

Bob Dole



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

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V-E DAY - 50TH ANNIVERSARY STATEMENT OF SENATE MAJORITY LEADER BOB DOLE

Fifty years ago today, the guns were silenced in Europe, and that continent was at last freed from the tyrants who had plunged it into war. And across the world on May 8, 1945, there were moments that are remembered today, and will be remembered for generations yet to come.

Here in Washington, at the White House, President Truman spoke to the American people by radio, with these dramatic words: "This is a solemn and glorious hour. I only wish that Franklin Roosevelt had lived to witness this day. General Eisenhower informs me that the forces of Germany have surrendered to the United Nations. The flags of freedom fly all over Europe."

In New York City, a half a million people crowded into Times Square; and in main streets and town squares across America, smaller crowds gathered to celebrate.

In Paris, the boulevards that Hitler and his armies had once controlled were free again, and the French people rallied under the Arc de Triomphe.

And in London, Winston Churchill spoke before a large crowd, telling the people of Britain, "This is your victory." And many in the crowd shouted back that the victory was his. Later that night, the floodlights illuminated Buckingham Palace, Big Ben, and St. Paul's Cathedral for the first time in six years.

Remembering the Lessons of World War II

Anniversary celebrations are a time for remembering the past, but they are also a time for looking to the future. And as we celebrate this fiftieth anniversary of the Allied victory, let us remember the lessons that World War II taught us--lessons that hold for us still.

We learned that we can not turn our backs on what happens in the rest of the world. We learned that we can never again allow our military to reach low levels of readiness and supplies. We learned that we cannot appease tyrants and despots.

And, perhaps above all, we learned the critical importance of American leadership.

Yes, before our involvement, Britain courageously fought on against the odds. And, yes, Russia, after initially siding with the Axis powers, helped to turn the tide when the Nazis turned against them.

Importance of American Leadership

But, the war could not have been won and would not have been won without the commitment, the manpower, and the leadership of the United States. It's that simple.

It was American leadership that built the arsenal of democracy which made victory possible. It was American leadership that held the Allies together through the darkest days of the war. And it was American leadership which conquered the forces of tyranny and restored liberty and democracy to Europe.

And when I talk about leadership, I don't mean just the famous names of Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Marshall, Churchill, and de Gaulle. And I don't just mean the soldiers who fought their way across Europe and the Pacific. For we must also thank those who served at home -- the Gold Star moms, the factory workers, and the farmers. Without their contribution and their sacrifice, the war effort could not have been successful.

Celebrate Triumph of Democracy

So, today is a day for all of us to celebrate the triumph of democracy, and to honor those who served and those who paid the ultimate price on behalf of their country.

And the best way we can do that is to rededicate ourselves to the promise that President Reagan made on behalf of America on the beaches of Normandy eleven years ago: "We will always remember. We will always be proud. We will always be prepared, so we may always be free."

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