

## HISTORY AS IT HAPPENS

Thursday, May 15

British forces advanced beyond Solum.

To wives of German seamen, Goebbels made a despondent speech, urging further sacrifices by civilians, and admitting the difficulty of life in towns bombed by British aircraft.

Two German aeroplanes were reported to have landed near Mosul.

Friday, May 16

Mr. Eden announced that French authorities had allowed German aircraft to use Syrian aerodromes for flights to Iraq.

Mr. Fraser landed in Cairo, after his plane had been fired at by Iraqi troops.

The Duke of Aosta, Commander-in-Chief of Italian forces in Abyssinia, asked for British terms of surrender after his force of about 150,000 had been completely surrounded at Amba Alagi.

Saturday & Sunday, May 17 & 18

British aircraft systematically bombed German-occupied aerodromes in Syria.

The United States War Department announced that thousands of British pilots under the Empire Air Training Scheme will in future be trained in U.S. air schools, retaining their civilian status until graduation.

A guaranteed wage was granted to English miners by an Essential Work Order, subject to their willingness to render reasonable services. The miners would always be permitted to change the colliery at which they work.

An Ankara report confirmed the London impression that Syria had been handed over virtually lock, stock and barrel to the German forces, who were setting up bases and controlling the communication systems.

Monday, May 19

The Duke of Aosta accepted the British terms, and surrendered himself with his troops at Amba Alagi. Operations were proceeding in Southern Abyssinia.

Turkey, it was reported from Tokio, had given tacit consent to all German requests, including permission for troops to cross Turkish territory into Iraq.

Once again German mechanised forces failed to recover ground lost at Sollum.

Tuesday, May 20

An attack on Crete by German parachute troops was reported from London.

The impending retirement of Major-General Sir John Duigan, Chief of the New Zealand General Staff, was announced, with the news that Lieutenant-General Sir Guy Williams, formerly G.O.C. Eastern Command, had been lent to New Zealand as military adviser to the Government.

Wednesday, May 21

Mr. Churchill told the Commons that 1500 enemy troops, wearing New Zealand battle dress, had landed in Crete. The situation, he said, was in hand. Later messages stated that at least 7000 of the enemy had landed from the air, and that a shore landing had been attempted.

High authorities at Vichy declared that if Britain continued bombing French airfields in Syria, France would resort to reprisals.

It was rumoured in London that Germany and the Soviet were negotiating for a full military alliance.

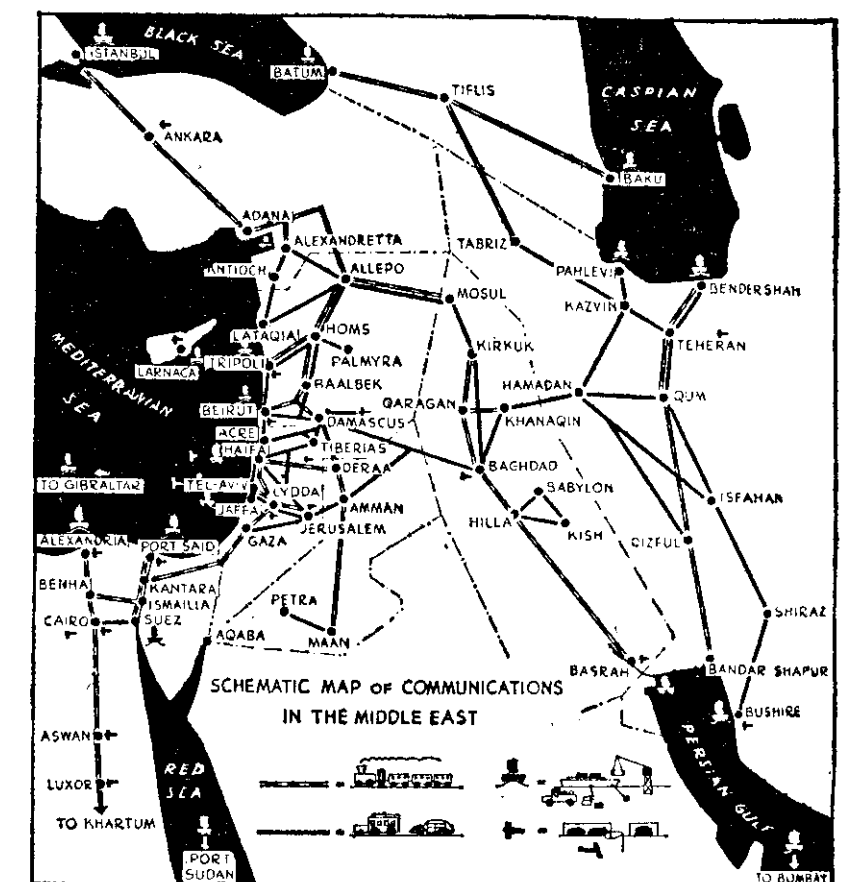
### OLD BILL'S "MICE"

#### The Art of Understatement

GENERAL WAVELL, whose brilliant series of lectures on the Science of Generalship was recently reprinted by *The Times*, tells in them how, after the last war, the Germans set up a commission of inquiry to discover the moral reasons for the British victory. The commission came to the conclusion that the Englishman's sense of humour was a deciding factor and, as an example to imitate, they incorporated in their military manuals one of Bruce Bairnsfather's famous "Ole Bill" drawings. The picture showed "Ole Bill" sitting in a farmhouse somewhere in France with a great hole gaping in the wall behind him. "Wot did that?" asks Bill's mate. "Mice," says Bill. The Germans inserted a bracketed note under the caption: "It wasn't mice, it was a shell that caused that hole."

If the Germans had profited by the lesson in their military manuals, they would never have launched mass air raids on Britain, writes Macdonald Hastings in "London Calling." Before the bombs began to fall, the English had already belittled them into insignificance.

Nearly all the jokes thrown up by the air raids are inspired by this exasperating imperturbability of language. That it reflects the national temper is evidenced by the fact that the best of the stories originate quite unconsciously. Some people were scanning the menu in a restaurant during a heavy raid. The waiter came up for their order with the remark: "Please order your dinner quickly. The building next door is on fire." I, myself, had a similar experience when dining with a friend of mine. We had just ordered a meal when a shower of incendiary bombs fell in the street outside. My friend and I went to help in putting them out. Half an hour later when—dirty but triumphant—we re-



Railways and roads of Syria, Iraq and Iran

turned, my friend's only remark was simply: "I suppose that has delayed our omelette somewhat."

Our practice of making light of disaster is, of course, a national weakness as well as a source of national strength. It explains the torpor of complacency which gripped us in the first year of the war. It is also the reason why our Prime Minister has to talk to us so severely, and why our war communiques invariably understate our victories. To keep us up to the mark, our high-spirits have to be damped-down just as the Germans, who are a low-spirited race, need theirs boosted-up. The moral for Director Goebbels is that, if he wants his propaganda to be effective in England, he ought to put it about that the Luftwaffe is licked, Hitler is planning suicide, and Germany is on the brink of revolution.

## RADIOS FOR WAR

### New Australian Industry

THE production of radio equipment for war purposes is one of the most important developments the war has brought about in the radio industry of Australia. Every new ship in the Australian Navy carries locally manufactured wireless, and the Army and Air Force are correspondingly equipped. The Army is also making extensive use of the new low-powered combination transmitter-receiver instruments produced for the exchange of messages over distances limited to a few miles.

And it is the same in the Air Force. Not only is every plane provided with the means of communicating with its base and with other aircraft in flight, but all the air stations and training schools are linked up by wireless installations which have a range covering the whole Continent of Australia and beyond.

Owing to war conditions in Great Britain and U.S.A., it became desirable that aircraft instruments, hitherto imported, should be produced in Australia. The task was handed to A.W.A., and that organisation is not only making gyroscopes, altimeters, air speed indicators, rate of climb indicators, flying and bearing compasses, vacuum gauges, and manifold pressure gauges for Australia, but has reached a stage at which it is providing equipment for use in countries beyond the Commonwealth. That, however, is a story that cannot now be told.

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