



VE DAY



Victory in Europe

Victory in Europe Day/ VE Day took place on May 8th 1945. It was day of celebration to mark the defeat of Germany World War 2.

VE Day marked the formal end of the war with Germany and brought to an end six years of suffering, courage and endurance across the world.



Surrender

After Hitler's death in April, 1945, the Germans knew they could not win the war.

On the 7th May, at 2.41am, in front of some of the leaders of the Western Allies, a general (Jodl) signed a surrender document on behalf of Germany.

This meant that the war in Europe was over, although World War II continued in other countries so it was not over completely



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Celebrations

As news of the surrender spread, the war-weary British began to celebrate straight away. During the previous six years, half a million homes had been destroyed, thousands of civilians had been killed and many millions of lives disrupted, in Britain alone.

The news of a surrender was what everyone needed to hear.



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People ran out on to the streets, hanging bunting and banners and dancing. People organised sudden street parties, shared rationed food with the neighbours and listened to the wireless for updates.

Announcement

Yet the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, had yet to make a formal announcement. He was being held back by Stalin, the leader of the Soviet Union. Stalin wanted his own document of surrender signing, so he was holding off announcing the fall of Germany.

Churchill was not going to give Stalin the satisfaction of making Britain wait, so at 19:40, Churchill made this announcement over the radio:



"In accordance with arrangements between the three great powers, tomorrow, Tuesday, will be treated as Victory in Europe Day and will be regarded as a holiday."

Victory in Europe



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This photograph shows Churchill waving to crowds in Whitehall, London, on the day he broadcast to the nation that the war with Germany had been won, 8th May 1945.

Time to Celebrate



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Britain's Resolve and Strength

On VE Day, everyone, both in London and at home sitting by their wireless sets, wanted to hear just one man: Winston Churchill. At 3pm the Prime Minister broadcast to the nation. He praised the British spirit and reminded them that this was a victory of the great British nation as a whole. He also reminded them that the war continued against the Japanese, but 'we can all take a night off today'.



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Crowds gathered in Trafalgar Square and up The Mall, waiting for Winston Churchill and King George VI to make an appearance on the balcony of Buckingham Palace.

A Memorable Night

Later that evening, Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret slipped out of Buckingham Palace to experience the celebrations for themselves. They stood amongst the joyful crowds below the royal balcony.

HM Queen Elizabeth II recalled the event:

"... my sister and I realised we couldn't see what the crowds were enjoying ... so we asked my parents if we could go out and see for ourselves ... After crossing Green Park we stood outside and shouted, 'We want the King', and were successful in seeing my parents on the balcony. I think it was one of the most memorable nights of my life."



A special celebration – 75 years

To celebrate 75 years since the original VE Day, the May Day bank Holiday has been moved for the second time in history. Although it's usually on a Monday, this year, the May Day Bank holiday will be on Friday 8th May to coincide with the anniversary of VE Day.

Buglers have been invited to play The Last Post and Reveille from their homes at 2:55 p.m. This will be followed by a 'Nation's Toast to the Heroes of World War II' at 3:00 p.m. Here, people at home can raise a drink of their choice and say the following:

“To those who gave so much, we thank you.”

The thought is that as a nation, the UK will toast their remembrance, together.

Bugler: Someone that plays the bugle – a horn-like instrument used by soldiers to send signals and orders.

