

# Remarks at the American Embassy in Paris.

March 02, 1969  
Mr. Ambassador:

I appreciate the opportunity that you have provided for me to greet the Embassy personnel and also some of the members of their families that I see down here in front and also for those that are in this room. There is another group downstairs in the lobby watching on television.

I want to express my regret that we were unable to be able to get everybody in the same room. I was going to say to the Ambassador that we probably needed a larger Embassy. But, who knows? No, I think we have got to speak to Mr. Rooney.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Representative John J. Rooney, chairman, Subcommittee on Appropriations for the Departments of State, Justice, Commerce, the Judiciary and Related Agencies.

But, nevertheless, on a visit of this type that is so filled with official talks--and I move from here for my last talk during this visit with President de Gaulle and then we go on to see Pope Paul in Rome and then back to Washington tonight. That is just a light day. But we spent the morning on Vietnam.

But, nevertheless, I did not want to leave Paris without expressing to all of those in this Embassy, and all of those who are associated with it in any way, my appreciation for what you have done on this visit, first.

I know what a burden a visit by VIP's places upon an Embassy. I first came to Paris, I remember, 22 years ago in this same building, and then as a Congressman. I know we caused a lot of trouble. I guess that hasn't changed.

But, anyway, then I came back as a Senator in 1951, and I have been here many times since. I didn't come here as a Vice President, and now I come as a President. They tell me that that is even harder harder on the staff, I mean.

But I do want you to know that I realize it is hundreds of people, literally hundreds of people, that I will never be able to thank personally or by letter, or to greet personally, who worked on this visit.

I know you worked many hours overtime. And I am speaking now not simply of the officers of the Embassy, the Ambassador, of course, who has been so cooperative, and Bob Blake [Deputy Chief of Mission]. I rather grew up with him in Whittier. He is a little after my time. I should say, I knew his parents.

But, nevertheless, I want you to know that not only the officers, but everybody in all the offices--as I went down the halls today, I saw girls typing out schedules, and I know that you have got to run them through the mimeograph machines and-or, no, you put them through some other kind of a machine now to get them multilithed. And that is just part of it. But the immense amount of logistical detail that is involved in a visit by a President and a Secretary of State is something that places an immense burden on the Embassy. I express appreciation for that.

Beyond that, however, I want to tell you that the visit has been handled in this very brief time that we have been here with great precision.

I have been trying to think of something that I could pick out as a mistake, you know, so that we could do better next time. But I found only one thing: I found on one of my schedules---I don't know who happened to prepare this, but nevertheless, the schedule said, with regard to the first dinner, the dinner that President de Gaulle was the host--the second one, as you know, was in Ambassador

Shriver's residence, and I was the host there--but at the first dinner where he was the host, he was supposed to make a toast and I was supposed to prepare one to him. On my schedule it said: "President Nixon will speak for 10 minutes and then his speech will be translated into English." I knew I had troubles in communicating, but not that much.

But whether it was my French or English or whatever the case might be, that was the only thing I could find--and we need to have a little humor in a trip. I think it was put in deliberately for that very purpose.

But could I go one step further? Also, in this room are people who have dedicated their lives to the service of the Government of the United States, some in the Foreign Service and some in other branches of the service. You have been in this post; you have been in many others.

I am sure there must be times when you wonder whether you made the right decision. There must be times when the boredom of what your job is, the failure to get the promotion that you think you should have had, the failure to have the responsibility which you think you might be capable of--these are the things we all feel from time to time--all of these things must run through your minds. And, also, perhaps, in the positions that you have you wonder if the country really appreciates people in Government.

I can simply tell you that I, as one who has had the opportunity of traveling now to 73 countries and have seen our embassies abroad and our other missions in most of those countries, I appreciate what you are doing, both as the President of the United States and as an individual.

I know how dedicated you are. I know, in many cases, what a sacrifice it is for you to continue in public service, as you have. I know that many of you probably figure you could have done better economically if you had been in some other branch.

But whatever the case might be, let me give you this one word of reassurance with regard to the decision you made sometime in your life to come into public service.

I firmly am convinced of the fact that all of you are playing a great part in a cause that is much bigger than any of us. All of us have that privilege. And we in America can say that, and it cannot be said in all countries of the world. It can be said frankly in the free world, more in ours than in any other, not because we asked for that responsibility, but because it is ours.

And as we play that great role, I want you to know that sometimes it appears that all that really matters is what a President says or what he does, or what the Ambassador says and what he does--and all of those things are important--or what the Secretary of State may declare in his various remarks or in the statements that he may send out around the world.

But I can assure you that what the men at the top do does have an immense effect on the foreign policy of the United States and whether we have peace and freedom in the world, that the success of a policy depends upon thousands of people around, in an Embassy like this, an establishment like this, and millions around this world--3 million people, maybe 4 million, if you include military and the rest in the service of the United States.

I think I can best bring that home by what Colonel Frank Borman said when I presented an award to him at the White House a few weeks ago, shortly after I was inaugurated. I congratulated him. He accepted the award and he said: I accept it not only for my two colleagues on the voyage to the moon, but for 400,000 Americans who, one way or another, worked on this project.

And then he made a significant point: that in that Apollo there are 2 million parts, and if something went wrong with one of those parts, who knows whether or not the project would have succeeded.

I realize that the success of our efforts at the highest post in Government depends upon how every person in Government does his job. And I am very proud to have the opportunity to serve in the

highest post, but I am even prouder to have supporting me, in that search for peace and freedom that we all want, a fine group of career officers and thousands of people like yourselves in this room who have dedicated your life to public service in the Government of the United States.

All of you count--every one. And I know it. And I know that even the tiniest slip on your part might make a difference at the highest level at some point or other, or something that you do may make us do a better job.

Finally, one other point: I realize in this room are some other people who are not American citizens, people who are French by background, but who have worked for this Embassy for many years. We couldn't run it without you. I know that. And I want to thank you for what you have done.

And so, with that, I can only say, again, after having been here for a very busy 48 hours, that the success of the trip, if it was successful, is due, in large part, to the people that I see in front of me. And I thank you for what you have done.

I wish you well in what you do in the future. And when I get back to the States, I will tell them we have a fine team here in Paris under the leadership of Ambassador Shriver.

Thank you.

*Note: The President spoke at 12:25 p.m. at the American Embassy in Paris. The U.S. Ambassador in Paris was R. Sargent Shriver, Jr.*

Richard Nixon, Remarks at the American Embassy in Paris. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/240785>