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Yorktown Bicentennial

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

On October 19, 1781, the British forces under Lord Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown, Virginia, to General Washington and our French allies. That surrender signified the practical end of the struggle by our forefathers for liberty and independence. The impossible dream of those patriots was about to be transformed into the reality of a bright new Nation.

As the King's troops came slowly down the road to the surrender field, legend has it that they struck up the tune, "The World Turned Upside Down." And, indeed, the old order was to be turned upside down, for the creative powers of democracy were about to be released on an unsuspecting world.

This year marks the two hundredth anniversary of the surrender. October 19, 1781, was a major date in the development of America and her freedoms; and today, two centuries later, it remains an important reminder of our identity as a nation. The anniversary is also an appropriate time to recall the assistance France gave to America's revolutionary struggle. We, as Americans, are the product of many victories, many sacrifices, and many hopes. The campaign at Yorktown is a historic example.

The Congress has enacted a joint resolution (Public Law 96-414) designating October 19, 1981, as a "Day of National Observance of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of the Surrender of Lord Cornwallis to General George Washington at Yorktown, Virginia." It is fitting that we reflect upon our victory at Yorktown and commemorate it in such a manner as to inspire love of country and devotion to ideals by recalling to this generation the struggles of the past. We can do this at the same time as we give thanks for the great bond of friendship which exists between ourselves and Great Britain.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim Monday, October 19, 1981, as a day of national observance to remember and to honor the sacrifice of our ancestors in their quest for the political freedom that we enjoy today. I urge all Americans to celebrate again the joyous victory of our forefathers and I urge appropriate officials of the Federal, State, and local governments, as well as private organizations, to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 14th day of Sept., in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-one, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and sixth.

Ronald Reagan