

## George Washington to Comte DeGrasse

Head-Quarters, 20 October, 1781.

Sir,

The surrender of York, from which so much glory and advantage are derived to the allies, and the honor of which belongs to your Excellency, has greatly anticipated our most sanguine expectations. Certain of this event, under your auspices, though unable to determine the time, I solicited your attention, in the first conference with which you honored me, to ulterior objects of decisive importance to the common cause. Although your answer on that occasion was unfavorable to my wishes, the unexpected promptness, with which our operations here have been conducted to their final success, having gained us time, the defect of which was one of your Excellency's principal objections, a perspective of the most extensive and happy consequences engage me to renew my representation. Charleston, the principal maritime port of the British in the southern parts of the continent, the grand deposit and point of support for the present theatre of the war, is open to a combined attack, and might be carried with as much certainty as the place which has just surrendered. This capture would destroy the last hope, which induces the enemy to continue the war; for, having experienced the impracticability of recovering the populous northern States, has determined to confine themselves to the defensive in that quarter, and prosecute a most vigorous offensive southward, with a view of reconquering States, whose sparse population and natural disadvantages render them infinitely less susceptible of defence, although their productions render them the most valuable in a commercial view. His general naval superiority, previous to your Excellency's arrival, gave him decisive advantages in the rapid transport of his troops and supplies, while the immense land marches of our succours, too tardive and expensive in every point of view, subjected us to be beat in detail.

It will depend upon your Excellency, therefore, to terminate the war, and enable the allies to dictate the law in a treaty. A campaign so glorious and so fertile in consequences could be reserved only for the Count de Grasse. It rarely happens, that such a combination of means, as are in our hands at present, can be seasonably obtained by the most strenuous of human exertions; a decisively superior fleet, the fortune and talents of whose commander overawe all naval force that the most incredible efforts of the enemy have been able to collect; an army flushed with success, and demanding only to be conducted to new attacks; and the very season, which is proper for operating against the points in question. If, upon entering into the detail of this expedition, your Excellency should still determine it impracticable, there is an object, which, though subordinate to that above mentioned, is of capital importance to our southern operations, and may be effected at infinitely less expense; I mean the enemy's post of Wilmington in North Carolina. Circumstances require that I should at this period reinforce the southern army under General Greene. This reinforcement, transported by sea under your convoy, would enable us to carry

the post in question with very little difficulty, and would wrest from the British a point of support in North Carolina, which is attended with the most dangerous consequences to us, and liberate another State. This object would require nothing more than the convoy of your Excellency to the point of operation, and the protection of the debarkation.

I entreat your Excellency's attention to the points, which I have the honor of laying before you, and that you will be pleased at the same time to inform me what are your dispositions for a maritime force to be left on the American station. I have the honor to be, &c.



*Th. Jefferson*  
MONTICELLO