**WWII - Timeline of Surrender**

On [April 26](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/April_26), [Soviet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union) and [American](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) troops linked up, cutting [Germany](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germany) in two (*see* [*Elbe Day*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elbe_Day)). The first units to make contact were from the [U.S.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) [69th Infantry Division](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/69th_Infantry_Division_%28United_States%29) of the [U.S. First Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._First_Army) and the [Soviet 58th Guards Division](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Soviet_58th_Guards_Division&action=edit) of the [5th Guards Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Soviet_5th_Guards_Army&action=edit) near [Torgau](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torgau), on the river [Elbe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elbe).

On [April 30](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/April_30), [1945](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1945), realizing that all was lost, [Adolf Hitler](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adolf_Hitler) committed suicide in his [bunker](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F%C3%BChrerbunker) along with [Eva Braun](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eva_Braun), his long-term mistress who had married him hours before their joint suicide. In [his last testament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Last_will_and_testament_of_Adolf_Hitler) Hitler appointed his successors; [Karl Dönitz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_D%C3%B6nitz) as the new [*Reichspräsident*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reichspr%C3%A4sident) ("President of Germany") and [Joseph Goebbels](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Goebbels) as the new [*Reichskanzler*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chancellor_of_Germany) ([Chancellor of Germany](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chancellor_of_Germany)). However, Goebbels committed suicide on [May 1](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_1), [1945](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1945), leaving Dönitz to orchestrate negotiations of surrender. Dönitz appointed [Ludwig von Krosigk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ludwig_Graf_Schwerin_von_Krosigk) as *Reichskanzler*.

On [May 1](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_1) SS General [Karl Wolff](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Wolff), after prolonged unauthorized secret negotiations named [Operation Sunrise](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Crossword), with the [Western Allies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allies_of_World_War_II), and the [Commander-in-Chief](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commander-in-Chief) of the [German Tenth Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Tenth_Army), General [Heinrich von Vietinghoff](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heinrich_von_Vietinghoff), which were viewed as trying to reach a [separate peace](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Separate_peace) by the [Soviet Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union), ordered all German armed forces in Italy to cease hostilities and signed a surrender document which stipulated that all German forces in Italy were to surrender unconditionally to the Allies on [May 2](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_2). The [Battle of Berlin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Berlin) ended on [May 2](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_2), when the commandant, General [Helmuth Weidling](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helmuth_Weidling), surrendered the city to the [Soviet army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Army).

On [May 4](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_4), [1945](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1945), the British [Field Marshal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Field_Marshal) [Montgomery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernard_Law_Montgomery%2C_1st_Viscount_Montgomery_of_Alamein) took the unconditional military surrender from Grand Admiral [Hans Georg von Friedburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans_Georg_von_Friedburg), and General [Hans Kinzel](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Hans_Kinzel&action=edit), of all German forces "in Holland, in northwest Germany including the Frisian Islands and Heligoland and all other islands, in Schleswig-Holstein, and in Denmark… including all naval ships in these areas" on [Lüneburg Heath](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%C3%BCneburg_Heath); an area between the cities of [Hamburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamburg), [Hanover](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanover) and [Bremen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bremen_%28city%29). As the operational commander of some of these forces was Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz, this signaled that the European war was over.

On [May 5](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_5) Dönitz ordered all [U-boats](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U-boat) to cease offensive operations and return to their bases. At 14:30 General [Hermann Foertsch](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Hermann_Foertsch&action=edit) surrendered all forces between the [Bohemian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bohemia) mountains and the [Upper Inn river](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inn_River) to the American General [Jacob L. Devers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacob_L._Devers), commander of the [American 6th Army Group](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_6th_Army_Group). At 16:00 General [Johannes Blaskowitz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Blaskowitz), the German commander-in-chief in the Netherlands, surrendered to Canadian General [Charles Foulkes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Foulkes_%28Canadian%29) in the small Dutch town of [Wageningen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wageningen) in the presence of [Prince Bernhard](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prince_Bernhard) (acting as commander-in-chief of the Dutch Interior Forces).

Deposition of captured [1st SS Division Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1st_SS_Division_Leibstandarte_SS_Adolf_Hitler) standards by Soviet soldiers near the [Kremlin Wall](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kremlin_Wall) during the [Victory Parade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moscow_Victory_Parade), [June 24](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/June_24), [1945](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1945).

On [May 6](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_6) at 18:00, General [Hermann Niehoff](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Hermann_Niehoff&action=edit) the commandant of [Breslau](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Breslau), a fortress city surrounded and besieged for months, surrendered to the Soviets. Half an hour later General [Alfred Jodl](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Jodl) arrived in [Rheims](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rheims) and following Dönitz's instructions offered to surrender all forces fighting the Western Allies. This was exactly the same negotiating position that von Friedburg had initially made to Montgomery, and like Montgomery the [Supreme Allied Commander](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supreme_Allied_Commander), General [Dwight D. Eisenhower](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dwight_D._Eisenhower), threatened to break off all negotiations unless the Germans agreed to a complete unconditional surrender. Jodl sent a signal to Dönitz, who was in [Flensburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flensburg), informing him of Eisenhower's position. Shortly after midnight Dönitz, accepting the inevitable, sent a signal to Jodl authorizing the complete and total surrender of all German forces.

At 02:41 on the morning of, [May 7](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_7), [1945](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1945), at the [SHAEF](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supreme_Headquarters_Allied_Expeditionary_Force) headquarters in Rheims, [France](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France), the Chief-of-Staff of the [German Armed Forces High Command](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Armed_Forces_High_Command), General [Alfred Jodl](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Jodl), signed the unconditional [surrender documents for all German forces](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Instrument_of_Surrender%2C_1945) to the Allies. It included the phrase "All forces under German control to cease active operations at 2301 hours [Central European Time](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_European_Time) on [May 8](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_8) 1945". The next day, shortly before midnight, German officials in Berlin signed a similar document, explicitly surrendering to Soviet forces, in the presence of General [Georgi Zhukov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgi_Zhukov).

News of the surrender broke in the West on [May 8](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_8), and celebrations erupted throughout Europe. In the United States Americans awoke to the news and declared [May 8](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_8) [V-E Day](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victory_in_Europe_Day). As the [Soviet Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union) was to the east of Germany it was [May 9](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_9) [Moscow Time](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moscow_Time) when German military surrender became effective, which is why [Russia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia) and many other European countries east of Germany commemorate [Victory Day](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victory_Day_%28Eastern_Europe%29) on [May 9](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_9).

Karl Dönitz continued to act as head of state, but his [Flensburg government](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flensburg_government) (so-called because it was based at [Flensburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flensburg) and controlled only a small area around the town) was not recognized by the Allied powers and was dissolved when its members were captured and arrested by [British](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom) forces on [May 23](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_23), [1945](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1945) at Flensburg. The Allies had a problem, because they realized that although the German armed forces had surrendered unconditionally, SHAEF had failed to use the document created by the "[European Advisory Commission](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Advisory_Commission)" (EAC) and so the civilian German government had not. This was considered a very important issue, because just as the civilian, but not military, surrender in 1918 had been used by Hitler to create the "stab in the back" argument, the Allies did not want to give a future hostile German regime a legal argument to resurrect an old quarrel. Eventually they decided not to recognize Dönitz and to sign a four-power document instead, creating the [Allied Control Council](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allied_Control_Council) which included the following:

The Governments of the United States of America, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United Kingdom, and the Provisional Government of the French Republic, hereby assume supreme authority with respect to Germany, including all the powers possessed by the German Government, the High Command and any state, municipal, or local government or authority. The assumption, for the purposes stated above, of the said authority and powers does not affect the annexation of Germany. [US Department of State, Treaties and Other International Acts Series, No. 1520.]

On [5 July](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/July_5) [1945](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1945) the four powers signed the document in Berlin and the [*de facto*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_facto) became the [*de jure*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_jure). In July/August 1945 the Allied leaders planned the new postwar German government, resettled war territory boundaries, ordered German [demilitarization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demilitarization), [denazification](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denazification) and settlements of [war reparations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_reparations) at the [Potsdam Conference](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potsdam_Conference).