



VE DAY

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Victory in Europe Day

8th May

Second World War

Britain had been at war since September 1939.
The war had caused great hardships for the entire country.



Cities, such as Coventry, London and Plymouth were badly bombed and many were killed. Buildings were destroyed and people were left homeless.



384,000 British soldiers were killed and many more were wounded.



It was usually impossible for soldiers to visit home due to the war.



Food was rationed; before the war, Britain imported lots of its food from abroad. With German submarines manning the seas, importing food was too risky.



The End

By the end of April 1945, the leader of Italy, Benito Mussolini and the leader of Germany, Adolf Hitler, were dead. Germany was in ruins.

On 7th May, at 2.41 a.m., in Reims in France, Germany surrendered. This meant that the war in Europe was over, although the war with Japan continued until August 15th. This is known as VJ day.



VE Day

Before long, the exciting news spread that the war in Europe was over. People ran out on the streets to celebrate and church bells were rung to spread the news. It was decided that the next day, May 8th would be Victory in Europe Day and would be regarded as a holiday.

The following day was one of great celebration. Prime Minister Winston Churchill made a speech in which he said: 'My dear friends, this is your hour. This is not victory of a party or of any class. It's a victory of the great British nation as a whole.'

Communities had street parties and churches held services of thanksgiving.



Sneaking Out

The royal family, including King George VI and his daughter Princess Elizabeth (who is our queen now) joined in the celebrations, waving from the balcony at Buckingham palace. When she appeared on the balcony of Buckingham Palace, Princess Elizabeth was wearing her ATS uniform.

Overjoyed at the people's celebrations, the Princess asked her parents if she and her sister might join. The King and Queen agreed on the condition that they went in a large group of people, who would look after them. No one in the crowd realised that two princesses were in their midst!



The Ongoing Battle

During the celebrations, Churchill reminded people that there were still problems to be faced when he said, “We may allow ourselves a brief period of rejoicing; but let us not forget for a moment the toil and efforts that lie ahead.”

Rationing (limits on the types and amount of food people could buy) continued until 1954. Many women weren’t allowed to keep the important jobs they had worked in during the war. Many people were facing sad and difficult times due to losing their homes or their loved ones during the war.



Reflection

In his VE Day speech, Winston Churchill said, “Do not despair, do not yield to violence and tyranny, march straight forward.”

How do we keep going when you face difficult or worrying times?

A black and white photograph of a crowd celebrating, likely on VE Day. Several people are visible, including a man in the foreground with his mouth open in a shout, and another man to the right also shouting. A large, semi-transparent 'V' is overlaid on the image. The text 'VE DAY' is centered over the 'V', with 'VE' in red and 'DAY' in white. Below it, the number '75' is written in large white digits.

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