

STATEMENT

By the Members of the European Parliament

8 May 2025

Strasbourg

This year, we commemorate the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe. The 8th of May 1945 is rightly remembered as a day of victory and liberation—the defeat of Nazism, the end of the Holocaust, and the beginning of freedom and rebuilding for a large part of Western Europe.

However, a truly common European culture of remembrance remains incomplete without acknowledging the full breadth of historical experience across the continent. The war did not end for all. For millions in Central and Eastern Europe, 8 May 1945 did not bring liberation, but rather the continuation of totalitarian oppression under a different regime. The end of Nazi rule marked the beginning of Soviet occupation, mass repression, and the imposition of communist dictatorships that lasted for nearly half a century.

The so-called "liberation" of Central and Eastern Europe by the Soviet Union in 1945 was accompanied by forced deportations, widespread sexual violence and rape, torture, executions, and the suppression of national sovereignty. Independent states were absorbed into the Soviet sphere of influence and subjected to decades of systemic repression. Armed resistance movements in Ukraine, Poland, the Baltic States, and beyond continued their struggle for another decade. Dissident networks persevered until the democratic revolutions of 1989–1991. Millions became victims of communist crimes across the region—atrocities which must not be forgotten.

Today, Europe continues to grapple with the consequences of uncondemned Soviet and communist crimes and Russia's monopolized claim to heroic victory in World War II. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and its hybrid attacks across the EU reflect a dangerous continuity with the imperial and revisionist policies of the Soviet era. Russia continues to assert an exclusive sphere of influence over its neighbouring countries, echoing the logic of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and its secret protocols. Just like in 1939, when the USSR agreed to divide Europe and then subsequently invaded Poland, today's Russia builds its brutal aggression on lies. The Kremlin uses its glorified victory in 1945 and the supposed 'liberation' of Europe to legitimize its current military aggression, portraying the invasion of Ukraine and other countries as efforts to free them from fictitious Nazi regimes.

European security and unity demand our resistance to such falsifications of history. A shared and nuanced understanding of the events of 1945, in all their complexity and diversity, is essential. Recognizing that the end of World War II did not mean freedom for all Europeans is a vital step toward a genuine European memory. Equally, condemning Soviet and communist crimes—including those committed in the very year we commemorate—is essential to counter the Kremlin's imperialist narrative and uphold the values of freedom, democracy, and human dignity.

We stand united in honouring all victims of totalitarian regimes and commit ourselves to a remembrance culture that is inclusive, just, and historically accurate. The legacy of World War II will only be truly over when all aggressive imperialist totalitarian regimes are fully defeated. That is only possible with full victory of Ukraine and freedom for all European countries to choose their path.

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