

From the Archives: Germany Surrenders to Western Allies, Russia

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Soldiers hoisting the Soviet flag after the Battle of Berlin ended on May 2, 1945.

EDITOR'S NOTE: On May 7, 1945, AP Paris bureau chief Edward Kennedy broke one of the biggest stories of that century: the unconditional surrender of Germany to the Allies at a former school house in Reims, France.

Instead of receiving praise, Kennedy was quietly dismissed.

The reason: The veteran reporter was accused of breaking a pledge that he and 16 other correspondents had made to keep the surrender secret for a time, as a condition of being allowed to witness it. This was done so Josef Stalin could formally announce the defeat in Berlin.

Kennedy viewed the embargo as a political security issue, rather than a military one, and felt compelled to report the surrender, especially after learning that German radio had already broadcast the news.

In 2012, almost 50 years after Kennedy's death, then-AP President and CEO Tom Curley apologized for the way the company had treated the journalist.

Seventy years after the scoop, the AP is making Kennedy's original story and photographs available.

REIMS, France (AP) — Germany surrendered unconditionally to the Western allies and the Soviet Union at 2:41 a.m. French time today (May 7, 1945).

The surrender took place at a little red school house that is the headquarters of Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower.

The surrender was signed for the Supreme Allied Command by Lt. Gen. Walter Bedell Smith, chief of staff for Gen. Eisenhower.

It was also signed by Gen. Ivan Susloparov of the Soviet Union and by Gen. Francois Sevez for France.

Gen. Eisenhower was not present at the signing, but immediately afterward Gen. Alfred Jodl and his fellow delegate, Gen. Admiral Hans Georg von Friedeburg, were received by the supreme commander.

They were asked sternly if they understood the surrender terms imposed upon Germany and if they would be carried out by Germany.

They answered yes.

Germany, which began the war with a ruthless attack upon Poland, followed by successive aggressions and brutality in concentration camps, surrendered with an appeal to the victors for mercy toward the German people and armed forces.

After signing the full surrender, Gen. Jodl said he wanted to speak and received leave to do so.

“With this signature,” he said in soft-spoken German, “the German people and armed forces are for better or worse delivered into the victor’s hands.

“In this war, which has lasted more than five years, both have achieved and suffered more than perhaps any other people in the world.”

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