



PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

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SPEECH BY

JACQUES CHIRAC
PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

AT THE DINNER IN HONOUR
OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II
AND HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
PRINCE PHILIP, DUKE OF EDINBURGH

PALAIS DE L'ELYSEE

MONDAY, 5 APRIL 2004

Madam,

In welcoming Your Majesty, I speak for all French people, who are especially delighted to be your hosts for the commemoration of the centenary of the Entente Cordiale. In Your person, they are greeting a great and close friend of France. I have my personal memory of the charm and warmth of your hospitality, when you invited my wife and me to Buckingham Palace in May 1996. Today, France welcomes you to Paris for this State visit in the same spirit of friendship.

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The French will never forget that, when the European continent was beaten down by barbarity, the hope of those who loved freedom resided in the United Kingdom. With its Royal Family, with the great figure of King George VI, Your father, and the much loved and respected figure of Queen Elizabeth, Your mother, who both showed magnificent courage and solidarity throughout the bombing. With its unbending government and its people with their admirable unity, determination and pugnacity.

It is you, the British, who protected the flame of the resistance at the darkest moment in History. It was in London that France's eternal spirit found help and encouragement. It was in London that it found the hope to continue fighting the occupation. France is aware of its debt to the United Kingdom and the people of the Commonwealth for the outstanding relationship based on trust and respect that linked the Leader of the Free French to the royal family and to the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill.

Madam,

In a few weeks, we shall be together to celebrate the Normandy Landings. Together with the representatives of the allied nations, and chief among them



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the United States of America, we shall welcome the surviving veterans of those hours when the fate of Europe and the World hung in the balance. Together, we shall honour the memory of those who fell so that the ideals of justice and freedom could prevail. In the presence of the German Federal Chancellor, we shall reaffirm that the mission of European construction is to secure peace and democracy on this Continent. We shall take the measure of the immense and unprecedented progress that Europe has made in the reconciliation between the enemies of yesterday. On the union between our old countries, which have managed to build the future by turning their backs forever on age-old conflicts.

The friendships and battles of our two countries, our two peoples, our two cultures and their common and separate histories have helped to forge European civilisation. Inspired by the same values of freedom, justice and human dignity, attached to their independence and their traditions, the British and the French have, each in their own way, personified the same ideals. The result is a mutual regard that embraces brotherhood, fascination and rivalry, in a process of perpetual emulation that has shaped History.

We have transcended these differences and are now making them work for Europe and the cause of greater justice in the world. The British and the French expect the identities that are the source of their national pride to be respected as they build a strong, dynamic and self-confident Europe. As the European Union prepares to welcome ten new Member States, the new Europe will need to adopt a constitution as soon as possible. Our two countries shall provide the impetus needed to achieve this major step.

The United Kingdom and France share the same taste for broad horizons and sense of duty that comes from worldwide responsibilities. This is why our two countries are working for peace in the Balkans and in Africa and why they have taken part in the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan. This is why our two countries had to join forces to give European defence a decisive impetus, in conjunction with Germany.

We share the same faith in science and progress, the same confidence in initiative and free enterprise, the same conviction that the public powers have a role to play in justice, solidarity and promoting development. This is why we recently joined with Germany to propose means of achieving renewed growth for Europe.

On 11 March, tragedy once again afflicted Europe. The bombings in Madrid created a wound. Let us present a common front against terrorism. Let us strengthen Europe's security with determination. Let us take the necessary political initiatives to attack the root causes of this scourge. We know that no country is safe. No country can stand apart. No country can act alone. We shall fight this battle together and on a European-wide front.

Our shared ambition of achieving a world of peace and solidarity is expressed in the forums where a new form of governance on a human scale is being



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developed. As founding members, we see the United Nations as the source of international legitimacy. As permanent members of the Security Council, we would like it to be strengthened and enlarged to take on the prime responsibility for international peace and security conferred upon it by the UN Charter.

We would like to see the G8 open up to emerging countries and the most deprived. So that globalisation does not leave entire continents behind, starting with Africa. So that the destruction of natural resources can be halted and the environment protected for tomorrow's generations. You have great plans for 2005. The British Presidency can count on France's support.

Madam,

On 14 July this year, the Horseguards will parade down the Champs Elysées. They will be a reminder of the blood our countries spilled together on the battlefields of the twentieth century, in the trenches of the Somme, in the African sands and on the cliffs of Normandy. The Horseguards will remind us of the inspired vision of your ancestor, Edward VII and those who signed the Entente Cordial one hundred years ago. It brought to an end long centuries of history where the British and the French constantly vied with each other and did battle on every sea and every continent. In a spectacular diplomatic change of heart, our two nations decided at last that they would get along. Shortly thereafter, they had to seal this pact as comrades in arms.

If we are celebrating this centenary today, it is to show that the durability, depth and diversity of our links have clearly prevailed over our divergences. What we want to celebrate in the events that will take place all year long is also the promise for the future expressed by the younger generations.

The Entente Cordiale is also an affair of the heart, a mutual attachment that we need to continue cultivating. Our hope is that the feelings we share are fulfilled in understanding, and with solidarity and a common vision. We must keep in mind the progress that our countries still have to make together and towards one another. At a time when so many French citizens have chosen to live in the United Kingdom and more and more British subjects are moving to France, we should rejoice that our two peoples continue to hold such fascination and attraction for each other.

In this spirit of long friendship and age-old understanding, Madam, I now raise my glass. I raise my glass in honour of a long reign that personifies the abiding British genius. I raise my glass in honour of Your Gracious Majesty and His Royal Highness, Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, as well as Your family. I raise my glass in honour of the great and beloved British people who are the allies and friends of the French people.

Long live the United Kingdom!

Long live France!

Long live French and British friendship!



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