



## **Toasts of the President and President Bourguiba. May 3, 1961**

*Ladies and gentlemen:*

I want to express on behalf of our country our great pleasure in having President Bourguiba here. I think it is most appropriate that today he visited the home of George Washington, because in many ways his own life is comparable to the experiences of the father of our country, General Washington. Like President Washington, President Bourguiba is a revolutionary, and like President Washington he also, when the revolution was won, had the sense of judgment, self-discipline and strength to attempt to bring good will and peace among his people and to the people of the former occupiers of his country and his surrounding neighbors.

I think we are extremely fortunate to have President Bourguiba here tonight. As we look back in our own history, there is a glow around the names of Washington, Hamilton, Jefferson, and all the others who contributed to the founding of our country. We are in the presence tonight of a man who has played a comparable role in the life of his own country. He spent many months and years in prison, and yet under great pressure and with great temptation to take the easy way, he continued to fight for the independence of his country, the peace of North Africa, for the well-being of his people.

This, I think, represents an extraordinary achievement in the life of any man, and I must say it was a great satisfaction to me to see the warm response which the people of our country gave to the President this morning.

This is the first state dinner that we have had for a chief of state since Mrs. Kennedy and I have come to the White House, and I must say, speaking personally and as President, there is no dinner that gives me greater satisfaction.

I hope that you all will join with me in drinking a toast to President Bourguiba.

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NOTE: Following the toast President Bourguiba responded (through an interpreter) as follows:

*Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen:*

I am most honored and very proud of the remarks of sympathy shown to me by President Kennedy, and the remarks of sympathy expressed to me and my people by the people of the District of Columbia.

Just now President Kennedy was good enough to recall the fact that I paid a visit today to the home of the first President of the United States, George Washington, and he was even good enough to go so far as to say that my life to a certain extent has resembled that of George Washington.

That is a very flattering comparison, for which I thank you. But I would really feel that George Washington did a good deal more for his country, for America, than it has been possible for me to do for the people of Tunisia.

But I might say that today I also have had a chance to enter into the past of another President, who is long known to us, and that is to say President Lincoln, whose Memorial I visited today. We look upon him as President of the Union. And if I have played a part in Tunisia in gaining independence for my people, I feel that I did so because I was able to achieve union among the Tunisian people, around a certain doctrine, around certain ideals, and to that extent, therefore, perhaps my role was similar to that of your President Lincoln in the history of the United States. And perhaps it may be said that the part Lincoln played was as great as that played by George Washington in the history of the United States.

I, for myself, found great inspiration for my own work in the work and life of Lincoln, because I found my country deeply divided - divided by ideas, by traditions, by ancient rancors, passions, feelings of all sorts; and for 25 years I have struggled to achieve the unification of my people.

But to my mind the greatest piece of work is to bring about an understanding among peoples and mutual comprehension. That is the great task in the world. Peace, to my mind, can be achieved only through a rapprochement of people, just as within a nation it is necessary to bring people together. That is a difficult task, and because not all people are inspired by the same good intentions. But it is a task



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which has to be performed, and it cannot succeed - or rather, if this task does not succeed, it will mean that we will be simply giving way to hatred, to distrust, to evil ambitions, and the world will be running backwards - it will be a retrogression away from peace.

President Kennedy has often spoken of the example of George Washington. We have spoken of the example of President Lincoln. It seems to me that President Kennedy has here, in his hands, the opportunity himself to facilitate a "rapprochement," a greater understanding among peoples. We all must work together for good or for ill. It is only thus that we can develop in harmony, in peace and in happiness.

I should like to thank President Kennedy in the name of my country, in the name of my people, for his kindness. I should like to thank Mrs. Kennedy for the kindness she has shown to my wife and to me personally when we were chatting this evening. I should like to thank the people of the United States and the people of the District of Columbia for the warm welcome given to us today - and I should like to ask you to drink a Toast to President Kennedy.