

Remarks at the United States Cemetery in Cambridge, United Kingdom

June 4, 1994

Mr. Prime Minister and Mrs. Major, Mr. Maclean, Chaplain, Secretary Bentsen, thank you for your fine remarks. To our British hosts and to all the distinguished Americans who are also here, Members of the Congress, the administration, the Armed Forces, we have come here today, all of us, on a journey of remembrance. For some, as for Secretary Bentsen, it was a journey to retrace time, to go back 50 summers and more when they took to airfields like these. For others, it is a journey to honor those who fought and those who died for the world in which we came of age.

In this moment, all of us are joined in a sense of pride, in a sense of indebtedness, a sense of wonder, and a sense of determination to carry on that work and never to forget.

On these ancient grounds, 3,812 Americans are buried, airmen, soldiers, and sailors. More than 5,000 others are remembered on the Wall of the Missing. The names of some we honor echo still in our Nation's memory, names like Joseph Kennedy, Jr., the brother of our late President, a young man for whom a distinguished political career was predicted but who gave his life for our country, or Glenn Miller, whose wonderful "Moonlight Serenade" soothed a savage world and still makes us tap our feet. In death, all these people on the Wall and buried behind us were equal. They came from every State in the Union. They were of many races and religions. They had names like Carillo, Kaufman, and Wood. They were, all of them, American. They fought to defeat a great evil which threatened to destroy our very way of life, what Winston Churchill called "the great principles of freedom and the rights of man," which are the joint inheritance of the English-speaking world.

For long months Britain bravely carried that fight on alone. In the Battle of Britain, night after frightful night, the people of this besieged island withstood the fierce attacks of Nazi bombers. It was their finest hour. Amid the horror the British looked west for help. Then the Yanks came, deepening one of history's profoundest bonds.

Overnight, it seemed, tens of thousands of GI's filled the streets and camps across southern England. All these years later we find the memories of many of them still very vivid: smiling GI's tossing packs of spearmint gum to British schoolboys, new faces and funny accents at the corner pub, Lindy hops in London, kids from Milwaukee invited in for high tea, olive uniforms filling the pews at British churches.

America gave to England an infusion of arms and men and materiel. The British gave our troops the feeling that they were not so far from home after all. The British gave us inspiration; the Americans gave in return, hope.

At every level, Yanks and Brits worked together like family. American intelligence services built on Britain's brilliant successes which were here chronicled in breaking the German code. General Eisenhower chose British marshals to be his deputies. Of course, Montgomery and Ramsay and Tedder, Roosevelt and Churchill, even as they led the assault on tyranny and rallied their own people to support the crusade, encouraged each other with personal notes, all shared a sense of kinship that sustained them through the darkest moments of the war. All shared a faith that our people, nurtured on freedom, would rise to the call of history. Nowhere was our bond more important than in the air war launched from the green fields like this one. The Royal Air Force and the Army Air Corps joined in countless sorties to cripple the Luftwaffe, to decimate the Nazi war machine, to soften the Atlantic Wall. One British citizen remembered, "For a thousand days, the sky was never still."

It was some of the most dangerous work of the war, and the tales of valor still amaze us all: pilots going down with burning flames to give all the rest of the crew just a few more seconds to get out, or the two crew members who shared the only parachute left on board as they jumped together from their burning plane over England. The Marauders, Liberators, Mustangs, and Flying Fortresses, the Halifaxes and Mosquitoes, they were all sturdy. But as one American remembered, "The flak sometimes seemed so thick you could walk on it."

The wild blue yonder above Europe could quickly turn cold and gray and lethal.

In just the 2 months before D-Day, the Allied forces lost over 2,000 planes and over 12,000 men. Because of their sacrifice, by June 6th of 1944, the Allies owned the air. Under the shield of that air supremacy, our ships crossed the Channel, our men crossed the beaches.

A few days after the Normandy landing, General Eisenhower stood on the beaches of France with his young son, John, recently a graduate of West Point, and told him: "If I didn't have the air supremacy, I wouldn't be here." After D-Day, the Air Corps continued to fly toward freedom's horizon, until the entire Continent was reclaimed and a world was set free.

The victory of the generation we honor today came at a high cost. It took many lives and much perseverance. After D-Day, it took freedom another year to reach the Elbe; it took another 44 years to reach Warsaw and Prague and East Berlin. And now it has reached Kiev and Moscow and even beyond. The mission of this time is to secure and expand its reach further.

The airmen who flew these skies had a ritual that Secretary Bentsen mentioned for signaling

to their comrades on the ground at the end of a mission. As they were coming in for landing, if they fired off a red flare it meant that there were casualties aboard. And if they fired off a green flare, it meant some lucky pilot had just completed his last mission before shipping out.

Well, the generation that won the Second World War completed their mission, whether they walk among us or lie among us today. And after looking down in sorrow at those who paid the ultimate price, let us lift our eyes to the skies in which they flew, the ones they once commanded. And let us send to them a signal, a signal of our own, a signal that we do remember, that we do honor, and that we shall always carry on the work of these knights borne on wings.

May God bless them and all our people.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 11 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Ed Maclean, president, 9th Army Air Force Association, and Lt. Col. Johnny R. Almond, USAF, who gave the invocation.

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters Following Discussions With Prime Minister John Major in North Aylesbury, United Kingdom *June 4, 1994*

Prime Minister Major. Hello. Good afternoon. I suppose I should begin by apologizing to you for the D-Day weather; I'm sorry about that.

Could I also say, at the outset, that the President and I will be able to take a question or two afterwards, but I need to be in Portsmouth very speedily, and I know the President has a live broadcast. So I'm afraid the question time will be limited.

We've had the opportunity, this morning, of discussions for nearly a couple of hours, and we'll take the opportunity over the next 2 days to pursue some other matters as well. We looked at a wide range of issues. We looked forward, firstly, to the Naples Summit. We anticipate the emphasis there will be on employment, following the Detroit Jobs Conference, and we discussed some of the preliminary work

that's now in course of preparation for that conference.

We will, of course, at Naples, be welcoming President Yeltsin. We both agree there's a more stable economic and political situation in Russia at present, a better foreign policy partnership than perhaps there has been at any stage in recent years. And we had the opportunity of looking at the responsible handling we've seen thus far by both Russia and Ukraine of the problems that exist in the Crimea.

Self-evidently today, we spent some time discussing our joint interests in Bosnia. We are at the middle, in the midst of crucial negotiations in Geneva. The United Nations continues to seek a cessation of hostilities. At present, as you'll know, the contact group is still meeting, pressing for settlement of territorial questions,