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"A CITY GONE MAD"

By NOEL MONKS, Representing the Combined British Press

With the Fifth Army
Naples, Friday

This is a city gone mad. Since I entered it this morning in a jeep with three American correspondents, ahead of our patrols, the sound of cheering and yelling has not stopped for a second as fully a million highly emotional people celebrate the deliverance of their city. There are as many tears as smiles among the multitude; blessings are being heaped on the heads of the British and American troops that have been pouring in all day because, with people in the state these Italians are in, a tear is as good as smile.

The reception of our troops has been completely overwhelming, and far exceeds anything seen in Sicily. When our jeep drove up outside the main Naples railway station people began to swarm in hundreds from a dozen streets and charged us. I was grabbed by five husky men and pulled from my seat. They then began covering me with kisses until I nearly suffocated under their garlic laden breaths. Grizzly chins scraped all over my face, which now feels as though it had been rubbed with emery paper, and twenty pairs of hands thumped me all over.

Similar treatment was handed out to my three American colleagues and to our driver a young Missourian, Delmar Richardson - who defended his "honour" by hitting out with his fists when four or five stubby faces with puckering lips tried to kiss him. But he was soon overwhelmed.

We were soon the centre of at least twenty thousand people. Women and girls who tried to kiss us were, alas, roughly handled by the men, who claimed first "honour".

Hundreds of men seemed to have rifles, which they began shooting into the air. British patrol cars that came rumbling up towards the station evidently thought the Germans were still in the city, for they unleashed a few rounds over the heads of the people. The yelling and shrieking grew fiercer as the crowd deserted us and stormed the armoured cars.

I have not been able yet to get through the crowds and inspect the damage done to the city. There is a pall of smoke over the dock area and many buildings in the centre of the city are seriously damaged.

The Germans are being chased away back over hills beyond Naples.

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