

For decades May 9 has been a very big day Russia and yesterday it was bigger than ever. First of all, it commemorates Victory Day, when Nazi Germany signed surrender documents with the Soviet Union, although the Germans had in fact surrendered a day earlier to a joint American-Soviet delegation. [Russia's deep inferiority complex vis-à-vis the West demanded a separate surrender solely to them.] The Russian belief that they won WW II on behalf of its feeble Western allies is deep, persistent and key to Moscow's claim that its traditional heroism will guarantee it victory over Ukraine. Indeed many more Russians perished in that terrible conflict than all the other allies put together, but there are some important realities that Moscow prefers to ignore. One is that the United States provided massive amounts of critical material, including warplanes, trucks and jeeps, explosives and so on. Although modern Russia denies that this was essential to their success, both Stalin and Khrushchev knew the truth, with the latter writing "If the United States had not helped us, we would not have won the war". Another inconvenient fact is that proportionally more Ukrainians died in the war than Russians.

In any event, this national holiday was a chance for Moscow to do its traditional chest thumping, with parades of weapons systems and goose-stepping troops. And those boots were especially shiny yesterday because it was also the day when Vladimir Putin was inaugurated for yet another term of office. De facto Russian



leader since 2000, if he survives his current stint he will have been in charge of his country for 30 years.

While Russia wallowed in its delusional greatness, Ukraine itself was subjected to a massive bombardment targeting its power generation infrastructure with 55 missiles and 21 Shahed drones.