



Mette Frederiksens tale i Normandiet ved markeringen af 80-årsdagen for D-dag

Taler

Mette Frederiksen
Danmarks statsminister

Dato

6. juni 2024

Sted

Omaha beach, Normandiet

Your Majesty.

Minister.

Honored guests.

The night before the 6th of June 1944 was a full moon. The sea was rough. And the largest fleet in history was on its way across the English Channel towards the French coast.

Around 30 of the ships and 800 of the sailors that supported the embarkment were Danish.

One of the sailors was Holger Jensen.

When he came to Omaha Beach, he was met by a terrible sight. These are his words:

"You had to step a little to the side not to step on corpses or parts of bodies and loose limbs."

While Holger survived to tell the story of what he had seen. Thousands of young men were killed.

That night 80 years ago was a turning point in the war against Nazism.

It was also the most brutal battle of the entire war on the Western Front.

When we are remembering the men – and also a few women today – it reminds us that freedom can never be taken for granted.

The Danish poet and member of the World War II resistance movement in Denmark, Martin A. Hansen wrote these remarkable words that I will quote in Danish:

*”Hvert liv, det koster ved Normandi,
Det lader en af vore gå fri.”*

The meaning of these words is that for every life taken in Normandy, one of ours go free.

This tells something about what D-Day meant.

Freedom is not free. Freedom comes with a price. Freedom is a struggle.

To succeed in their mission, the Allies needed more soldiers, more planes, more ships and more materiel. The largest invasion fleet ever assembled.

Before departure, troops received a letter from the operation commander. Many soldiers carried it in their breast pockets, on that night. It said:

”We will accept nothing less than full Victory!”

The letter was sent by General Eisenhower. His message was very clear: The free

world had to fight to the very end. Regardless of the cost. There was no alternative. And victory depended on each and every brave soldier.

* * *

Today – right here by the Danish monument – we honor the brave Danes who chose to join the Allied forces after Denmark had been occupied by Nazi Germany.

For too long they were forgotten in Denmark. It is with humility that we remember their deeds today. To all of you whose father, grandfather, great-grandfather or other close relative was part of the battle at Normandy or the fight against Nazism, I will say: Our freedom today is based on them.

As the years pass, witnesses become fewer. Memories more distant.

It is our responsibility, we who live now, to remember. To tell the story.

History is our common memory. It reminds us of who we are. What is wrong and what is right.

* * *

Generations before us imagined a new Europe of peace – after a terrible war. They strived for humanity – after genocide. They carried a wish and a hope and a struggle for freedom.

Now, today in Europe, we are still in the process of understanding what it means that war has returned to our continent.

We must step up to honor the sacrifice of past generations. Take on the heavy responsibility that has fallen on our generation. And make sure that the generations to come will be proud of what we did.

I am fully aware that history never repeats itself. But sometimes it feels that way.

Right now, in the heart of Europe, a city is bombed.

Right now, families and children murdered.

Just two hours flight from Copenhagen, our capital, Kharkiv is the target of daily bombings. A city just like any other city in Europe. But right now, a city at the front line of the fight for freedom.

The freedom that the soldiers bravely fought for, 80 years ago. That thousands of young men died for, 80 years ago. We cannot let it slip from our hands.

Freedom is not a legacy. Freedom is a fight, a battle, a struggle. Every day. Every hour. Right now.

To win the war, Ukraine needs our full support. Our weapons. Our aircrafts. Our material. They need more and they need it now.

And they will get it. For as long as it takes.

Doing too little too late is not an option.

Are the Ukrainians tired? Of course they are. Tired of an unfair and unjust war. Tired of fighting.

But the Ukrainians will not give up.

I have not met a single Ukrainian willing to give in on the Russian terms.

Not a single Ukrainian willing to live the life that Russia offers.

Not a single Ukrainian willing to give up freedom and their mother country.

Because again today, there is no alternative to Victory.

We must carry forward that torch.

We must listen to the whisper of history.

We must understand that freedom – always – comes with a price.

It is again a time of great concern in Europe. But it is also a time for hope. Hope for the future.

People matter. Freedom matters. Europe matters.

80 years ago and again today.

Kilde

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