

Translation

**Televised address
by Olaf Scholz,
Chancellor of the Federal Republic of
Germany
and Member of the German Bundestag,**

**on the anniversary of the end
of the Second World War in Europe**

Berlin, 8 May 2022

Fellow citizens,

the Second World War came to an end in Europe 77 years ago today. When the weapons fell silent on 8 May 1945, there was a deathly calm – shrouding the graves of more than 60 million women, men and children.

Millions of people fell on the battlefields. Millions were murdered in their towns and villages, in concentration camps and extermination camps. Germans were the ones who perpetrated this crime against humanity.

It is therefore all the more painful to see how today, at the heart of Europe, 77 years after the end of the Second World War, brutal violence is once again breaking the law. How Russia's army is slaughtering men, women and children in Ukraine, laying waste to towns and cities, even attacking those attempting to flee.

For me, this 8 May is like no other.

That is why I am addressing you today.

We cannot commemorate the end of the Second World War in Europe without facing the fact that once again Europe is beset by war. Russia has unleashed this war.

Once, Russians and Ukrainians fought *together*, making ultimate sacrifices to bring down Germany's murderous National Socialist regime.

During that period, Germany committed crimes against *both* nations, Russia and Ukraine.

We have been striving for decades with *both* to bring about reconciliation.

Now, however, Russia's President Putin wants to overthrow Ukraine and destroy its culture and its identity.

President Putin even regards his barbaric war of aggression as being on a par with the fight against National Socialism. That is a falsification of history and a disgraceful distortion. We have an obligation to state this clearly.

But that is not enough.

It was the military victory of the Allies which put an end to the National Socialist dictatorship in Germany.

That is something that we Germans are grateful for to this very day.

That is why the then Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker, speaking in 1985, was able to refer to 8 May as a "*day of liberation*".

The disastrous history of our country between 1933 and 1945 has taught us one key lesson. It is this: "*Never again!*"

Never again should there be war.

Never again should there be genocide.

Never again should there be tyranny.

And yet it has happened again – war in Europe. Ukrainian President Zelensky pointed that out today.

In the current situation that can only mean one thing: that we defend justice and freedom – side by side with those who are under attack. We support Ukraine in the fight against its aggressor.

To *not* do so would be to capitulate in the face of pure violence – and to strengthen the aggressor's position.

We are helping to find a way to end the violence.

That is why in the past few days and weeks we have taken far-reaching and difficult decisions – quickly and resolutely, judiciously and carefully.

- We have imposed unprecedented sanctions on the Russian economy and the Russian leadership in order to divert Putin from the path of war.
- We have welcomed hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians with open arms.

Hundreds of thousands who have found refuge with us after fleeing from the violence in their homeland.

Aid organisations are providing initial support, schools and nurseries are setting up Welcome Classes, citizens are taking refugees into their homes.

I would like to convey to you my heartfelt thanks for this huge demonstration of support throughout our country.

- And – for the first time in the history of the Federal Republic – we have sent arms to a war zone – in large quantities, and also, after careful consideration, heavy weapons.

We will continue to do so.

I can well imagine how unsettled many of you are by these decisions.

After all, this is literally about war and peace.

About our historical responsibility.

About demonstrating the greatest possible solidarity with Ukraine, in the grip of aggression.

About the security of our country and our Alliance.

Reconciling all these goals – that is the task we face on a day-to-day basis.

It is good and legitimate that we as a nation engage in intensive discussion on issues with such vast implications.

Democracy involves grappling with these kinds of controversial topics with respect and mutual consideration. The Federal President rightly underscored this in his address this morning.

Many of the comments I am hearing at the moment express grave concern. The fear among other things that the war could spread, that peace here in our country could also be under threat.

It would be wrong simply to dismiss these sentiments. Such concerns need to be voiced.

Yet at the same time we cannot allow ourselves to be paralysed by fear.

I have described to you what we are doing to defend justice and freedom in Ukraine and throughout Europe. It is a considerable amount.

Nonetheless, we are not simply doing *all the things* that some people are calling for. For in the oath I took upon assuming office, I swore to protect the German people from harm.

That includes protecting our country and our allies from danger.

Four definite political principles can be derived from this:

- Firstly: no German go-it alone efforts! Whatever we do, we coordinate closely with our Alliance partners – in Europe and across the Atlantic.
- Secondly: in everything we do we ensure that we maintain our capacity to defend ourselves! And we have decided to significantly improve the resources of the Bundeswehr so that it will remain in a position to defend us in future.
- Thirdly: we will not do anything that could inflict more damage on ourselves and our partners than on Russia.
- And fourthly: we will not take any decision that makes NATO a party to the war. We stand by these principles.

Never again should there be another world war – let alone a war between nuclear powers – that is another lesson of 8 May.

Fellow citizens,

I cannot say today when and how Russia's brutal war against Ukraine will end.

However, one thing is clear. There must not be a victor's peace dictated by Russia. Ukrainians will not accept that – and neither will we.

Seldom have we presented such a united front with our friends and partners as we are doing today.

I am firmly convinced of this:

Putin will not win the war.

Ukraine will prevail.

Freedom and security will win the day – just as freedom and security triumphed over oppression, violence and dictatorship 77 years ago.

Doing everything in our power to bring this about – that is what “*Never again*” means today.

That is the legacy of 8 May.