

What D day means to us



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Today we recall the launch of a mighty force to liberate the continent of Europe in 1944.

At today's commemoration our Queen will stand alongside the President of the USA and the Prime Minister of Australia as representatives of the allied nations that mobilised that awesome force. The President of France will attend, on behalf of the largest country they planned to set free. So too will the Chancellor of the new Germany that arose after her defeat, as a reminder that Germany too agrees the Nazi German tyranny over the continent had to be purged.

Some 160,000 troops made passage by boat to the beaches of Normandy, or flew in for a dangerous parachute drop as the advance party. Surprise was achieved despite the magnitude of the army and the length of time it took to assemble and concentrate the force, thanks to disinformation about where the blow would be struck. The Americans encountered the strongest resistance on Omaha, one of the five beaches, but Operation Neptune captured all beaches and began the long process of consolidating a position in France for the advance on Berlin.

In the days that followed D day temporary harbours were installed for future supplies and reinforcement, a pipeline was put in to fuel the highly mechanised armed forces, and air and sea control was established against the enemy planes and U boats. It took many more months of hard fighting with many losses to unite with the advancing Russians in Germany, but total victory was secured some eleven months later.

The second world war was a necessary tragedy. Germany's wish to dominate Europe with her Italian ally and Japan's wish to colonise much of Asia by military means had to be resisted and defeated. The axis powers would not compromise and could not be trusted to honour any possible peace agreement. The wanton Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, the long preparations for the German invasion of the UK, the impetuous and ultimately self defeating German invasion of the Soviet Union all demonstrated this was an occasion when military victory had to proceed diplomatic and political settlements.

It was a reminder of what happens when politics fails. Germany had been defeated just 21 years before the outbreak of the second world war. The Peace

Treaty imposed on her created grievances which Hitler was able to manipulate to his own advantage. The victors' failure to intervene in Germany politics when Hitler overthrew the democratic constitution, or when he remilitarised the Rhineland showed a failure of resolve and understanding of what could happen next. Western politics failed to produce an acceptable peace, and more importantly failed to police a tough peace. German politics was subverted by a demagogue who restored German pride, won an election and then created an evil tyranny which went on to perpetrate mass murder on the battle field and in the gas chambers and concentration camps.

We owe much to the many allied service personnel who were killed in wounded during the liberation of Europe.

You are welcome, Mr President



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Today we should welcome the President of the USA to the UK on a state visit.

The USA is our principal military ally. Her leading presence in NATO has been crucial to our safety over the last seventy years, as we have dealt with the Soviet threat of the 1950s and 1960s, and the more complex and various threats to our security of more recent years. The USA is the world's most powerful democracy. The UK is one of the world's oldest and most experienced democracies. Together we project democratic values, argue for freedom, defend free speech and free enterprise, and stand up against dictatorships, genocides and abuse of power.

Many MPs and some of my constituents dislike Mr Trump and say we should not afford him the courtesies of a state visit. The MPs and protesters have done all in their power to limit where he can go and what he can do whilst in our country. I regret that. I will be honouring the office of President. The whole point of a State visit is it bestows on the State visitor the trappings of power whilst with us and confirms the power of the office the visitor holds. We respect the office, whilst reserving the right to disagree with the office holders politics, words and actions as an international politician. On many a state visit a visitor has been told in private communications exactly what the UK's position is on issues of the day and how we would like the visitor's country to change or to accommodate our views.

On this visit I will find myself in agreement with Mr Trump over Brexit and the UK's good future outside the EU. The President urged Mrs May, as I and others did, to take a firmer line in the talks she held with the EU to get a better deal. Unfortunately she was tarnished with the view that Mr Trump was a difficult person for UK tastes and did not accept his good advice. She failed to follow up promptly and vigorously on his offer to see if we can agree a Free Trade Agreement between our two countries, to sign as soon as we leave the EU.

I agree with Mr Trump's policy of promoting prosperity by lower tax rates and selective higher public spending. We can learn a lot from the much faster growth rate in the USA than in Europe. I agree with the President that the West needs to ensure cyber security at a time of unprecedented technological challenge, which will have an impact on our commercial alliances. I also agree with his approach to Middle Eastern politics, where he has bombed less and not intervened on the ground in the belief that further military intervention will not help. This is a welcome change from Presidents Bush, Clinton and Obama.

I study why some so dislike Mr Trump. They argue that his wish to secure US borders and to build a wall at the Mexican frontier is unacceptable. They did not say the same when Mr Clinton built a substantial wall along part of that frontier, or when various EU countries rushed up walls at the height of the migration crisis in 2015-16. They say his attitude to women is unacceptable, though he has not stood accused of improper relations with a young female intern in the way Mr Clinton was. They dislike some of his language about migrants. They think that underlying his policies are intolerant attitudes towards foreigners and unpleasant attitudes towards women. I am not here to apologise for all that he has done in his private life before becoming President nor to defend all his tweets.

I say to his critics we should respect the democratic decisions of our ally, and leave it to US politics to decide what are acceptable attitudes in their democracy. We do not go into the failings and wrong doings of State visitors from tyrannies and monarchies abroad, but we let them come and make their own statements. We have entertained dreadful people from thug states without a murmur of protest from MPs. Why be less courteous to a democratic ally who has stood the ultimate test of democratic scrutiny and media fury in his own free country? I do not agree with some of the things Mr Trump says, and sometimes disagree with his policies as with features of his trade war that have a wide adverse impact. I do think we should welcome Mr Trump to understand him better and to collaborate with the USA as ally and friend in as many ways as are to our mutual advantage.

Royal British Legion lunch in Sulhamstead

It was a pleasure to attend the annual Burghfield Royal British Legion lunch today as their guest and to say a few words to them. I thanked all involved in the work of the Legion who do so much for veterans and their families, and keep alive the story of the wars so we can learn from it. I explained why remembrance is so important. The two world wars of the last century, with 750,000 and 400,000 UK dead afflicted every family and changed our country. The victory of two young generations of service personnel upheld democracy and self government, and ended a brutal genocide. We are right to remember the ultimate sacrifice of those who died, and the sacrifice of those who returned from fear and privation to lead more normal lives.

I also spoke about next week's events to commemorate the launch of Operation Overlord 75 years ago to liberate the European continent from German Nazi tyranny. On my main blog I am writing about our relationship with the USA and NATO, our main defence partner. I also raised this in my speech.

I would like to thank the organisers of the lunch for a most enjoyable occasion.

Update on leadership election

I have now heard from members of the Wokingham Conservatives about the leadership by email and through my meeting on Friday with members at a party reception. I will continue to consult.

I will now rule out voting for those candidates who want to delay our exit, and who have unrealistic plans to re open the Withdrawal Agreement and renegotiate bits of it, when the EU has said they will not do so.

I have heard enough to know Mr Stewart's positions do not offer us a way forward that is likely to work. He was one of the three foremost advocates of the Withdrawal Agreement which went down to the most spectacular defeat the Conservative party has ever experienced in the Euro elections, when it was the only proposition the official Conservative machine put forward. The failure with Mrs May to sell it to more than 90% of the public should rule him out as a future leader of the party. His stubborn belief that a variant of the Agreement has to go ahead shows he is completely out of touch with the electorate.

This Agreement is toxic, hated by both Leave and Remain voters. The Cabinet made a mighty mistake in going along with it, with some Cabinet members

trying trying the hard sell on it for weeks on end long after it was clear the public did not want it.

Invite Nigel Farage to help with an early many deals WTO exit

Now Nigel Farage leads the largest UK and largest EU wide single grouping of MEPs the next UK Prime Minister should work with him to secure an early exit from the EU. He should be invited to Downing Street as soon as the new PM moves in to discuss the details of our departure on or before 31 October this year. The government should invite the Brexit party MEPs to assist in presenting our case for a smooth WTO exit, adding to government work on ensuring working arrangements are agreed for the main issues in an exit of many deals. Much of the work is already completed and agreed, including customs, transport and government procurement, but more could be offered and supported in the European Parliament as well as in further bilateral discussion between the UK government and the EU. Both the Brexit party and the government should accept that the Withdrawal Treaty is a no go for the UK, as the Brexit party made clear to achieve their win in the European election. The resounding defeat for Mrs May's Withdrawal Agreement, commanding only 9% of the vote, should be decisive. There is no way we should sign that Treaty or anything like that Treaty, for the reasons often set out here.