

First Hand – May 8 1945 as remembered by the participants

Audio-feature on the surrender in Berlin-Karlshorst

The audio feature includes the verbatim recollections of eyewitnesses from their memoirs about the signing of the surrender on May 8 in Berlin-Karlshorst.

The following eyewitnesses have their say:

General Georgy Zhukov:

Commander-in-Chief of the 1st Belorussian Front, which, together with the 1st Ukrainian Front, captured Berlin.

The quotations are based on Zhukov's memoirs published in German in 1976, which are derived from his original memoirs published in Russian in 1974. There are numerous versions of Zhukov's memoirs, which have been revised repeatedly. However, the act of surrender is described consistently across the various sources.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder:

Deputy to Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander of the Western Allied forces (Allied Expeditionary Force).

Tedder published his memoirs in 1966. There is no German edition.

General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny:

Commander-in-Chief of the French Army, who was sent by his government—the exile government under de Gaulle that had returned from Great Britain.

De Lattre published his memoirs in 1949; reprinted in 2015. There is no German edition.

Captain Harry C. Butcher:

Originally a radio journalist, he served as Eisenhower's aide-de-camp and was part of his closest circle. As a trusted confidant of Eisenhower, he accompanied him to Berlin.

Butcher published his memoirs in 1946, which were also released in a German translation in the same year.

Major Fritz Oppenheimer:

An officer in the US Army and advisor in the legal department on Eisenhower's staff. As a Jewish lawyer from Berlin, he had fled to the USA before the Holocaust. Due to his knowledge of German, he was assigned as a permanent escort for the German delegation.

The quotations come from a report by Oppenheimer dated May 12, 1945, which he explicitly described as personal. A copy of this personal report is held in the State Archive of Stuttgart. Based on this, a publication was made in 1979, but it includes only parts of the report in German translation. The museum has received an identical copy of the original report from the family estate.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny, and General Georgy Zhukov are three of the four signatories of the surrender document and represent the British, French, and Soviet perspectives. **Captain Harry C. Butcher** provides the complementary American viewpoint. The German perspective does not appear as an independent narrative but rather as observations by **Major Fritz Oppenheimer**, who, as a German serving with the Americans, accompanied and supervised the German delegation.

Bibliographic information for the memoirs:

- De Lattre de Tassigny, Jean, *Histoire de la 1re Armée Francaise*, Paris 2015 (reprint von 1949), S. 593-620
- Tedder, Arthur, *With Prejudice. The War Memories of Marshal of the Royal Air Force Lord Tedder*, London 1966, S. 681-686
- Butcher, Harry C. *Three Years with Eisenhower*, London/ Toronto 1946, S. 680-707 [German edition: *Drei Jahre mit Eisenhower*, Bern 1946]
- Oppenheimer, Fritz, unpublished manuscript, Landesarchiv Baden- Württemberg, Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart Q 1/8 Bü 11, published in excerpts in: Manfred Overesch, *Deutschland 1945-1949, Königstein/Taunus 1979*, S. 177-181 (see also: Klaus Bergmann/Gerhard Schneider (Hg.), 1945. *Ein Lesebuch*, Hannover 1985, S. 93)
- Shukow, Georgi Konstantinowitsch, *Erinnerungen und Gedanken*, 8. Aufl. Berlin (Ost) 1987, S. 315-317