

Remarks at a State Dinner Hosted by President Emmanuel Macron of France in Paris, France

June 8, 2024

President Macron. Mr. President, dear Joe; Madam First Lady, Dr. Jill Biden.

[At this point, President Macron spoke briefly in English as follows.]

I want to reassure you, it's just a toast and not a speech—[laughter]—so I will be very short.

[President Macron continued in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.]

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, my wife and myself are very honored to be hosting you today here at the Élysée with all of your delegation and all of our guests, because every time there is an occasion to celebrate that brings together Americans and French people, the spirit of 1776 is never far, conjuring what is best in both of our countries.

These warm feelings borne of a long and deep friendship is further enhanced by the joy today of hosting you today for your first official state visit to France with a very pleasant feeling of déjà vu. Indeed, a year and a half ago, you were hosting me in Washington in December 2022, thus demonstrating through regular visits how close we are in the reciprocal interests of our countries.

And this year, 2024, for all people who are attached to the Franco relations—Franco-American relationship, there is something special to celebrate because there is a reciprocal sacrifice for our independence, for our freedom.

Indeed, this year, we will celebrate the 200th anniversary of the farewell tour of the Marquis de Lafayette, a hero of the American Revolution. I know that he is close to the hearts of all Americans.

We also commemorate the 80th anniversary of the landings in Normandy and in Provence. We stood side by side then, as we did 2 days ago in Normandy for the ceremonies on June 6, to bow our heads in the peaceful cemetery of Colleville to remember their courage on the Omaha Beach—Omaha the bloody—where so many of your countrymen gave their lives for a country they had never been to before.

Never will we forget these heroes who, from Normandy to Berlin, helped to free a continent and our country. Their sacrifice has cemented our friendship.

Amongst these heroes, there was a young man, Harold Terens. He was 18 when Pearl Harbor happened. At the age of 20, he was a radio operator working with your Air Force. He was at his duty post on D-Day, and then the war led him everywhere in France, in Morocco, and all the way to Ukraine.

Today Harold has chosen our country to marry Jeanne Swerlin. They are with us today, and they are just making their marriage vows, so let us congratulate the young newlyweds. We're very pleased to be here for your wedding repast.

On this foundation, so many relations have developed—from cinema to music, from literature to space, from energy to transport, agriculture and health—so many partnerships that have served to consolidate our bilateral relationship and that we have further strengthened recently.

It's also this relation that make it possible to affirm our values faced with a war of aggression by Russia in Ukraine or today in the Middle East in Gaza, and once again, thank you for the initiative that you have just taken and that we support to be united in spite of our differences when the main values are at stake. This is what is our—lie across the Atlantic.

When it comes to defending our values, we stand together, so, of course, there's something a bit special in our relationship, because you are—you're American; we are French. And there's something of a mutual fascination you find from Tocqueville all the way to Miller or, indeed, in our respective film industries.

We love the American Dream, and you like the French *art de vivre*, the French lifestyle. And we tend to be maybe defending our singularities, but we love each other for what we are. And this applies to each and every one of us.

And when I—we see the affection that you have for France, the way in which you have been prepared to attend the Olympic and Paralympic Games, I can see that more than ever you remain your best allies. United we stand, divided we fall—this is enshrined in the very name of your country. This should be the philosophy that should inspire us, that inspired the Greatest Generation to which you paid tribute yesterday at Pointe du Hoc. And indeed, that is what binds us together today.

We are allies. We will remain allies. And these are the values which 80 years down the road keep us together.

And this is why, Mr. President, dear Joe, dear Jill, it is such an honor to have you here in France on the occasion of this state visit that is an opportunity to celebrate the untrammelled vitality of our alliance and this very special relationship between our two nations and, indeed, our love for freedom.

If I may, I would like to propose a toast to the United States of America, to France, and, indeed, to the friendship between the United States and France.

[President Macron offered a toast.]

President Biden. Mr. President, Brigitte, distinguished guests.

You know, one of the things that's been a legend in my family is my middle name is Robinette. And allegedly, I've never—I've been told by my grandfather that this was established—I have not found it yet; maybe someone could help me—that I'm a son of the American Revolution, because Robinette came over with Lafayette and never went home. He stayed in the United States.

So that makes me a son of the American Revolution. And—but I haven't been able to establish that yet. So maybe one of your genealogists can figure it out for me.

Look, the—your—France is our first ally. And that's not insignificant. The fact of the matter is you were with us to help us secure our freedom, and we were with you 170 years later—

[President Biden cleared his throat.]

Excuse me—to do the same. And ever since, we've remained united, unyielding, as well as unwavering in our partnership.

That's what democracies do. That has been an extraordinary week here for us, for Jill and me. It's just been amazing to be here. I've been here a number of times over the years. I know I don't look it, but I'm only 40 years old. *[Laughter]* But, all kidding aside, been here many times, but this has been the most remarkable trip that I've ever made.

Together, we celebrated D-Day, the heroes of D-Day, and told the story of the alliance and how, together, we saved Europe. And the people of France two—and two—and you two, personally, honored our veterans with such warmth and dignity.

On behalf of all the American people, we want to say thank you, thank you, thank you from the bottom of our heart. I mean it.

When the American troops came to these shores 80 years ago on an audacious mission to save the continent, they each carried a book given to them by the U.S. military. And the book was called "A Pocket Guide to France." Seriously.

It included helpful hints like this: "No bragging; the French don't like it." *[Laughter]* Not a joke. "Be generous; it won't hurt you." "Avoid controversial topics, even if you took French in high school." *[Laughter]*

And try to follow at least one—I tried my best to follow at least one of those. But you know—and then it said the French are allies who, quote—to quote: "happen to speak democracy in a different language. And we democracies aren't just doing favors; we're fighting for each other when history goes—gets through. We all are in the same boat," end of quote.

France and the United States have always been there for one another. We stand together when the going gets tough, and that's a fact.

We stand together to defend the values that lie at the soul, the very soul of both our nations, and I believe that to be the case today: liberty, equality, brotherhood. Generation after generation, people across both our nations have upheld these ideals because they know, when we stand as one, our countries are stronger and, literally, the world is safer.

Emmanuel, you've heard me say it before. We stand at an inflection point in history. The decisions we make now will determine the course of our future for decades to come.

We have a lot of opportunity, but a lot of responsibility. And it gives me hope to know France and the United States stand together now and always, or as the "Pocket Guide to France" given to the invading Americans might say, "We're rowing in the same boat."

Ladies and gentlemen, to France, the United States, and to our people, may we continue to seek democracy. May we—in both our languages. And may we always stay together.

It's been a great honor to be here. And I want to thank you. I'm going to raise my glass.

[President Biden offered a toast.]

To France.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 8:20 p.m. at the Élysée Palace. In his remarks, he referred to Brigitte Macron, wife of President Macron. President Macron referred to Lake Worth, FL, residents Harold Terens and Jeanne Swerlin.

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