The 71st Anniversary of the Great Victory!

“Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few” - Winston Churchill

The war between Germany and the Soviet Union officially began in late June 1941, although the threat of conflict had loomed since the early 1930s. After Germany crushed France, and determined that it could not easily drive Great Britain from the war, the Wehrmacht turned its attention back to the East. Following the conquests of Greece and Yugoslavia in the Spring of 1941, Berlin prepared its most ambitious campaign; the destruction of Soviet Russia. The ensuing war would result in a staggering loss of human life, and in the final destruction of the Nazi regime.

The Fight on Land

On June 22, 1941, the German Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe struck Soviet forces across a wide front along the German-Soviet frontier.

The course of the war is far too complicated to detail in this article. Suffice to say that the German enjoyed overwhelming success for the first five months of the war, before weather and stiffening Red Army resistance led to a Soviet victory in the Battle of Moscow. Germany resumed the offensive in 1942, only to suffer a major defeat at Stalingrad. The Battle of Kursk, in 1943, ended the Wehrmacht’s offensive ambitions. 1943, 1944, and 1945 saw the pace of Soviet conquest gradually accelerate, with the monumental offensives of late 1944 shattering the German armed forces. The war turned the Wehrmacht and the Red Army into finely honed fighting machines, while also draining both of equipment and manpower. The Soviets enjoyed the support of Western industry, while the Germans relied on the resources of occupied Europe.

The Fight Against Civilians

The Holocaust is perhaps the most remembered legacy of the War in the East. The invasions of Poland and the Soviet Union brought the bulk of Eastern Europe’s Jewish population under Nazi control, facilitating a German policy of extermination. For non-Jews, German occupation policies were nearly as brutal, although populations sympathetic to the anti-Soviet crusade were sometimes spared.

Towards the end of the war, the Soviets did their best to return the favor. Soviet depredations against the German civilian population of East and Central Europe do not generally receive the same degree of attention as German actions, in no small part because of an enduring (if problematic) sense that the German deserved what they got. Other Eastern European populations were caught in the crossfire, suffering starvation and other depredations from both sides. Nevertheless, there is no question that the Soviets (and the peoples of Eastern Europe) suffered far more deeply from the war than the Germans.
The Fight in the Air

Mercifully, the nature of the war did not offer many opportunities for strategic bombing. Russia launched a few sorties against German cities in the first days of the war, usually suffering catastrophic casualties. For their part, the German Luftwaffe concentrated on tactical support of the Wehrmacht. Germany did launch a few large raids against Russian cities, but did not maintain anything approaching a strategic campaign. Notwithstanding the improvement of the Soviet Air Force across the war, and the effectiveness in particular of attack aircraft, in general the Luftwaffe mauled its Soviet foe. This remained the case even as the Soviet aviation industry far outstripped the German, and as the Combined Bomber Offensive drew the attention of the Luftwaffe to the west.

On February 2nd, 1943, the 6th German Army, under the command of Field Marshall Von Paulus, and elements of the 4th Panzer Army, surrendered to the Red Army at Stalingrad. This stunning victory is considered the turning point in the war in Europe, heralding the defeat of fascist Germany.

That defeat came on May 2nd 1945, when the German forces in Berlin, the capital of the Third Reich, surrendered to the forces of the Red Army that had captured the city. On May 9th, the official act of surrender of the German government and military forces took place in Berlin when the Germans surrendered to the Soviet commander, Marshal Zhukov, a surrender witnessed by representatives of the American, British and French forces. This was the end of the war in Europe.
Raising a flag over the Reichstag” the photo by Yevgeny Khaldei, taken on May 2, 1945. The photo shows Soviet soldiers raising the flag of the Soviet Union on top of the German Reichstag building following the Battle of Berlin.

Surrenders of elements of the German armies in Italy and Austria on May 2, and German forces in northern Europe on May 7, at first claimed by the Western allies to be the official surrender of Germany, were not recognised as such by the Soviet government, since they were in violation of the agreement of the European Advisory Committee of the three Big Powers which was finalised in March 1944. That agreement required the surrender of the German government itself, not just the army elements in impossible positions, and was to take place at the seat of government from which German aggression had been launched - Berlin.

The Western allies had no choice but to agree, and to regard the May 9th ceremony as the official act of surrender of the German government. But it was clear even then that the Western allies had tried to arrange a separate peace with the Germans while the Soviets were still fighting and it was made very clear that the Americans and British wanted to steal the show from the Russians. Now 70 years later, the propaganda machine in the west once again claims that the earlier date was the end of the war in Europe.
A Tribute To The Illuminated Woman of World War II by Irfanulla Shariff

Our humble tribute to you
The illuminated woman
Of Word War II
Oh! The courageous Miss Noor Inayat Khan
Great grand daughter
Of the Sufi king Tipu Sultan
The Tiger of Mysore
You were bestowed
With the highest military awards
For your splendid valor
Oh! The most charismatic heroine
Of World War II

Oh! The emblem of
Purest beauty and grace
You, the poet and musician
Your stunning tales of inspiration
Now captivating the children’s attention
You, the amazing air force lady
You, the brilliant wireless operator
You are Madeleine and Nora
The master of disguises and aura
Oh! The dynamic spy
Of World War II

The Red Army and Navy and the whole Soviet people must fight for every inch of Soviet soil, fight to the last stop of blood for our towns and villages... onward, to victory!” - Joseph Stalin, July 1941