

In May people all over the world remember one of the greatest tragedies of the 20th century - World War II (1 September 1939 – 2 September 1945).

It was the most widespread war in history. There were 104 countries that either were participants or otherwise affected by the war (80% of the world's population). Battles were fought on the territory of three continents and in the waters of four oceans. The war finally ended in 1945 but only after approximately 60 to 80 million people lost their lives (approx. 3% of the 1939 world population).

Beyond the liberation of Europe, the Soviet Union moved some of its troops to the Far East and helped the allies (Great Britain, US, France, and China) defeat the Japanese army. The brotherhood in arms that had arisen between the armies of soldiers and officers of the coalition and the political will and wisdom of the leaders of the Allied powers helped to bring peace to the world during a time of considerable conflict.

It is appropriate that the end of World War II in Europe be remembered for its magnitude, devastation, and the unbelievable valor of common people and their heroic deeds. Never have so many countries sought peace together. It is appropriate that we try to understand the global story and the personal stories as well. As you read these stories, reflect on the gratitude we owe these people for their contribution. Please pause and take a moment to multiply in your mind the millions of similar stories of sacrifice that can no longer be told. On Victory Day do something to honor their courage and contributions. Then, remember one of the biggest lessons that can be learned from such a catastrophic world event, "never again."

The 8th and 9th of May, European countries celebrate the signing of the Act of Capitulation by Nazi Germany.

In Russia Victory Day is traditionally celebrated on May 9th. In the Soviet Union, 27 million people were lost, and there was not a single family that did not lose a loved one.

On May 5th, male and female choirs will sing songs for us about war and peace, friendship and love, and mutual support. The older generation, that survived the war and deprivation, teaches us courage, patience, and a love of peace.

Because of their concert every year and the displays in the Hall of Flags with stories of the WWII veterans, our students are reminded of the sacrifices made and the bravery of those who died and those who survived. Our students are fortunate to have been kept from the horrors of war, yet when meeting this group of veterans, everything begins to have deeper meaning for them. They will be looking at the conflict from another point of view and will see the long lasting impact of this moment of history. They will see the bravery written on their faces and hear the pride in their voices as they sing. At a time when many young people are disconnected from the past, the choir helps us feel a direct link and connection to the history of Russia, Europe, and the entire world.

It is a wonderful tradition celebrating Victory Day together and joining our voices against all war. We need to know history in order to learn from past mistakes and seek a future filled with peace and understanding.