

Routine Proceedings

defend the principles of freedom that underlie all truly democratic societies.

At a time when the very principle of our collective allegiance was threatened, our citizens rallied to take up arms. The threat must have been perceived as great indeed for a people as fundamentally peaceful as we are to become involved as we did in the most devastating armed conflict in history.

The determination was also great to erase the threat of any future conflict. If there is one view shared by all veterans who are haunted by the terrible atrocities they witnessed, it is their condemnation of war.

We owe more than mere gratitude and admiration to those who lay down their life or endured terrible suffering. We have a duty to them to remember, because it is by remembering the horror of war that we will remain vigilant defenders of peace.

[English]

It is with gratitude and humility that I pay tribute to the Canadian men and women of every background, race, religion, language and political persuasion who laid down their lives in Europe, or lost their friends and comrades and returned to Canada, some maimed, and all forever marked by an experience of tragedy and a knowledge of bravery and sacrifice of a kind rarely encountered in our times.

In remembering the sacrifices made on D-Day, let us resolve once more to honour the memory of the men and women who fought against fascism by continuing in our day the struggle for democracy and human rights. In order that the spirit of democracy be allowed to flourish, and not simply its structures, I would wish for us all throughout the coming years the understanding and sensitivity that we perhaps experience in heightened degree on occasions such as this when we remember, above all, our shared values and common democratic goals.

• (1515)

Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Mr. Speaker, on the sixth of June, 1944 Canadians joined allied forces in the assault on Festung Europa, Fortress Europe, a continent held for more than four years in the iron grip of the Axis forces: Adolf Hitler's Third Reich and Benito Mussolini's fascist regime.

Prior to the D-Day invasion Canadians had twice been engaged against the Axis: at Dieppe on August 19, 1942 and in the Italian campaign which started with the invasion of Sicily on July 10, 1943.

In these previous actions Canadians took heavy casualties but established themselves as a formidable adversary; determined, courageous and effective fighting troops, respected and feared by their opponents.

On D-Day the five Normandy beaches to be assaulted were designated Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword. On this, the longest day, more than 150,000 allied soldiers would complete their crossing from England to occupied France.

Inland over 23,000 U.S. paratroopers had jumped into battle while another 57,000 American soldiers landed on the beaches designated Utah and Omaha.

Concurrently British and Canadian troops had jumped or landed in gliders while 60,000 British and 15,000 Canadian troops joined the assault on the beaches, the British on Gold and Sword while the Canadian came ashore on Juno. Thus, one in ten of the allied forces landed in the D-Day invasion was Canadian.

This ratio carried through to the total Canadian population with over one million of Canada's 11 million people in uniform and behind them was a Canadian public committed to supporting the war effort. Canadians were united in rejecting the totalitarian forces of Germany, Italy and Japan, a regime which had it not been effectively opposed would have subjected the world to a reign of terror, discrimination and oppression.

Canada's D-Day success resulted from a combined effort of navy, army and air force units, 109 ships and 10,000 sailors, 15,000 soldiers and 37 RCAF squadrons working as a team.

Canadians achieved two firsts during the Normandy campaign. The Canadian 7th Brigade was the first formation to reach its D-Day goal, and 441, 442 and 443 squadrons RCAF were the first to commence air operations from French soil since the allied 1940 withdrawal from France.

The Canadians who went ashore at Dieppe, at Pachino, at Normandy and those who fought to liberate the rest of Europe considered themselves ordinary people but they were willing to jeopardize their all to support a cause in which they believed.

I want to conclude with a quote from Jack Granatstein's book, *Normandy, 1944* where, speaking of Canadians who landed on D-Day, it is said:

They were not all saints. They were not all heroes. But there were saints and heroes among them. Remember them and remember their achievements.

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I wonder if I could have the unanimous consent of the House to speak on this occasion on behalf of the New Democratic Party caucus.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Mr. Speaker, my thanks to colleagues for agreeing to my request.

I think it is only appropriate on the 50th anniversary of D-Day that we have an opportunity to reflect in the House and across the country, to gather together all those feelings and thoughts and reflections that we have had over the last few years as a number of different 50th anniversaries have come to us as a result of the 1990s.