

Victory celebration

Parisians and Allied soldiers make their way together down the Champs Elysées, Paris, on 8 May 1945 to celebrate Victory in Europe (VE) Day. Celebrations continued well into the night.



EYEWITNESS 8 May 1945

VE DAY

When Germany surrendered unconditionally to the Allies on 7 May 1945 at the American advance headquarter in Rheims, France, the war in Europe was officially over. The following day was designated VE (Victory in Europe) Day, and victory celebrations took place in Paris, London, and throughout Europe.

“This is it ... This time this is Victory in Europe day ... The Air Corps is really going to town and C-47 cargo planes, fighters, and even fortresses and other bombers are flying back and forth and buzzing the city. We're all dashing out on the balcony – it's a warm, warm day and the French windows are wide open. Everyone confesses to feeling a bit unable to concentrate ... I actually knew yesterday morning ... 'cause we'd seen the radio message from SHAEF [Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force] ... but it was confidential so we'd just go round grinning like cats that swallowed canaries ... When we got off the metro by the Arc [de Triomphe], then we knew it for sure. People were milling around the Etoile, up and down the Champs Elysées, and they were shooting off fireworks while planes dropped flares. I was really excited then and I said I wasn't going to be in at any 12 o'clock ... There was celebration up and down our street and up on the corner by the Arc people were singing and fireworks were still going on ... As a matter of fact, they kept on all night. At three am, when Dorothy went on guard duty, she said it was still noisy and about 5 [am] I woke to hear a few 'yippees' up and down the street ...”

American Betty M. Olson, 29th Traffic Regulations Group, stationed in Paris

“... American sailors and laughing girls formed a conga line down the middle of Piccadilly and cockneys linked arms in the Lambeth Walk. It was a day and night of no fixed plan and no organized merriment. Each group danced its own dance, sang its own song, and went its own way as the spirit moved ... soldiers swung by one arm from lamp standards and laughing groups tore down hoardings ... The young servicemen and women who swung arm in arm down the middle of every street, singing and swarming over the few cars rash enough to come out were simply happy ...”

English writer Mollie Panter-Downes's description of VE Day in London, filed for "New Yorker" magazine

