

I lived in Paris during the Nazi occupation, and D-Day and the liberation were not anything anyone knew about. It was all kept totally secret, that it might take the German armies by surprise. Today I found and read this copy of the article written by Heather Cox Richardson, about the "chat" given by President Roosevelt the night before the huge and awesome operation of D-Day that took place on June 6, 1944. The words spoken by a man who possessed so much authority and bore so much responsibility impressed me greatly. The tenderness and care that I felt coming from the heart of this Commander in chief touched me deeply. This man of great power was careful to include all who made this day happen. He bestowed honor and love to all the brave and courageous young men who obeyed in the face of danger, and gave so much to make freedom ring again in the suffering populace of Europe. This is something that must be treasured among all men and women everywhere. *Angèle Caporaso (Jackie)*

June 5, 2026 82 Years Later-

D-Day-

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt had good news for the American people when he gave his twenty-ninth Fireside Chat on June 5, 1944. The day before, June 4, Rome had fallen to Allied troops. "The first of the Axis capitals is now in our hands," Roosevelt said.

The president pointed out that "it is...significant that Rome has been liberated by the armed forces of many nations. The American and British armies—who bore the chief burdens of battle—found at their sides our own North American neighbors, the gallant Canadians. The fighting New Zealanders from the far South Pacific, the courageous French and the French Moroccans, the South Africans, the Poles and the East Indians—all of them fought with us on the bloody approaches to the city of Rome. The Italians, too, forswearing a partnership in the Axis which they never desired, have sent their troops to join us in our battles against the German trespassers on their soil."

This group of ordinary men from many different countries had worked together to defeat the forces of fascism. For all that the fascists boasted of the superiority of their form of government over democracy, in Italy "our troops have found starvation, malnutrition, disease, a deteriorating education and lowered public health—all by-products of the Fascist misrule," FDR said.

But the president warned Americans that the fall of Rome was only the beginning. "We shall have to push through a long period of greater effort and fiercer fighting before we get into Germany itself," he said. "The victory still lies some distance ahead. That distance will be covered in due time—have no fear of that. But it will be tough and it will be costly."

FDR knew something his audience did not. On the other side of the Atlantic, paratroopers, their faces darkened with cocoa, were already dropping into France, and the soldiers, sailors, and airmen of the Allies were on their way across the English channel.

The order of the day from their commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, on the

evening of June 5 had read: "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 people of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world."

"Your task will not be an easy one," it read, but it assured the troops that the Germans had suffered great defeats and Allied bombing had reduced German strength, while our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in 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!"

Eisenhower's public confidence did not reflect his understanding that the largest amphibious invasion in military history was a gamble. The seas on the crossing were rough, and the beaches the men would assault were tangled in barbed wire, booby trapped, and defended by German soldiers in concrete bunkers. On June 5, in pencil on a sheet of paper, he had written a message to be communicated in case the invasion failed. "Our landings in the Cherbourg-Havre area have failed to gain a satisfactory foothold and I have withdrawn the troops," it read. "My decision to attack at this time and place was based upon the best information available. The troops, the air and the Navy did all that bravery and dedication to duty could do. If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt it is mine alone."

But Eisenhower's letter was never delivered.

On the morning of June 6, 1944, five naval assault divisions stormed the beaches of Normandy. Seven thousand ships and landing craft operated by more than 195,000 naval personnel from 8 countries brought almost 133,000 troops to beaches given the code names UTAH, OMAHA, GOLD, JUNO, and SWORD.

By the end of the day, more than 10,000 Allied troops were wounded or killed, but the Allies had established a foothold in France that would permit them to flood troops, vehicles, and supplies into Europe.

When FDR held a press conference later that day, his comment to the cheerful reporters highlighted the extraordinary weight of the past 24 hours. "I knew last night, when I was doing that broadcast on Rome," he told them, "that the troops were actually in the vessels, on the way across."