

RONALD REAGAN, "REMARKS AT A CEREMONY COMMEMORATING THE 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE NORMANDY INVASION, D-DAY," POINTE DU HOC, FRANCE (6 JUNE 1984)

and

RONALD REAGAN, "REMARKS AT A UNITED STATES-FRANCE CEREMONY COMMEMORATING THE 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE NORMANDY INVASION, D-DAY," OMAHA BEACH, COLLEVILLE SUR MER, FRANCE (6 JUNE 1984)

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**Abstract:** This essay analyzes two speeches delivered by President Ronald Reagan on June 6, 1984, within the broader context of Reagan's Cold War foreign policy rhetoric. In his remarks at Pointe du Hoc and Omaha Beach, Reagan provided a vivid narrative of D-Day and applied the moral lessons of World War II to the present Cold War struggle between U.S. democracy and Soviet communism.

**Key Words:** Ronald Reagan; D-Day; Cold War; Pointe du Hoc; Omaha Beach; Epideictic

On June 6, 1984, President Ronald Reagan delivered two speeches in Normandy, France, marking the fortieth anniversary of D-Day: one at Pointe du Hoc and the other at Omaha Beach. In both speeches, Reagan praised the men who stormed the beaches and scaled the cliffs of Normandy, using the story of D-Day to reaffirm the West's commitment to democracy in Europe. He compared the struggles of World War II to the challenges still facing European democracies, pledging that the United States would stand with other nations defending freedom against the threat posed by the Soviet Union. For Reagan, this historic celebration of the Allied victory at D-Day was an opportune moment to recommit the United States and its Western allies to the Cold War struggle between democracy and communism.

In this essay, I analyze both speeches—Reagan's address at Pointe du Hoc and his remarks at Omaha Beach—as independent and yet interrelated rhetorical moments within Reagan's larger Cold War foreign policy narrative. Both speeches exemplify Reagan's common themes of U.S. patriotism, moral resolve, and commitment to the Western democratic alliance. I first describe how Reagan's speeches on the fortieth anniversary of D-Day echoed themes from his 1982 Address to the British Parliament and his 1983 speech to the National Association of Evangelicals. I then analyze each speech separately, drawing on the archives of the Reagan Library to illuminate the White House's goals for Reagan's remarks and showing how those goals were manifested in the speeches themselves through a close reading of both texts.

Finally, I show how Reagan's commemoration of D-Day was later repurposed by his 1984 presidential campaign, and how successive U.S. presidents have continued the tradition of remembering D-Day by speaking at Normandy.

### **Ronald Reagan's Cold War Diplomacy**

When Ronald Reagan defeated incumbent Jimmy Carter in the 1980 presidential election, many saw Reagan's landslide victory as a direct rejection of the Carter's policies at home and abroad.<sup>1</sup> According to a *New York Times*/CBS News Poll, voters ousted Carter because of two main issues: the failing U.S. economy and the nation's foreign policy failures, including its troubled relationship to the Soviet Union. The *New York Times* reported that two-thirds of voters "cited economic problems such as unemployment, taxes and inflation as a key reason for their vote." Moreover, those polled, by a margin of almost two-to-one, said they wanted the United States to be "more forceful" in dealing with the Soviet Union "even if it increased the risk of war."<sup>2</sup> "When Ronald Reagan took office in early 1981," writes Paul Fessler, "the United States appeared weak and faltering. In foreign affairs, the United States, still reeling from defeat in Vietnam, faced not only a Soviet Union expanding into Afghanistan but also a major hostage crisis in Iran. . . . It seemed as if America's self-image as a confident and strong international superpower was fading into a distant memory."<sup>3</sup> Reagan countered this perception of a weakened America in his inaugural address, pledging that as the nation took steps to "renew ourselves here in our own land, we will be seen as having greater strength throughout the world. We will again be the exemplar of freedom and a beacon of hope for those who do not now have freedom."<sup>4</sup>

Early in his first administration, as Reagan implemented policies to revitalize the economy, he also delivered several important foreign policy addresses that outlined his views on the Cold War, communism, and the Soviet Union. In a 1997 interview, Anthony "Tony" Dolan, one of Reagan's chief speechwriters, explained that Reagan's foreign policy rhetoric from 1981 to 1983 displayed the "evolution of a counter-strategy to the Soviets" that accomplished two things:

First, it reject[ed] the notion that you cannot be morally candid and confront the Soviet Union. In other words, it establishes a sort of dual strategy—a paradoxical strategy—of candor and reconciliation. Tough rhetoric and at the same time an offer of diplomatic engagement—many offers of diplomatic engagement. But it did something else: It rejected containment. It said the Soviet Union is about to collapse and we're gonna push it. That's all it's ever really needed. And we're not going to stay on our side of the fifty yard line anymore.<sup>5</sup>

Thirty-five years later, it is difficult to fully appreciate the boldness of this approach. But after a long history of détente, with U.S. presidents striving to appease the Soviet Union, Reagan took a more aggressive and, in a sense, idealistic approach. Reagan's strength, writes Cold War historian John Lewis Gaddis, "lay in his ability to see beyond complexity to simplicity. And what he saw was simply this: that because détente perpetuated—and had been meant to perpetuate—the Cold War, only killing détente could end the Cold War."<sup>6</sup>

Two speeches in particular—Reagan’s 1982 Address to Members of the British Parliament, and his 1983 speech to the National Association of Evangelicals—set forth his new vision of American foreign policy and provided a foundation for his later speeches in Normandy. Reagan Attorney General and confidante Edwin Meese later wrote that these two speeches were significant because they "set forth [Reagan's] view of communism, the Soviet system, and the required free world response in comprehensive fashion."<sup>7</sup> Thus, a brief consideration of Reagan's 1982 speech at Westminster and his so-called “Evil Empire” speech the following year is necessary to appreciate fully the context for his speeches at Normandy in 1984.

On June 8, 1982, Reagan spoke to members of the British Parliament in the Royal Gallery of Westminster. In this speech, the president promised support for European nations seeking freedom from Soviet domination, in the process predicting that "the march of freedom and democracy . . . will leave Marxism-Leninism on the ash-heap of history." He also spoke of the special partnership between the United States and Great Britain, one that was cemented during World War II and fostered by President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill. As leaders on the world stage, Reagan declared that the United States and Great Britain had a responsibility to learn from the mistakes of World War II and act as "[f]ree people, worthy of freedom and determined not only to remain so but to help others gain their freedom as well."<sup>8</sup> Reflecting on the address after his presidency, Reagan called it "one of the most important speeches I gave as president." He noted that although many considered 1982 a watershed year for his domestic and economic policy initiatives, "the real story of 1982 is that we began applying conservatism to foreign affairs."<sup>9</sup> The Westminster Address was Reagan's opportunity to chart a new course for U.S. foreign policy and renew the United States' partnership with Great Britain. Although Reagan's willingness to relegate Soviet communism to the "ash-heap of history" struck some critics as reckless and naïve, his prediction proved correct over time.<sup>10</sup>

The second speech that bears mention is Ronald Reagan's March 8, 1983 address at the annual meeting of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida. Although the speech was designed for a religious audience, Reagan's remarks received both praise and criticism for describing communism in explicitly moral terms. He called on his audience to resist the temptation "to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire, to simply call the arms race a giant misunderstanding and thereby remove yourself from the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil." Reagan also maintained that the struggle between democracy and communism was not ultimately a matter of military might, but a spiritual challenge—"a test of moral will and faith."<sup>11</sup> Instead of simply presenting U.S. democracy and Soviet communism as two competing views of the world, Reagan pronounced one good and the other evil, with the U.S. on the side of what was right and good. As such, the nation had a responsibility to extend democratic liberties to those still oppressed by Soviet communism.<sup>12</sup>

These two speeches established an important foundation for Reagan's later speeches at Normandy in at least two ways. First, the president's address at Westminster and his “Evil Empire” speech emphasized the need for a shared democratic alliance between the United States and other Western democracies, most notably Great Britain. In 1982, the president emphasized the vitality of a U.S.-British partnership throughout history. He reminded his British audience (and the U.S. audience at home) that the two nations had worked together to defeat Nazi Germany, thereby linking the world situation in 1941 with the current struggle against

Soviet communism. Reagan argued that "[i]f history teaches anything it teaches that self-delusion in the face of unpleasant facts is folly," and he praised Prime Minister Winston Churchill's courageous leadership during "the dark days of the Second World War." The choice in 1982 was the same as it was during World War II: Would the United States and Great Britain stand strong or let "freedom wither in a quiet, deadening accommodation with totalitarian evil?" At the end of his speech, Reagan answered his own question: "[T]ogether . . . [l]et us now begin a major effort to secure the best—a crusade for freedom that will engage the faith and fortitude of the next generation."<sup>13</sup> This explicit link between the Allied cause in World War II and the present situation continued in Reagan's D-Day commemorations in 1984.

The second way these speeches provided a foundation for Reagan's rhetoric at Normandy was in his portrayal of the Cold War as a moral struggle between good and evil. Reagan's declaration that communism was an "evil empire" was radical in 1983; all previous U.S. presidents had argued for a policy of accommodation and *détente* towards the Soviet Union. When Reagan spoke at Normandy in 1984, he softened his tone but still hinted at the underlying spiritual ethic of fighting totalitarianism. Reagan referred to the Allies' "rockhard belief that Providence would have a great hand in the events that would unfold here; that God was an ally in this great cause" (Pointe du Hoc, 15).<sup>14</sup> Naming God as an "ally," the president argued that Providence was on the side of those who fought Nazi Germany. He stated that the Allies were "bound today by what bound us 40 years ago, the same loyalties, traditions, and beliefs" (Pointe du Hoc, 24). Linking the present struggle between democracy and communism to World War II, Reagan implicitly argued that God was on still on America's side in 1984.

### **Setting the Stage at Normandy**

Ronald Reagan's 1984 visit to Normandy was part of a ten-day European tour designed to strengthen U.S. ties with its Western allies, particularly Great Britain, France, and Ireland. "[O]ur objective," wrote National Security Advisor Robert C. McFarlane to Deputy Chief of Staff Michael K. Deaver, "by the time the trip is completed, will be to reassert U.S. interest in a stronger and viable Europe within a larger policy context embracing both the Atlantic and Pacific communities, while stressing shared democratic values."<sup>15</sup> According to the "Public Diplomacy Action Plan" that McFarlane included with his memorandum to Deaver, the "Primary Perception" the White House sought to advance was that of a "Strong President and the American Renewal: assertive leadership is essential to world peace and prosperity."<sup>16</sup>

The White House chose specific geographic locations that would highlight these themes. In an April 1984 memo, William Flynn Martin, the Director of International Economic Affairs for the National Security Council, noted that certain places would play a significant role in the president's trip. He wrote that Reagan's visits to Ireland, Normandy, and London would "provide the President with an ideal backdrop for his themes of peace and prosperity and the importance of Allied support and cooperation in the achievement of both."<sup>17</sup> But, as Secretary of State George P. Schultz noted, the president's visit to Normandy was particularly significant: "The public relations highlight of your trip to Europe will undoubtedly be the celebrations in Normandy. . . . The intense media interest provides an opportunity for you personally, and allied leaders as a group, to reach an unprecedented audience on both sides of the Atlantic."<sup>18</sup>

Historian Douglas Brinkley provides some insight into how Reagan's visit to Normandy would link the sacrifices of World War II with the present moment. He recalls a *Time* cover story that ran on May 28, 1984, entitled "D-Day: Forty Years After the Great Crusade." An underlined copy of this article sits in the speechwriting files at the Reagan Library. Lance Morrow, the author of the article, wrote that World War II veterans would "go up again to Pointe du Hoc and shake their heads again in wonder at the men who climbed that sheer cliff while Germans fired down straight into their faces." Of more importance, however, is Morrow's claim that the fortieth anniversary of D-Day would "become *the* election year symbol of the Reagan administration's New Patriotism." According to Morrow,

The ceremonies in Normandy will celebrate the victory and mourn the dead. They will also mourn the moral clarity that has been lost, a sense of common purpose that has all but evaporated. Never again, perhaps, would the Allies so handsomely collaborate. The invasion of Normandy was a thunderously heroic blow dealt to the evil empire. Never again, it may be, would war seem so unimpeachably right, so necessary and just. Never again, perhaps, would American power and morality so perfectly coincide.<sup>19</sup>

In this article, Brinkley explains, Morrow demonstrated "how the D-Day story had spellbinding, redemptive qualities that Reagan could sell to Cold War America. . . . Morrow, perhaps placing himself into the President's mind-set or psyche, explained D-Day to *Time* readers as an American religious fable or sterling folklore moment."<sup>20</sup> Of course, Morrow's decision to describe Nazi Germany as "the evil empire" was most certainly a direct reference to Reagan's earlier characterization of the Soviet Union. Although the extent to which this article influenced the Reagan speechwriters is not clear, it accurately predicted how Reagan's speeches at Pointe du Hoc and Omaha Beach would tap into the mythic heroism of D-Day.

Reagan made three stops in Normandy on June 6, 1984—Pointe du Hoc, Omaha Beach, and Utah Beach—and delivered prepared remarks at the first two sites. I now analyze both of these speeches in turn through archival sources, historical accounts, and close textual criticism to illuminate how Reagan used this occasion to honor the soldiers who fought to liberate France from Nazi tyranny and call upon his present-day audience "to continue to stand for the ideals for which they lived and died" (Pointe du Hoc 26).

### Reagan at Pointe du Hoc

Although Ronald Reagan would deliver two addresses on the fortieth anniversary of D-Day, the White House saw Pointe du Hoc as especially significant.<sup>21</sup> In a May 1984 memorandum to Reagan, Secretary of State George P. Schultz wrote of Pointe du Hoc:

It was here on June 6, 1944 that the US Army Rangers scaled the cliffs under heavy fire and secured the area to protect the landings at Omaha and Utah Beaches... Here you will make your principal statement of the day -- a 15 minute speech stressing the bravery of the fallen and the survivors of this battle and

emphasizing that Normandy marked the beginning of a continuous U.S. commitment to the security of Europe.<sup>22</sup>

In this memo, Secretary Schultz stressed the foreign policy goals of Reagan's address: memorialize the dead, honor the living, and show how the events of D-Day worked to strengthen U.S.-European ties in the future. A speech draft from the National Security Council commented on the symbolism of Pointe du Hoc: "The Cliffs which fall away to this often rough sea witnessed extraordinary heroism. Forty years ago—as part of a great Allied effort—brave American Rangers scaled these heights under fire. This ceremony and this place honors them."<sup>23</sup> The persuasive power of Pointe du Hoc as place continued throughout successive speech drafts leading up to Reagan's address. A handwritten note on the top of a May 21, 1984 speech draft summarized the speech's overarching theme: "Pointe du Hoc a symbol of our selfless effort—against impossible odds men willing to do great deeds."<sup>24</sup> This notation hinted at the connection Reagan would draw between the U.S. Army Rangers' heroic action in 1944 and the United States' ongoing commitment to defending democracy against Soviet expansion.<sup>25</sup>

White House speechwriter Peggy Noonan was tasked with writing Reagan's speech at Pointe du Hoc. In her memoir of her years at the White House, she described the challenge of crafting a speech that would use "big, emotional words and images so [the White House Office of] advance and Mike Deaver would be happy" but also retell the story of D-Day so anyone, young or old, would understand what the day symbolized for the Allies in 1944 and freedom-loving nations in 1984. "I thought that if I could get at what impelled the Rangers to do what they did," she wrote, "I could use it to suggest what impels us each day as we live as a nation in the world. This would remind both us and our allies of what it is that holds us together."<sup>26</sup>

Noonan wrote for two audiences: the U.S. public watching the speech on the morning news, and Reagan's immediate audience in France, particularly the surviving U.S. Army Rangers who had climbed the cliffs. She knew that the speech would be broadcast live in the United States,<sup>27</sup> and she imagined the "kids watching TV at home in the kitchen at breakfast." By describing the events of D-Day, Noonan wanted to place "it all in time and space for myself and, by extension, for the audience. If we really listen to and hear the snap of the flags, the reality of that sound . . . will help us imagine what it sounded like on D-Day. And that would help us imagine what D-Day itself was like. . . . History is real."<sup>28</sup> By using the images of sight and smell and sound, Noonan said she "wanted American teenagers to stop chewing their Rice Krispies for a minute and hear about the greatness of those tough kids who are now their grandfathers. . . . Pause, sink in, bring it back to now, history is real."<sup>29</sup> The goal was to help the U.S. audience, although far removed from the scene of battle, to connect past history with the present.

As important as the U.S. public was, Noonan structured the speech so the president could speak directly to the heroes of his story: the surviving U.S. Army Rangers who were in the audience for the speech. In the midst of her preparations, the head of Reagan's advance office told Noonan that the men who scaled the cliffs of Pointe du Hoc would be sitting right in front of Reagan as he spoke. Noonan later recalled how this information changed her approach to the speech: "[T]he Rangers were going to be sitting all together in the front rows, sitting right there five feet from the president. . . . Well then he should refer directly to them. He should talk to them. He should describe what they did and then say—. . . 'These are the boys of Pointe du

Hoc."<sup>30</sup> By talking "directly to them," Reagan could celebrate their heroic actions and call on his audience to show similar resolve and bravery in the fight between democracy and communism.

President Reagan spoke with his back to the English Channel, with the "boys of Pointe du Hoc" seated on both sides of him. This staging was deliberate. A miscellaneous note scratched on the back of a White House notepad described the set up: "RR stands in front of memorial dagger w/ Rangers, Mrs. Rudder & Mrs. Reagan seated in front on same level – In horseshoe – vets dependents[,] other veterans[,] VIP – military brass[,] official. RR won't even be announced. No one else speaks."<sup>31</sup> This arrangement had several important effects. Although U.S. presidents most often speak from an elevated podium or platform at some distance from the audience, Reagan situated himself on the "same level" as the U.S. Army Rangers. The president and the "boys of Pointe du Hoc" were featured together on the elevated stage, with the larger audience assembled around the stage in a "horseshoe" formation. This allowed two rhetorical exchanges to occur simultaneously. In the first, Reagan spoke directly to an intimate group of sixty-two U.S. Army Rangers who had fought to secure the very ground on which they sat. In the second, the U.S. Army Rangers worked alongside Reagan as silent symbols, their physical presence testifying to this sacred occasion and what D-Day meant for future generations. For the broader audience assembled around the stage, it was impossible to look at Reagan without seeing the U.S. Army Rangers on either side. The second part of the note reveals an unusual departure from protocol. The president was never announced to the audience, but instead simply walked up behind the podium (which did not contain the typical presidential seal) and began to speak. This decision worked as a subtle reminder that the president was not the featured headliner of this event. Instead, "the boys of Pointe du Hoc" were the main attraction.

Reagan began his address by recalling what was being commemorated: "We're here to mark that day in history when the Allied armies joined in battle to reclaim this continent to liberty" (Pointe du Hoc, 1). In this opening passage, Reagan invited the audience to imagine the historical context of June 6, 1944. "For 4 long years, much of Europe had been under a terrible shadow. Free nations had fallen, Jews cried out in the camps, millions cried out for liberation. Europe was enslaved, and the world prayed for its rescue" (Pointe du Hoc, 1). The lack of conjunctions underscored the relationships among these events, and Reagan's dual use of "cried" emphasized the horror of Nazi occupation and the concentration camps, as if the suffering continued, unbound, with no end in sight. These stylistic devices created a distinct rhythm that set the tone—solemn, reverent, patriotic—for the rest of the speech.

In addition, Reagan used words that vividly fused the present moment with the past actions of the heroic Allied forces. He shifted abruptly from the past to the present to describe the immediate scene—"a lonely, windswept point on the northern shore of France"—and to contrast that scene to the mayhem of battle forty years earlier (Pointe du Hoc, 2). Although the air was now "soft," Reagan reminded his audience that "40 years ago at this moment, the air was dense with smoke and the cries of men, and the air was filled with the crack of rifle fire and the roar of cannon" (Pointe du Hoc, 2). These powerful metaphors of sight, sound, and smell made the realities of war viscerally present. Booming verbs, such as "crack" and "roar," anchored the sentence, causing it to flow rhythmically and heavily, almost like the sharp popping of artillery.

After positioning the audience in time and place, Reagan referred repeatedly to the physical space as a catalyst for the U.S. Army Rangers' actions.

At dawn, on the morning of the 6th of June, 1944, 225 Rangers jumped off the British landing craft and ran to the bottom of these cliffs. Their mission was one of the most difficult and daring of the invasion: to climb these sheer and desolate cliffs and take out the enemy guns. The Allies had been told that some of the mightiest of these guns were here and they would be trained on the beaches to stop the Allied advance. The Rangers looked up and saw the enemy soldiers -- the edge of the cliffs shooting down at them with machineguns and throwing grenades. And the American Rangers began to climb. They shot rope ladders over the face of these cliffs and began to pull themselves up. When one Ranger fell, another would take his place. When one rope was cut, a Ranger would grab another and begin his climb again. They climbed, shot back, and held their footing. Soon, one by one, the Rangers pulled themselves over the top, and in seizing the firm land at the top of these cliffs, they began to seize back the continent of Europe. (Pointe du Hoc, 2-3)

In this passage, Reagan relied on what was visually evident and physically present: the "sheer and desolate cliffs," the beachhead at the "bottom of these cliffs," and the hazardous climb to the "top of these cliffs." Through his repeated references to "these cliffs," Reagan reminded his audience that they were sitting on top of the very cliffs where the U.S. Army Rangers had fought and died. In so doing, Reagan brought the present audience into the past, inviting them to respond kinesthetically to the image of the Rangers jumping off landing craft and running toward the cliffs upon which they were seated. It would be nearly impossible to listen to Reagan's narrative as a member of the immediate audience and not realize that one was seated in the exact spot from which the German soldiers fired down upon the Rangers "with machineguns and . . . grenades." In that moment of commemoration, with flags and honor guards and well-dressed dignitaries, the contrast between past and present was stark. The U.S. Army Rangers scaled the cliffs so this audience, many of whom were but children on June 6, 1944, could commemorate their heroic sacrifice forty years later.

Up to this point in the speech, Reagan had been describing the Allied advance on Pointe du Hoc as an event in the past. Although the president had connected the immediate scene of D-Day to the present ("these cliffs" were the same in 1944 and 1984), he could have been referring to an event that took place two hundred years earlier. However, after recounting how the U.S. Army Rangers climbed to the top of these cliffs and, in doing so, "began to seize back the continent of Europe," Reagan introduced the human actors who linked the past with the present.

Two hundred and twenty-five came here. After 2 days of fighting, only 90 could still bear arms. Behind me is a memorial that symbolizes the Ranger daggers that were thrust into the top of these cliffs. And before me are the men who put them there. These are the boys of Pointe du Hoc. These are the men who took the cliffs. These are the champions who helped free a continent. These are the



heroes who helped end a war. Gentlemen, I look at you and I think of the words of Stephen Spender's poem. You are men who in your "lives fought for life . . . and left the vivid air signed with your honor." (Pointe du Hoc, 3-6)

In this passage, Reagan referred to the U.S. Army Rangers seated before him: "These are the boys of Pointe du Hoc." The president used the same word, "these," to describe both "these cliffs" and "these . . . boys. . . men. . . champions. . . [and] heroes who helped end a war." This word choice allowed Reagan to draw the audience's attention to the jagged rocks directly behind him and the elderly men in front of him. After recounting the historical narrative, the president introduced the main actors of his story: the boys of Pointe du Hoc. In a climax construction, Reagan redefined how this struggle had changed these warriors. Initially, they were "the boys of Pointe du Hoc." Then they became "the men who took the cliffs. . . the champions who helped free a continent." Now they were "the heroes who helped end a war." Through this construction, Reagan described the U.S. Army Rangers' climb as a movement toward maturity; as they took the cliffs, they were transformed from boys to champions. In this way, their bodies shifted the discourse from the imaginary to the immediate. The Rangers became part of Reagan's rhetorical text, a living representation of what had happened forty years ago.

Reagan then linked these brave men to other Allied troops, using vignettes vivid in their specificity to describe other soldiers and nations who had fought beside the U.S. Army Rangers (Pointe du Hoc, 7-10). Scottish soldier Bill Millin of the 51<sup>st</sup> Highlanders cheerfully played his bagpipes as he led a group of reinforcements to rescue British soldiers trapped near a bridge, and Lord Lovat of Scotland apologized for being "a few minutes late" coming from "the bloody fighting on Sword Beach, which he and his men had just taken" (Pointe du Hoc, 7-8). There were others, too. Reagan praised the "impossible valor of the Poles who threw themselves between the enemy and the rest of Europe as the invasion took hold, and the unsurpassed courage of the Canadians who had already seen the horrors of war on this coast. They knew what awaited them there, but they would not be deterred" (Pointe du Hoc, 9). Reagan enumerated "a rollcall of honor": the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, Poland's 24th Lancers, the Royal Scots Fusiliers, the Screaming Eagles, the Yeomen of England's armored divisions, the forces of Free France, and the Coast Guard's "Matchbox Fleet" (Pointe du Hoc, 10). By specifically naming these groups, the president made their sacrifices present to the assembled audience and emphasized that the U.S. Rangers had not won the battle alone. This listing also underscored the need for Allied cooperation in the present-day struggle against Soviet communism.

After recognizing the other nations that fought to free Europe, Reagan returned to the heroes of his story. He recalled how young the Rangers were and focused his audience's attention on their moral resolve:

Forty summers have passed since the battle that you fought here. You were young the day you took these cliffs; some of you were hardly more than boys, with the deepest joys of life before you. Yet, you risked everything here. Why? Why did you do it? What impelled you to put aside the instinct for self-preservation and risk your lives to take these cliffs? What inspired all the men of

the armies that met here? We look at you, and somehow we know the answer. It was faith and belief. It was loyalty and love. (Pointe du Hoc, 11)

The president explained that as he and the rest of the audience looked at them, they could understand why they risked everything to seize the cliffs of Pointe du Hoc. These men, although grey and frail, were the living proof that the Allies understood the "profound, moral difference between the use of force for liberation and the use of force for conquest" (Pointe du Hoc, 12).

As Reagan translated the heroic actions of the men sitting before him, he shifted the speech to transform commemoration into future resolve for the larger audience. "You all knew that some things are worth dying for. One's country is worth dying for, and democracy is worth dying for, because it's the most deeply honorable form of government ever devised by man" (Pointe du Hoc, 13). This bold claim positioned democratic freedom above all other governmental structures, in particular the "tyranny" the men of Normandy came to fight: "All of you were willing to fight tyranny, and you knew the people of your countries were behind you" (Pointe du Hoc, 13). Reagan then linked the Rangers to those at home who supported them, identifying particular groups of citizens in their specific locales. In "Georgia they were filling the churches at 4 a.m., in Kansas they were kneeling on their porches and praying, and in Philadelphia they were ringing the Liberty Bell" (Pointe du Hoc, 14). He also evoked their "rockhard belief that Providence would have a great hand in the events that would unfold here; that God was an ally in this great cause" (Pointe du Hoc, 15). Again, sharply drawn examples made that point intensely. He told of Lt. Col. Robert Lee Wolverton, commander of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division of the U.S. Army, who asked his parachute troops to kneel with him in prayer, but who said: "Do not bow your heads, but look up so you can see God and ask His blessing in what we're about to do" (Pointe du Hoc, 15). He told of General Matthew Ridgway, who relied for strength on the Bible, "listening in the darkness for the promise God made to Joshua: 'I will not fail thee nor forsake thee'" (Pointe du Hoc, 15). Reagan recreated the battle, the fears and hopes of those who fought there, and in so doing recreated intense patriotic and religious feelings about the rightness of the cause for which the U.S. and Allied forces fought and died.

In the second half of his speech, Reagan linked the Allied victory on D-Day to present and future action by the United States and its European allies. The president assumed his role as historical narrator, moral guide, and interpreter of important events. "When the war was over, there were lives to be rebuilt and governments to be returned to the people. There were nations to be reborn. Above all, there was a new peace to be assured. These were huge and daunting tasks. But the Allies summoned strength from the faith, belief, loyalty, and love of those who fell here" (Pointe du Hoc, 17). Reagan described Allied efforts to rebuild Europe, including the Marshall Plan and the Atlantic Alliance. But despite "our great efforts and successes . . . [s]ome liberated countries were lost. The great sadness of this loss echoes down to our own time in the streets of Warsaw, Prague, and East Berlin" (Pointe du Hoc, 19). Once again, the president made these losses tangible and specific. The tragedy was, in his words, that "Soviet troops . . . did not leave when peace came. They're still there, uninvited, unwanted, unyielding, almost 40 years after the war. Because of this, allied forces still stand on this continent" (Pointe du Hoc, 19). The present-day Soviet presence in Europe was a continuation of the Second World War, implying that there was still more to accomplish even after the Allied victory in 1944.

In the final minutes of the speech, Reagan offered the moral to this story, explaining what was to be learned from these events:

It is better to be here ready to protect the peace, than to take blind shelter across the sea, rushing to respond only after freedom is lost. We've learned that isolationism never was and never will be an acceptable response to tyrannical governments with an expansionist intent. (Pointe du Hoc, 20)

Yet learning was not enough; specific actions were necessary. "[W]e try always to be prepared for peace; prepared to deter aggression; prepared to negotiate the reduction of arms; and yes, prepared to reach out again in the spirit of reconciliation" (Pointe du Hoc, 21). The rhythm underscored the importance of preparing to respond to possibilities and risks. Reagan stated that the United States welcomed reconciliation with the Soviet Union so that both countries could "lessen the risks of war, now and forever" (Pointe du Hoc, 21). The shift was subtle and somewhat unexpected, the language reflecting a desire to reunite in an effort that echoed their past alliance.

This spirit of reconciliation was underscored by his public recognition of "the great losses also suffered by the Russian people during World War II: 20 million perished, a terrible price that testifies to all the world the necessity of ending war" (Pointe du Hoc, 22). The National Security Council and State Department had pushed the speechwriting staff to include this line, noting that "an addition of a short paragraph alluding to Soviet losses . . . will assist us in maintaining the moral high ground we have secured in our public diplomacy struggle with the Soviets."<sup>32</sup> Reagan used this inclusion to stress that the United States did not desire war, but wanted "to wipe from the face of the Earth the terrible weapons that man now has in his hands" (Pointe du Hoc, 22). However, Reagan placed responsibility on the Soviet Union, stating that the Russians needed to demonstrate a "desire and love for peace, and that they will give up the ways of conquest" so that the United States could "turn our hope into action" (Pointe du Hoc, 22).

After describing his vision for a post-Cold War world, Reagan returned to the immediate scene and spoke in his own voice as U.S. president. He called on his audience to rededicate themselves to the values for which the Allies fought and died. At this ceremony commemorating the fortieth anniversary of D-Day, he stated that it was "good and fitting to renew our commitment to each other, to our freedom, and to the alliance that protects it" (Pointe du Hoc, 23). He then concluded:

We are bound today by what bound us 40 years ago, the same loyalties, traditions, and beliefs. We're bound by reality. The strength of America's allies is vital to the United States, and the American security guarantee is essential to the continued freedom of Europe's democracies. We were with you then; we are with you now. Your hopes are our hopes, and your destiny is our destiny. Here, in this place where the West held together, let us make a vow to our dead. Let us show them by our actions that we understand what they died for. . . . Strengthened by their courage and heartened by their value [valor], and borne

by their memory, let us continue to stand for the ideals for which they lived and died. (Pointe du Hoc 24-26)

In this conclusion, Reagan directed his audience yet again to the U.S. Army Rangers seated before him at Pointe du Hoc and those buried at the Normandy American Cemetery down the road. These men were the living, enduring link between the past and present. They had risked and even given their lives; how could the Allied coalition not honor their sacrifice? Here, in this sacred place, Reagan spoke as national priest and called on the Allies to consecrate themselves to the task set before them. This "lonely, windswept point on the northern shore of France" was "the place where the West held together" forty years earlier (Pointe du Hoc, 2; 25). Now, with nuclear war as a very real threat to humanity, what might Pointe du Hoc symbolize for relations between the Soviet Union and the Western allies? In his speech, Reagan reconstituted the very place for which men fought and died to call on Western leaders to stand against communism while seeking peace with Russia. Although many in the immediate audience were not present at Pointe du Hoc in 1944, the president invited them to become fellow soldiers for the cause of democratic freedom and demonstrate their moral resolve to "stand for the ideals for which [the Allied soldiers in 1944] lived and died" (Pointe du Hoc, 26).

### Reagan at Omaha Beach

After delivering his speech at Pointe du Hoc, the president greeted the surviving U.S. Army Rangers and then departed via helicopter for Omaha Beach for a joint ceremony with French President François Mitterrand. Where the Pointe du Hoc event was "strictly an American commemoration," Reagan's remarks at Omaha Beach were part of a larger Allied ceremony. "At Omaha Beach," explained a Secretary Schultz in a briefing memorandum to Reagan, "you will be joined by President Mitterrand and other French officials in paying tribute to the American commitment to the liberation of France. . . . Both you and President Mitterrand will make brief remarks at this event. Yours will stress the theme of a broadened western solidarity evolving from the wartime alliance."<sup>33</sup> One official schedule described this ceremony as a "Joint Ceremony with brief remarks,"<sup>34</sup> and another document noted the "time guidelines" of "3-5 minutes" for the president's remarks at Omaha Beach.<sup>35</sup> And although this ceremony was to stress the U.S.-French partnership during the Second World War, Reagan provided another vivid narrative of one U.S. soldier to encapsulate the story of D-Day.

Anthony Dolan was assigned the Omaha Beach remarks and structured the speech around one particular account from Lisa Zanatta Henn, the daughter of a D-Day veteran. In a letter dated March 15, 1984, Zanatta Henn wrote to Reagan asking for his assistance in attending the U.S. ceremony at Normandy in June. "Dear Mr. President," she wrote, "My father, Peter Robert Zanatta, PFC, 37<sup>th</sup> Engineer Combat Battalion, landed on the First Wave of Omaha Beach on D Day. This event was probably the most important event of his life. He always planned to go back someday. Since he is no longer living—my mother, brothers, and I are planning to attend. We would like to attend not just as tourists but as representatives of the United States."<sup>36</sup> In this letter, Zanatta Henn enclosed a brief but moving narrative she wrote about her father, portions of which Reagan would read aloud at Omaha Beach.

Colonel M. P. Caulfield, Deputy Director of the White House Military Office, responded to Lisa Zanatta Henn's letter on May 10, 1984, stating, "[t]he President has requested the Secretary of Defense to include you and your family on the United States Invitation List for the Omaha Beach commemoration on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June." Caulfield specified that the U.S. government was unable to provide travel arrangements to Zanatta Henn and her family, but he did state that they would "be given whatever assistance is required once you arrive in France."<sup>37</sup> Reagan's personal secretary, Kathleen "Kathy" Osborne, shared Caulfield's response with the president, writing: "I ran this by Dick Darman and he thought that page 4 of this letter [Zanatta Henn's narrative] might be useful to speechwriters for possible use in Europe or for radio speech from Europe. Any objections?" Reagan's response: "NOT AT ALL." The president then added, "If Lisa's problem is inability to afford transportation how about a pvt. [private] initiative to raise money for some people like this?"<sup>38</sup> It is unclear whether Reagan's suggestion for a private fundraising initiative ever occurred. However, we do know that the President and Mrs. Reagan did meet privately with Lisa Zanatta Henn, her mother, and her three brothers for ten minutes prior to the president's speech at Omaha Beach on June 6, 1984.<sup>39</sup>

Dolan incorporated Zanatta Henn's story into the very first drafts of Reagan's remarks at Omaha Beach, but the heavy focus on one soldier's experience concerned some White House staff members. As Robert Kimmitt, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, explained to Richard Darman, the National Security Council was concerned that Dolan's draft "concentrated heavily on one personal experience" and recommended that the speech be refocused "toward a broad tribute to the sacrifices of the American and Allied Soldiers."<sup>40</sup> Although some of these changes were adopted, Reagan's final version devoted 494 words—about half of the speech—to Zanatta Henn's narrative.

The president began by rooting his audience in place and recalling the lives lost at Omaha Beach: "Mr. President, distinguished guests, we stand today at a place of battle, one that 40 years ago saw and felt the worst of war. Men bled and died here for a few feet of—or inches of sand, as bullets and shellfire cut through their ranks" (Omaha Beach, 1).<sup>41</sup> Reagan then underscored his own inability to "adequately portray their suffering, their sacrifice, their heroism" by invoking Abraham Lincoln: "President Lincoln once reminded us that through their deeds, the dead of battle have spoken more eloquently for themselves than any of the living ever could. But we can only honor them by rededicating ourselves to the cause for which they gave a last full measure of devotion" (Omaha Beach, 2). This was more than an inference; here Reagan directly quoted from the Gettysburg Address when he stated that those who died gave a "last full measure of devotion."<sup>42</sup> Reagan also appropriated key themes from Lincoln's rhetorical masterpiece, particularly his admonition that the living should honor the dead by rededicating themselves to values and ideals for which they died. "Today we do rededicate ourselves to that cause," Reagan said. "And at this place of honor, we're humbled by the realization of how much so many gave to the cause of freedom and to their fellow man" (Omaha Beach, 3).

The president then introduced the story of Private Zanatta through the words of his daughter, Lisa.

"Someday, Lis, I'll go back," said Private First Class Peter Robert Zanatta, of the 37th Engineer Combat Battalion, and first assault wave to hit Omaha Beach. "I'll

go back, and I'll see it all again. I'll see the beach, the barricades, and the graves." Those words of Private Zanatta come to us from his daughter, Lisa Zanatta Henn, in a heart-rending story about the event her father spoke of so often. "In his words, the Normandy invasion would change his life forever," she said. She tells some of his stories of World War II but says of her father, "the story to end all stories was D-day." (Omaha Beach, 5-6)

The inclusion of this story not only provided Reagan with the perspective of a soldier who fought at Omaha Beach forty years ago, but it also allowed him to underscore his earlier point that "the dead of battle have spoken more eloquently for themselves than any of the living ever could" (Omaha Beach 2). Reagan continued to read aloud from Zanatta Henn's letter:

"He made me feel the fear of being on that boat waiting to land. I can smell the ocean and feel the seasickness. I can see the looks on his fellow soldiers' faces – the fear, the anguish, the uncertainty of what lay ahead. And when they landed, I can feel the strength and courage of the men who took those first steps through the tide to what must have surely looked like instant death." (Omaha Beach, 7)

Zanatta Henn's personal reflection on her father's experience at Omaha Beach provided a vivid narrative that encompassed the experience of not just one soldier, but all those who came to Normandy.

After identifying Private Zanatta as specific example of sacrifice and U.S. patriotism, Reagan connected the soldier's personal experience to the larger story of D-Day:

When men like Private Zanatta and all our allied forces stormed the beaches of Normandy 40 years ago they came not as conquerors, but as liberators. When these troops swept across the French countryside and into the forests of Belgium and Luxembourg they came not to take, but to return what had been wrongly seized. When our forces marched into Germany they came not to prey on a brave and defeated people, but to nurture the seeds of democracy among those who yearned to be free again. (Omaha Beach, 10)

The parallel between Zanetta and the rest of the Allied forces also extended into the present day as Reagan nodded to the current partnership between the United States and other European democracies fighting against the spread of communism. The implied message was similar to Reagan's more overt argument at Pointe du Hoc: just as the Allied forces came "nurture the seeds of democracy among those who yearned to be free again" during World War II, so too would the West take active steps to encourage "seeds of democracy" to sprout and take root even in the hostile soil of Soviet communism (Omaha Beach, 10).

As Reagan moved toward his conclusion, he reminded his audience of what they were there to celebrate and the lessons to be learned from the Allied assault forty years earlier. "Today, in their memory, and for all who fought here, we celebrate the triumph of democracy. . . From a terrible war we learned that unity made us invincible; now, in peace, that same unity makes us secure" (Omaha Beach, 12-13). The juxtaposition of past and present tense

underscored the modern-day relevance of the lessons of history. "Today" the assembled audience had gathered to "celebrate the triumph of democracy" forty years earlier. "[A] terrible war" taught the United States and its allies the importance of a unified alliance against totalitarianism; today, "that same unity" made the West "secure."

The president reemphasized this connection between past and present by closing with another moving passage from Zanatta Henn's letter.

Lisa Zanatta Henn began her story by quoting her father, who promised that he would return to Normandy. She ended with a promise to her father, who died 8 years ago of cancer: "I'm going there, Dad, and I'll see the beaches and the barricades and the monuments. I'll see the graves, and I'll put flowers there just like you wanted to do. I'll feel all the things you made me feel through your stories and your eyes. I'll never forget what you went through, Dad, nor will I let anyone else forget. And, Dad, I'll always be proud." Through the words of his loving daughter, who is here with us today, a D-day veteran has shown us the meaning of this day far better than any President can. (Omaha Beach, 15-16)

Here Reagan repeated his earlier statement that "[n]o speech can adequately portray their suffering, their sacrifice, their heroism" (Omaha Beach, 2). Through the personal experience of Private Zanatta (as recounted by his daughter), Reagan drew on the patriotic themes and mental images of one young soldier storming the beaches forty years earlier. In so doing, Private Zanatta became a metaphorical representation of "all the men of honor and courage who fought beside him four decades ago" (Omaha Beach, 16). To them—both those who died on June 6, 1944, and those who survived to attend the ceremonies forty years later—Reagan promised that the United States and the rest of the Allied nations would not forget their sacrifice. "We will always remember. We will always be proud. We will always be prepared, so we may be always free" (Omaha Beach, 16).

### **Remembering D-Day: Reagan and Beyond**

Thirty years later, Reagan's two speeches at Normandy continue to receive critical acclaim and have become exemplars of U.S. presidential commemoration. Indeed, Reagan is to Normandy as Kennedy is to Berlin; all successive presidential addresses at Normandy are judged by Reagan's speeches in 1984.<sup>43</sup> Reflecting on Reagan's Pointe du Hoc speech in 2004, *Washington Post* reporter and Reagan biographer Lou Cannon described the address as "elegiac," a term that captures the cadence or repeated rhythms adopted by Greek poets to recite national history and memorialize the dead.<sup>44</sup> At Normandy, Reagan recounted the events of D-Day and immortalized "the boys of Pointe du Hoc" and Private First Class Peter Robert Zanatta by situating their daring acts within the broader historical context and then comparing the Allied defeat of Nazi Germany to the present moment (Pointe du Hoc, 5). In this way, Reagan's rhetoric accomplished two specific rhetorical purposes: honoring the heroes of World War II and using their actions to illustrate the values that should guide present and future U.S. Cold War.

The immediate press coverage of Reagan's speeches at Pointe du Hoc and Omaha Beach stressed the linkages between 1944 and 1984. In a special report for the *New York Times*, military correspondent Drew Middleton noted that Reagan's speeches "touched common themes, including the bravery of the German enemy and sacrifices made by the Soviet Union during World War II."<sup>45</sup> The *Los Angeles Times* described how Reagan "issued a call to 'wipe from the face of the earth the terrible weapons man now has in his hands,'" and made special mention of the president's reference to "the 20 million Soviet citizens who lost their lives in the war."<sup>46</sup> According to Benjamin Taylor, a writer for the *Boston Globe*, "[t]he now peaceful beaches of Normandy served as a dramatic backdrop yesterday for a ceremony commemorating the 40th anniversary of D-Day. . . . In remarks laced with emotion and patriotism, Reagan castigated the Soviet Union for its military domination of Eastern Europe even as he continued to extend the olive branch of reconciliation if 'they will give up their ways of conquest.'"<sup>47</sup> These reports highlighted the clear dual message of Reagan's speeches at Normandy: commemorate the past Allied triumph over Nazi tyranny and rededicate the Western alliance to defending—and spreading—democracy during the Cold War.

In a 2013 interview, Reagan speechwriter Peggy Noonan commented on these two goals as expressed in Reagan's speech at Pointe du Hoc:

The text of the speech—the ostensible thing that was being said—was, "Look, civilized nations of the West, look what you did forty years ago when you held together, joined together, you defeated a terrible tyranny called Hitler's Germany." So that's what the speech is. Underneath that, Reagan was really saying to all the gathered leaders of the West who were there that day, "Guys, look what your parents and grandparents did. If we hold together as they did, we are going to defeat together the tyranny of our time—and that is Soviet communism." So, by lauding the World War II generation, Reagan was also trying to inspire those who now still had to hold together—the Berlin Wall had not fallen—to push that wall over. So, he very consciously . . . used that speech to say, "Look what we did last time. We can still do it!"<sup>48</sup>

Noonan's reflection underscores how Reagan used his speeches at Pointe du Hoc and Omaha Beach to argue that the most appropriate way to honor the memory of the men who fought at Normandy was to stand against the present threat of Soviet communism.

The media coverage of Reagan's speeches at Pointe du Hoc and Normandy also demonstrated the potential for coupling spoken texts with visual images for a particularly memorable result. Kathleen Hall Jamieson observes that "[t]elevision enabled Reagan to transport the national audience to the stage he had set in Normandy. . . . The dramatization was compelling, the staging unsurpassable, the visual argument politically potent."<sup>49</sup> The 1984 Reagan-Bush campaign amplified this dramatization when they used video footage from Reagan's speeches at Normandy to portray Reagan and the nation as strong, determined, and confident. On the final evening of the Republican National Convention in Dallas, the campaign aired an eighteen-minute video titled "A New Beginning" that highlighted iconic moments and key initiatives of Reagan's first term in office.<sup>50</sup>

The film featured snippets of Reagan's speeches at Pointe du Hoc and Omaha Beach, including sweeping panoramic shots of the cliffs at Pointe du Hoc, endless rows of white crosses



and Stars of David in the American Cemetery at Normandy, and the large audience assembled for the joint ceremony at Omaha Beach. The most poignant aspect of this segment was how the film interspersed Reagan's speeches at Pointe du Hoc and Omaha beach with actual footage of men storming the beaches on June 6, 1944. In addition, the video also contained close up shots of the sixty-two "boys of Pointe du Hoc," along with Private Peter Zanatta's daughter, sons, and widow. As the audience listened to Reagan's narrative of the Allied landings at Normandy, they watched black and white footage of soldiers struggling to reach the shore. When Reagan recounted the courageous climb of the U.S. Army Rangers forty years earlier, the camera zoomed in on the faces of the aged veterans. And as the president read aloud from Lisa Zanatta Henn's letter at Omaha Beach, the audience witnessed Zanatta Henn crying in the front row. This juxtaposition of text and image provided a striking tribute not just to the men who fought at Normandy, but it also reinforced Reagan's image as a focused, patriotic head of state dedicated to protecting U.S. democracy at home and preventing the spread of communism abroad.

Since Reagan's speeches at Pointe du Hoc and Omaha Beach on June 6, 1984, three additional presidents—Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama—have traveled to Normandy to commemorate the anniversary of D-Day and rededicate the United States to cause for which the Allied forces fought, bled, and died. "We commit ourselves, as you did, to keep [freedom's] lamp burning for those who will follow. You completed your mission here. But the mission of freedom goes on; the battle continues," President Bill Clinton said in 1994.<sup>51</sup> Ten years later, President George W. Bush told the surviving veterans gathered for the sixtieth anniversary of D-Day, "[Y]ou will be honored ever and always by the country you served and by the nations you freed."<sup>52</sup> In 2009, President Barack Obama told his audience, "D-Day was a time and a place where the bravery and selflessness of a few was able to change the course of an entire century."<sup>53</sup> And in 2014, on the seventieth anniversary of the Normandy invasion, Obama not only honored those who fought at Normandy, but he also acknowledged several U.S. service members who had served in Iraq and Afghanistan since 9/11. After introducing several of these individuals to the audience, he told the World War II veterans: "[Y]our legacy is in good hands. . . this 9/11 generation of servicemembers—they, too, felt something. They answered some call; they said 'I will go.' They, too, chose to serve a cause that's greater than self, many even after they knew they'd be sent into harm's way."<sup>54</sup> In his remarks, Obama drew a parallel between the "Greatest Generation" and present-day military heroes fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. Like Reagan had done before him, Obama used the story of D-Day to inspire patriotic sentiment and humble appreciation for these "generations of men and women who proved once again that the United States of America is and will remain the greatest force for freedom the world has ever known."<sup>55</sup>

These examples of U.S. presidential commemorations of D-Day demonstrate how Reagan's speeches at Pointe du Hoc and Omaha Beach inaugurated an important tradition in U.S. political culture. As "interpreters-in-chief" of our shared history, U.S. presidents remind us of our national identity and shared values, and one of the primary ways they do this is through public speech.<sup>56</sup> When Reagan narrated the events of June 6, 1984, to the nation and the world via live television, he translated the story of D-Day—in all its hardship and struggle and triumph—into the contemporary moment. To a nation recovering from economic inflation and a lost sense of self, the heroic actions of "the boys of Pointe du Hoc" and Private Peter Zanatta

provided a moral lesson that was just as applicable in 1984 as it was on that "longest day" forty years earlier.<sup>57</sup>

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**Author's Note:** Allison Prasch is a doctoral student at the University of Minnesota. Portions of this essay originally appeared in "Reagan at Pointe du Hoc: Deictic Epideictic and the Persuasive Power of 'Bringing Before the Eyes,'" *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 18 (2015): 247-276. The author is grateful to Marty Medhurst and Michigan State University Press for graciously allowing that material to appear in this essay.

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> H. W. Brands, *Reagan: The Life* (New York: Doubleday, 2015), 237.

<sup>2</sup> Adam Clymer, "The Collapse of a Coalition," *New York Times*, November 5, 1980.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Fessler, "Ronald Reagan, Address to the National Association of Evangelicals ("Evil Empire Speech") (8 March 1983)," *Voices of Democracy* 2 (2007): 26.

<sup>4</sup> Ronald Reagan, "Inaugural Address," January 20, 1981. *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*. Ronald Reagan Presidential Library. <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1981/12081a.htm> (accessed October 16, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Martin J. Medhurst, "Writing Speeches for Ronald Reagan: An Interview with Tony Dolan," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 1, no. 2 (1998): 247.

<sup>6</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005), 217.

<sup>7</sup> Edwin Meese III, *With Reagan: The Inside Story* (Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway, 1992), 164.

<sup>8</sup> Ronald Reagan, "Address to Members of the British Parliament," June 8, 1982. *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*. Ronald Reagan Presidential Library. <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1982/60882a.htm> (accessed October 12, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Ronald Reagan, *Speaking My Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 107.

<sup>10</sup> In their study of Reagan's Westminster Address, Robert C. Rowland and John M. Jones explain that although this speech is hailed by neoconservatives "as the moment when Reagan and Britain's Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher put 'freedom on the offensive where it belonged [Thatcher's assessment]," "Reagan's address "was not recognized as particularly important or effective at the time." Instead, Rowland and Jones argue that the speech offered a vision for a post-Cold War world that was difficult to imagine in 1982: "At the time, few shared Reagan's optimism about the cold war, and almost no one thought that the survival of the Soviet Union was in doubt. . . . A quarter-century later, Reagan's claim that the cold war was at a 'turning point' seems clearly correct, but few agreed with him in 1982." See Robert C. Rowland and John M. Jones, *Reagan at Westminster* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2010), 13-15.

<sup>11</sup> Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at the Annual Conference of the National Association of Evangelicals," March 8, 1983. *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*. Ronald Reagan Presidential Library. <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1983/30883b.htm> (accessed October 12, 2015).

<sup>12</sup> For an analysis of this particular speech, see Fessler, "Ronald Reagan, Address to the National Association of Evangelicals."

<sup>13</sup> Reagan, "Address to Members of the British Parliament."

<sup>14</sup> All passages from Reagan's June 6, 1984, speech at Pointe du Hoc are cited with reference to paragraph numbers in the authenticated text on the *Voices of Democracy* website. To differentiate between Reagan's two speeches, "Pointe du Hoc" precedes all paragraph numbers.

<sup>15</sup> Robert C. McFarlane, "Preserving Peace and Prosperity: The President's Trip to Europe, June 1984 (Public Diplomacy Action Plan)," 2, folder "June 1984 European Trip (1)," Richard G. Darman Files Box 3, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>16</sup> "Preserving Peace and Prosperity: The President's Trip to Europe, June 1984 (Public Diplomacy Action Plan)," 2, folder "June 1984 European Trip (1)," Richard G. Darman Files Box 3, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>17</sup> Memo, William F. Martin to Robert C. McFarlane, April 10, 1984, folder "President's Trip to Normandy (2)," Box 161, White House Office of Speechwriting: Research Office, 1981-1989, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>18</sup> Memo, George P. Schultz to Ronald Reagan, May 14, 1984, folder "The President's Trip to Europe: Ireland, UK, and Normandy, June 1-10, 1984 – The President (3 of 5)," RAC Box 4, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Trip File, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>19</sup> Brinkley, *The Boys of Pointe du Hoc*, 144-145.

<sup>20</sup> Brinkley, *The Boys of Pointe du Hoc*, 147.

<sup>21</sup> Brinkley writes that of the two speeches—one at Pointe du Hoc and the other at Omaha Beach—the second was considered the major foreign policy speech. "Some in the White House simply referred to Omaha Beach as 'the Speech' and Pointe du Hoc as 'Brief Remarks.'" White House principal speechwriter Tony Dolan was assigned the Omaha Beach speech, and "Pointe du Hoc was considered a sideshow on June 6, a feel-good, non-policy-based moment. Therefore, Peggy Noonan was tasked with penning the 'impressionistic' oration, while Dolan's 'realist' policy speech would be headlined by prominent U.S. newspapers on June 7" (163). Brinkley's account was published in 2005, when multiple documents related to the "Pointe du Hoc" speech had not yet been declassified. During my visit to the Reagan Library in June 2013, I accessed a number of documents (all of which were declassified after 2005) that show that the Reagan White House planned for "Pointe du Hoc" to be the centerpiece of Reagan's visit to Normandy. See the National Security Council's official briefing book, "The President's Trip to Europe: Ireland, UK and Normandy, June 1-10, 1984," RAC Box 4, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Trip File, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>22</sup> Memo, George P. Schultz to Ronald Reagan, May 14, 1984, folder "The President's Trip to Europe: Ireland, UK, and Normandy, June 1-10, 1984 – The President (3 of 5)," RAC Box 4, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Trip File, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>23</sup> Speech Draft, "Draft No. 4, The President's Normandy Speech June 6, 1984," April 30, 1984, folder "Pointe du Hoc Address, Normandy (4)," Box 161, White House Office of Speechwriting: Speech Drafts, 1981-1989, Ronald Reagan Library. Draft also found in folder "June 1984 European Trip (3)," Box 3, Richard G. Darman Files, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>24</sup> Speech Draft, "Presidential Address: Pointe du Hoc, Wednesday, June 6, 1984, (Noonan/BE), May 21, 1984, 3:30 p.m.," folder "President's Trip to Normandy (8)," Box 162, White House Office of Speechwriting: Research Office, 1981-1989, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>25</sup> Special Assistant to the President William F. Martin wrote that the Pointe du Hoc Address was to be "emotional, stirring, and personal. The themes include reconciliation of former adversaries, how postwar cooperation has kept the peace for the longest period in modern European history, Alliance solidarity, and the strength of the American commitment to Europe." See Memo, William F. Martin to Robert C. McFarlane, April 10, 1984, folder "President's Trip to Normandy (2)," Box 161, White House Office of Speechwriting: Research Office, 1981-1989, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>26</sup> Peggy Noonan, *What I Saw at the Revolution* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 1990), 85, 83-84.

<sup>27</sup> The White House timed the "Pointe du Hoc" speech so it could be broadcast live on U.S. networks over the morning news. The "Draft Notional Schedule – Trip of the President to Europe" dated May 7, 1984, specified that Reagan would arrive at the Pointe du Hoc landing zone at 8:20 am EDT (2:20 pm local time), tour the Ranger Memorial for ten minutes with two survivors of the Pointe du Hoc landing, and begin his "Remarks to assembled Veterans and unveiling of plaque commemorating Point [sic] du Hoc" at 8:40 am EDT (2:40 pm local time). See Draft Notional Schedule, Trip of the President to Europe, May 7, 1984, folder "President's Trip to Normandy (2)," Box 161, White House Office of Speechwriting: Research Office, 1981-1989, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>27</sup> Draft Notional Schedule, Trip of the President to Europe," May 7, 1984, page 7, folder "President's Trip to Normandy (2)," Box 161, White House Office of Speechwriting: Research Office, 1981-1989, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>28</sup> Noonan, *What I Saw at the Revolution*, 85.

<sup>29</sup> Noonan, *What I Saw at the Revolution*, 86.

<sup>30</sup> Noonan explained that this line came easily because she had just read Roger Kahn's memoir of the Brooklyn Dodgers, *The Boys of Summer*. See Noonan, *What I Saw at the Revolution*, 87.

<sup>31</sup> Miscellaneous Note, no date, folder "President's Trip to Normandy (4)," Box 161, White House Office of Speechwriting: Research Office, 1981-1989, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>32</sup> Memorandum, Robert M. Kimmitt to Richard G. Darman, June 1, 1984, folder "President's Trip to Normandy (11)," Box 162, White House Office of Speechwriting: Research Office, 1981-1989, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>33</sup> Memo, George P. Schultz to Ronald Reagan, May 14, 1984, folder "The President's Trip to Europe: Ireland, UK, and Normandy, June 1-10, 1984 – The President (3 of 5)," RAC Box 4, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Trip File, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>34</sup> Draft Notional Schedule, Trip of the President to Europe," May 7, 1984, page 7, folder "President's Trip to Normandy (2)," Box 161, White House Office of Speechwriting: Research Office, 1981-1989, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>35</sup> Memo, Robert M. Kimmitt to Ben Elliott, May 31, 1984, folder "Omaha Beach Memorial Remarks (Dolan) (White)," Box 160, White House Office of Speechwriting: Speech Drafts, 1981-1989, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>36</sup> Lisa Zanatta Henn to Ronald Reagan, March 15, 1984, folder "President's Trip to Normandy (9)," Box 162, White House Office of Speechwriting: Research Office, 1981-1989, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>37</sup> M. P. Caulfield to Lisa Zanatta Henn, May 10, 1984, folder "President's Trip to Normandy (9)," Box 162, White House Office of Speechwriting: Research Office, 1981-1989, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>38</sup> Memo, Kathy [no last name] to Ronald Reagan, no date, folder "President's Trip to Normandy (9)," Box 162, White House Office of Speechwriting: Research Office, 1981-1989, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>39</sup> "Trip of the President to Normandy, France, Wednesday, June 6, 1984, Personal Schedule," folder "Europe," Box 17, Office of Presidential Advance, Records, Series II: G7 Summits, OA 17071, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>40</sup> Memo, Robert M. Kimmitt to Richard Darman, May 28, 1984, ID # 215027, SP 891, WHORM: Subject File, Box 222, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>41</sup> All passages from Reagan's June 6, 1984, speech at Omaha Beach are cited with reference to paragraph numbers in the printed text that accompanies this essay. To differentiate between Reagan's two speeches, "Omaha Beach" precedes all paragraph numbers.

<sup>42</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "Gettysburg Address," November 19, 1863.

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gettysburgaddress.htm> (accessed October 17, 2015).

<sup>43</sup> See R. W. Apple, Jr., "Clinton in Normandy: Hands Across a Generation," *New York Times*, June 8, 1994, A16; Jill Abramson, "Bush Speaks of Heroism and Sacrifice at Cemetery at Normandy," *New York Times*, May 28, 2002, A10; Richard W. Stevenson, "In D-Day Rite, Bush Praises Veterans of Normandy," *New York Times*, June 7, 2004, A10; Mary L. Kahl and Michael Leff, "The Rhetoric of War and Remembrance: An Analysis of President Bill Clinton's 1994 D-Day Discourses," *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication* 7 (2006): 15-21; John McCormick, "Family Tapestry Part of Obama's Europe Trip," *Chicago Tribune*, June 4, 2009, 1.12; Christina Bellantoni, "Obama Pays Homage to D-Day Veterans," *Washington Times*, June 7, 2009, A1; John Ibbitson, "Barack Obama is No Ronald Reagan – Yet," *The Globe and Mail*, June 10, 2009, A15; "Reagan Set the Tone for D-Day Observances," *Daily Herald*, June 6, 2014, 2; "Lost Opportunities." *Daily Times*, Jun 12, 2014.

<sup>44</sup> Lou Cannon, "At 40th D-Day Tribute, Reagan Took the Occasion by Storm," *Washington Post*, June 7, 2004, A06.

<sup>45</sup> Drew Middleton, "Reagan Honors D-Day; Calls for Spirit of Peace," *New York Times*, June 7, 1984, p. A1.

<sup>46</sup> "D-Day Remembered: Allied Leaders Honor Heroes of Normandy," *Los Angeles Times*, June 6, 1984, p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> Benjamin Taylor, "Reagan Lauds Men Who Died on D-Day," *Boston Globe*, June 7, 1984, p. 1.

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<sup>48</sup> Peggy Noonan, "Peggy Noonan on Reagan's D-Day Speech," *The Kelly File*, December 4, 2013. Retrieved from <http://video.foxnews.com/v/2893720031001/peggy-noonan-on-reagans-d-day-speech> (accessed May 5, 2014).

<sup>49</sup> Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Eloquence in the Electronic Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 162-163.

<sup>50</sup> For a full record of how the campaign video worked within the sequence of events that final day of the campaign, see "August 23, 1984, Republican National Convention, Day 4," C-SPAN. <http://www.c-span.org/video/?124909-1/republican-national-convention-day-4> (accessed October 21, 2015). For an analysis of the film itself, see Joanne Morreale, *A New Beginning: A Textual Frame Analysis of the Political Campaign Film* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991).

<sup>51</sup> William J. Clinton, "Remarks on the 50th Anniversary of D-Day at Pointe du Hoc in Normandy, France," June 6, 1994, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project* <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=50297> (accessed October 22, 2015).

<sup>52</sup> George W. Bush, "Remarks on the 60th Anniversary of D-Day in Colleville-sur-Mer, France," June 6, 2004, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project* <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=72648> (accessed October 22, 2015).

<sup>53</sup> Barack Obama, "Remarks on the 65th Anniversary of D-Day in Normandy, France," June 6, 2009, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project* <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=86253> (accessed October 22, 2015).

<sup>54</sup> Barack Obama, "Remarks on the 70th Anniversary of D-Day in Normandy, France," June 6, 2014, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project* <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=105250> (accessed October 22, 2015).

<sup>55</sup> Obama, "Remarks on the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D-Day."

<sup>56</sup> Mary E. Stuckey, *The President as Interpreter-In-Chief* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, Inc., 1991). See also Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

<sup>57</sup> Cornelius Ryan, *The Longest Day: June 6, 1944* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959).