

31 Toasts of the President and King Hussein of Jordan.

February 6, 1973

Your Majesties, and our very distinguished guests:

As we sit here at this table tonight, my thoughts go back, and Mrs. Nixon's thoughts, Secretary Rogers' thoughts, particularly go back to the year 1959 when His Majesty first came to this country as

the King of Jordan and was received here by President Eisenhower.

I was trying in my mind's eye to think of that evening. The tables were somewhat like this. President Eisenhower was sitting in this place and His Majesty was sitting in this place. And as Vice Presi-

dent, I perhaps was sitting a couple of places over, and Mrs. Nixon here, Secretary Herter¹ further down the line.

I recall, particularly, that evening President Eisenhower, in the private conversation before the dinner began, expressed his great admiration to me of His Majesty and for the courage of this very young King. He was only 24 then. He is still a young King. He is 37 now. But I also remember that some of the intelligence reports that we received, not from our own Government, but from other governments, indicated that he wouldn't last long. [Laughter] There were too many troubles in Jordan. It was a country that had forces that would split it apart and here was the young King, whose grandfather had been assassinated, who had seen his country torn by strife, here in the United States in 1959 being toasted by President Eisenhower, the then leader of the free world, 14 years ago.

He did last. President Eisenhower, President Kennedy, President Johnson have all passed on, and our distinguished guest still lives. He is here as the head of a country that has had very difficult problems. It has had great threats from within and from without, but it has survived because of one man—the man we honor tonight, a man who has been honored at this table before at dinners that President Eisenhower gave, and President Johnson, and in my first term in 1969, right here at this table.

And it is his courage, the fact that at times when it appeared that extremism was the way to popularity, he stood for moderation and responsibility. At times when it appeared that timidity was the

best way to be safe, he stood for courage. He was the symbol that kept this small country, with its very brave people, alive, strong, independent in the heart of the Mideast.

And that is the reason why all of our guests, from all over the United States tonight, are very proud to be here in the company of Your Majesty and also of your Queen. We are very proud to welcome her for the first time to this house, and we claim a bit of her.

While she has lived in all of the great capitals of the world or most of them—in Rome, because she came from a great diplomatic family, in London, in Ankara, of course in her own country, and she has visited most of the capitals of the world—she also has lived in New York and at least a part of her worldwide education was at Hunter College in New York City. So, whatever her virtues are, Your Majesty, we claim. [Laughter] And we know they are many.

And we are honored that both of you were able to come to our country on this occasion.

I would simply say in concluding the toast to His Majesty's health, as is the custom on such occasions, that it was once written that as far as greatness is concerned, that some men are born to greatness, others achieve it, and others have it thrust upon them. Our very distinguished guest this evening was born to greatness, in a great royal family. He had greatness thrust upon him at a very young age—17 years of age—he became King of his country and he bore that responsibility with dignity and great courage.

But we honor him tonight because he achieved greatness, achieved greatness in all the years he has ruled his country with such courage and stability and modera-

¹Christian A. Herter, Secretary of State (1959-61).

tion, in a part of the world that could otherwise explode into violence and extremism.

All of us tonight are dedicated to his hope and our hope of a real peace in the Mideast, a peace for which he has worked and for which we are working. And consequently, tonight, we honor him because he has sought that peace; he has stood for it against those elements that might not perhaps have supported it. And we honor him also for the courage that he has displayed throughout his life as the King of his country, a country that we are proud to be allied with in friendship and allied with also in the ideals that we support: of peace and freedom and independence for all nations in the world.

It is in that spirit that I ask you to rise and raise your glasses to His Majesty, the King of Jordan.

The King.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:05 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House.

Earlier in the day, the President and King Hussein met at the White House.

King Hussein responded to the President's toast as follows:

Mr. President, Mrs. Nixon:

It is really a great pleasure and a tribute for me to be once again in the United States and in particular as your guest here.

You have brought to my mind, with your kind words, many, many memories of the years that have passed, of the years through which I was privileged to serve among the people who have given me pride in serving them and to strive with them and, with their help and support, to uphold the ideals and principles that are ours and yours in every way and in every respect.

As for the friendship that has always existed between our nations, to us in Jordan, who have seen it grow, have striven to see it grow, in every field and in every area, with pride, as we have indeed and have always been proud to belong to the same family of free people.

If Jordan has survived, it was because the

people of Jordan, as a whole, have inspired me, but more than that, shared with me my beliefs and my convictions and also shared with me the same hopes for a better future in that part of the world and in the world as a whole. It has always been a privilege for me to visit the United States. I have always been overwhelmed by the great kindness, the friendship, the interest, the sympathy of my friends in the United States throughout the years that have passed; and for the support, we owe a great debt in many times of difficulty and crisis.

As for the present, sir, we have watched the tremendous efforts of you, your good self, Mr. President, not only at the helm of the greatest nation on Earth but your efforts for a better world, a world of understanding and friendship and cooperation.

In many ways we have shared with the people of the United States their pride in you. Your victories have been ours. As we have worked closely together in the past, we promise you what we have promised ourselves, that we will do our utmost in our part of the world to present the future generations with something that is worthwhile.

We feel in our part of the world—I feel personally that my life in itself is probably spent, if it means anything to me at this stage, it means as much as I can give them or make in the way of a contribution for a better future for them, a future of peace with honor, a lasting peace that can enable them to live with it, to develop the potential that is there, to have a better life.

This is your dream, sir, that you are turning into a reality, as far as the world is concerned. This is our dream in our part of the world. We will do our utmost, and we are indeed proud to have the same objective, to share it, as we are proud of our friendship, and will always be.

I can only pray that I live up to the expectations always of my people, plus of my friends, and no words can come easily to me by which I can express our very deep gratitude, sir, for all your kindness to us, on behalf of my wife and all the members of the Jordanian group here tonight and to Mrs. Nixon, for your kind hospitality, for your kind words which come from your heart, sir, for the friendship of which we are so proud.

We wish you continuous success, sir, and we pray for your continuous success in leading the people of the United States, this greatest of nations, and in serving mankind the world over.

Once again, sir, our deepest and sincerest

gratitude, our pride in you, and our everlasting friendship.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like you to join me in raising your glasses to drink a toast to the President of the United States.