

# THE GREATNESS OF THE GREAT VICTORY

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## **Abstract**

*This article discusses the symbolic meaning of "May 9". As its western counterparts celebrate May 9 as Europe Day, Russia also celebrates May 8 and 9 as Remembrance and Reconciliation Days. The writer pointed out how the date of May 9 has marked a great victory of humanity from devastating threats and the end of the World War II.*

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## **THE GREATNESS OF THE GREAT VICTORY**

May 9, 2005 the whole world solemnly celebrates the 60th anniversary of the end to the World War II. 60 years ago, on May 9, 1945 the Soviet Union in alliance with other members of the anti-Hitler coalition at the cost of incredible physical and spiritual exertions and innumerable victims defeated the Nazi Germany, forcing the Third Reich

commanders to sign an unconditional surrender.

Six decades have passed, but we are still living and will continue to live in the post-war era. Why? It is because the World War II has been an epochal event that divided the time into "before" and "after". It was not only a global battle exceeding in scale all the previous armed conflicts in human history. For the first time the stake in this struggle was the

preservation of the life of whole peoples. Thus, the main outcome of the war was not merely a victory of one coalition of states over the other. In essence, it was a victory of the forces of construction and civilization over the barbaric forces of destruction. It was a victory of life over death: The Great Victory.

The will to defend freedom and civilized future from the threat posed by German Nazism and Japanese militarism united the people of many nations all over the world. Still, it has to be admitted that the decisive role in achieving the Victory was played by the Soviet Union and its armed forces that delivered the main blow at Germany and its allies.

In Russia's calendar of memorable dates May 9 occupies a special place. Just a mentioning of the Victory Day makes the heart of every Russian to beat faster. Even now, 60 years after, one can hardly find a family in Russia that was not scathed by the flames of war. The grievous

ordeal that fell to lots of people of the Soviet Union revealed numerous examples of heroism, personal feat and true patriotism. That is why this war has gone down in the history of Russia as the Great Patriotic War. As never before, in those dramatic war years the destinies of the nation and of the people became most closely intertwined.

Russia has paid an incredibly painful price - 27 million lives - for its independence and for the liberation of the peoples of Europe and Asia enslaved by Nazism. 1710 cities and towns, 70.000 villages, 32.000 factories, 62.000 kilometres of railways, 40.000 hospitals, and 84.000 schools were destroyed. The Soviet Union lost one third of its national wealth.

At the same time the war demonstrated enormous spiritual power and potential the Russian people possess. In this regard, for us the history of the Great Patriotic War is an inexhaustible source of strength and confidence

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in our future. For the Russians May 9 symbolizes the triumph in the struggle for freedom and the right for all the nations throughout the world to freely choose their own path.

The Victory of the World War II has not only predetermined the direction of the Russian history but also reshaped the whole world. Take the United Europe, which quite symbolically celebrates the European Day on May 9. Take countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Without the Victory many of them might not have been on the map. Even now, 60 years later, when the world has changed beyond recognition, the post-war arrangement retains a key significance for safeguarding peace and security on our planet.

One of the most remarkable consequences of May 1945 was the beginning of an irreversible process of the collapse of colonialism. Before the World War II, colonial territories had been accounted for 69% of the world's population and 77% of its territory.

By the mid-1970s the figures were 0.2% and 0.5% respectively. Some 100 new sovereign states appeared in place of former colonies and Indonesia was among the first of them.

The glorious August revolution of 1945 in Indonesia was triggered by the general assault of the Soviet Army against the Japanese stronghold in the North-Eastern China – the Kwantung Army. The operation started on August 9 and within days, on August 15, the enemy was defeated. The days of Japan's occupation in Asia were numbered. This inspired the founding fathers of modern Indonesia, Soekarno and Hatta, to proclaim independence from the Japanese rule on August 17, 1945.

The Victory gave the Russian people strength not only to rebuild their own country but also to help other nations to win and defend their independence. On February 3, 1950 the Soviet Union officially recognized the Republic of

Indonesia as an independent and sovereign state. The USSR assisted Indonesia's economic construction, helped to strengthen its defence capability and backed its bid for a UN membership. We are proud of the strong support the Soviet Union rendered to the young Indonesian State in its struggle to liberate West Irian.

The striving to deliver humanity 'from the scourge of war for good' has urged the nations of the anti-Hitler coalition to establish a global mechanism for maintaining international peace and security - the United Nations Organization. Its Charter became a generally recognized basis of contemporary international law, a fundamental code of conduct for states and international organizations. It was the first international document to outlaw the use of force in international relations. Over the last 60 years, the principles enshrined in the UN Charter have been successfully ensuring international security and even now, in the changing

circumstances of globalization, have not lost their relevance.

The Victory Day is not only our holiday. It is our common pride and glory. By the resolution of its General Assembly the United Nations, at the initiative of Russia and other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, has designated the 8th and 9th of May as the Days of Remembrance and Reconciliation.

These are days that unite all countries and peoples and reinforce our solidarity in the face of the global challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. On these days, while paying tribute to all those in Russia and other countries who has sacrificed their lives for the sake of the Victory, we should also think of ways to preclude a repetition of such a tragedy. The tragedy that has taught us one very important lesson: it is necessary to join hands to stand up to violence and evil.

The experience of the international brotherhood in arms

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during the war years is assuming particular significance in the conditions when a global challenge has again been thrown down to humanity, this time by international terrorism, which is no less dangerous than Nazism. And no less merciless: thousands of innocent people have already become its victims. Like Nazism, terrorism has nothing to offer the world, but violence and scorn for human life, its preparedness to trample upon the most elementary norms of human morality for the achievement of its maniacal aims. Only together can we face this and other threats to the global civilization.

Recent calamities in the Indian Ocean reminded us of another kind of challenges – natural disasters. People of Russia like people elsewhere were shocked by the deadly consequences caused by the tsunami and earthquakes, which hit Indonesia on December 26, 2004 and March 28, 2005. Shortly after the December tragedy President of the Russian Federation Vladimir

Putin called President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and offered humanitarian assistance.

In both cases, Russia immediately joined the relief operation. The Russian Government allocated over USD 30 million of urgent humanitarian aid to the Asian countries affected by the tsunami. A Russian military field hospital was deployed in Aceh. 150 doctors and medical staff worked there for more than a month providing assistance to thousands of local patients. Upon the accomplishment of the mission the hospital with its equipment was handed over to the Indonesian friends as a gift from the Russian Government. When the earthquake devastated the island of Nias, Russia sent 48 rescuers who did their job on a high professional level. It is a token of solidarity of our people and their readiness to come to the rescue. As an old saying goes 'a friend in need is a friend indeed'.

The relations between Russia and Indonesia are now in a good shape and as dynamic as ever. In

a congratulatory message to President Yudhoyono of February 3, 2005 on the occasion of the 55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of diplomatic relations between two countries President Putin described the partnership between two countries as "mutually beneficial and fruitful cooperation characterized by a high degree of goodwill, mutual trust and respect". The two leaders maintain an intensive political dialogue (their last meeting took place in November 2004 at the APEC summit in Chile), trade and economic cooperation are rising, and our collaboration on

the international arena contributes to the global efforts to combat new threats and challenges. We cherish this relationship but we should not forget that it traces back to 1945. It would not be an exaggeration to say that it "grows out" of the Great Victory.

We should not forget how it all started. The global peace and security we enjoy, the progress made by individual nations, the success stories of their bilateral relations, everything the peoples of the world have achieved for the last six decades – all this bears a clear birthmark: "May 9, 1945".



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