

THE news of this war has been brought much closer to the peoples concerned than the news of any other war.

It took eight days for the news of the Battle of Blenheim, fought in Bavaria, to reach England. The messenger travelled as fast as horse and sail would carry him. It took 16 days to get the intelligence of Trafalgar to the Admiralty.

Then came the era of the telegraph and the daily newspaper with regular and quick news services. Civilians far behind the battle-line learned of developments within a few hours. But there were gaps. Save for the issue of extras, there was no press service to the reader between late afternoon and next morning. People waited from Saturday night until Monday morning for news. This method of linking battlefield with public lasted until after the first World War. Then came radio, and the news came, not by the printed word, which could only be issued at infrequent intervals, but by spoken word, which could be carried at any time of the day or night, straight into the home.

Propaganda Weapon

Before this war radio had become a potent instrument for distributing news and opinion. It had been developed as the greatest weapon of propaganda in history. The governments of Germany and Italy, bending it entirely to their purposes, flooded the world with news and opinions to implement their policies. Without radio Hitler might not have been able to mould a nation so completely to his will. Every country made broadcasting policies against the contingency of war. In New Zealand restrictions upon broadcasting, and arrangements for its special use in the war effort, were included in the Government's "War Book," and immediately the war came these precautions were put into operation.

Then began the great period of listening to war news and commentaries. The BBC news bulletins were re-broadcast directly from London, or broadcast from recordings, several times a day from NBS and NCBS stations. Some New Zealanders went further afield and tuned in to London, to Sydney, the United States, Berlin, Rome, or Tokio, but the BBC bulletins were the fare of most. And right well did the BBC do its job. Comprehensive, accurate, unemotional and steady, its bulletins set a standard for the world.

"HERE IS THE NEWS"

Radio's Role In The War

(By the Supervisor of Talks, NBS)



A corner of the BBC News Room, from which originate the bulletins and other news services listened to eagerly by people all over the world

Radio showed from the outset that we were in a new era of communication. The whole Empire heard Mr. Chamberlain's own voice declare a state of war. At this opposite side of the world we listened to tidings of defeat and victory coming from the receiving set in this most astounding of all wars. Frontiers were burst suddenly open; armies were scattered; capitals fell; nations capitulated. We listened to the story of our Achilles in the Battle of the River Plate, and the rescue of the men in the Altmark. We heard Denmark fall, and Norway, and Holland and Belgium and France. We went through the agony of Dunkirk, and chalked up the score in the Battle of Britain. High peaks of news out of the blue, bad and good, come to mind—Italy's entry, the German attack on Russia, Pearl Harbour, the sinking of the Prince of Wales and Repulse, Rommel in full and final

retreat, the Allied landings in North Africa, the invasion of Sicily and Italy, and the news for which the world waited with more expectancy than it has given to any anticipated event in history—D-Day.

We got all this news, not in cold print—though of course we read the print as well—but by the human voice, right in the home. If this method made bad news sound worse, it also made good sound better. Announcers became friends; so did the commentators who clarified the progress of this most vast of wars. Wickham Steed, Macdonald Hastings, Cyril Falls, Vernon Bartlett, J. B. Priestley, H. S. Ferraby, and others, bucked us up in days of desperate defence, and amid their cheers when things went well, they advised us not to be complacent, not to slacken. At the head of the Empire was His Majesty the

King, speaking to all his people everywhere in words of calm assurance, encouragement, and faith. And his Prime Minister—what events his speeches were! Winston Churchill was the world's broadcaster No. 1, and his words so pungent, so eloquent, so homely, so appealing, to common people everywhere, were as good as victories in the field. And from the other side of the Atlantic came the clear, steady, resolute voice of Franklin Roosevelt bringing the vast might of America and its idealism to bear on the conflict.

Sounds of Battle

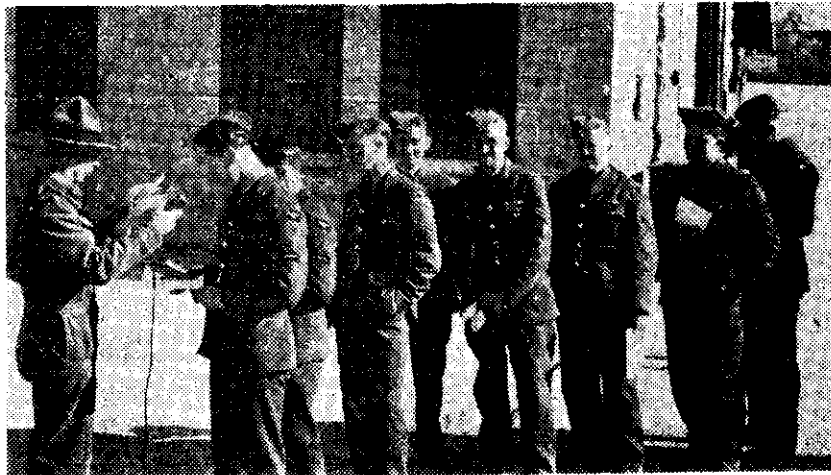
Besides all this, listeners heard stories of the fighting, and the very sounds of the battlefield. Seamen, soldiers, and airmen (including many New Zealanders) recounted their experiences. Correspondents of the BBC took microphones to sea, into the air, and into the firing-line on land from France to Burma, to transmit to England recordings of actual operations. Listeners heard the rattle of anti-aircraft guns in London, the roar of bombers over Berlin, and the voice of commentators in the front line in Normandy. They learned, too, how the civilian people of England kept the armies going with weapons and supplies and stood up to the blitz. The National Broadcasting Service has, stacked away, well over 20,000 discs of recorded BBC news commentaries and general talks, taken from the air. But let us remember the price paid for this service. Radio and newspaper correspondents sailed and marched and flew with the fighting men in this war, and a good many lost their lives.

This was news and commentary taken straight from the air. In addition the BBC—and our American Allies too—supplied the NBS with numbers of what are called transcriptions. These are talks or dramas or features of various kinds recorded in the studio and sent out by mail. By this means many aspects of the war were covered skilfully—individual deeds in battle, the record of units, the achievements of our allies, the almost infinite variety of civilian war work, and the heroism and resolution of people in occupied countries.

Broadcasting in New Zealand itself covered every phase of the local war effort. The Governor-General came to the microphone from time to time. The Prime Minister and his colleagues spoke frequently. The talk by the late Michael Joseph Savage when he declared that "where Britain goes, we go," will live as one of the political highlights of the



Members of the New Zealand Mobile Broadcasting Unit with the Third Echelon have a morning shave in the Jordan Valley



"With the Boys Overseas": The NBS Broadcasting Unit records personal messages from airmen for transmission home