

= If Day =

If Day ( French : " Si un jour " , " If one day " ) was a simulated Nazi German invasion and occupation of the Canadian city of Winnipeg , Manitoba , and surrounding areas on 19 February 1942 , during the Second World War . It was organized by the Greater Winnipeg Victory Loan organization , which was led by prominent Winnipeg businessman J. D. Perrin . The event was the largest military exercise in Winnipeg to that point .

If Day included a staged firefight between Canadian troops and volunteers dressed as German soldiers , the internment of prominent politicians , the imposition of Nazi rule , and a parade . The event was a fundraiser for the war effort : over C \$ 3 million was collected in Winnipeg on that day . It was the subject of a 2006 documentary , and was included in Guy Maddin 's film *My Winnipeg* .

= = Background = =

If Day was an elaborate campaign to promote the purchase of Victory Bonds . These bonds , which were loans to the government to allow for increased war spending , were sold to individuals and corporations throughout Canada . If Day was the second Victory Loan campaign of the Second World War . The campaign began on 16 February 1942 , and continued until 9 March . Manitoba 's fundraising target was \$ 45 million ( \$ 620 million in 2011 dollars ) , including \$ 24 @. @ 5 million from Winnipeg . The Greater Winnipeg Victory Loan committee , a regional branch of the National War Finance Committee , organized If Day under chairman John Draper Perrin . The organizers believed that bringing the war ( or , rather , a simulation thereof ) to people 's homes would result in a change of attitude among those not directly affected by the war .

The committee drew up a map of Manitoba , which was divided into 45 sections , each representing \$ 1 million of their fundraising target . As money came in from those selling Victory Bonds , the sections were " reclaimed " from the Nazi invaders . The map was posted at the corner of Portage and Main , the city 's central intersection . The campaign was publicized in local newspapers for a few days before the event , although the " invasion " took many citizens by surprise . To prevent a rush to emergency shelters , residents of neighbouring northern Minnesota were also warned because radio broadcasts dramatizing the event could be received in that area . Royal Canadian Air Force aircraft painted to look like German fighter planes flew over the city on 18 February 1942 . Selkirk , a small town northeast of Winnipeg , held its own fundraising simulation , a one @-@ hour blackout and mock bombing , on 18 February 1942 in preparation for the main If Day event .

= = Events = =

The simulation included 3 @, @ 500 Canadian Army members , representing all of Winnipeg 's units , making it the largest military exercise in Winnipeg to that point . The defending forces were commanded by Colonels E. A. Pridham and D. S. McKay . Troops were drawn from the 18th ( Manitoba ) Armoured Car Regiment , No. 10 District Engineers and Signals , the Royal Winnipeg Rifles , the Winnipeg Grenadiers , the Winnipeg Light Infantry , the Queen 's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada , Veteran 's Guard of Canada ( including over 300 veterans of the First World War ) , and a number of reserve and civilian groups . The ' Nazi ' troops were volunteers from the Young Men 's Board of Trade , using uniforms rented from Hollywood and with painted sabre scars on their faces . They were commanded by Erich von Neurenberg . Approximately \$ 3 @, @ 000 was spent on the event .

'Nazi ' patrols in the city began before 5 : 30 am on 19 February . A radio announcer was detained and his microphone commandeered for radio broadcasts , beginning at 5 : 45 am . ' Nazi ' troops assembled on the west side of the city half an hour after the first patrols . Canadian troops were massed at Fort Osborne barracks and the Minto and Macgregor armouries at 6 : 30 am , and at 7 am air @-@ raid sirens were sounded and a blackout ordered in preparation for the invasion . The aerial blitzkrieg began before 7 am with mock bombings . Beginning at 7 : 03 am , troops started their simulated attack on the city , which was defended by a small group of active and reserve troops

assisted by local community groups . The defenders formed a perimeter around the industrial and downtown areas of the city , approximately 5 kilometres ( 3 mi ) from City Hall , retreating to a 3 @-@ kilometre ( 2 mi ) perimeter at 7 : 45 .

The firefight included large @-@ scale troop movements and the simulated destruction of major bridges . Nine troop formations held three positions each during the tightly scripted invasion sequence ; they were directed via telephone ( one line per formation ) and flash @-@ lamp signals from the headquarters established at the Chamber of Commerce building . The defensive pattern employed was similar to that used during the First World War in Paris to conduct soldiers to the front . Light tanks were stationed at road and rail junctions as fighting intensified . Thirty anti @-@ aircraft vehicles fired blanks at fighter planes overhead , assisted by anti @-@ aircraft gunners on buildings downtown . The first mock casualty was reported at 8 am . Dressing stations were set up at strategic points to treat the mock casualties ; they also treated the two real casualties of the event ? a soldier who sprained his ankle , and a woman who cut her thumb preparing toast during the early @-@ morning blackout .

At 9 : 30 am , the defenders surrendered to the ' Nazis ' and withdrew to the downtown muster point , and the city was occupied . The fake Nazis began a widespread harassment campaign , sending armed troops throughout the city . A tank was driven down Portage Avenue , one of the main streets of the downtown area . Some people were taken to an internment camp at Lower Fort Garry ; those interned included prominent local politicians like Premier John Bracken ( arrested with several members of his cabinet at a caucus meeting ) , Mayor John Queen , Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba Roland Fairbairn McWilliams , and visiting Norwegian ambassador to the United States Wilhelm de Morgenstierne . One council member , Dan McClean , escaped but was recaptured after an intensive search . Chief of Police George Smith avoided capture because he was dining out when soldiers arrived at his office . The Union Flag at Lower Fort Garry was replaced with the swastika . The city was renamed " Himmlerstadt " , and Main Street was termed " Hitlerstrasse " .

Erich von Neurenberg was installed as gauleiter ( provincial leader ) ; he was assisted by George Waight , who acted as the local Gestapo chief . Their stated purpose was to assist Hitler in his plans to take advantage of Canada 's relatively low population density by colonizing the country . Von Neurenberg issued the following decree , which was posted throughout the city :

This territory is now a part of the Greater Reich and under the jurisdiction of Col. Erich Von Neuremburg , Gauleiter of the Fuehrer .

No civilians will be permitted on the streets between 9 : 30 pm and daybreak .

All public places are out of bounds to civilians , and not more than 8 persons can gather at one time in any place .

Every householder must provide billeting for 5 soldiers .

All organizations of a military , semi @-@ military or fraternal nature are hereby disbanded and banned . Girl Guide , Boy Scout and similar youth organizations will remain in existence but under direction of the Gauleiter and Storm troops .

All owners of motor cars , trucks and buses must register same at Occupation Headquarters where they will be taken over by the Army of Occupation .

Each farmer must immediately report all stocks of grain and livestock and no farm produce may be sold except through the office of the Kommandant of supplies in Winnipeg . He may not keep any for his own consumption but must buy it back through the Central Authority in Winnipeg .

All national emblems excluding the Swastika must be immediately destroyed .

Each inhabitant will be furnished with a ration card , and food and clothing may only be purchased on presentation of this card .

The following offences will result in death without trial

Attempting to organize resistance against the Army of Occupation

Entering or leaving the province without permission .

Failure to report all goods possessed when ordered to do so .

Possession of firearms .

No one will act , speak or think contrary to our decrees .

Notices were posted on churches forbidding worship services , and priests who objected were

arrested . Buses were stopped and their passengers searched by armed troops . The Winnipeg Tribune was renamed Das Winnipeg Lügenblatt ( " The Winnipeg Lies @-@ sheet " ) , a ' Nazi ' publication featuring heavily @-@ censored columns and a front page written almost entirely in German . One satirical story noted that " this is a great day for Manitoba ... The Nazis , like Der Fuehrer , are patient , kind and tolerant , but THEIR PATIENCE IS RAPIDLY EXHAUSTED BECOMING " , while another included an " official joke " , approved by the German authorities , at which all readers were ordered to laugh or be imprisoned . Henry Weppler , a newspaper seller for the Winnipeg Free Press , was attacked and his papers ripped up . The Winnipeg Free Press featured a front @-@ page story about the " invasion " , describing in great detail the devastation caused by the Nazis in Winnipeg .

Books were burned in front of the main Carnegie branch of the Winnipeg Public Library ( the books had been pre @-@ selected for incineration as damaged or outdated ) . Soldiers entered the cafeteria at Great West Life and stole lunches from workers . They seized buffalo coats from the police station and wore them throughout the day , as the temperature was below ? 8 ° C ( 18 ° F ) . At one local elementary school , the principal was arrested and replaced with a ' Nazi ' educator dedicated to teaching the " Nazi Truth " ; special lessons were prepared for high @-@ school students throughout the city . Some stores and homes were looted by the fake troops . Canadian currency was replaced with fake German Reichsmarks , the only propaganda notes that Canada created during the war .

The day ended at 5 : 30 pm with a ceremonial release of prisoners , a parade , and speeches from the released dignitaries . Members of the organizing committee and local businesspeople marched down Portage Avenue with banners reading " It MUST Not Happen Here ! " and " Buy Victory Bonds " . Following the parade , a banquet was held at the Hudson 's Bay Company building . Ambassador de Morgenstierne spoke about his experiences with If Day and in Norway , suggesting that the " make @-@ believe Nazi occupation of [ Winnipeg ] was an authentic glimpse of German behavior in German @-@ ridden Europe " .

Surrounding towns were also affected by the invasion : for example , in Neepawa ' Nazi ' soldiers confronted citizens in the streets . Virden was renamed " Virdenberg " . A mock attack was planned for strategic targets in Brandon . The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation broadcast a program called " Swastika over Canada " on the radio throughout the province , along with military music and extracts of Hitler 's speeches .

= = Effects = =

The If Day event not only resulted in Victory Bond sales well over Greater Winnipeg 's goal , but brought Winnipeg 's innovative efforts to the attention of people throughout North America . Life Magazine ran a pictorial spread of the If Day activities in Winnipeg and in smaller centres across Manitoba , photographed by William Shrout . Reporters from several American publications , including Newsweek , The New York Times and The Christian Science Monitor , were also present for the event ; cameraman Lucien Roy shot newsreel footage for BBC News . Newspapers as far away as New Zealand included stories about the event . An estimated 40 million people worldwide saw coverage of If Day .

The money raised for the Victory Loan campaign on If Day was \$ 3 @. @ 2 million , which was the city 's largest single @-@ day total . Winnipeg passed its \$ 24 million Victory Loan quota on 24 February , largely because of the effects of If Day . The provincial total for the entire campaign was \$ 60 million , well above its target quota of \$ 45 million . The campaign raised approximately \$ 2 billion nationwide for the war effort , and If Day was considered one of the most successful fundraising events of the nationwide drive . Officials had expected a significant increase in army recruits as a result of the event , but it failed to end the long @-@ term decline in recruitment numbers : 23 people enlisted at the Winnipeg recruitment office on If Day , compared to an average of 36 per day for the first half of February .

If Day was successful enough to spark imitations in other communities . The US government contacted the organizing committee for details of the event . A smaller @-@ scale invasion was

staged in Vancouver , using promotional materials from the Winnipeg campaign .

In 2006 , a television documentary of the events was made by Aaron Floresco for CTV 's local series Manitoba Moments . The work incorporates newsreel footage from the event , as well as interviews with historians and participants . Filmmaker Guy Maddin included a brief newsreel clip of If Day in his film My Winnipeg .