

D-Day – 1944

Text: *D-DAY!*

Narrator: In England, General Dwight D. Eisenhower and his deputy commanders chart the liberation of a lost continent, plan when and where the mighty armies of the United Nations will strike. Today, northern France is that battleground.

Into the building of their defense system, the so-called Westwall, the Nazis poured the slave labor of conquered nations. Pictures made by the Germans themselves to impress their satellites with the strength and invincibility of their fortifications. Within steel and concrete emplacements four years in the making, the Germans have amassed every known weapon of defense. Whether those weapons are enough to stop the Allied onslaught will be proven in the struggle that lies ahead.

Here is the other side of the Channel, Britain, an armed camp bristling with tanks and trucks and guns from the United States and Canada. Here is the fruition of four years of planning and production. Here is a glimpse of England as the Allied armies awaited D-Day. Locomotives built to run on Continental railways. Break cars and tank cars to replace rolling stock destroyed by the Germans. All this and more is included in the gigantic preparation for invasion.

Here is something of the gigantic naval armada assembled to transport the Allied armies across the English Channel. Here is something of the ingenuity of Allied engineers. Assault boats and invasion barges launched directly from the decks of the ships that brought them to England. Week after week, the fleet grew in numbers: steel ships of every description, ships expressly designed and constructed for the mission upon which soon they were to embark.

Nothing was left to chance. Every loading operation was rehearsed and timed in advance. Every soldier knew his station. Every man knew just where he was to fit into the gigantic pattern. Daily, they boarded their ships. For all they knew, they were bound for France or Belgium, or wherever their commanders had decided to strike. Every jeep, every tank, every piece of mobile equipment was assigned its place in the grand strategy of attack.

Then on the fifth day of June 1944, just as you see them here, a fleet of more than 4,000 ships put out from England. This was D-Day, fourth anniversary of the Battle of Dunkirk, and the Allied armies were striking back.

The great fleet was under way.

The morning of June 6th, this was the battleground. Fierce fighting around Caen. Vast squadrons of bombers and transports led the way, more than 11,000 planes spearheading the attack. Paratroopers landed in Normandy behind the coastal defenses. Landings made with timing and precision, perfected only through scores of rehearsals like this.

Barges approach shore ready for instant action, some bearing artillery and rocket guns already opening fire.

Video Transcript for Archival Research Catalog (ARC) Identifier 39013

Today, just as in these scenes, the armies of the United Nations have made their first landings on the soil of Western Europe. Another of the great decisive battles of world history has been joined. This is the day for which free people long have waited. This is D-Day.