

Harry S. Truman (1884-1972)

## **Radio Address to the American People After the Signing of the Terms of Unconditional Surrender by Japan**

*given on September 1, 1945*

My fellow Americans, and the Supreme Allied Commander, General MacArthur, in Tokyo Bay:

The thoughts and hopes of all America--indeed of all the civilized world--are centered tonight on the battleship Missouri. There on that small piece of American soil anchored in Tokyo Harbor the Japanese have just officially laid down their arms. They have signed terms of unconditional surrender.

- 5 Four years ago, the thoughts and fears of the whole civilized world were centered on another piece of American soil--Pearl Harbor. The mighty threat to civilization which began there is now laid at rest. It was a long road to Tokyo--and a bloody one.

We shall not forget Pearl Harbor.

The Japanese militarists will not forget the U.S.S. Missouri.

- 10 The evil done by the Japanese war lords can never be repaired or forgotten. But their power to destroy and kill has been taken from them. Their armies and what is left of their Navy are now impotent.

To all of us there comes first a sense of gratitude to Almighty God who sustained us and our Allies in the dark days of grave danger, who made us to grow from weakness into the strongest fighting force in history, and who has now seen us overcome the forces of tyranny that sought to destroy His civilization.

- 15 God grant that in our pride of the hour, we may not forget the hard tasks that are still before us; that we may approach these with the same courage, zeal, and patience with which we faced the trials and problems of the past 4 years.

- Our first thoughts, of course--thoughts of gratefulness and deep obligation--go out to those of our loved ones who have been killed or maimed in this terrible war. On land and sea and in the air, American men and women have given their lives so that this day of ultimate victory might come and assure the survival of a civilized world. No victory can  
20 make good their loss.

We think of those whom death in this war has hurt, taking from them fathers, husbands, sons, brothers, and sisters whom they loved. No victory can bring back the faces they longed to see.

- Only the knowledge that the victory, which these sacrifices have made possible, will be wisely used, can give them any comfort. It is our responsibility--ours, the living--to see to it that this victory shall be a monument worthy of the  
25 dead who died to win it.

We think of all the millions of men and women in our armed forces and merchant marine all over the world who, after years of sacrifice and hardship and peril, have been spared by Providence from harm.

We think of all the men and women and children who during these years have carried on at home, in lonesomeness and anxiety and fear.

- 30 Our thoughts go out to the millions of American workers and businessmen, to our farmers and miners--to all those who have built up this country's fighting strength, and who have shipped to our Allies the means to resist and overcome the enemy.

- Our thoughts go out to our civil servants and to the thousands of Americans who, at personal sacrifice, have come to serve in our Government during these trying years; to the members of the Selective Service boards and ration boards;  
35 to the civilian defense and Red Cross workers; to the men and women in the USO and in the entertainment world--to all those who have helped in this cooperative struggle to preserve liberty and decency in the world.

We think of our departed gallant leader, Franklin D. Roosevelt, defender of democracy, architect of world peace and cooperation.

And our thoughts go out to our gallant Allies in this war: to those who resisted the invaders; to those who were not  
40 strong enough to hold out, but who, nevertheless, kept the fires of resistance alive within the souls of their people; to  
those who stood up against great odds and held the line, until the United Nations together were able to supply the arms  
and the men with which to overcome the forces of evil.

This is a victory of more than arms alone. This is a victory of liberty over tyranny.

From our war plants rolled the tanks and planes which blasted their way to the heart of our enemies; from our  
45 shipyards sprang the ships which bridged all the oceans of the world for our weapons and supplies; from our farms  
came the food and fiber for our armies and navies and for our Allies in all the corners of the earth; from our mines and  
factories came the raw materials and the finished products which gave us the equipment to overcome our enemies.

But back of it all were the will and spirit and determination of a free people--who know what freedom is, and who  
know that it is worth whatever price they had to pay to preserve it.

50 It was the spirit of liberty which gave us our armed strength and which made our men invincible in battle. We now  
know that that spirit of liberty, the freedom of the individual, and the personal dignity of man, are the strongest and  
toughest and most enduring forces in all the world.

And so on V-J Day we take renewed faith and pride in our own way of life. We have had our day of rejoicing over this  
victory. We have had our day of prayer and devotion. Now let us set aside V-J Day as one of renewed consecration to  
55 the principles which have made us the strongest nation on earth and which, in this war, we have striven so mightily to  
preserve.

Those principles provide the faith, the hope, and the opportunity which help men to improve themselves and their lot.  
Liberty does not make all men perfect nor all society secure. But it has provided more solid progress and happiness  
and decency for more people than any other philosophy of government in history. And this day has shown again that it  
60 provides the greatest strength and the greatest power which man has ever reached.

We know that under it we can meet the hard problems of peace which have come upon us. A free people with free  
Allies, who can develop an atomic bomb, can use the same skill and energy and determination to overcome all the  
difficulties ahead.

Victory always has its burdens and its responsibilities as well as its rejoicing.

65 But we face the future and all its dangers with great confidence and great hope. America can build for itself a future of  
employment and security. Together with the United Nations, it can build a world of peace rounded on justice, fair  
dealing, and tolerance.

As President of the United States, I proclaim Sunday, September the second, 1945, to be V-J Day--the day of formal  
surrender by Japan. It is not yet the day for the formal proclamation of the end of the war nor of the cessation of  
70 hostilities. But it is a day which we Americans shall always remember as a day of retribution--as we remember that  
other day, the day of infamy.

From this day we move forward. We move toward a new era of security at home. With the other United Nations we  
move toward a new and better world of cooperation, of peace and international good will and cooperation.

God's help has brought us to this day of victory. With His help we will attain that peace and prosperity for ourselves  
75 and all the world in the years ahead.

(1266 words)

Quelle: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=12366&st=&st1=>

## Aufgaben

1. What happened aboard the battleship Missouri?
2. How many years did it take for the U. S. to defeat the Empire of Japan?
3. What comfort did President Truman offer to the families who lost loved ones during the war?
4. Truman is considered to be a President who could relate to, and represent the common man. What evidence can  
be found in this speech to support this idea?
5. Why was it fitting for the President to mention Franklin Roosevelt in this speech?

7. In his address President Truman proclaimed America to be "the strongest nation on earth." Can we still make this claim today? Support your answer with specific examples.
8. President Truman reminded Americans that along with "rejoicing" the victory, the nation faced "difficulties." In your opinion, what were the problems Truman was referring to?
9. In his speech President Truman proclaimed September 2, 1945 to be V-J Day, a day "of retribution." What do you think he meant?
10. What did you learn about President Truman by listening to or reading this speech? What did this speech tell you about American society during this era?
11. When Truman spoke of the "burdens and responsibilities" of the United States as a victorious nation, what did he mean? How does the US treat the people of Japan after their surrender? What is the US relationship with Japan today? Discuss.
12. 2. The United States demanded that the Empire of Japan sign "terms of unconditional surrender." What does unconditional surrender mean? Was the United States justified in making this demand? Discuss.