

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MAY 19, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF REMARKS
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT
AND
VALERY GISCARD D'ESTAING
PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC
AT THE
SOUND AND LIGHT PROGRAM

MOUNT VERNON, VIRGINIA

9:22 P.M. EDT

PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING: Mr. President, 100 years ago, to celebrate the first centennial of her friends and allies the American people, France gave America the Statue of Liberty, casting light upon the world. Today, by playing a veil of lights on the home of George Washington, it is again freedom of which he was the hero that France has chosen to commemorate for the second centennial.

By lighting up the surroundings where he lived and where he is buried, may we bring the glorious figure of the founder of the American nation to live again, just as one might have seen him coming home in the evening or sitting at his desk by the window.

France, through the kindness of the ladies of Mount Vernon, whom I would like to thank for their generosity in allowing this show to take place here, we will again experience through the voices of great American and French actors one of the most extraordinary epics of liberty.

Mr. President, as a tribute to liberty and a token of friendship, I present to you in the name of the French people the sound and light show of Mount Vernon.

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. President, Madam Giscard d'Estaing, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

I am greatly honored to accept this magnificent presentation on behalf of the American people. It is an ingenious and very generous gift, a symbol of the common heritage of friendship and devotion to freedom which distinguishes the historic ties between our two countries.

MORE

The sound and light display will take its place with your country's gift in 1876 to our centennial, the Statue of Liberty. It has become a symbol, Mr. President, of America, as well as a continuing reminder of the inspiring values that we share between our two countries.

For many generations the lady with the lamp has welcomed millions and millions of immigrants to breathe free in our country.

Like the Statue of Liberty, the Mount Vernon sound and light display will be a continuous celebration of the principles of liberty shared by our two Republics. There could be no more historic and suitable site than Mount Vernon for France to honor our Bicentennial. It was here on September 9, 1781 that General Washington arrived just before the decisive battle of Yorktown.

He was joined by French Generals Rochambeau and Chastellux. It was from here that the American Commander-in-Chief and his French allies rode to Yorktown and into the pages of our history.

Mr. President, today at Yorktown you personally commemorated our joint victory. We are proud to share our day of glory with you. George Washington's love of Mount Vernon is well known to all of us and to people around the world. It was to Mount Vernon that his thoughts turned during the difficult, often discouraging campaigns of the war of our revolution and during his Presidency.

Visitors to Mount Vernon, Mr. President, will now hear, see and feel the emotions aroused by the creation of the United States of America by Washington's meeting with LaFayette and by the friendship of our two countries.

Mr. President, I ask that you convey to the people of France the heartfelt thanks of the American people for this superb display of sound and light and for the unique friendship and relationship that it symbolizes.

Thank you very, very much.

END (AT 9:33 P.M. EDT)