

Victory in Europe: May 8, 1945

40 years later, V-E Day recalled

RIOT LOSS MILLIONS

THE HALIFAX MAIL

"What Stands If Freedom Falls — Who Dies If England Lives?"

HALIFAX, CANADA, WEDNESDAY, MAY 8, 1945



Never fly again over Germany

Canadian troops with a flag that will never fly again over Germany. Picture was taken just hours before V-E Day.

V-E Day mob runs loose for hours

Bill Elrick of Midland provided with a copy of the May 9, 1945, edition of The Halifax Mail. Front page stories dealt with the riot which caused a reign of terror in Halifax shortly after V-E Day (May 8, 1945) was announced. Elrick served in the Navy as a firefighter during the war.

Wednesday, May 9th 1945

CHEERING MILLIONS GREET VE-DAY

An Eyewitness Account

What War's End Looked Like From Ringside Seat

Editor's Note: When Allied and German commanders met to sign an official end to the war in Europe, Sgt. Ross D. Parry, Maple Leaf staff correspondent, was there to write this first-hand, eye-witness account of what went on. He was one of 20 newspapermen representing the press of the United Nations permitted to cover the armistice proceedings.

By SGT. ROSS D. PARRY (Maple Leaf Special Correspondent)

SUPREME FORWARD HEADQUARTERS AT RHEIMS

—May 7 at 5 a.m.—As I write the day is breaking. It is two and one-half hours since Germany formally surrendered to the Allied nations and the world does not yet know that the war in Europe is over.

To this correspondent, who left Paris hurriedly with a specially-chosen group of war correspondents to cover this, the greatest story of the war for The Maple Leaf, it's hardly possible to describe the feelings of those who witnessed the occasion of Germany's complete and final surrender. It was like a stage drama. The characters seemed unreal. And yet it lacked any of the trimmings which a theatre setting would have provided.



Sgt. Parry Was ... Suitably Impressed

It was difficult to absorb at the moment the significance of the events I was watching. I tried to think of the number of people it would affect.

After a night of anxious waiting as the surrender talks went on in the room above us, we were finally called suddenly to the war room of supreme headquarters, the same room from which only last week General Eisenhower and his commanders were directing an all-out and final fight against the German.

Pleanty of Room

Luckily, the war room was of adequate size to accommodate us and I wound up standing about 12 feet from the oblong surrender table around which, in a few minutes, Allied and German representatives would end the war.

Great lights flooded the room as cameramen prepared to record this easiest moment in recallable history. The light was dazzling as it reflected from the cellophane-covered battlemaps of Europe that lined the walls.

United Nations Go All-Out In Victory Salute

By SGT. RON POULTON (Staff Writer, The Maple Leaf)

The only business the people of the United Nations went about yesterday was the business of going happily mad. In the streets of little towns and big, millions found out how wise the man was who once said that it was sometime fun to be crazy.

In any language the lid was off, the war with Germany was over. And there were five years, eight months and five days of war nerves to shake loose. While radios blared forth the news, while the voice of a sob singer tugged at the heart strings with the song: "When the lights go on again all over the world, when the boys come home again all over the world," while hastily assembled bands played stridently, weariness vanished and that ethereal thing called "hope" wore the bright toggery of realization.

Mardi Gras

Driving from Paris to Brussels Monday night was like moving through a miniature 175-mile Mardi Gras. Church bells spread the mellow call of peace. Village folk paraded up and down the streets of every town, singing "Madelon" and "The Marseillaise." There were fireworks, garished with rounds from blunderbusses. There was plenty of wine and song. And there were lights everywhere. But cognac was still 600 francs a bottle.

Across the Channel, across the Atlantic the scenes were duplicated. The languages were different. The screams of delight, the sounds of cheering, the heady melody of natural laughter were the same. And there was praying done, in great cathedrals and little churches everywhere.

In Germany over 100,000 British troops celebrated with bonfires and Very lights of a dozen colors. There were festivities in every mess and billet from the Weser to the

Maple Leaf Writer's Personal Log in Build-Up to Surrender

BY SGT. ROSS D. PARRY (Maple Leaf Special Correspondent)

SUPREME FORWARD HEADQUARTERS—RHEIMS

—May 6: The following is a running commentary of events from the time I arrived at supreme headquarters until Germany signed unconditional surrender and the war in Europe was over.

Sidelights On German Surrender

All Jodl had as credentials for signing was a statement written by Doenitz. Jodl is a professed Nazi and has been recognized as one of Hitler's chief supporters.

While no one could explain the origin of the custom, it was noted that Eisenhower's absence from the conference was due to the fact that surrender terms are always discussed on a chief-of-staff level.

On meeting American Gen. Bell Smith, Friedberg explained their fear of Wehrmacht soldiers being unnecessarily killed by Russians. "So what," was the quintessence of Smith's reply. Unconditional surrender was the answer.

While sweating out the surrender terms, alone, Friedberg and Poleck had sandwiches and whiskey. (Ain't even NAAFI day yet, either.)

Friedberg sent a message to Doenitz in SHAEF code — to Second British Army and then on by courier. The Hun admiral told Doenitz that the new government would be held responsible for the guilt of continuance of hostilities unless they agreed promptly to surrender terms.

Prime Minister Churchill phoned

1730—Dropped down on a makeshift airport outside Rheims after a hurried flight in a C-47 transport from Paris where on a moment's notice a small group of war correspondents, representing the press and radio of the world, were despatched.

1745—Arrived in the specially-prepared conference room outside the now-famous conference room where the Germans accepted complete and unconditional surrender. Having been briefed on fast-moving events of the past two days, started to compile notes.

1805—It is revealed that Col. Gen. Gustaf Jodl, German chief of staff and representing the German Government, arrived for talks at 1720 hours. He had with him his personal aide, Major G. S. Oxenius. At the airport, they were met by Brigadier E. J. Ford, chief of intelligence at SHAEF. General Ford saluted but Jodl refused to return it and strutted arrogantly to the waiting car.

1835—Story told that Gen. Admiral Friedberg, the first German leader to reach supreme headquarters with surrender proposals, demanded water and more water after his preliminary conference with the Allied chief of staff during which he apparently and literally "sweat it out."

1845—Commander Harry Butcher, naval aide to General Eisenhower, came in and passed around the two pens which will be used for the signing of surrender terms. They are Parker (what an advertisement!) 57's, new, with khaki barrel and gold cap. They were left over from a supply that General Eisenhower had in North Africa.