

HISTORISCHE FEIERTAGE IM JUNI

Jun 6, 2014

D-Day / Allied Invasion of Europe (der 6. Juni 1944)

D-Day Commemoration: From Conflict to Cooperation

Seventy years ago today, the Allied invasion on the beaches of Normandy signaled the approaching end of the Second World War. In the coastal town of Ouistreham, the heads of state and government of the then-warring nations joined veterans of those fateful days in an official commemoration of the 70th anniversary of D-Day. Chancellor Angela Merkel took part at the invitation of French President François Hollande.

Merkel called the German-French reconciliation after the war, paving the way for European unity, something of a miracle. The unbroken will for reconciliation and the French and German desire to together shape a peaceful, better future, belong to the most moving and inspirational moments of recent history, Chancellor Merkel wrote in an article for the French newspaper Ouest France. The French-German reconciliation and the German-German unification, kicked off 25 years ago, show that conflict can become cooperation and provide a reason for hope in today's world, according to Merkel.



A visitor walks amongst graves in the German cemetery in La Cambe, in Normandy, France.

D-Day Anniversary: 'We had a funeral every day'

James Sansom landed on the beaches of Normandy just days after D-Day, but soon found himself being held as a prisoner of war, praying for the allied advance. His memories are the second part of our series marking the 70 anniversary of the beginning of the end of Nazi Germany.

It was deceptively calm when 22-year-old James F. Sansom drove ashore in Normandy on June 11th, 1944.

He was on Omaha Beach, which just five days prior had seen some of the heaviest fighting and biggest losses of the allied invasion of France. By his arrival it was a logistical hive of men, machines and supplies.

“There was still tank traps and pill boxes,” Sansom, 92, told The Local in an interview. “But things were reasonably quiet.”

Sansom's luck would hold until that winter, when a massive surprise offensive from the Germans showed him another side of the war. At one of the lowest points during his captivity he would attend a funeral every day for a month.