



Message from the President of the French Republic His Excellency M. Jacques CHIRAC.

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Paris, 12 december 2006.

On June 18, 1940, General de Gaulle, from London, exhorted his compatriots to continue their struggle. Following his call, many French, but also many friends of France, chose to join the fight for freedom and against barbarity despite the enormous risks, the impression of solitude, and the overwhelming enemy superiority.

Virginia Hall was one of them.

Born in Baltimore on April 6, 1906, fluent in French, Italian and German, she was working for the Washington Post in Paris when the war broke out. With a German attack on Paris already appearing inevitable, she enlisted in the French army. She became an ambulance driver, despite an old injury due to a hunting accident. Successfully reaching England in 1940, she volunteered with the British secret service for a mission in Occupied France.

Under cover as a reporter with the New York Post, she helped the French Resistance in Lyon under the code name Germaine. Several other agents stationed in Lyon had occasion to call upon her. One of them, Denis Rake, would later write: "From my point of view and that of many of my colleagues, Virginia Hall can be considered the greatest wartime agent."

In late 1942, Virginia Hall, whose activities hadn't escaped the notice of the Gestapo, had no choice but to flee. She crossed the Pyrenees into Spain. This ordeal-already difficult for a healthy man-required a superhuman effort for Virginia Hall. From Spain, she was able to return to England where she put herself at the service of her homeland, which had by then entered the war.

Virginia Hall was sent back to France in 1944 as a radio operator to support the Resistance in the departments of the Creuse, the Cher and the Nièvre. She notably helped train and arm several groups of combatants within the country. In the Haute-Loire, she organized three FFI battalions that engaged in crucial sabotage and combat missions to slow enemy movements after the Normandy and Provence landings. Ms. Hall was also in charge of radio links between England and the Maquis. She sent more than 30 messages to London, supplying precious information about the enemy.

Virginia Hall is a true hero of the French Resistance. Her indomitable bravery, her exceptional selflessness, her staunch determination and her talents as a



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leader and organizer contributed greatly to the Liberation of France.

On behalf of her comrades in the Resistance, on behalf of French combatants and on behalf of all of France, I want to tell her families and friends that France will never forget this American friend who risked her life to serve our country.

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