

Tense Public Takes Victory News Quietly

By RUTLEDGE CARTER

Quietly, and yet with an air of repressed excitement, Philadelphians yesterday heard the news that Germany had surrendered.

Then they waited hour after hour for official confirmation.

At 9.37 A. M. the news, reported by the Associated Press, was flashed over the radio. By 10 A. M. small crowds, eager and expectant, gathered in the central part of the city; some ticker tape and torn newspapers streamed from office buildings; there was some cheering and back-slapping among office workers and pedestrians; a few motorists sounded horns in noisy jubilation.

At 2 P. M. crowds were still gathered outside City Hall and at Broad and Chestnut sts. But they quickly began to melt away as those who had waited for hours gave up hope again that the official V-E Day had arrived.

Celebrations Delayed

The citizens in general and the city officially held off celebrating until the news is proclaimed personally by President Truman. And such a proclamation did not come yesterday.

But last night several thousand impatient souls decided not to wait.

The majority went to the central city, parading gleefully up and down Chestnut, Market and Walnut sts.

Others went to night clubs and taprooms. They drank and sang and slapped backs and talked of victory. Business, however, was far short of what was expected, only two night clubs reporting capacity crowds.

Saturday Night Crowd

The crowd was called by police "just an ordinary Saturday night crowd on Monday night." It was cheerful and happy, but not boisterous.

Hundreds of teen-age girls appeared to be having the most fun. They skipped and danced through the streets, frequently grabbing the arms of servicemen.

But the soldiers and sailors, who apparently had been given orders not to participate in any celebrations, shied away as shore patrolmen watched them closely.

"Gosh," said one soldier as he tore himself away from a couple of girls, "this is worse than fighting."

At Broad and Locust sts., the Hegeman String Band, which played last night at the Academy of Music, gave an impromptu victory concert as hundreds of persons clapped and cheered.

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Mayor Makes Ready

When the news of Germany's surrender first was announced, Mayor Bernard Samuel made ready to sound the air-raid sirens which would officially proclaim victory.

Informed by Judge Robert V. Bolger that President Truman soon would make the official announcement, the Mayor and Judge Harry S. McDevitt, chairman of the Philadelphia Council of Defense, hurried to the fire operator's room on the sixth floor of City Hall shortly before noon. In the room is located the control button which will sound the sirens.

Both the Mayor and the Judge even posed for pictures with their fingers on the button.

"But," the Mayor said, "that button is never going to be pushed until the surrender news is officially proclaimed."

Mayor Gives Up

At 12.57 P. M. the Mayor glumly went back to his office. He did not do so until he had been told that V-E Day would not be proclaimed officially until today.

Gov. Martin took the same position as Mayor Samuel. He said he would not release his V-E proclamation, which was mailed to Pennsylvania editors two weeks ago, until the end of the European war is announced by President Truman.

The Governor did appear before a joint session of the House and Senate to say that everybody should be thankful "the war in Europe is almost ended," but he expressed regret he was unable to make any announcement of its termination.

Three Judges Close Courts

Three Judges closed their courts in City Hall when they heard the news. They were Judge Bolger, of Orphans' Court, and Judges Clare G. Fenerty and Joseph L. Kun, of Common Pleas Court. The other courts remained open.

Said Judge Kun: "While the announcement of V-E Day is not strictly speaking official, it is so imminent that we shall take notice of it, and adjourn the court for the rest of the day in gratitude for this epochal event."

To the average Philadelphia citizen the news without official confirmation was anti-climactic.

Within the last 10 days he had been prepared to celebrate so many different V-E days that he didn't appear to know what to do.

There was the false announcement on Saturday, April 28, that Germany had surrendered. Many had celebrated that night.

Other "Victory Events"

Then the fall of Berlin was taken by many to signify V-E Day. There was also the death of Hitler and the sudden collapse and wholesale surrender of German armies.

And during the day central city, in most war plants, in office buildings and in homes there was the same general theme — "We're going to wait until those sirens sound. Then we'll know it is true."

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Few Plants Closed

A few war plants closed.

Some 3000 workers at the Cramp Shipbuilding Company dropped their tools without official sanction and walked from the yard, cheering wildly.

They received the news of the surrender at 10.30 A. M., and adding to the confusion, the fire siren at the yard sounded simultaneously. The workers thought the siren signified that V-E Day was actually here. They did not know it was an alarm.

Similar confusion was evident at the Western Electric Company plant at B st. and Allegheny ave. when the workers there received the news at 10 A. M. They stood around laughing and cheering. Finally company officials told them to go home and to come back to work on Thursday. All 750 employees left.

At the American Engineering Company, Aramingo and Cumberland sts., 250 employees, or half the company's personnel, walked out without permission. The others remained at work and said they would do so until they were told to go home.

Still Japan, WPB Says

Scores of war plants telephoned to the War Production Board to find out just what to do. The majority of them wanted to close and let their workers celebrate.

They all received the same answer: "We still have the war with Japan to win. It's alright to have a celebration for half an hour or so, just to let off steam. But keep working, and this other war will be over all the sooner."

Phone Wire Swamped

The news was announced at 9.37 A. M. and within a few minutes telephone lines were swamped with persons seeking official confirmation.

Operators at the Philadelphia Record alone received more than 4000 telephone calls within two hours and thousands of other persons who attempted to telephone could not get their calls through.

Thousands of calls were received by 20 operators at the City's Electrical Bureau. James Hammond, chief operator of the bureau, said it was perhaps the busiest two hours the bureau has ever had.

Federal agencies reported that they received more than 3000 telephone calls, the heaviest load in their history. It was virtually impossible for an hour or more for outside calls to be made from most agencies.

Excitement Around City Hall

What excitement there was centered around City Hall and office buildings.

Crowds, a few hundred in each, gathered at City Hall watching guards place Victory flags over the arch facing east on Market st. and tensely watching the news flashes on the building of the Evening Bulletin.

Faces Tense and Nervous

There was no cheering. There were a few grins, but most faces were tense and nervous as the crowds waited for the official con-

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firmation that did not come. A few elderly women, some with sons in the armed forces, wept.

Those who did comment had virtually the same thing to say—"I'm waiting for those sirens to blow. Then I'll celebrate."

Finally those who had waited became impatient. For a few moments there was a steady chant of "Blow the whistles. Blow the whistles."

V-E Buttons Sold



A few minutes later a hawker appeared with V-E buttons. They were white and bore the letters V-E in red and blue.

Within an hour he sold more than 300 and those in the crowd pinned them on, and some continued to wait. Many who had waited since 10 A. M. did not go home until after 2 P. M.

Many soldiers and sailors were gathered in small groups in Market, Walnut and Chestnut sts. One said: "Even if it's true, it doesn't mean a thing. It's over for us when we get out of this uniform."

Only two or three men were in the USO Hospitality Center, and one of them, a soldier, sat at a desk writing a poem of victory. "This may be a great poem," he said, "but I'd rather have my discharge papers."

Girls Toss Ticker Tape

Hundreds of girl workers in office buildings stood in windows tossing out ticker tape, torn newspapers and telephone books, memo pads and advertising folders. Work in many offices virtually ceased.

In some parts of Market, Arch, Chestnut and 16th sts. the paper came down so thickly that traffic was slowed down and for a few minutes virtually brought to a halt.

Hundreds of pounds of paper were tossed from the windows of the buildings of Pennsylvania Suburban Station and the Insurance Company of North America, which face each other across Cuthbert st. Most of this paper fluttered past the windows of the War Production Board in the suburban building which has been spearheading a drive to salvage waste paper.

At noon the office buildings poured out their workers for the lunch hour. Thousands of girls, grinning and laughing, came out prepared to join in victory celebrations, and then to their displeasure discovered there weren't any.

Crowds Impatient

They found the largest crowd, one which was quiet and yet taut, at Broad and Chestnut sts. But there was no display of joy or excitement; there were merely signs of impatience at the delay in the official announcement.

Street vendors wearily barked

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their wares, and found few sales. Several were selling red, white and blue horns, and they cried, "Buy your victory horns. Blow in V-E Day." Others were selling bags of confetti, at 15 cents each, but found virtually no buyers.

The horns were being sold for various prices. At City Hall the asking price was 25 cents, at Reading Terminal 15 cents and at many other intersections 10 cents.

16 Students Parade

Perhaps the noisiest street celebration was given by 15 boys and a girl, all students at Germantown High School, who had been rehearsing at the Academy of Music. They paraded on Market st., singing patriotic songs, as pedestrians applauded them.

Many office workers stopped work to lean from windows. That appeared to upset some servicemen.

A second lieutenant stood outside the Army Signal Corps building at Broad and Cherry sts. and shouted to men and women standing at windows:

"Get back to work, get back to work. Don't you know there's a war on?"

Stores Take Precautions

Many central city stores, fearful that a crush of celebrants would smash plate glass windows, took precautions. An iron rail was set up in front of a whole block of stores on the south side of Market st. between 7th and 8th sts. Other stores boarded windows.

At the Reading Terminal, wooden fences, used during the PTC strike, were placed at the 12th and Market sts. entrance, and only those with tickets or definite business were admitted to the station.

Department stores, which had planned to close on V-E Day, remained open. Executives characterized yesterday as just "an ordinary shopping Monday."

On the soberer side was the reaction of many men and women who have sons in the service or who have lost sons in battle.

Prayer Services Held

They walked, sometimes alone, sometimes in small groups, into churches and prayed silently.

Religious services were held last night in Jewish synagogues throughout the city. In announcing the call to prayer, Rabbi Maxwell M. Farber, president of the Philadelphia Board of Jewish Ministers and rabbi of Congregation Emanu-El, said:

"With deep humility and heartfelt thanks to mighty God, we hear the news that peace has come to war-stricken Europe. Our spirits are uplifted as we realize that men have stopped killing each other.

"We should celebrate this day with quiet dignity and restraint in prayer and in dedication to the greater service of God and man resolved to devote ourselves to the task of removing the causes of war and to bring reality in our day the words of prophet—'Nation shall not lift up sword

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against nation, neither shall they learn of war any more.'"

Announced in Schools

The news was announced in the public schools, but there was no excitement and no celebration among the children. Just a bare announcement was read to them, a few minutes was given for the news to sink in, and then the pupils went back to their studies.

The police department had taken every precaution to make certain that any celebration would not get out of bounds.

When the police shift that was to go off duty at 8 A. M. today reported off, all were told to report back to their stations and stand by for further orders. They were not sent home until after noon when it appeared that the official announcement would not come today.

It is the police plan to call all of the city's 6200 policemen and 10,000 auxiliary policemen on duty as soon as victory in Europe is officially proclaimed. They have been instructed to report to their stations as soon as the victory sirens sound.

Gather Outdoors

In the homes there was a similar air of calm and repressed excitement. Most housewives stuck closely to their radios. Others gathered outdoors in small groups discussing the news.

And all decided to postpone any house parties until the official confirmation arrived.

One grey-haired mother decided to go to the home of a daughter whose husband is overseas. She walked through the subway turnstile at 13th and Market sts. and then abruptly stopped and said, "Oh, I've lost my exchange."

"Why, lady, it's in your hand," a man told her.

"Goodness," she said, "I'm so excited over our licking Germany that I don't know what I'm doing."

Nazi Prisoners Hear News

News of Germany's surrender first reached 130 German prisoners of war interned at the National Guard Armory, Ogontz and Somerville aves., over a radio in their barber shop. There was no display of emotion.

The prisoners were sent as usual to their regular jobs — some at the Philadelphia Quartermaster Depot, some at the U. S. Signal Corps and a few to the National Cemetery on Limekiln pk.

Returned to Armory

Shortly after 10 A. M., however, Lt. Robert J. Porter, commanding officer of the camp, arranged for the men to return to the armory as a precautionary measure. For the balance of the day they were kept there, mowing lawns and doing minor repair jobs.

The news spread rapidly through city, private and service hospitals, but attendants carefully watched over patients to make certain that they did not become unduly excited.

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Eastern Pen Quiet

At Eastern Penitentiary prisoners received the news over their cell radios.

"They heard it before I did," said Warden Herbert Smith, "but there wasn't even any yelling or shouting. When the official news comes, maybe they'll let off a little steam."

The feelings of scores of officers of the Pennsylvania State Guard, who are veterans of World War I, were summed up by Brig. Gen. John M. Gentner and Col. James B. Cusart. They issued a joint statement warning "the war in the Orient will undoubtedly be a long, bitter struggle," and urged that the nation's armed strength be kept at its present strength.

Siren Sets Off Excitement

In Ardmore, householders were tensely waiting for the official announcement when the air-raid siren on Lower Merion High School sounded. It had been announced that sounding of the siren would be the official proclamation of V-E Day.

Excitement swept through the community. Work virtually ceased in several plants. Then came the letdown—it was announced the siren sounded because of a mechanical defect.

Confusion in Delaware County

Confusion was general throughout Delaware county. President Judge Albert Dutton McDade adjourned the Delaware County Court sitting in Media as soon as he heard the news. He told the jurors not to report back to work until tomorrow.

A few small war plants in the Upper Darby section closed down and sent their workers home.