satisfactory than the visits you are paying to several European capitals and, notably, to Paris.

So here you are in the process of exchanging your views with ours in order to serve what we want, you and we, I mean progress and peace. This is being done---is it not true?--in the frankest manner. But that is indeed the manner which is necessary between two countries naturally different in their situation, size, and interests, but which are ever drawn together by a two-centuries-old friendship, as well as by the profound community of a certain human ideal whose flame has often spread more light and warmth in both our countries than anywhere else on our earth.

This means that France, for her part, thanks you warmly for being here.

I raise my glass in honor of Mr. Richard Nixon, President of the United States of America, in honor of the dignitaries accompanying him, in honor of their country, which is always dear to the heart of ours.

Richard Nixon, Toasts of the President and President de Gaulle at a Dinner at the Elysee Palace in Paris. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project
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