

HISTORY AS IT HAPPENS

In this section appears 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 at least one week retrospective.

Thursday, March 27

A military coup took place in Belgrade early in the morning. The 17-year-old King Peter seized power and appointed General Simovitch to lead the country. The Regent, Prince Paul, left the country and the Prime Minister who signed the Axis Pact was arrested. The young King appealed to all the people to cease demonstrations.

A small German detachment occupied El Agheila, 150 miles south of Benghazi.

Marshal Petain was given an ironical reception when speaking to industrial workers.

Roosevelt's special emissary, Colonel Donovan, after visiting the whole of the Middle East praised the work of the British forces and warned America of the dangers of a German victory.

Ninety per cent. of the employees of the Bethlehem Steel Plant struck on a protest concerning union matters, threatening to tie up 1,500,000,000 dollars worth of defence orders.

Winston Churchill promised all possible aid from the British Empire for the new Yugoslav Government.

The Rt. Hon. Peter Fraser announced that he had been invited to go to England.

Friday, March 28

Germany sent a note to the new Yugoslav Government demanding an explanation of the speed-up of Yugoslav mobilisation, and requesting the Government to indicate whether it endorsed the previous foreign policy.

Cairo communique announced the capture of Harar, second largest town in Abyssinia, and Keren, key point of the Italian defence in Eritrea.

Hitler met the Japanese Foreign Minister, Mr. Matsuoka.

Saturday and Sunday, March 29 and 30

An outstanding naval victory was fought between the Italian and British Mediterranean fleets in which the Italians suffered severe losses.

In Belgrade popular demonstrations continue against Germany.

Mr. Matsuoka left Berlin for Rome. The new Yugoslav Cabinet decided to return to full and absolute neutrality.

The Italians evacuated their forces from Diredawa.

Labour disputes continued throughout American industry but some success in settlement was achieved by the Defence Mediation Board.

Monday, March 31

Fuller details were available of the defeat suffered by the Italian navy. Three enemy cruisers of 10,000 tons each, possibly a fourth, and three destroyers, were sunk, and it was believed that a battleship was also sunk. A thousand Italian survivors were rescued by the British, but the rescue work had to be abandoned because of German dive-bombers. On the British side

there were no ships lost or casualties sustained, but two aircraft were missing.

French shore batteries in Algeria fired on light British forces. The British ships were investigating a French merchant convoy.

The United States seized 30 Axis merchant ships in American ports and 35 Danish ships. Sabotage was discovered on the Italian ships, and 1600 members of crews were taken into custody. Altogether, 300,000 tons of shipping were involved.

Tuesday, April 1

Graphic stories were published of the naval battle in the Eastern Mediterranean and tributes were paid to the work of Sir Andrew Cunningham. The Fleet Air Arm delayed the fast Italian ships until the British forces arrived.

The German surface raiders Scharnhorst and Gneisenau after raiding ships in the Atlantic, were found berthed at Brest and were heavily bombed by the R.A.F.

In the first three months of 1941 enemy aircraft over England were destroyed at the rate of 50 a month.

Germany and Italy protested to America against the seizure of their ships.

Average British expenditure during the last three months rose to £13,000,000 a day.

Wednesday, April 2

Asmara, capital of Eritrea, surrendered to the British forces without a fight.

Germany demanded of Yugoslavia an apology for recent incidents, ratification of the signature to the Pact, and demobilisation.

Over a million Yugoslavs were with the colours and the Government seemed unwilling to discuss demobilisation.

General Sir Alan Brooke issued a warning that the possibility of German invasion still remained.

Reports from America stated that the conveying of goods to Britain might soon be undertaken.

Italian officials in America were ordered by Rome to be prepared to leave the States at a moment's notice.

I SAW THE TROOPS MARCH BY

(Written for "The Listener" by W. R. KINGSTON)

MY little boy loves military parades with bands, and I am still so much of a small boy that I always turn out on the sidelines myself, but there is something about parades to-day that induces silence. It is not the battledress that does it, because the little boy still likes the show; it's the deeper realisation that this is the real business of war.

One morning in early summer, 1914, my mother woke me about six o'clock to come and see the troops ride by. An Otago mounted regiment which had been in camp at Tahuna Park were riding down to Port Chalmers to embark and just before passing our home, they had to breast a slight rise. The early morning sunlight glinted on their buttons and on the horses' harness as their heads came up the hill, then a sharp little trot down the other side, a wave to the children hanging over the gate, and a clatter of hoofs filled our suburban street. After a while, some older girls from next door ran out to get autographs. There was much laughter and jingle of harness as some of the men pulled up. Gallipoli and the mud of Passchendaele were far away in the unsuspected future and bathed in the early morning sunshine that cameo lives in my memory. It had all the glamour and romance of war in the days of Rupert Brooke.

In 1941 there is nothing like that, and certainly none of the frenzied singing of "It's the Soldiers of the Queen" and "Tipperary." I have seen all the parades of overseas troops through Wellington, and every time I have noticed the quietness of the crowds. Individuals call out "Cheerio Jack," of course, but the occasional burst of handclapping and embarrassed cheering only makes the following silence seem more marked.

The parade of one Reinforcement was made just after the Army of the Nile started their great advance into Libya. I was standing at the corner of Willis Street and Lambton Quay, but in the crowds in both streets not a voice was raised to cry, "What About Sidi Barrani?" or "On to Bardia."

I happened to be in Auckland when the First Echelon paraded, and I must say that they had a really cheery recep-

tion. Of course the war had hardly started then — the Maginot Line was unbroken, our Achilles had just helped to beat the Graf Spee, we were still in the Christmas holiday spirit, and it was one of Auckland's brightest and hottest days. From about John Court's we could see the line of khaki come across the top of Queen Street against the deep blue sky, then wind slowly down the hill. The cheering was intense. Very few people had streamers, but I could see that all the others thought it was a good idea and vowed to bring streamers next time. The next time was of course that wonderful reception to the Achilles men when New Zealanders for about the first time really let themselves go. I doubt if we will see anything like that now until we see the victory parades.

For the parade I am now talking about, I chose a position opposite the War Memorial in Lambton Quay, but never again. Military bands don't play while passing war memorials, so the whole parade marched by in utter silence, made all the more acute by the steady crunch, crunch, crunch of their heavy boots and the occasional sharp commands: "No 3 Section, Eyes Right." During this salute, no one liked to cheer or call a greeting. There was only the sound of marching feet as the sons of the Anzacs paid tribute to the fallen of the First N.Z.E.F. before setting out to complete the jobs their fathers had begun.

The silent crowds along Wellington streets know and realise that; if they don't cheer it is only because they are too self-conscious.

"CONTACT"

New Air Force Journal

A NEW service journal has arrived which not only sets a new high standard for other service journals to aim at, but which in itself is a splendid example of New Zealand magazine production. This is a bold claim to make in view of the excellence of many troop journals produced since the war began, but *Contact*, the official magazine of the R.N.Z.A.F. Ground Training School at Levin, is, within its limitations, a first-class job.

Contact is on an ambitious scale. It is 48-pages and cover, on good quality paper and plentifully illustrated. The cover is in three colours, with a central design depicting by photo-montage, various aspects of the work at Levin. The contents, including the written matter, cartoons, drawings and photographs, were all compiled at Levin and cover every aspect of the life of the Initial Training Wing.

The most interesting feature in the first issue, entitled "Through the I.T.W. in 10 Minutes," is also a good piece of pictorial journalism. The camera has followed the arrival of a new recruit, from the railway station at Levin to his first meal, medical inspection, fitting out of uniform, first parade, lectures, physical training, and all his career down to his farewell parade.

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