

Publishing Editor's column

AT THE TIME of writing these words, many are thinking about D-Day, which occurred on 6 June 1944, sixty years ago. In the early hours of the morning, American, British and Canadian forces, 150,000 in all, landed on the beaches of Normandy along a broad front. Though the loss of life was considerable, by the end of the day the allied forces had secured positions from which they were able to mount a successful recovery of Western Europe from the Nazi oppression. The Germans were taken by surprise as to place, having expected the invasion to take place elsewhere, and also as to time, since the weather was stormy. The decision to invade was a last-minute one, brought about by forecasts of an easing in the weather conditions, which occurred just at the right time—surely the hand of God at work in ensuring a successful invasion.

Success was by no means immediate, however. It was to be well over a year before the allied and Soviet forces completed the conquest of Germany. The invasion was widely supported across the world—apart, of course, by Germany and its few friends and allies—and the liberating forces were widely welcomed as they advanced across Europe. Europe was liberated from a terrible dictatorship, and the continuing presence of British and American troops halted the advance of another cruel dictatorship, the Soviet Union.

One of the most remarkable developments in prophetic fulfilment in modern times came out of the ending of Nazi tyranny in Europe and the looming threat of Soviet domination. Leaders from France, Germany and Italy, closely allied with the Roman Catholic Church, resolved to end hundreds of years of European wars and establish unity amongst formerly warring nations. And when we contrast the war-torn, poverty-stricken, oppressed Europe of sixty years ago with the peaceful and prosperous Europe of today we are amazed at the contrast.

The united Roman Catholic-dominated Europe which is to oppose Christ at his coming was not foretold to be established by military conquest but rather by voluntary submission to a common ideal, the ten kings “have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast” (Rev. 17:13), and this is exactly what has been happening.

Last year, British and American forces combined to rid the world of another tyrant. Despite adverse weather conditions (sandstorms and heat), victory was achieved quickly and with little loss of life. Unlike Hitler, Saddam Hussein had not succeeded in imposing his tyrannical rule on other countries. The invasion was not welcomed by surrounding countries, nor by many nations across the world—nor indeed by many of the citizens of the Britain and America themselves. Nor has it been as favourably received by the Iraqis themselves, as the governments of Britain and America thought it would be, and the current troubles were widely anticipated by many even in Britain and America.

We anticipate that in sixty years time the Kingdom will be well established and the warfare that has marred mankind's rule will hardly be remembered, let alone commemorated. If things were to continue as they are, however, we can be sure that the British and American victory over Iraq will not be something to be celebrated sixty years later. But there is a more interesting question for us, and that is, Will the British and American invasion of Iraq turn out to have an unforeseen part to play in prophetic fulfilment, as did the British and American invasion of Europe?

The saving of Europe from Nazi tyranny, of which D-Day was such a vital stage, brought British and American troops into Europe, and they have never left. Large numbers of American troops, and some British, are still stationed in Germany, other still carry out peacekeeping roles in parts of former Yugoslavia. Yet we understand latter-day prophecy to require Britain and America, as the ‘merchants of Tarshish’ power, to be separate from Europe.

The major nations of Europe opposed the invasion of Iraq, or, if they did support it, are turning from that support, regarding America as arrogant and domineering. Add to this the fact that fifteen years have passed since the threat of conquest by a repressive Soviet Union evaporated away, and the fact that most of the European nations which were once part of that evil empire have recently joined the European Union, and it all points to the days of an American military presence in Europe coming to an end, and Britain's along with it.

Tony Benson