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Seventy years ago, the landing of Allied soldiers continued on Normandy's beaches – four weeks after the initial D-Day landings on the French coast. On July 4, 1944, just west of the nearby city of Caen, Canadian troops began Operation Windsor – a bloody assault through French wheat fields against SS machine guns defending the town of Carpiquet and its airfield.

Meanwhile, more than a thousand American guns erupted in a Fourth of July salute directed at German lines. At one gun emplacement, a soldier carefully marked a large artillery shell with chalk: "To Adolph – This is July 4, 1944."

July 4 was not a Canadian holiday, and certainly not a British one, but surely it was the American spirit of the Declaration of Independence which motivated what Allied troops did as they steadily pushed Nazi troops out of Normandy.

No one understood that spirit better than British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill – arguing in London as usual with his military chiefs. General Alan Brooke, chief of the Imperial General Staff, reported that Churchill was in a bad mood when he met with the Prime Minister in early evening – perturbed that the Americans insisted on an Allied landing in Mediterranean France, a strategic error the Prime Minister believed. Churchill was "longing to have a good row" with President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Churchill had been deprived by King George VI of his wish to observe the Operation Overlord invasion first hand, but he had been able to visit Normandy on June 12. The Prime Minister was never happier than when he could hear or see the din of battle. When Operation Anvil commenced landings on France's Mediterranean coast on August 15, Churchill would be sure to be present – despite his opposition to the strategy. Nazi guns could not keep him away.

Churchill never lost sight of the cause for which Allied soldiers fought and died.

"We must never cease to proclaim in fearless tones the great principles of freedom and the rights of man which are the joint inheritance of the English-speaking world and which through Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights, the Habeas Corpus, trial by jury, and the English common law find their most famous expression in the American Declaration of Independence," former Prime Minister Churchill would declare at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri on March 5, 1946.

Churchill's "Sinews of Peace" speech is better known for his reference to a European iron curtain than to his celebration of America's Declaration of Independence. Often the subject of Churchill's writing and speaking, he held the Declaration a world-changing document on the road to liberty.

"The Declaration was in the main a restatement of the principles which had animated the

Whig struggle against the later Stuarts and the English Revolution of 1688, and it now became the symbol and rallying centre of the Patriot cause,” Churchill wrote in his *History of the English-Speaking Peoples*. He acknowledged the impact was not altogether helpful to the American Revolution: “Its immediate result was to increase the number of Loyalists, frightened by this splendid [American] defiance.” But Churchill, an imperialist, did understand the long-term impact for democracy.

Born of a rich American mother and an aristocratic British father, Churchill straddled the Anglo-American world. Addressing the U.S. Congress on December 29, 1941, Churchill remarked to a standing ovation: “I cannot help reflecting that if my father had been American and my mother British, instead of the other way round, I might have got here on my own.”

Some emphasize that Churchill was not always sensitive to the rights of those who lived in British colonies, but he always embraced the Anglo-American tradition that gave birth to human rights around the world. In his speech at Fulton, Churchill said: “Here are the title deeds of freedom which should lie in every cottage home. Here is the message of the British and American peoples to mankind. Let us preach what we practice — let us practice what we preach.” Democracy has seldom had a better preacher.

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