



# PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

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SPEECH BY

JACQUES CHIRAC PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

AT THE INTERNATIONAL CEREMONY OF 6 JUNE 2004

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60th ANNIVERSARY of THE D-DAY LANDING

ARROMANCHES

Veterans of the D-Day Landing,

Your Majesties,

Heads of State and Government,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At this auspicious moment, as we gather today on these Normandy beaches with the same emotion, history is again in the making.

Nations and peoples who yesterday were divided by the clash of arms stand united in silence, remembrance and reflection.

Former combatants and enemies are moved by the same impetus, in tribute to men, sacrifice and the blood that was shed.

The wind of peace, reconciliation and freedom is blowing across Europe, reunited at last.

To you, legendary heroes of that blood-red dawn of 6 June 1944;

To you, children of the world thrown so young into the fire of war;

To you, admirable symbols of courage and devotion, of honour and nobility, of duty and supreme selflessness;

To you, on behalf of all French men and women, on behalf of all the Heads of State and Government gathered here today and of all freedom-loving people, I express our gratitude, our pride and our admiration.

We are beholden to your struggle. Your engagement is an example, an obligation and a duty for us and for future generations. There can be no future without memory.



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The torch you carried so high and so far, the torch of freedom and law, of dignity and respect for mankind, of justice and democracy, still lights our way.

France, whose spirit of resistance Charles de Gaulle, Leader of the Free French, embodied right from the outset, the France to whom, in the darkest days, he gave a voice in the war, the will to hold out, and hope France will never forget.

Every one of these white crosses that stand in the stillness of the Normandy countryside, every one of these names carved forever in the stone of remembrance, every one of these brothers in arms who fell on the field of honour will remain in our hearts for eternity. They will remain in the hearts of all those who have faith in mankind and who want to look to the future of humanity with confidence. \* Ladies and Gentlemen, sixty years ago the soldiers of freedom landed here, rising up from the sea, under a deluge of iron and fire, to liberate France.

They came in great numbers from the United States of America. Under General Eisenhower's command, for a second time Americans put their ideal, their might and their courage at the service of the liberation of our country and our continent, at the service of democracy. France will never forget what it owes America, its steadfast friend and ally. Today as yesterday, we appreciate the deep commitment implicit in that long-standing bond of friendship, shared values, trust and mutual respect. Like all the countries of Europe, France is keenly aware that the Atlantic Alliance, forged in adversity, remains, in the face of new threats, a fundamental element of our collective security.

The soldiers of freedom also came from the United Kingdom, a heroic nation that long held out alone, united behind its royal family and the indomitable Winston Churchill. A nation that, as the last archipelago of liberty, took in those who refused defeat and humiliation, those who carried the flame of hope.

Soldiers came from Canada, Australia and New Zealand. They came from Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway and Greece. There were Poles, Czechs and Slovaks among them. They were young and daring and driven by the same spirit, by the same love of their homelands and by a deep-felt belief in the justice of their struggle, which, beyond fear, made them willing to accept the supreme sacrifice.

The soldiers of freedom also came from France. For the SAS parachutists and the men of the Kieffer Commando, for the Free French, it was a decisive moment, a unique moment. It was the hour of the long-awaited return, of the light that would rise again over the motherland, of the sun that would scatter the heavy clouds of tears. All over France, the Resistance was at work, galvanised by this new hope. "The supreme battle has begun!" declared General de Gaulle.

In the heart of darkness, all the soldiers of freedom endured the same bitter struggle. The bitter struggle that faced their brothers in arms in Italy, in



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the Pacific and on all the seas of the globe. The bitter struggle that, on the Eastern Front, was the lot of the heroic soldiers of the Red Army, who in Moscow, Kursk and Stalingrad had opened the gates and were advancing irresistibly.

On that sixth of June of immortal memory, the tide turned. Victory was still far off. There was much suffering to come. And the journey to the end of the night would continue for a long time yet in the death camps.

But nothing, no further folly, could stop the march towards freedom, the march towards peace now.

Nothing could stop a new international order from forming, an order founded on respect for mankind and for the law, on freedom, justice and democracy, an order that is still symbolised and guaranteed today by the Charter of the United Nations.

No one could stop the peoples of Europe from coming together, reconciling their differences and reuniting, inspired by the generous Utopia of visionary leaders.

As we commemorate those decisive moments in our history, I wanted Germany to remember with us those hours when the ideal of freedom returned to our continent.

For several decades now, the bitter enemies of the past have been building their present and looking to the future together. With respect for history, the soldiers, the suffering and the blood that was shed, we are celebrating together the victory of peace and democracy. We hold up the example of Franco-German reconciliation, to show the world that hatred has no future, that a path to peace is always possible. With force, we express our joint commitment to the goal of a Europe reunited around its values and reconciled with itself, its geography and its history. \* Ladies and Gentlemen, on this anniversary, the world is watching us.

It sees free peoples, honouring the finest of their heroes.

It sees loyal peoples, remembering the sacrifices made.

It sees reconciled peoples, working for peace.

On 6 June 1944, when the sun set on "the longest day" and night cloaked Bloody Omaha, Utah, Juno, Sword and Gold Beaches, when darkness descended over battered Caen, when night fell on France, maimed by years of war and occupation, they held on. They held on to a few acres of sand and soil. But hope was alive again, at last.

Today on the sixth of June 2004, it is that same hope, that same ideal that we owe to those men whom we shall never forget.



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Faced with the dangers of a changing world, let us strive to remain loyal to the legacy, the sacrifice and the message of our fathers. Let us strive to give substance to the humanistic values of respect, justice, dialogue and tolerance, for which they gave their lives. Let us strive together to build a world of freedom and progress for our children, a world that respects the diversity of individuals and ideas, cultures and peoples.

It is that legacy, that duty, which we are commemorating today, for we are its custodians and tributaries.

It is incumbent upon us to entrust it to new generations. |