



A. G. SILK
Toothache was worse than dive-bombing

NEW ZEALANDER WHO LOOKED FOR TROUBLE

What He Found Has Made Good Pictures

When war broke out, he resigned his job, took his last £45 out of the bank and went to Australia to sell an idea to the Australian Government. After two months' persistent negotiation, it was bought, and in due course young Mr. Silk, in officer's uniform with shoulder badges proclaiming that he was an official Australian war photographer, left for the Middle East with the first convoy of the A.I.F. With him was Damien Parer, a newsreel photographer.

His Worst Experience

Nine months he spent in Palestine, "bored stiff and wondering what the war was about." He had a spell of bad

health, his troubles including, of all things, a bite on the nose by a rabid dog. He also had an abscessed wisdom tooth extracted without anaesthetic (because there wasn't any on hand). Two sergeants held him down while two surgeons worked on his jaw. It was his worst experience of the war.

Then he transferred to Libya and got in on the tail end of the first drive to Benghazi. Then to Greece, and a series of adventures, including the recording, with Parer, of the Nazi's cold-blooded liquidation of the village of Elason. Parer's newsreel shots, Silk claims, remain the most touching camera document yet secured in this war. During the evacuation, Silk drove a car for 52 hours on end, on 100 octane petrol. Fortunately it was an old car, and its engine well worn, or he would have blown the head off. The Piraeus was pretty well burned out, and he jumped on a small Greek coastal steamer and found that he had a handful of British troops and 100 German prisoners for company.

It was a three days' journey to Crète, and as Silk stepped on the wharf, seven Junkers 88's appeared from nowhere. He dived headlong under the nearest shelter and was distressed afterwards to find that he had been lying flat on his stomach in the middle of a petrol and ammunition dump. He was evacuated again to Alexandria for medical treatment. This done, he contacted some old friends on the Australian cruiser Perth, on which he had previously done a two months' spell patrolling up and down the Mediterranean, landing commandos and helping to keep supply routes clear. The Perth was on her way to help in the evacuation from Crète, and Silk went along too.

On one occasion the Perth was dive-bombed 180 times (approximately) and he got some pretty pictures of bombs

bursting. On the Perth, and later on the wharves at Alexandria, he found fine photographic material in the grim, war weary Australians and New Zealanders. One shot of a bearded Australian with one arm in a sling and clutching a salvaged tommy gun in the other (reproduced on the cover of this week's *Listener*) was used in newspapers and on posters throughout Australia.

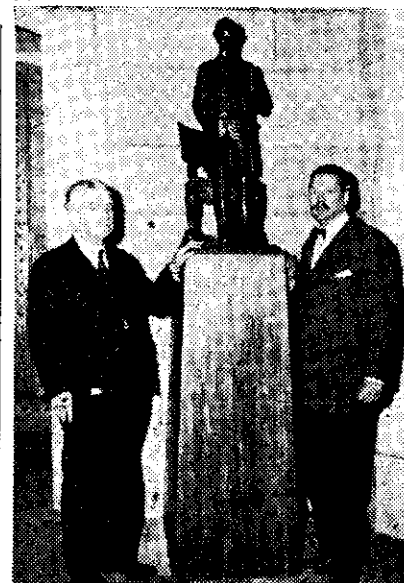
Silk's next diversion was with a flotilla of Australian destroyers. He imagined that the most he could hope for was patrol activities, with possibly a brush with the Italian navy. He found, however, that he was taking part in a "close support" movement along the coast of Syria, assisting Australian troops on shore.

Transferring to the Perth again, he was in time for a short engagement with

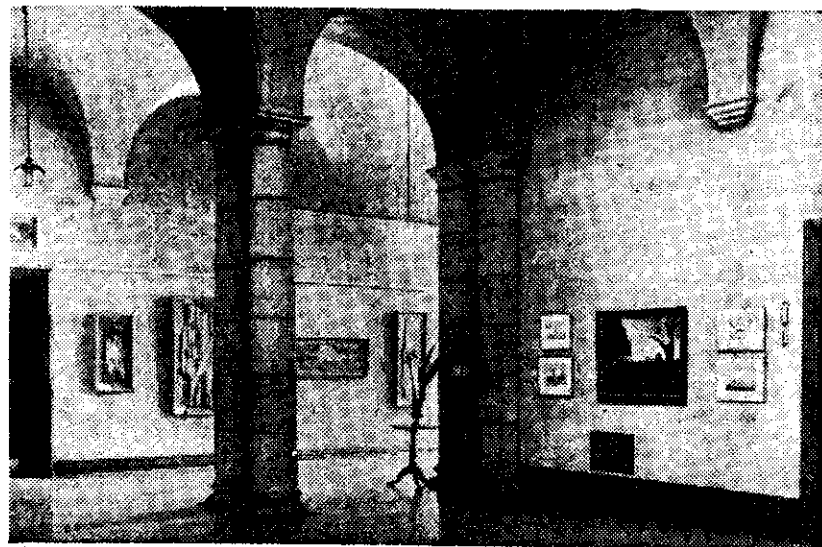
a force of Vichy destroyers which, operating out of Beirut, had been harassing the Australian troops in exactly the same manner as the Australian destroyers had been harassing the French. For six nights the Perth hunted them and then ran slap bang into them, opening up fire at 1,000 yards, which is peashooter range for a cruiser's six-inch guns. It was willing enough while it lasted, but the Vichy destroyers were fast, and after firing a lot of torpedoes ran in under the shelter of coastal guns. "We didn't think that was fair," says Silk. "The big stuff made a funny whistling noise as it came over at us, and we got from under." During the battle he got some unique shots with a special camera carried for such occasions.

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BIRTHDAY GROUP



THE Hon. Walter Nash, New Zealand's first Minister to the United States, was born on the same day of the year as Abraham Lincoln. Recently during a visit to an exhibition of Australian art in the Yale University Art Gallery, Mr. Nash was photographed alongside a statue of Lincoln with Professor Theodore Sizer, director of the gallery. Professor Sizer visited New Zealand last year under the auspices of the Carnegie Corporation to assist in organising an exhibition of New Zealand art for display in the United States. An exhibition of Australian art which he arranged is now touring the United States, but the outbreak of war in the Pacific made it impossible to proceed with the New Zealand scheme for the time being. The picture below shows a corner of the Yale Gallery, with samples of aboriginal art hung at the left.



THE reports cabled to New Zealand about the signing at Acre of the armistice between Britain and Vichy France following the Syrian campaign, stated that the finishing touches were put to the document by the light of a hurricane lamp. There was a good and sufficient reason for that hurricane lamp. A photographer had rigged up an elaborate system of lighting to assist him to make a proper record of the event, and when he switched it on, the whole electric light system fused.

Fortunately there were no diplomatic complications, though the photographer recalls that several Frenchmen scowled at him. The photographer was A. G. Silk, a young New Zealander, who is attached to the Australian Department of Information, and who is now in New Zealand photographing our war effort. The incident at Acre is only one of many little excitements he has crowded into his life since the outbreak of war. If Virginia Cowles hadn't thought of it first, there could be no better title to his story than "Looking for Trouble."

He Didn't Win Prizes

Silk worked behind the counter in a photographic dealer's shop in Fort Street, Auckland, and in his spare time used to take a camera out yachting on the Waitemata in summer and up to Chateau Tongariro in winter to photograph snow effects and bouncing young women on skis. Sometimes he sent pictures to exhibitions, but he never won a prize. He thinks that was because most of the judges preferred pretty pictorial effects, and most of his pictures were hard and realistic.