

HISTORY AS IT HAPPENS

In this section weekly will appear a day by day record of the events of history in the making. As some time elapses in the publication of "The Listener" this diary is one week retrospective.

Wednesday, January 8

A British Ministry was announced for the study of reconstruction and post-war problems, under the responsibility meantime of Arthur Greenwood. Other Cabinet changes were the creation of an Import Executive and a Production Executive to allocate the available resources of raw materials and labour. "The Times" said that the new Cabinet Committees caused disappointment, and that the maximum of civilian effort and sacrifice was not utilised, "The Government is fumbling with a policy on the whole economic side of the war."

Tobruk had a further heavy bombardment together with the aerodromes and ports to the west. The British mechanised forces advanced to within fifteen miles of the town, and took possession of the aerodrome of El Adem with many damaged aircraft.

Destroyers, torpedo boats and other small units of the French Navy passed the Straits of Gibraltar in two's and three's unmolested by the British, a manoeuvre designed to remove the navy to Africa safe from German hands.

The British blockade was relaxed to permit the American Red Cross to send to unoccupied France condensed milk and vitamin products for children.

Danish miners on arrival at Copenhagen reported that American troops have occupied Greenland and American police were posted in one town.

Bitter fighting broke out between rival factions of the Iron Guard in Rumania.

Greek destroyers entered Valona roadstead unmolested, shelled targets, and returned to their ports safely. Valona has also been attacked by the R.A.F.

Thursday, January 9

Reports from America stated that 100,000 British troops are on the Abyssinian border of Kenya waiting for the end of the rainy season.

The German radio announced a rumour that England intended to invade Eire through Ulster, and that if this should happen Germany would react in the same way as in the case of Norway.

Thirty-five thousand additional Italian soldiers embarked from Valona indicating the Italians' desperate plight. From Pogradec to the coast the Greeks advanced without much resistance.

President Roosevelt ordered all warships to be manned at war-time strength and authorised an increase in the active strength from 192,000 to 232,000. The Navy was reorganised into three fleets, the Pacific, the Asiatic, and the Atlantic.

An Australian armoured corps and an armoured division for the A.I.F. was announced by Mr. Menzies, involving an expenditure of several millions of pounds.

Friday, January 10

A formal and urgent demand by Hitler for control of the French Mediterranean coast and the right to establish naval bases and dockyards was rejected by Marshal Petain, according to Swiss reports.

"Le Temps" reported that a desperate food shortage was spreading sickness

and disease through Paris. Through lack of vital fats thousands of children are the victims of malnutrition.

Saturday and Sunday, January 11 and 12

Leaders of the United States Administration introduced simultaneously in both Congress and Senate President Roosevelt's plan for further aid for the Allies. The powers under the Bill are virtually unlimited, and the President could sell, transfer, exchange or lease any defence article. Criticism was directed against the scope of the President's authority.

Russia and Germany signed an agreement covering commercial exchanges and matters of common concern such as frontier delimitation.

The Greeks captured Kelceyra (Klitorisra) which was found sacked.

Dr. Dalton, Minister of Economic Warfare, issued a warning that Hitler would soon open a more active phase in hostilities.

Monday, January 13

Reports from East Africa show the precarious hold of the Italian Army. Haile Selassie at Khartoum received Abyssinian tribesmen in conference.

General Soddu, the Italian Commander in Albania, resigned.

The Chinese Government concluded a new barter agreement with Soviet Russia for military supplies in exchange for tea.

The Bulgarian Premier declared his Government's determination to safeguard Bulgarian independence and freedom. He said that Germany had taken no steps to bring Bulgaria under foreign domination.

Tuesday, January 14

The United States Secretary of the Treasury announced that the British had negotiated with American investment trusts for the liquidation of British-owned direct investments.

Japanese newspapers stated that President Roosevelt's "Aid to Britain" Bill was tantamount to an open challenge to the Axis.

British merchant shipping losses of the first week of the New Year were among the lowest for any week since the war began.

It was authoritatively stated that Britain was prepared to facilitate the evacuation of Italian women and children from East Africa if Italy desired.

Wednesday, January 15

In a naval and air clash in the Mediterranean one Italian destroyer was sunk and 12 enemy planes shot down with damage to three British warships. German and Italian planes made extensive dive-bombing attacks on part of the fleet.

The "Daily Telegraph" stated that the R.A.F. was shifting the air frontier from over London to over the Continent.

The British Government announced a plan for conserving the use of refrigerated ships by bringing meat to England from the Argentine in order to avoid the lengthy voyage to and from New Zealand.

THE EMPIRE'S ARMY

Reorganized And Ready For The Future

AT the outbreak of the war our Army numbered just over 850,000 of all ranks. Of these over 200,000 had less than six months' training. Moreover, despite optimistic statements made in the House of Commons, and to the Press, by responsible Ministers, it was woefully deficient in machines and arms.

We could fully equip only two Army Corps for the B.E.F. during the first month of the war, and this was done by taking from training and other units almost all they had in the way of essential arms.

To-day we have an army of over 2,000,000, the greater part of which is fully equipped. Behind this first line National Army are over 1,500,000 men of the Home Guard.

The Empire

Standing shoulder to shoulder with their brothers of the Motherland are men from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and many of the colonies. With them are Frenchmen, Belgians, Dutchmen, Poles, Czechs and Norwegians, who know that their countries are not down and out.

We have, too, a strong army in the Middle East, which has won outstanding victories against the Italian Armies.

By something like a miracle of concentrated effort by armament factory workers the enormous mass of warlike stores lost in the great retreat from Flanders has been replaced. The arms drive is still increasing its velocity of output.

Our Army learned many lessons of great importance during the retreat and break-through to the sea last May and June. Not the least of these is that the German method of infiltration by armoured units supported strongly from the air is not unbeatable. The Germans did their utmost to prevent the withdrawal of our corps. That so many got away was itself a defeat of German tactics.

Value of Attack

The answer to Nazi methods is aggressive attack. Even with the holding of Calais by that never-to-be-forgotten handful of heroes the triumph of the retreat to Dunkirk and the subsequent withdrawal would not have been possible without determined and continued attacking of the vastly outnumbering enemy forces during every step of the fight to the sea.

Another lesson we have learned is that despite light automatics, machine guns, mortars, and machinery generally, the rifle is still the most important weapon of the infantry soldier.

The Norway adventure first showed the importance of the rifle, and that it was not the back number that it was supposed to be when the Army Council announced that the Bren was in future to be regarded as the major infantry weapon.

In Norway there were very many incidents where a few determined marksmen were able to take heavy toll of the enemy. The work of members of Norwegian rifle clubs, hurriedly embodied for the defence of their country, provided many stories of the effectiveness of the skilled rifleman. There is no doubt that it was their work as snipers that inspired our Government to that stroke of genius, the formation of our Home Guard.

What of the future? The Army believes that the final decision rests with it. That once again there will be a B.E.F. operating on the Continent. Behind the sure shield of the Royal Navy and the rapidly growing offensive power of the Royal Air Force it is piling up men and munitions to that sole end.

The defensive power of the Army may yet be tested to the utmost by some terrific stroke across the narrow seas. It believes that it can faithfully deal with anything that the Navy and the Air Force have not already scuppered, burned, and destroyed. But it looks to the attack. Its whole education is moulded on aggression. It is only aggression that can win.



CHINESE AMERICAN draws the first marble in the conscription draft ballot in the U.S. He is Chong-chan Yuen, laundryman, of New York, who is here shown as he learned of his distinction

"Blitz" Humour

When news got round that a cinema was bombed, a very perturbed mother ran all the way from home to find her two children who had gone there. They were missing. Later they walked in quite unconcerned. "Oh," they explained, "we were bombed out of the Royal so we went to the Majestic."

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Many London shops that have been bombed display the notice "Open as usual," or "More open than usual," or "Business as usual during alterations to Europe," and sometimes "Special Bomb Bargains." Even when a shop is totally wrecked the shopkeeper is defiant, and one notice stated "Good-bye; but carry on, London."