



General De Gaulle's Visit



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Montréal 



General de Gaulle on the balcony of City Hall

At the invitation of Mayor Jean Drapeau, a huge crowd of nearly 100,000 people gathers in front of City Hall to welcome General de Gaulle.

The French President and Québec Premier Daniel Johnson, accompanied by their wives, are welcomed by Mayor Jean Drapeau and his wife Marie-Claire. They climb the grand staircase and turn towards the crowd. The Montréal Fire Department's brass band plays "La Marseillaise."

After greeting the crowd, the French President enters the city hall and makes his way to the second-floor balcony.

No speech was planned, but microphones have been set up and de Gaulle decides to address the crowd. At the end of his speech, he utters the words that would reverberate around the globe: "Vive Montréal, vive le Québec, vive le Québec libre!" ("Long live Montréal, long live Québec, long live free Québec!") Mayor Drapeau is stunned.

The following day, the French President visits Expo 67, where he celebrates Bastille Day at the French Pavilion. After the Canadian Prime Minister, Lester B. Pearson, calls the balcony speech "unacceptable," de Gaulle decides to cancel his visit to Ottawa and return to France.

His impassioned and tumultuous trip has since gone down in history.

Photo credits : Archives de Montréal

Montréal and General de Gaulle

July 12, 1944

First visit, lasting a few hours, as head of the liberated French Republic.

April 21, 1960

Second visit, as French President, welcomed at City Hall by Mayor Sarto Fournier (1908-1980).

July 24, 1967

On his third and final visit, the French President is welcomed at City Hall by Mayor Jean Drapeau (1916-1999).

September 5, 1985

The Highway 40 bridge over the Rivière des Prairies, linking Lachenaie and Pointe-aux-Trembles, erected in 1967, is named the Charles de Gaulle Bridge.

December 17, 1987

Pierrefonds names one of its streets rue De Gaulle.

July 16, 1992

Inauguration of Place Charles-De Gaulle by the Mayor of Paris, Jacques Chirac, during the 350th anniversary of the founding of Montréal.

July 24, 2017

50th anniversary of the visit of General de Gaulle at the city hall.

Charles de Gaulle: a few dates

- Born in Lille on November 22, 1890
- President of the French Republic from 1959 to 1969
- Died in Colombey-les-Deux-Églises on November 9, 1970