

D-Day 70th Anniversary Observation

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Freedom Square
Budapest, Hungary

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**Respected Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**We are here at Budapest's Freedom Square to observe the 70th Anniversary of D-Day.
In Normandy events include:**

- Top world leaders - including the American, British, Russian and German, hosted by the French president - will attend ceremonies tomorrow.
- 93-year-old Jim "Peewee" Martin was a private in the fabled 101st Parachute Regiment, which landed in Normandy 70 years ago. He will parachute again in Normandy tomorrow.
- Inauguration of the Normandy Honor Wall at the Paratrooper Historical Center.
- Earlier this week a 70 meter-length fresco of Utah Beach invasion scene by school children from several countries was exposed on the beach.

The breakdown of D-Day and the Battle on Normandy Casualties:

- Over 425,000 Allied and German troops were killed, wounded or went missing during the Battle of Normandy. This figure includes over 209,000 Allied casualties. Roughly 200,000 estimated German troops were killed or wounded.
- Today, twenty-seven war cemeteries hold the remains of over 110,000 dead from both sides: 77,866 German, 9,386 American, 17,769 British, 5,002 Canadian and 650 Poles.
- Between 15,000 and 20,000 French civilians were killed, mainly as a result of Allied bombing. Thousands more fled their homes to escape the fighting.

The **allied forces** heroes of D-Day marked the turning point that lead to victory over the **Axis Powers**.

Yet, as we remember them we should also be mindful of the cost of life lost in addition to their own.

World War II **fatality statistics** are estimated at 50 - 80 million. That is 3%-4% of the World population at the time.

A higher figure of 85 million includes deaths from war-related disease and famine.

Civilians killed totaled from 38 to 55 million, including 19 to 25 million from war-related disease and famine. 11 million exterminated in the genocidal holocaust of whom 6 million were Jews (1/3 of the Jewish people).

Total military dead: from 22 to 25 million, including deaths in captivity of about 5 million prisoners of war.

As we honor the D-Day fallen heroes and remember their sacrifice we ought to focus our attention on how **avoidable** WWII was. The allied soldiers carried out their mission with great success and indeed created the turning point that won the war.

But what about those who sent them to the battle field? Here are some milestones to consider:

- The 1919 WWI Treaty of Versailles is perceived as the precursor to WWII.
- In 1934 the rapid consolidation of the Nazi dictatorship in Germany.
- Failed Soviet efforts (from late 1934 until the Munich Pact of September, 1938) clamoring to convince the major Western powers to accept a purely defensive alliance against the Axis.
- Western powers were tired of the enormous casualties of WWI and did not want to get involved in another war. Germany and Italy were willing. This gave the Axis the upper hand as to when and where to start the war.
- In Britain there was sympathy and tolerance to the view that **the world would be much better off if the "Aryan", "Nordic" elements of the English-speaking countries, and of Germany and Scandinavia, would exercise the political leadership of the 'civilized world'**. They were therefore psychologically ready to accept Hitler's demands not only to re-occupy the Rhineland (1936) and to annex Austria (1938), but also to rebuild Germany's military forces. They also looked the other way when he abrogated treaties Germany was a signatory to.
- After Hitler had invaded and annexed Austria **without meeting any diplomatic or military resistance**, he demanded that the portions of Czech territory in which 50% or more of the inhabitants were of German 'race' should be transferred forthwith to German sovereignty.
- In early September 1938 British Prime Minister Chamberlain organized the four power "Munich Conference" (Britain, France, Germany, and Italy) which effectively put the fate of Czechoslovakia in Hitler's hands.
- The "Appeasement" policy insulted the Soviet Union, led Stalin to seek his own agreement with Germany, thereby giving Hitler the opportunity to initiate World War Two without having to fight on two fronts, the problem which had defeated Germany in the First World War.
- Hitler received no sign from the West that it was determined to stop him. By the time the sign was sent it was too late and it had to be in the **reactive form of war AFTER** Hitler invaded Poland on September 1, 1939.
- The only military force which was finally able to save democratic Europe was the defensive alliance of United Kingdom, Canada and the US, along with Australia, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Free France, Greece, the Netherlands, Newfoundland, New Zealand, Norway and Poland and the **Soviet Union**, China, India, Yugoslavia.
- The leader of the West who has made the difference was **Winston Churchill**. Roosevelt was implicitly supportive but actively joined only **after** Japan attacked Pearl Harbor.

- It took major German aggressive offensives in Europe, the ruthless U-Boat sinking of merchant marine ships with passengers and sailors in the Atlantic, and Pearl Harbor in the Pacific, **for the U.S. "to do the right thing."** Yet, at what terrible cost to life and property.

That was 70 years ago.

What about today? Dangers to European democracy and to world peace are looming particularly by **external** state actors such as Iran that is likely to end up with nuclear weapons, and by non-state actors such as al Qaida and affiliated terrorist groups. The dangers also loom **internally** and are well-associated with economic hardships and a growing sense of nationalism.

If we will not heed these alarming signs, history may repeat itself and we may have to do - yet again - the right thing as if we have learned nothing from our history.

Ronald Reagan, the 40th President of the United States said:

Peace is the highest aspiration of the American people.

We will negotiate for it, sacrifice for it.

We will not surrender for it now or ever.

Noble words indeed. He surely meant:

Negotiate wisely - unlike Munich in 1938 or Iran these days.

Minimize the sacrifice - by preventing avoidable war yet fight them if necessary and intend to win!

Make the adversary know your resolve and take you seriously.

Nothing can be a better tribute to the memory of D-Day than to heed this legacy.