

The beginning and end of World War II

8/9 May 1945

**Lesson
material**

**Lesson
90 minutes**

**Historical
documents 1945**

The Second World War ended in Europe on 8 May 1945. When the guns finally fell silent, more than 60 million people were dead. This text provides an overview of the end of the war.

Germany 1945 - The “**thousand-year**” **Nazi Reich**¹ sank in an ocean of blood and tears. When the guns finally fell silent on 8 May, more than 60 million people were dead. Fallen at the front, murdered in concentration camps, burned to death in nights of bombing, dead from hunger, cold and violence as they fled. When the world learned what had happened in the name of Germany—and not only in the regime’s camps—the anger of the nations turned against all of Hitler’s people.

The outcome of the war in Europe had actually been decided in early April 1945. In Yalta at the beginning of February, the USA, France, Great Britain and the Soviet Union had started discussing the post-war order. But instead of surrendering, the Nazis continued to throw everything they had into a final battle. Old men were drafted into the “**Volkssturm**”², children of the **Hitler Youth**³ were sent out onto the streets with bazookas. In many places throughout the Reich, many people were still being executed as “traitors”. Right up to the end, the **Wehrmacht**⁴ and **SS**⁵ courts martial passed thousands of death sentences against German soldiers and civilians. On 21 April, the Soviet Army reached the city borders of Berlin, and on the evening of 29 April 1945 they stood at the Brandenburg Gate. The fight for Berlin was not over until 2 May.

While Berlin perished in street fighting and tens of thousands of people paid with their lives for the fight to the bitter end, Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler shirked responsibility by committing suicide on 30 April 1945 - as he had said he would. He appointed **Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz**⁶ as his successor. Dönitz instructed **Colonel General Alfred Jodl**⁷, the man responsible for warfare from Norway to North Africa, to conduct the surrender negotiations at the American headquarters in **Reims**⁸. Jodl still tried to delay the surrender to the Red Army in order to allow the Germans in the eastern territories to escape to the west, but without success.

Colonel General Jodl signed the unconditional surrender of the German Wehrmacht on 7 May 1945 in Reims at the headquarters of **General Dwight D. Eisenhower**⁹, commander-in-chief of the Allied forces in Europe. The surrender entered into force at 23.00 on 8 May 1945. The Soviet dictator Josef Stalin urged a repeat of the ceremony in the Soviet sphere of power. On the night of 9 May, **Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel**¹⁰, Chief of the High Command of the German Wehrmacht, signed the Instrument of Surrender at the Soviet headquarters in Berlin-Karlshorst. After more than five years of war, the guns were finally silent in Europe.

On 5 June 1945 the four victorious powers signed the Berlin Declaration. It states: “The Governments of the United Kingdom, the United States of America, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Provisional Government of the French Republic hereby assume supreme governmental authority in Germany, including all powers of the German Government, the Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht and the governments, administrations or agencies of the Länder, cities and towns”.

Germany was divided into four zones of occupation and Berlin into four sectors. Each victorious power determined the economic and political development in its zone or sector at its own discretion.

The war in the Pacific, which had begun on 7 December 1941 with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, lasted until August 1945 and reached its somber climax with the dropping of atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On 2 September 1945, the Second World War ended in the Pacific region with Japan’s capitulation.

The record of the Second World War is shocking: over 60 million people died, and more than six million European Jews were murdered. Thousands of Sinti and Roma, people with disabilities, political dissidents and homosexuals were persecuted and killed. 17 million people were lost without trace. Large parts of Europe were destroyed.

This war created new societies, and was the precondition for another war—the Cold War. The Holocaust—the systematic annihilation of entire population groups—could only have been carried out in the conditions prevailing in the Second World War.

After the end of the fighting, the revenge of the victors began - revenge for the gigantic suffering caused by the Germans and those who worked with them. 14 million Germans were driven from their homes. It was mainly the women who had to pay for Hitler's war: rape, looting and murder were the order of the day.

More than half of the approximately 5.7 million Red Army soldiers who were taken prisoner by the Germans during the Second World War did not survive the disastrous conditions of their imprisonment.

After forced labour, starvation and illness, around two million of the 3.2 million German prisoners of war from the Soviet Union returned to Germany, the last in January 1956. According to the German Red Cross, the fate of 1.3 million German military personnel is still unknown.

The end of the war was not the cause of all the fleeing, expulsion and loss of freedom. The cause lies rather in the beginning of the war, and indeed the beginning of the tyranny that led to the war. 8 May 1945 should not be separated from 30 January 1933 - the day when power was handed over to Hitler.

932 words

Source: Zweiter Weltkrieg: Kriegsende am 8. Mai 1945, <https://www.lpb-bw.de/kriegsende>, last visited: 21/01/2021

Glossary of terms

¹ The term “Third *Reich*”, which is widely used officially and in today’s historiography for the Nazi state, was not invented by Hitler and the National Socialists. Nevertheless, it was Hitler who officially announced on 1 September 1933 that the state he led was a **Third Reich** that would last “a thousand years”.

² In the final phase of the Second World War, all men aged between 16 and 60 who were capable of carrying weapons were drafted to defend the “home soil” of the German *Reich*. The **Volkssturm’s** area of responsibility primarily included construction work, security tasks and the defence of villages, mostly in the immediate home area. The aim of the call was to strengthen the troops of the *Wehrmacht*.

³ The main task of the **Hitlerjugend** (HJ), a youth organisation of the NSDAP, was to educate young people in the spirit of Nazi ideology and thus to secure the rule of National Socialism in the long term. At the same time, the members of the HJ were prepared for the war by physical training and military exercises.

⁴ The **Wehrmacht** is the umbrella name given to the German armed forces in Nazi Germany. The Wehrmacht was divided into the army, the navy and the air force.

⁵ The **Schutzstaffel (SS)** was a Nazi organisation during the Weimar Republic (1918 – 1933) and the period of National Socialism (1933 – 1945), which served the NSDAP (Nazi party from 1920 - 1945) and Adolf Hitler as an instrument of domination and suppression. From 1934 onwards, its responsibilities included the administration of concentration camps and, from 1941 onwards, of extermination camps. The SS was primarily involved in the planning and execution of the Holocaust and other genocides.

⁶ **Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz** (1891 - 1980) was a German naval officer. At the 1946 Nuremberg Trial of Germany's principal war criminals, Dönitz was one of the 24 accused, and was found guilty of war crimes and sentenced to ten years imprisonment.

⁷ **Colonel General Alfred Jodl** (1890 - 1946) was a German army officer who played a leading role in the planning of German military operations in the *Wehrmacht* High Command during the Second World War. At the 1946 Nuremberg Trial of Germany's principal war criminals, Jodl was one of the 24 accused, and was found guilty on all four charges against him, sentenced to death, and executed in Nuremberg.

⁸ **Reims** is a town in the north-east of France, about 130 kilometres from Paris.

⁹ **General Dwight D. Eisenhower** (1890 - 1969) was a US Army General and Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces in Europe during the Second World War. As a politician of the Republican Party, Eisenhower was the 34th President of the United States from 1953 to 1961.

¹⁰ **Field Marshal General Wilhelm Keitel** (1882 - 1946) was a German army officer and from 1938 to 1945 Chief of the High Command of the *Wehrmacht*. He was one of the 24 accused in the 1946 Nuremberg Trials, and was found guilty on all four charges against him, sentenced to death, and executed in Nuremberg.



Recollections of witnesses of war from Poland / Belarus on the end of the war in May 1945

Jacob Shepetinski born in 1920 in Slonim (formerly Poland, today Belarus), Jewish partisan, participant in the German-Soviet War, prisoner of the Slonim ghetto during the German occupation. After World War II he was in a Gulag.

Slonim: from 1915 to 1919 Slonim was under German occupation. On 18 March 1921, it fell under Polish rule. After the Wehrmacht invaded Poland on 18 September 1939, Red Army troops arrived in Slonim and the town was incorporated into the Belarusian SSR (Soviet Union). From June 1941 to July 10, 1944, Slonim was occupied by the Wehrmacht. Today Slonim is one of the oldest towns in Belarus.

... On the road along the river Oder, all German towns and villages are empty. April 14, 1945 we cross and attack the town of Eberswalde. My hatred of the enemy and desire for revenge is getting stronger. I've made up my mind: at the next opportunity I take all, without exception, to the cellar, and I've stocked up with anti-tank grenades...

We cross the Oder. Despite resistance we approach the city. We open heavy machine-gun fire along the streets, and wait for return fire. None. Suddenly, from every window and balcony, whatever they have in the house that's white can be seen flapping in the wind. The city has surrendered. We've learned from experience, though: we move forward cautiously, slowly. And we see an unforgettable image: children and adults standing near their houses, many with wrist watches in their hands. I remember my promise, and I want to drive all of them into the cellar ... but the children are looking directly into my eyes, scared. No, I can't, I can't. So my two grenades remain unused for the rest of the war. We've taken the town, and now we're off to Berlin. ...

The columns of prisoners walk obediently under the command of their officers. I'd taken a camera from a dead German but wasn't using it. I didn't know how to use it. One of the captives explained to me about how I had to pull out the lens, etc.

Everyone is moving westwards, and there are policewomen on the roads. In this way, we and our column of "Studebakers" get to Berlin, and we need to go north. Berlin has almost fallen, the Reichstag has been destroyed, the Brandenburg Gate is in front of us. I ask the captain to stop for a second; I want to take a picture of the gate. Then I ask him to take a picture of me, and I show him how to do it. He was impatient, but still took the picture, and then we had to get back on the road. The photos came out, but I couldn't find the captain to pass them on. The film also contained family photos of the dead German.

Early May, there are still pockets of resistance. A lot of the approach roads had been mined, and—just my luck!—one went off and I was wounded in the leg again. I had splinters in my arm, and one of them is still there. I was evacuated to the central army hospital near Brandenburg. May 9 - Victory Day - I celebrate this day in hospital. Everybody's happy, celebrating, hugging and kissing. The war has ended. They're going home to their families and loved ones, but I press my face into my pillow. I weep. I have no home, no family, no relatives, no friends. I'm alone. Amidst this general triumph of joy, well-deserved happiness and hope, I am broken, suddenly realizing the depth of my own tragedy and of the tragedy of the entire Jewish people. ...

In July 1945, before I was discharged from the hospital, Major Hakhalin visited me and suggested that I continue my service in the occupying forces in Neuruppin in East Germany, as an interpreter. I agreed. He put in an application for me, and I was discharged from hospital to continue my military service. My living and working conditions had changed completely. I was still a soldier, but sort of a civilian as well. I was given leave at my own request and on the Major's recommendation. I found my sister, who had also been looking for me the whole time. She came to live with me, and I'm waiting for the date of my discharge - August 20, 1946. ...

From his book "Jacob's Ladder, Memories of a Holocaust and Gulag Survivor", Minsk, 2014, pp. 101-106

Maya Isaakovna Krapina 1935 (Minsk) - 2018 (Minsk). Prisoner in the Minsk ghetto. Residents of the village of Porechye in the partisan zone saved her life and the lives of 39 Jewish children from the Minsk ghetto.

The end of the war

...One day the usually quiet village of Porechye suddenly came alive. People ran out of their houses into the street. All the children rushed to the river. My Nastya and her mother and father stood silently, wiping away their tears. I did not understand why they were crying. After all, there were no Germans in the village, no one was shouting the terrible word "marathon*", meaning "save yourself, who can", no one was running into the forest, fleeing from the German executioners. Nastya, seeing my confusion, held me close to her, stroked my head, and whispered: "We've been waiting for our own, and the wait is over!" A new word was heard: "Victory!" The general excitement swept over me as well. I ran after the other children. It turned out that a reconnaissance unit of Red Army soldiers had arrived in the village, followed by tanks with red stars. They'd stopped by the river, and the soldiers were washing their hands and faces. They were splashing themselves with water in just the same way that we children played. Everyone was laughing, everyone was overcome with joy. The more cocksure of our boys made friends with them at once. Some of the boys were even lucky enough to try on a cap or helmet. The soldiers asked who we were and where we were from. They were surprised that there were so many of us. And there really were quite a few of us: more than forty children, counting the locals and those who had come from the Minsk ghetto. All of us together must have made for an unusual sight. The tanks did not stay in the village for long. Their journey was to Minsk. Some of the crews took the boys up onto their tanks, and they tore off back to their home town. Misha Pekker, Misha Novodvorski, and Zhenya Machez left with them... Many of the girls left the village. I was the only girl from Minsk left in the village. ...

* The name given by partisans and the local population to armed operations against the partisans. At that signal, the whole village would run into the forest and hide in the marshes.

From her book "Thrice Born: Memoirs of a Former Prisoner of the Minsk Ghetto", Minsk, 2008, p. 36

Recollections of a witness of the war from Russia (formerly part of the Soviet Union) on the end of the war in May 1945

Evgenia Vadimovna Shavrova 1928 – 1991.

Daughter of the airplane builder and designer of the “flying boats” Vadim Shavrov. She kept her diary when she was a schoolgirl in Leningrad. She survived the Leningrad blockade.

9th May

We didn't have lessons today. We arrived at school and went in an organised manner to the education department on Nevsky, from where the procession started. Everyone, friends and strangers, were exchanging good wishes. Antonina Ivanovna, our headmistress, cried all the time (her husband had died), but still bore up well. Our school is in safe hands. In the evening, people were making merry in Palace Square. Spotlights lit up the walls of the buildings from all sides. The film “The Liberation of France”, which had just been released, was shown. On the stage at the foot of the Alexander Column, dancers - indispensable participants in all major events in the life of our city – once again performed. Despite the fact that there was a huge gathering of people, there was complete order in the square. We returned late and walked the quiet streets for a long time—but they probably didn't get properly quiet until morning that day...



Recollections written by Hermann Lohmann (*1925) from Germany

Hermann Lohmann was born in Deutsch Evern in 1925, which meant that his teenage years from 13 to 19 coincided with the Second World War. On September 1st, 1939, the Second World War began. As a 13-year-old, he would have never thought that he would have to go to war himself. In May 1943, he was called up to the *Reichsarbeitsdienst (RAD)* [Reich Labour Service] and then to the *Wehrmacht*.

His memories of this time were written down in February 2010.

The end of the war in Saxony

After severe battles in East Prussia and the evacuation across the Baltic Sea, we were first taken by train from Berlin to Jüterbog [...] for redeployment in the Dresden area on April 17th, 1945. I remember we got off at Stettiner Bahnhof station in Berlin, stumbled through several underpasses over debris left scattered after the air raids, and finally arrived at the train to Jüterbog. [...]

By the end of April, we were in the Wehlen area, on the river Elbe close to the Elbe Sandstone Mountains. Two weeks before the end of the war, we received brand-new equipment. We were surprised that there was still so much left. The equipment for us soldiers was in top condition: underwear, sturdy leather shoes, a brand-new field-grey uniform with the eagle of the *Luftwaffe* [air force] [...], as well as a new air force backpack, cooking gear, gas mask, gas tarp, and a haversack with a water bottle, and other things besides[...]

On May 2nd, 1945, Berlin surrendered. Over the next few days, we drove from Dresden, which had been completely destroyed in February 1945, to Pirna, south of the river Elbe. In the north of Pirna, on the *Sonnenstein*, close to the community garden, we set up our artillery observation post. While I was moving through the area over the course of those days and watching Russian airplanes crossing the sky and firing their guns, I thought: "The war must be over soon. I hope I won't be wounded again." There were hardly any German planes in the sky any more. Just Russian. [...]

I think it was on May 6th, 1945 that we saw Russian infantry approaching on both sides of the street, under the trees. Shooting at them would have been useless. [...] The Russians were about to seize Pirna. [...]

On May 7th, 1945, we got the order to withdraw towards Czechoslovakia. We were expected to battle our way towards the Americans near Außig. [...]

On May 8th, 1945, the order to surrender arrived. It took effect on May 9th, 1945 at midnight.

This order did not reach us directly in Czechoslovakia. But it got around among the soldiers that Germany had surrendered and the war was over. We were glad that the fighting and killing had come to a stop, but we did not feel either free or happy. We were not sure what lay ahead for us. [...]

In the East Ore Mountains, we withdrew into the mountain forests, to be safe from the Russian troops and to make a realistic appraisal of our position. We moved west until we reached a mountain village. We saw women tearing up bed sheets to make white armbands for the soldiers. We also saw a Russian soldier standing at the end of the downhill path. He allowed every German soldier with a white armband to pass after a short inspection. Most comrades including me got up the nerve to walk down to the Russian commissar. I dismantled my machine gun and scattered the pieces in the bushes. The women also handed me a white armband, and I walked down to the Russian with mixed feelings. He asked me in his best German: "You still have weapons, ammunition?"

I said I did not. "Then go home to your mother." [...]

As soon as we could, we left the main road and took the side roads through the mountains. We saw many dead bodies in the roadside ditches. [...]

We could see from the equipment of the Russian soldiers moving south that they too were running on empty. We saw only a few motor vehicles. There were horse-drawn vehicles, mainly Panje-wagons; the horses had been seized. And large numbers of Russian and Asian soldiers in earth-brown uniforms were moving along the streets.

At the end of the day, in the evening, Russian soldiers suddenly started to come after us. They were shouting something at us. We didn't understand what we were expected to do, since we'd all been told to "go home to mother". Things quickly got very serious. The Russians beat us on the back with the butts of their rifles and yelled: "Davai, davai." They forced us onto a large field filled with dozens of other people. At first I thought they were all freed prisoners. Then I realized that there were more than one thousand German soldiers who'd been rounded up and sat down here. We were prisoners of war of the Russians.

833 words

Source: Lohmann, Hermann: Das Kriegsende in Sachsen, in LeMO-Zeitzeugen, Lebendiges Museum Online, Stiftung Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, <https://www.dhm.de/lemo/zeitzeugen/hermann-lohmann-das-kriegsende-in-sachsen-1945.html>, last visited: 21/01/2021

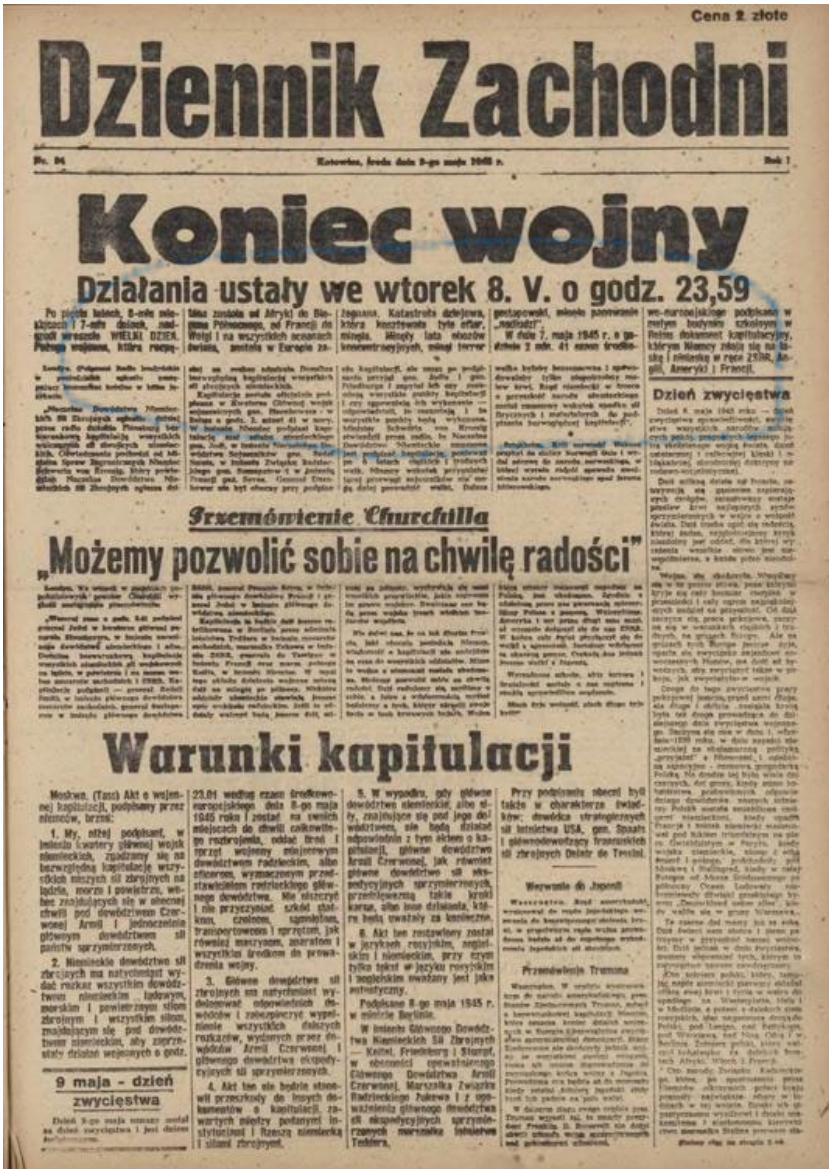




Zycie Warszawy [The Warsaw Life]: Warsaw, Wednesday, 9 May 1945

Germany has capitulated!

After 2,077 days of the most bloody war in world history. Yesterday at 23.01 the order was issued to cease military operations in Europe, at sea, on the ground, and in the air.



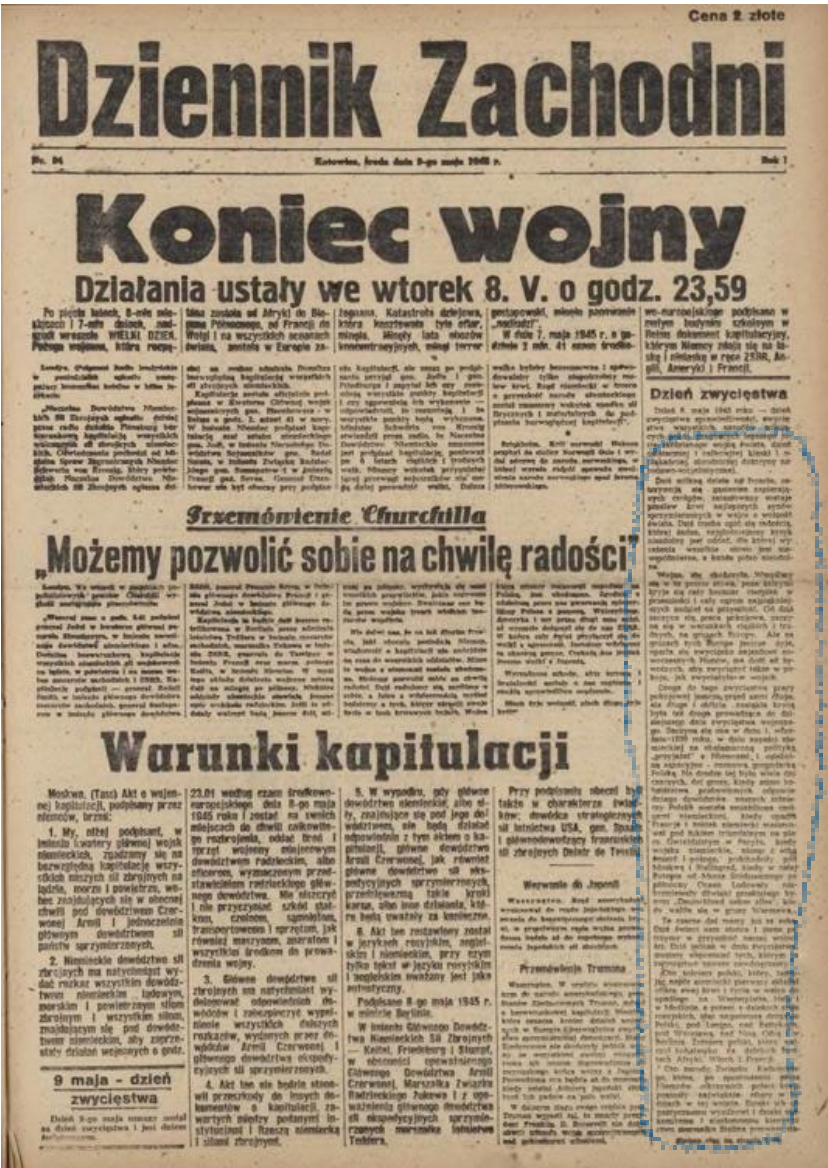
Dziennik Zachodni [Western Daily] Katowice, Wednesday, 9 May 1945

The end of the war

Hostilities ended on Tuesday, May 8, at 23.59.

After five years, 8 months and 7 days, the GREAT DAY has finally come. The conflagration of war that had been unleashed from Africa to the North Pole, from France to the Volga, and on all the oceans of the world, has been ended in Europe. The historical catastrophe, which cost so many lives, has passed. The years of the concentration camps have ended, the terror of the Gestapo has ended, the rule of "Ubermenschen" has ended.

On May 7, 1945 at 2:41 Central European Time, in a small school building in Reims, the Instrument of Surrender was signed, through which Germany put herself at the mercy of the USSR, England, America and France.



Victory day

May 8, 1945 - the day of the victory of Justice, the victory of all peace-loving nations who want a better tomorrow in our war-torn world, the day of the final and total defeat of the insane, criminal doctrine of the national-socialists.

Today, the guns on the front are silent, the treads of the aggressor tanks are still, the slaughter of the best sons of the allies in the struggle for world freedom is over.

Today is a day to get drunk with joy. A joy not even the loudest cry can properly express, a joy which no word can properly describe and no pen adequately capture.

The war is over. Let us think of these simple words, behind which lies all the immensity of the suffering now past and all the immensity of the most beautiful hopes for the future.

Today the work of peace begins. It does so in difficult conditions, in the ruins of Europe. But even in its ruins, Europe is still alive. It resisted victoriously the invasion of the modern Huns; it has enough vital force to be victorious in peace, just as it was victorious in war.

[...] There were many black days, days of horror, when, despite the heroism of our soldiers (who were shorn of leadership), Poland was crushed by German tanks, when France fell and German soldiers marched under the Arc de Triomphe in La Place de l'étoile in Paris, when German troops, carrying with them death and conflagra-

tion, approached Moscow and Stalingrad, when the sounds of the cursed "Deutschland uber alles" hymn resounded throughout Europe from the Mediterranean Sea to the North Sea, when Warsaw fell into ruins.

These black days are already behind us. Today the sun shines on us and we look clearly into the future of our freedom. Today, however, on the day of victory, we must remember those to whom we shall always owe this victory:

The Polish soldier who was the first to sacrifice his blood and life in battle, fighting until Westerplatte finally fell. [...]

The nations of the Soviet Union, who [...] suffered the greatest human casualties in this war. Thanks to their enormous efforts and the excellent and unyielding leadership of Marshal Stalin, they first repelled the German invasion of Stalingrad and then harassed the Germans until they planted their flag in the ruins of Berlin.

England, who persevered in spite of its sufferings, who did not collapse and, led by the unrelenting energy of Prime Minister Churchill, was able to create a mighty fighting force.

The United States, with its great champion of democracy, President Roosevelt, gave its wealth, its power and its people in aid of Europe.



These are all lovers of peace and democracy and they, acting together in a great alliance, contributed as much as they possibly could to the common work of victory.

Today all these nations celebrate the day of their triumph, the day of the triumph of justice, the day of the triumph of freedom and democracy.

Together, they will also bring the victory of peace.

695 words

Original sources (Russia/ Belarus)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kYJ9uMtwbRI>

Note: The following text is taken from the newspaper "Pravda" for 10th May 1945, p. 2

ADDRESS Of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief TO THE TROOPS OF THE RED ARMY AND NAVY

On 8 May 1945 in Berlin, representatives of the German High Command signed an act of unconditional surrender of the German Armed Forces.

The Great Patriotic War waged by the Soviet people against the Nazi invaders has ended in victory, and Germany has been completely defeated.

Comrades of the Red Army, Red Fleet, sergeants, petty officers, army and navy officers, generals, admirals and marshals, I congratulate you on the victorious ending of the Great Patriotic War.

In commemoration of our complete victory over Germany, today, 9 May, Victory Day, at 10 p.m., the capital of our Motherland, Moscow, on behalf of the Motherland, will salute with thirty artillery rounds fired from one thousand guns the valiant Red Army troops, ships and units of the Navy who won this glorious victory.

Eternal glory to the heroes who fell in the battles for the freedom and independence of our Motherland!

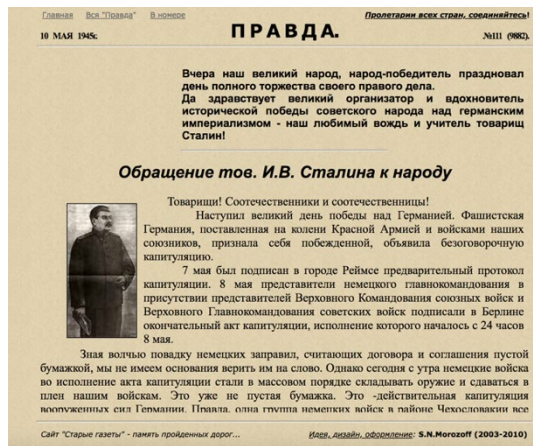
Long live the victorious Red Army and Navy!

Supreme Commander-in-Chief

Marshal of the Soviet Union **I. STALIN.**

8 May 1945, No. 369.





Note: The following text is taken from the newspaper "Pravda" for 10th May 1945, p. 2.

Yesterday, our great nation, our victorious people, celebrated the day when their just cause was completely triumphant.

Long live the great organiser and inspiration of the historic victory of the Soviet people over German imperialism - our beloved leader and teacher, Comrade Stalin!

Address to the Nation by Comrade I.V. Stalin

Comrades! Compatriots!

The great day of victory over Germany has come. Fascist Germany, brought to its knees by the Red Army and the troops of our allies, has declared itself defeated and announced its unconditional surrender.

A preliminary surrender protocol was signed in Reims on 7 May. On 8 May, representatives of the German High Command, in the presence of representatives of the Supreme Allied Command and the Supreme Soviet Command, signed the final surrender protocol in Berlin, which came into force at midnight on 8 May.

Knowing the duplicitous ways of the German leadership, who consider treaties and agreements to be empty pieces of paper, we had no reason to take their word for it. This morning, however, German troops began to lay down their arms on a massive scale and to give themselves up to our troops in fulfilment of the act of surrender. This is no longer an empty piece of paper. It is a valid surrender by the German armed forces. It is true that one group of German troops in the area of Czechoslovakia is still refusing to surrender. But I hope that the Red Army can bring them to their senses.

We can now state with good reason that this is the historic day of the final defeat of Germany, the day of our people's great victory over German imperialism.

The great sacrifices we made for the freedom and independence of our homeland, the incalculable privations and suffering our people experienced during the war, the hard work on the home front and on the battle front, and the sacrifices made at the altar of the Motherland, were not in vain and have resulted in a complete victory over the enemy. The centuries-long struggle of the Slavic peoples for their existence and independence has ended in victory over German invaders and German tyranny.

From now on, the mighty banner of freedom for peoples and peace between peoples will be flying over Europe.



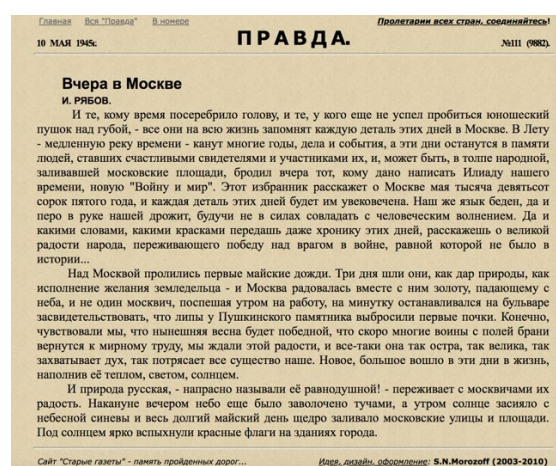
Three years ago, Hitler declared publicly that his mission was to dismember the Soviet Union and break away from it the Caucasus, Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic States and other regions. He explicitly stated: "We will destroy Russia so that it can never rise again." That was three years ago. But Hitler's insane ideas were not destined to come true - the course of the war reduced them to ashes. What has come about is the direct opposite of the Hitlerites' ravings. Germany has been shattered. German troops are surrendering. The Soviet Union is triumphant, although it is not going to dismember or destroy Germany.

Comrades! The Great Patriotic War has ended with our complete victory. The time of war in Europe is over. A period of peaceful development has begun.

I congratulate you on victory, my dear fellow countrymen and compatriots!

GLORY TO OUR HEROIC RED ARMY, WHICH DEFENDED THE INDEPENDENCE OF OUR HOMELAND AND WON VICTORY OVER THE ENEMY!

GLORY TO OUR GREAT NATION, OUR VICTORIOUS NATION! ETERNAL GLORY TO THE HEROES WHO FELL IN BATTLES WITH THE ENEMY AND GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR THE FREEDOM AND HAPPINESS OF OUR PEOPLE!



Note: The following text is taken from the newspaper "Pravda" for 10th May 1945, p. 2.

Yesterday in Moscow

I. RYABOV

[...]The first rains of May came pouring down over Moscow. For three days they came, like a gift from nature, like the fulfilment of a husbandman's wish - and Moscow rejoiced with him at the gold falling from the sky, and more than one Muscovite, hurrying to work in the morning, stopped briefly on the boulevard to witness that the lime tree by the Pushkin monument had put out its first new shoots. Of course, we felt that this spring would be one of victory, that many warriors from the battlefields would soon return to peaceful work. We expected this joy, and yet it is so sharp, so great; it sends our spirits soaring and shocks us to the core. Something new and great has come into our lives these last days, filling them with warmth, light, sun.

And our Russian nature—how wrong they were to call it indifferent! —is sharing with the people of Moscow their joy. The evening before, the sky was still shrouded in storm clouds, but in the morning, the sun lit up in the blue sky and generously flooded Moscow's streets and squares for the whole long May day, and in the sun, red flags coruscated on the city's buildings.

Moscow was celebrating Victory Day.

[...] The people of Moscow waited for Comrade Stalin's speech.

At nine o'clock in the evening his voice rang out, Stalin's voice, so familiar to the people of Moscow. In the streets and squares they listened to him, in their apartments and clubs. Stalin spoke to his fellow countrymen and women. He spoke simply and calmly.

[...] In commemoration of our complete victory over Germany, today, 9 May, Victory Day, at 10 p.m., Moscow, on behalf of the Motherland, saluted with thirty artillery rounds fired from one thousand guns the valiant Red Army troops, ships and units of the Navy who won this glorious victory.

[...] On that historic night, far beyond the borders of Moscow, the lights of Moscow could be seen, and it seemed that all countries and all peoples were looking at Moscow that night, and seeing her as a bastion of peace in the world.

1009 words

Source: <https://oldgazette.ru/pravda/10051945/index1.html>, last visited: 21/01/2021

