**Charles de Gaulle speech**

*On 18 June 1940, as the French government prepared to sign an armistice with the Nazi invaders, General Charles de Gaulle broadcast on the BBC to France. That first broadcast was not recorded - so he repeated a similar speech on 22 June. This recording is of that broadcast on the BBC.*

The speech translates:

The French government, after having asked for an armistice[[1]](#footnote-1), now knows the conditions dictated by the enemy. The result of these conditions would be the complete demobilization of the French land, sea, and air forces, the surrender of our weapons and the total occupation of French territory. The French government would come under German and Italian tutelage[[2]](#footnote-2).

It may therefore be said that this armistice would not only be a capitulation[[3]](#footnote-3), but that it would also reduce the country to slavery. Now, a great many Frenchmen refuse to accept either capitulation or slavery, for reasons which are called: honor, common sense, and the higher interests of the country.

I say honor, for France has undertaken not to lay down arms save in agreement with her allies. As long as the allies continue the war, her government has no right to surrender to the enemy. The Polish, Norwegian, Belgian, Netherlands, and Luxemburg governments, though driven from their territories, have thus interpreted their duty.

I say common sense, for it is absurd to consider the struggle as lost. True, we have suffered a major defeat. We lost the battle of France through a faulty military system, mistakes in the conduct of operations, and the defeatist spirit shown by the government during recent battles. But we still have a vast empire, our fleet is intact, and we possess large sums in gold. We still have allies, who possess immense resources and who dominate the seas. We still have the gigantic potentialities of American industry. The same war conditions which caused us to be beaten by 5,000 planes and 6,000 tanks can tomorrow bring victory by means of 20,000 tanks and 20,000 planes.

I say the higher interests of the country, for this is not a Franco-German war to be decided by a single battle. This is a world war. No one can foresee whether the neutral countries of today will not be at war tomorrow, or whether Germany's allies will always remain her allies. If the powers of freedom ultimately triumph over those of servitude, what will be the fate of a France which has submitted to the enemy?

Honor, common sense, and the interests of the country require that all free Frenchmen, wherever they be, should continue the fight as best they may. It is therefore necessary to group the largest possible French force wherever this can be done. Everything which can be collected by way of French military elements and potentialities for armaments production must be organized wherever such elements exist. I, General de Gaulle, am undertaking this national task here in England. I call upon all French servicemen of the land, sea, and air forces; I call upon French engineers and skilled armaments workers who are on British soil, or have the means of getting here, to come and join me. I call upon the leaders, together with all soldiers, sailors, and airmen of the French land, sea, and air forces, wherever they may now be, to get in touch with me. I call upon all Frenchmen who want to remain free to listen to my voice and follow me.

Long live free France in honor and independence!

1. Peace Agreement [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Rule, Guidance [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Surrender [↑](#footnote-ref-3)