

August 14, 2020

V-J Day, At Last, 75 Years Ago

WWII Weekly Front Pages

12 August – 18 August 1945

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V-J Day, at last.



PACIFIC

Japan was given the news Monday that the Emperor could remain but would be subject to the supreme Allied commander who would accept and enforce unconditional surrender. Japanese radio was keeping citizens in the dark about the developments, but Allied radio, through the Office of War Information, was broadcasting news of the offer to the Japanese people.

The Third Fleet's assault against Japan the past Thursday and Friday destroyed or damaged at least 711 enemy planes and 94 ships, but there had been no offensive operations since the surrender offer by Tokyo, even though an announcement had specifically been made that full-scale operations against Japan would continue regardless of surrender negotiations. On Monday the gloves came off as carrier planes destroyed or damaged several score enemy aircraft parked on fields in the Tokyo area, 800 B-29s dropped over 6,000 tons of bombs, and a spokesman for General MacArthur announced that air and ground forces would continue their offensive against

Japan until the final “cease fire” had been given. In addition, Russian drives in Manchuria continued with an onslaught that collapsed defenses in a 93-mile drive in a single day, sweeping up thousands of prisoners.

At noon Japan time on Wednesday 15 August (11 PM on 14 August Pittsburgh time), a recorded speech by Emperor Hirohito was broadcast, in which he announced the surrender of Japan, citing in part the “new and most cruel” atomic bomb. MacArthur ordered Japan to send representatives to Manila to receive Allied surrender terms, and to use the code word “Bataan” when communicating with him. The enemy were ordered to cease hostilities, and American forces were ordered to cease offensive action as of 1 PM Wednesday Japan time. Some fighting was continuing – on 18 August Japanese planes attacked two US photo aircraft over the Tokyo area. Concern was also expressed by Allied military officials as to what Japanese resistance would be experienced as the occupation began.

In a speech as leader of the opposition, Winston Churchill said a gigantic offensive against Japan had been planned at Potsdam, and he and President Truman had already given the order to set in motion what might have proved the bloodiest campaign in history. But for the dropping of the atomic bombs, he said, the offensive could have cost a million American and 250,000 British lives.

Japan pleaded with MacArthur to halt the Soviet offensive in Manchuria, but Russian radio ordered Red armies to press on and “kill without mercy.” A Russian spearhead had reached the area of Mukden, the most important city in Manchuria, and indications were that it would soon be besieged.

## HOME FRONT

On V-J Day, the Army and Navy were expected to cut munitions contracts flatly and totally. The only exceptions would be development and experimental work on weapons and certain lines other than armaments. That meant that production lines in scores of Pittsburgh district plants would be halted on signal, and unemployment for many would begin. Layoffs were predicted to be from 34,000 to 35,000 workers within 90 days of V-J Day.

Congress was asked to cut short its vacation to deal with fast-multiplying reconversion problems as demobilization of the home front to a peacetime economy began in earnest. A grim warning came from Government officials that widespread unemployment was inevitable during the six months it would take to achieve a good measure of reconversion.

The Army was preparing plans for the release of four million men in the first 12 months after the end of the war with Japan. This would reduce the Army to between three and four million men. Meanwhile, the War Department announced that the number of soldiers returning to the US from all overseas theaters since 12 May would pass the million mark on Monday.

The rationing of gasoline ended on 15 August, on order of the Office of Price Administration. Canned fruits and vegetables, fuel oil and oil stoves also fell off the ration list. Rationing of all other products would continue indefinitely.

The War Department released a technical report on the five years of experimentation which produced the atomic bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It disclosed that the atom bomb in its present state of imperfection released only one-tenth of one percent of the total energy potentially releasable in the splitting of uranium atoms. Should the bomb be improved only slightly, “civilization would have the means to commit suicide at will.”

(Photo courtesy newspapers.com, Pittsburgh Press)