

Commemorative speech prepared by the French themselves

Listen to the bells ring out a joyful peel, announcing the arrival of our American friends. However remember that 70 years ago tomorrow, September 3 1939, some other sons were less happy with announcement war of the France against the Germany bringing a general consternation. There were hard and violent fights during May and June 1940, our soldiers inflicting of heavy losses on the enemy, but lost the fight. More than 110 000 were killed, some ten of thousand were prisoners. It was for our country, the beginning of a long nightmare, of four long years. France was deprived of all liberty under the yoke of the Nazi occupier, the humiliation, requisitions of all kinds, the deprivations, and the harassment. All this brought a situation which became intolerable for our country. The arrogance of the victor who did not respect anything, all was permitted, ignoring without scruples all treaties, we lived through many dramas and murders during these years of occupation.

And then, one morning, of spring June 6 1944, some thousand of young men, coming from far off horizons, faced a determined enemy on our beaches. They had courage, they knew sacrifice was necessary in order to defeat this fanatic army ruled by a perverse ideology that had put the world to fire and to blood.

They had fought before in operation "Torch" in North Africa, in November 1942 and operation "Husky" in Sicily in July and August 1943. Your division, the 2nd Armored Division, landed on our soil between 9th and 13th June 1944 at Omaha-Beach. The first fight you underwent, took you Carentan and then Caumont l'Evente. After many violent engagements, on July 27 about noon, some elements of your units entered Notre-Dame-de-Cenilly with terrifying active fights, sometimes hand to hand in many places of the township. Half your division under the orders of General Edward H Brooks, then occupied the town.

Several civilians, of which three little girls, were fatally wounded. Several of your comrades were also killed, notably on the 28 and 29 July. We here recognise men of the 67th Armored Regiments losses, the soldiers Ralphus L Faulk, Arlen R Rhame, Roy V Screen and some distance from here Colonel Richard E Nelson. The monument carries the traces of these violent fights which took place where we stand at this moment. The photo hung in the porch of the church is an authentic one taken at the time. Thanks to your courage, we found again our liberty, alas for you, the fighting was far from being ended. It was necessary for another 10 month of intense and violent battles to finally defeat the enemy on May 8 1945, an unconditional surrender of the enemy and the end of the Nazi regime.

Yesterday, with great emotion you gathered in the middle 9387 crosses of white marble in the cemetery of Colleville sur Mer where so many of your comrades rest forever. At the foot of this monument, our thoughts go at this moment to all your friends, to all those fallen ranks, to their families, and to their country, for retuning our liberty.

Trained in July 1940, the 2nd Armored Div. US. and commanded in November 1940 by the general Patton. During the course of the war and numerous fights, your division lost 1160 men killed in battle, 254 deaths by accidents, 5362 injured and 253 missing in action. These were the sufferings and the sacrifice for our freedom.

Today 2 September 2009, it is a big honour and a pride for us to welcome you to N-D-de-Cenilly, our small village in Normandy, where more than a half century ago, you were confronted, many of you were only 20 years old, and new to the hard and cruel reality of war. Be assured that the French people and particularly the inhabitants of Normandy will never forget all the sacrifices and all the sufferings that you suffered during these years of your youth.

In this morning of remembrance we want to testify our deep gratitude and our big recognition once again, towards all those that gave their life for our liberty.

Thank you of having come to the help of the France. Thank you once again for all the sacrifices that were made. Thank you of having returned to our country its independence and its dignity.

Before this monument and this plaque in the honour of the 2nd Armored American Division, we reaffirm our attachment without fail to Peace.

Vive the veterans of the 2ème Armord Division,

Vive the United States of America, Vive la France, Vive the Peace.