

Statement on the Death of François Mitterrand *January 8, 1996*

I learned with deep regret this morning of the death of former President of France François Mitterrand. During his 14 years as President of the French Republic and in frequent service as a minister in the post-war years, President Mitterrand put his remarkable intellect and deep-rooted dedication to democracy at the service of the French nation.

Not only France but the United States and the entire world benefited from his strong and principled leadership. He stood shoulder-to-shoulder with his NATO allies during the Soviet challenges of the early 1980's, the Gulf war, and the peaceful revolutions that ended a half-century of East-West confrontation. President Mitterrand's stalwart leadership during some of

the Alliance's greatest challenges leaves the people of Europe with a hard-won legacy of peace.

I consulted frequently with President Mitterrand, as did my predecessors, and greatly valued his insights, advice, and wisdom. He was a man of vision whose strength helped bring Europe and the West through a period of tough confrontation to the peaceful, undivided Europe we are building today.

Hillary and I join the American people in expressing heartfelt sympathy to the people and the Government of France and to Danielle Mitterrand and the Mitterrand family. We hope the sorrow of this difficult time will be eased by an appreciation of the profound contribution that President Mitterrand made to his nation and the world. He was a great statesman.

The President's News Conference *January 9, 1996*

Budget Negotiations

The President. Good afternoon. As you know, we have just completed another long meeting with the Republican and Democratic leaders in the Congress. We have arrived at a point where, clearly, all sides have agreed on more than enough cuts to both balance the budget in 7 years, according to the Congressional Budget Office, and allow a modest tax cut. A final agreement on the balanced budget, I believe, is clearly within reach.

Unfortunately, the talks have not yet succeeded because we do still disagree on the level of cuts in the programs of Medicare, Medicaid, aid to poor children, the earned-income credit, which protects the hardest pressed working families, and education and the environment. The Republicans still want cuts in Medicare and Medicaid that we believe are well beyond what is necessary to balance the budget and cuts in the discretionary account which funds education and the environment that we believe are excessive and beyond what is needed to balance the budget or to provide a reasonable tax cut.

Still, I want to emphasize that we made progress today. The atmosphere was good. It was a genuine bipartisan effort. We are moving closer together on the spending numbers. At the opening of the meeting, we moved and made an initial offer to them. We are clarifying areas of policy agreement as well as the areas of disagreement. And today we agreed to a recess to last no longer than until next Wednesday, during which time our staffs will work directly to clarify the agreements as well as the remaining areas of disagreement, and hope to find some new ideas to bridge the gap which remains.

I also would say, right at the very end of the meeting I left all the parties with a proposal which could possibly bring this to a conclusion. And I asked both the Democratic and the Republican leaders to consider that proposal.

Over the last year, I've worked hard to find common ground on this issue. At the start of the process, I said the Republican Party and the Democrats and I shared a common goal to balance the budget. And I agreed that we also ought to have at least a modest tax cut