

WHAT SO ★ PROUDLY ★ WE HAIL

The American Soul in Story, Speech, and Song

Order of the Day: 6 June 1944

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After almost five years of devastating war in the European theater, the Allies mounted what turned out to be the decisive operation in the liberation of France and the final defeat of Nazi Germany. On June 5, 1944, Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890–1969), Supreme Allied Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force, gave the order to commence Operation Overlord, the invasion of France. The next day, 24,000 paratroopers poured from Allied planes over Normandy, while the largest amphibious assault in history—over 160,000 soldiers and nearly 200,000 navy personnel and merchant seamen from 5,000 ships—took place on the beaches. Each member of the expeditionary force received a copy of General Eisenhower’s Order of the Day for June 6, D-Day.

What is the tone of Eisenhower’s order, and how does it compare with Roosevelt’s speech after Pearl Harbor (see previous selection)? What is a “crusade,” and why does he call this “the Great Crusade”? What are its goals, and the reasons for fighting? What is “great and noble” about this undertaking? Try to imagine yourself receiving General Eisenhower’s order: how would you respond?

Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!

You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers in arms on other fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle hardened, he will fight savagely.

But this is the year of 1944! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940–41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man to man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our home fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in

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weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching together to victory!

I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full victory! Page | 2

Good Luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.