

YANK

THE ARMY



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THE news of the surrender was to have been held up for a simultaneous announcement by President Truman, Premier Stalin and Prime Minister Churchill, but, in spite of censorship precautions, it leaked out and set off celebrations in all Allied capitals. YANK reporters in overseas posts from Saipan to Cairo heard the good news as it spread from soldier to soldier, in combat, in camp and on the streets of pass towns:

THE announcement came as an anticlimax to men of the Ninth Army, just as it did to most of the rest of the world. They had been relieved for the last time on the Western Front some days before the signing at Reims and their relief was to them the real end of the war in Europe. Pfc. S. L. Gates, who has a brother in the Marines in the Pacific, figured he'd be heading there soon. Most of the talk was like that—either of home or of possible Pacific duty.

In Paris, where the news had begun as a phoney rumor and then turned true, it was an anticlimax, too. A photographer staged a shot with some French babes kissing some over-happy doughs in front of the Rainbow Corner. "I keep telling everybody that it's over," said an MP at the door of the Red Cross Club who was no longer even checking passes, "but nobody believes me."

Finally, when Paris believed the news, it was just a big-city celebration—crowds and singing and cheers and lots of cognac and girls. People stopped work and airplanes of all the Allied forces buzzed the *Champs Elysees*. Pvt. Ernest Kuhn of Chicago listened to the news come over the radio at the 108th General Hospital. He had just been liberated after 5 months in a Nazi PW camp and he still had some shrapnel in his throat. "I listened to Churchill talk," he said, "and I kept saying to myself, 'I'm still alive. The war is over here and I'm still alive.' I thought of all the guys in the 28th Division Band with me who were dead now. We used to be a pretty good band."

In London there were crowds too, and singing and kissing and cheering. Everybody you spoke to said the news was swell, but they all added a postscript about the Japs. The end of the war in Europe seemed to bring the Pacific war closer than ever to GIs here. Cpl. Robert M. Rhodes of Kittanning, Pa., who works in a base ordnance depot in the U.K., said, "I just can't be-

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lieve it's over on this side. That is, I can't realize it yet. I figure this VE-day is just one step nearer New York and the Statue of Liberty. I figure it'll take 10 to 12 more months to get rid of the Japs. I'm just going to write home to my wife, 'So far, so good. I'll be seeing you.'"

GI reaction to the surrender was calm in Cairo. There was no singing or dancing in the streets, no great spontaneous demonstration, no fights. T/Sgt. Holis B. Miller of Benedict, Neb., leaning against a staff car parked in front of a downtown hotel, watched the crowds stopping to read the announcement in the extra of the *Stars and Stripes* posted on the hotel wall. "Most of the GIs don't quite know what to make of it," he said. "It doesn't mean much of a change. We won't be getting out of the Army tomorrow or going home." In the Cairo bars, which didn't even enjoy a business boom, men thought mostly of what the celebration might be like in the U. S. "I'll bet they're having a hot time at home tonight," said Cpl. Paul Furgatch of the Bronx and he ordered another drink.

In the Aleutians there wasn't much formal celebrating either. Mostly there were rumors on "How much better are my chances of getting off this island?" Unit commanders banned "boisterous or disorderly demonstrations" and forbade "discharge of small arms," but many outfits arranged the monthly beer ration to coincide with VE-day. Back of all reaction to the news was the thought that the theater might be due to become important again, that it might live up actively to its slogan, "The Northern Highway to Victory."

In Hawaii there was almost complete lack of interest. The men there were too close to the continuing Pacific war to be unduly jubilant. The ones who got the biggest kicks were those who had close friends or relatives in the European Theater. There wasn't even much talk about VE-day among the GIs. And when they did talk they were usually saying, "Now maybe we can wind *this* war up sooner."

Nobody got very excited on Saipan when the news came over the B-29 squadrons' loudspeakers in the morning. It was like the Hawaiian reaction, only stronger. M/Sgt. Wilbur M. Belshaw, a flight engineer from Vesta, Minn., said what was uppermost in GIs' minds: "The Japs thought they could lick the world. Well, now they've got their chance."