

HISTORY AS IT HAPPENS

Thursday, April 24

The situation in Greece showed a marked deterioration.

The German press paid tribute to the heroism of the New Zealanders in defending the gap between Mount Olympus and the Aegean. For forty hours they held the German advance at a standstill.

Franco and the Spanish Government were being pressed by the Germans to permit the passage of German troops to attack Gibraltar.

At Dessye the Italians were making a firm stand.

Friday, April 25

News of the situation in Greece was conspicuously lacking, but the Germans claimed that part of the Empire's forces had already embarked. The Luftwaffe has been ordered to make the British retreat as costly as possible. The Germans were 35 miles from Athens. The Anzacs were defending the pass of Thermopylae and the Australian Acting-Prime Minister stated that there was no ground for hoping there would be any turn to our advantage.

President Roosevelt summoned his War Cabinet for a full dress review of the Allied position in Greece. Reports were circulated in some circles that 40% of American supplies for Britain were being sunk. Colonel Knox, Secretary of the Navy, strongly indicated that the U.S. would convoy supply ships to Britain, as "we must see the job through."

Further Australian troops arrived at Singapore.

Foreign diplomatic circles reported that Germany had demanded from Turkey military control of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles in return for a slice of Thrace.

Vichy reported that Germany and Italy had an army of 200,000 men and 1,200 aeroplanes in Libya.

Saturday & Sunday, April 26 & 27

The German advance guard entered Athens at 10.0 a.m. on Sunday, and mechanised units followed. A valiant rearguard action was fought by British and Anzacs, although hopelessly outnumbered. The British destroyed more German tanks than there were British tanks sent to Greece. Greek communiques and broadcasts have ceased.

A small Greek defence force fought the German landing party at Lemnos for 4 hours.

A strong attack by the Axis forces on Tobruk was repulsed.

A new British fighter plane, the Typhoon, was stated to be in full production.

President Roosevelt declared that American neutrality patrols would operate far into the oceans.

Gibraltar was being thoroughly prepared for any emergency.

There were reports that Japan had completed preparations to attack Singapore to synchronise with the next German move in the Mediterranean.

Monday, April 28

The only official news of the fighting in Greece was that the British withdrawal was continuing. The Germans claimed to have captured Corinth.

Some criticism was made in English newspapers of the lack of news.

It was officially announced that the Imperial forces captured Dessye, the last stronghold of the Italians in Abyssinia.

Mr. Churchill announced in an Empire broadcast the decision of the United States to patrol with naval surface craft and flying-boats the waters of the Western Hemisphere and to warn Allied and neutral ships of the presence of enemy submarines and raiders.

Mr. Churchill's speech claimed that the call made upon us by Greece could not be resisted. "We must now expect war in the Mediterranean, on the seas and in the air, to become very fierce, varied and wide-spread."

Tuesday, April 29

The Acting-Prime Minister of Australia, Mr. Fadden, announced in Sydney that the evacuation of Greece was proceeding and Imperial forces were conducting themselves with great heroism in the face of great enemy pressure.

Reports from Lisbon state that the Spanish Foreign Minister, Senor Sener, was completing preparations to declare Spain on the side of the Axis.

German and Italian forces occupied Sollum.

Wednesday, April 30

Reports from American sources stated that the last valiant Anzacs were evacuated from Greece, and British and Greek forces had fortified Crete. The Germans claimed to be approaching the last harbours in the south of Greece.

Admiral Stark, Chief of U.S. Naval Operations, revealed that U.S. naval patrols were operating 2,000 miles out in the Atlantic.

German newspapers admitted that the war in the Balkans caused economic damage on a large scale.

The Canadian budget imposed taxes on the heaviest scale in the Dominion's history.

The Bomber Command in daylight operations between April 17 and 23 sunk or damaged much German shipping off the coast of Europe.

"BOYS OVERSEAS" RADIO FEATURE

NBS Receives Huge Mail

NO single feature ever presented by radio in New Zealand has been the cause of so many letters to the NBS as the Sunday morning programme *With the Boys Overseas*. Mothers, sisters, sweethearts, cousins, wives, and friends, have been writing to the Service asking for repetitions of messages, inquiring for further details, or offering appreciation of the programme. There are so many letters, in fact, that if the volume continues, extra members of the staff may be required to cater for them.

To Make Sure You Listen

A large group of inquiries concerns the unfortunate cases where people heard from someone else that a message was given for them, but which they missed through not listening at the time. Sometimes there are rather tragic lapses of this nature, where, say, a mother has missed a personal message from her son. To guard against accidents of this type the NBS makes two special provisions—the first is that the list of names of men sending messages is read over at the beginning of the Sunday morning session, and then there is a period while the Sports Talk is being given to allow friends to ring up relatives and draw their attention to the coming message. The second provision is that the personal messages are repeated on Monday evenings, so that people who could not be reached by telephone on the Sunday morning can be advised by letter or telegram in plenty of time.

There are cases where special circumstances have intervened, as for example, when a mother might be in hospital, and in cases of this nature the NBS has gone to some trouble to be of assistance, though it will be appreciated that such special privileges could not be extended very far.

No Undue Delay

A large number of letters to the NBS are prompted by the fact that a soldier has sent a cable or air mail letter advising his relatives in New Zealand that he has had the opportunity of making a record for broadcast. The relatives then immediately write or telegraph to the NBS asking when it will be heard, or,

if they have listened in for a week or two without hearing their message, they demand to know exactly why their message has been missed. The explanation of this delay is a simple one. The Broadcasting Unit in the Middle East makes records when and where there is the opportunity, and as soon as they have made up a batch, the parcel is posted from the Middle East to New Zealand by ordinary mail, which takes, of course, a few weeks longer than the cable or air mail service. There may be a further delay in Wellington of a few days, but the New Zealand public can rest assured that there is no undue delay in this service. In fact, where people have written in to say that they know there will be a message for them from a soldier whose correct name is given, the NBS endeavours to write and advise them when to listen, as soon as the NBS itself has received the record here.

The important phrase in the preceding paragraph is that referring to the correct name. There are many thousands of soldiers in the Middle East, and of course many of them have names like Smith and Brown. An inquiry for a message from "John Smith" or "Sergeant D. J. Smith" is almost useless if the announcer with the unit refers to him as "Jack Smith." If inquirers would give the names that their soldier friends would be likely to use, it would save the NBS staff an immense amount of trouble.

Wide Appreciation

That this programme is widely appreciated there can be no doubt. The NBS has received letters of thanks from men in the field who have heard from New Zealand how pleased their relatives were to hear their voices. There have even been letters from casual listeners in Australia commenting favourably on this feature, and in particular one letter tells of hearing in the New Zealand Boys' Overseas programme, a "Cheerio" from a friend in the Australian forces in the Middle East. The "Cheerio" came from an Australian soldier who happened to be present at a garden party where Doug. Laursen asked the boys to speak.

Although some hundreds of New Zealand soldiers have already had the opportunity of sending a personal greeting, these are but a small fraction of our men in the Middle East. Many people must have wondered when their boy would get that opportunity, yet there have been no complaints and indeed wide understanding of the difficulties faced by the small staff of the Broadcasting Unit in choosing at random a few individuals each week.

No special effort is made to choose men from different districts, yet when one hears the place-names mentioned by the announcer, one realises that every district in New Zealand has sent its quota overseas.

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