

Zelensky Angers Russia with Plan to Change Date of Victory in Europe Day

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The annual Victory Day remembrance was marred by an announcement by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky today that his country intended to change the day that it celebrated the defeat of Nazi Germany.

The Soviet Union commemorated May 9 as Victory in Europe Day because, with time zone differences, that was the date the Nazi surrender was signed.

Russia has continued the tradition since the fall of the Soviet Union while western Europe marks the surrender on May 8.

The Soviet Union lost about 27 million troops and civilians during the war, by far the largest number of casualties of any nation in the conflict.

The attack by the Nazis in 1941 was the largest invasion in history and involved millions of troops.

The Red Army bore the brunt of vicious fighting in Europe for the next four years. After suffering severe hardship to the population, including the loss of more than half a million people at the brutal siege of Stalingrad, it managed to drive the Nazis back.

But Mr Zelensky said:

“Today I am submitting a Bill to the Verkhovna Rada [parliament] of Ukraine proposing that May 8 be the Day of Remembrance and Victory over Nazism in the Second World War of 1939-1945.”

Mr Zelensky said that Ukraine, like western European nations, would instead adopt May 9 as Europe Day, a celebration of “peace and unity in Europe.”

Russia's Foreign Affairs spokeswoman Maria Zakharova attacked the move. Ms Zakharova said:

"What could be worse than an enemy? A traitor. This is Zelensky. The new incarnation of Judas in the 21st century.

She said:

"By cancelling Victory Day on May 9, he betrayed his ancestors once and for all."

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