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It Was Sunny In PARIS

It wasn't as exciting as Liberation Day, but all over the city people sang, kissed each other and paraded through the streets.

Ticker tape and telephone books drop into Paris streets near the Opera after 3 P.M.

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PARIS.—On the Champs Elysees they were singing "It's a Long Way to Tipperary," and it was a long way even the few blocks from Fouquet's restaurant to the Arc de Triomphe if you tried to walk up the Champs on V-E Day in Paris. From one side of the broad and beautiful avenue to the other, all the way from the Obelisk in the Place de la Concorde to the Arc de Triomphe in the Place de l'Etoile, there was hardly any place to breathe and no place at all to move. That was the way it was in the Place de l'Opera and the Place de la Republique and all the other famous spots and in a lot of obscure little side streets that nobody but Parisians know.

Paris and her people, like the GIs of every nationality who helped flood the streets, were out to celebrate. It was a fine sunny day, a trifle too warm for comfort even if there had not been such crowds, but no one who remembered the cold winter in Paris or the cold winter in the fox holes minded that much.

The French Government had announced that the afternoon of May 8 and all of May 9 would be national holidays, but long before noon on the Eighth, most of the people had stopped work and taken to the streets or were perched in balconies and windows to watch the crowds below. At the Hotel Claridge, the door of the barbershop was open but inside you couldn't get anybody to wait on you; the barbers were all busy waxing their own mustaches and preparing for a big time.

"C'est aujourd'hui la victoire," they said, spreading their hands as if that were more than explanation enough for anyone. Practically the only people who were doing business were the proprietors of sidewalk cafes, the hawkers of flags and souvenirs and the newspaper vendors who sold out 20 different newspapers in no time at all and were busy all day handling the fresh extras that kept rolling off the presses in French and English. Here were some of the headlines: *"L'Allemagne Vaincue"* (Germany Vanquished); *"Ils Ont Capitule"* (They Have Capitulated); *"Le Jour de Gloire. . ."* (The Day of Glory . . .) and just plain *"C'est Fini!"*

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VE-DAY: PARIS

In the Place de l'Opera Parisians and Allied GIs await Gen. De Gaulle's broadcast.

At 1500 hours, when Gen. de Gaulle went on the radio to make an official announcement of the victory, the crowds were two layers deep in the Place de l'Opera, where pretty girls and children in their Sunday best perched on the shoulders of French soldiers and civilians to listen for the words they had been waiting so long to hear. Great blue loudspeakers on the balconies of the Opera and in every important *place* throughout the city, carried the general's message to the people and recordings repeated it at regular intervals the remainder of the day.

Down on the banks of the Seine, just opposite the *Ile de St. Louis*, an old French 75, which was used in the first World War, boomed out a salute all day and night. The weapon was captured by the Germans in the collapse of the French forces in 1940 and retaken by French troops in 1944. Crowds lined the river walls on both banks to watch the ceremony, the children and women plugging their ears with their finger tips to deaden the concussion from the gun.

Air raid sirens, so long a symbol of terror to the French and to all the war-torn world, this time sounded a message of freedom. And the people of Paris responded with a full-throated yell and the bedlam of every auto horn in the city.

All day long, teen-age boys and girls paraded down the great broad avenues and through the squares in their traditional *"monome"* formations, 10 and 15 abreast, arm in arm, waving the flags of all the Allied nations. At Marbeuf on the Champs Elysees, a huge throng of students formed a circle on the lawn and sang the stirring French songs, the *Marseillaise*, the *Internationale*, the *Madelon* and the great marching songs of many wars. Their leader conducted the singing perched on the shoulders of two schoolmates, using a pencil as a baton.

Many of the students wore paper hats made half of American and half of French flag designs, as they marched along the street, singing their favorite songs. In between they chanted *"Avec nous," "Avec nous"* over and over again, inviting crowds along the street to join them.

At the head of the columns of students, for whom it was a great day, were youths and girls on bicycles, riding as many as a dozen abreast, left hand on steering wheel, right hand on neighbor's shoulder. Behind the columns came jeeps and trucks, sedans and Jerry vehicles of every size and description, loaded to the axles with other happy and noisy French students.

Somewhere, three French girls had gotten hold of an American jeep. There were no GIs in the vehicle. The girls were civilians, in gay summer dresses. The one who drove waved gaily with one hand at the throttle. Everybody laughed. The MPs were too startled to even question the girls.

Another column was led by a GI driving a horse and buggy. He had lost the driver some place. He had also lost the reins. But he was undaunted. He held on to the horse's tail with both hands, using it as a whip and a rein, while the axles of the buggy groaned and the crowd at his back cheered him on in chariot-race fashion.

Halfway up the Champs Elysees a half-dozen French police tried to turn vehicles off the broad avenue into the side streets. They tried also to clear the people from the streets back to the sidewalks. It was like trying to stem a flood.

"The president of the Republique cannot pass," one policeman shouted.

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VE-DAY: PARIS

One of hundreds of student parades that jammed the Champs Elysees all V-E Day.

"*Vive le President. Vive la Republique. Vive la France,*" the crowd replied.

At the Arc de Triomphe the banners of the Allies flew from special rigging above the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. From the famous Carrousel, the small arc before the Palace of the Tuileries, you could look up the Champs Elysees past the Obelisk in the Place de la Concorde, centered perfectly in the arch, and to the banners of the Allies flying in the great Arc at the Etoile.

THERE in the Etoile the crowds sobered for a moment and sang a less boisterous *Marseillaise*, a credible "God Save the King" and a feeble "Star Spangled Banner."

It wasn't, as the French girls hastened to assure their American friends, that they felt cold toward the U.S.A.; any Yanks who felt the warmth of French kisses on this day knew this was far from the case. "It's simply that the tune is impossible and no one knows the words" wheel were jammed as the throng made its slow way to this symbol of France as a great nation. There was a formal changing of the guard as specially chosen squads of 33 French sailors, soldiers and air force cadets shared a day-long vigil of honor by the tomb, which was covered with fresh flowers.

All day long the aircraft of all the Allies buzzed the Champs Elysees, swooping down to treetop level, then zooming up to clear the Arc de Triomphe. There were little Cubs and P-47s and C-47s, B-17s, B-25s and even a great British Lancaster. Down at the Eiffel Tower it was open season again for pilots who wished to tackle the comparatively small opening under the great network of steel.

"We've waited for this for a long time," said the *agent de police* (or what everybody except the French people call a *gendarme*) who had given up trying to untangle traffic at one busy intersection and was surveying the resulting confusion with calm satisfaction. "My brother-in-law is still a prisoner of the Germans at Vienna, or was when we last had news of him. Only that makes this day incomplete."

On the Champs Elysees we met a French woman, native of Algiers, who had last ridden with us during the hectic day of the liberation of Paris last Aug. 25. She greeted us warmly. "We meet only on the days of great glory," she said. Her companion was a French civilian employee of OSS who had worked for the U.S. in North Africa for a year before the invasion there. "This is a great personal triumph for me," he said. "I have worked hard for this day."

To a bank teller at the Credit Foncier, who had been in Paris for the Armistice in 1918, this celebration seemed more subdued than the last. "We've been waiting from minute to minute for 10 days now, expecting to hear the announcement of victory. The Germans have announced it, the radio has announced it, everybody has announced it, and only now has it become official. But we have been spreading our celebration over several days. For that reason it may lack some of the spontaneity of the last time."

A French woman put it differently. "For Paris," she said, "our great day was the day of our liberation. We can never hope to reach such heights again."

In the Metro at the Concorde, a three-year-old girl in a peach silk dress jumped up and down for joy. She didn't know that it was V-E Day but she did know it was some kind of a holiday because her mother had said the could wear her new dress. She was throwing kisses to everybody in the subway. Her father, a wine merchant, was equally happy. His brother, for five years a prisoner of war, had just been

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VE-DAY: PARIS

A Fortress buzzes the Arc as crowds gather to pay respects to Unknown Soldie

liberated by the Seventh Army and was now back home, one of 8,000 Frenchmen being repatriated daily. He looked thin but said he was rapidly gaining weight.

The Metro itself was so crowded that once in, it was impossible to move to get out, and it took as much as an hour to reach the train platforms.

Outside on the streets, big truckloads of other newly liberated French prisoners were weaving their way through the crowds who cheered and sang and jumped on the trucks. Once there was an excited shriek as an old woman thought she recognized her grandson on the back of a truck. At the Gaumont Palace Theater in Montmartre, which is one of the centers to which repatriated prisoners are brought, the daily crowd whose loved ones had not yet come home still waited, scanning each truckload eagerly.

At the AEF Club in the Grand Hotel near the Opera, where except for a run on the ice cream bar things were pretty quiet, an appealingly plump French Wac gave us the most direct (and easily the most pleasant) answer we'd had all day when we asked her how she felt about the end of the war. "I weel show you," she said, kissing us eagerly. Half a dozen other soldiers promptly asked her how she felt about the end of the war.

One of them, a French member of a British paratroop unit who had made nine combat jumps in France and Holland, twisted his maroon beret and said he was glad it was over. Then he announced his intention of volunteering for a unit that may see action in Indo-China soon. "We've got a war in the Pacific to fight, the same as you," he said. "But anyway, it's half over. The other half cannot take much longer."

With nightfall the City of Light came into its own again. Street lights were turned on and floodlights illuminated the beautiful Parisian monuments and structures. The Arc de Triomphe, Notre Dame, the facade of the Opera, Sacre Cœur which sits on top of the Montmartre, were lighted for the first time in six years.

A GI on the Champs Elysees stopped his jeep to let a beautiful blonde climb on board. She was followed by a dozen or more younger citizens. He asked the blonde: "Are these friends of yours?" One of the newcomers, a boy about nine, piped up: "On this day, M'sieur, all the world are friends of all the world."

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