

# The Eiffel Tower is Trump's

by Michael Curtis



“Emmanuel,” President Donald Trump must have said to French President Emmanuel Macron as he and his entourage got into Air Force I in Paris, “I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.” Trump had been the guest of honor at the July 14, 2017 national holiday celebration, an event that commemorated not only Bastille Day but also the 100th anniversary of the entry of the United States into World War I. After a series of hugs and interminable handshake battles, Macron replied, “nothing will ever separate us.” Indeed, Trump’s presence, for Macron, was “a sign of the friendship across the ages.”

The visit reminded all that France was technically the oldest ally of the U.S. since the 1778 Treaty of Friendship. During the whirlwind two-day visit, President Trump and Melania Trump were shown *Les Invalides*, built by Louis XIV, symbolic of the military history of France, with an army museum, which among

other things, contains the tombs of Napoleon and other French military leaders. For Americans, it also symbolic since it is the place from where on July 4, 1917 the U.S. 16th Infantry Division marched, accompanied by French troops, to the *Picpus* Cemetery, the largest private cemetery in Paris, which contains the tomb of the Marquis de Lafayette over which a U.S. flag always flies.

While witnessing the display of French pride and pomp in the military parade, with French soldiers marching together with members of the 1st U.S. Infantry Division founded in 1917, Trump paid tribute to the courage of French troops at the Battle of Marne and other battles in World War I. Trump disregarded his fictional friend "Jim," who used to go to Paris every year but no longer does so because Paris is not Paris and so doesn't bring French first lady Brigitte Macron pretty flowers. Instead, Trump praised Paris, as have the other 3.5 million US citizens who visited the city in 2016, as "beautiful." However, in more questionable fashion, the 71 year old Trump also praised the 64 year old Brigitte, saying she "is in such good shape...beautiful."

After the Trumps were shown and enjoyed the sights of French prestige and grandeur, they must equally have enjoyed and appreciated a memorable meal when dining with the Macrons at the elegant restaurant in the Eiffel Tower. The French President hosted a gastronomic dinner of pate, dover sole, filet of beef, and French wine, prepared by the great chef Alain Ducasse who specially flew back from Hong Kong to make it.

It is too early to suggest that a Franco-American alliance has resulted from these encounters, but it appears that the present acknowledged differences on issues such as climate change, globalization, and trade, between the two presidents will not disrupt the growing harmony, and recognition that compromises are in order. In a sense without too fine a point, the very occasion the July14 celebration itself symbolizes a

compromise, a double symbolism.

The military parade, an official holiday since 1880 celebrates the storming of the Bastille Fortress and Prison in 1789 and the beginning of the French Revolution. But it is also a reminder of the 1790 Festival of the Federation that sought to limit revolutionary changes by presenting an image of national unity and featuring the King: it hoped *Ca ira* (things will work out). July 14 in essence therefore celebrates liberty and equality, but also the attempt to maintain a unified country with law and order.

Trump has praised his host the 39 year-old Macron as a great leader and a tough president. *Le jour de gloire* for Macron has not yet arrived, and he may not resemble Louis XIV or Jupiter, ruling above the fray, but in his short time as president he has been active, a showman beginning to assert himself and exert influence on the international stage as well as on French internal affairs.

On the world stage, Macron has spoken frankly to Russian President Vladimir Putin on stopping any Russian intervention in French elections. He assured Trump that France would join the U.S. in strikes against Syria if President Bashar Assad again used chemical weapons. Macron apparently has softened Trump's position on climate change. He has spoken to German Chancellor Angela Merkel urging a stronger EU, the creation of a Eurozone Finance Minister and a meaningful EU budget, and a common workable EU policy on immigration. France continues its active concern against terrorism in the Sahel and West Africa.

Macron has been equally active on behalf of French business and taxes. He is appealing a decision by a Paris court that Google does not have to pay more than 1.1 billion euros in back taxes, after the EU had imposed a record antitrust fine of 2.42 billion euros. In a complex case the Paris court ruled that Google had not evaded French tax laws by using an Irish subsidiary that was not subject to French taxes.

Macron is anxious to make Paris a more important technological hub now that Britain is preoccupied in planning to implement Brexit, and with Paris full of entrepreneurs, he plans a Franco-German 1 billion euro fund to finance digital investments.

Donald Trump, the oldest man to be elected U.S. President, and Emmanuel Macron, the youngest man to be elected President of France, may seem an odd couple, but the visit of July 14, 2017 suggests a developing partnership between the two. Certainly, Macron was less brash and more relaxed and accommodating than at the first meeting between the two leaders. They differ on important issues. For Trump immigration is a pivotal issue and he continues to be engaged in at least a temporary ban on immigration from six countries. Macron is not in favor of discriminatory policies toward France's Muslim population though he calls for a strong EU policy on immigration. Trump is a nationalist. Macron appears to be a globalist.

In spite of their differences this is the moment for Trump to realize that France under Macron will be the leading political factor in Europe, now that the UK is perplexed by Brexit and Chancellor Merkel is being challenged. Trump and Macron agree that action is essential to end the brutal conflict in Syria. Above all, Trump and Macron are equally concerned with the need for robust counterterrorism against Islamist terrorists. One wonders if the band at the military parade was playing "We'll be together again."