



At Sea, 16th February, 1944.

Number 7

THE GATEWAY TO INDIA

The docility and good humour which have marked the conduct of the troops on this transport underwent a severe test when it was first announced that we were not to have shore leave at Bombay and later that only a proportion of our number were to make actual contact with the great Indian city. Even the comparative few who were transported across the harbour felt that the trip lacked some of the pleasure that it might have given them, for their mates were left behind on the ship and, in any case, their time in the city was severely limited.

Those whom chance did not favour in the ballots spent a somewhat despondent day on board. Some leaned over the rails watching harbour movements or throwing overboard bottles, coins, and a variety of waste which was obviously treasure to the group of urchins who circled round the ship in their canoes appealing for "bucksheesh." It is worthy of note in passing that at least one little black-faced rascal demonstrated the spreading influence of the U.S.A. by accepting a bottle with a cry of "O.K. Thanks a lot." But even such novelty as the harbour provided palled a little, especially when thoughts reverted, as they often did, to the fact that we had travelled so far and come so near the reality of Indian life without being able to set foot ashore in this ancient and wonderfully interesting country. For most it was a dull day until the shore-going party arrived back with its fruit, its trinkets, newspapers, and a variety of souvenirs; and tongues never wagged so busily on board as they did when all hands gathered on the mess decks to listen to the tales of the day's experiences ashore.

For the majority of the troops, memories of our Bombay visit will always be tinged with disappointment, but soldiers are cheerful folk (as anyone on board may observe for himself) and, when once more our ship began to move, the atmosphere of gloom was rapidly displaced by one of pleasant anticipation, for we knew that we had begun the final stages of the long voyage to our destination and to a reunion with relatives and friends serving with the 2nd N.Z.E.F., in the Middle East.

J.G.

NEWS SUMMARY

RUSSIA The Red Army advance continues relentlessly. On all fronts the Germans are offering fierce resistance and leaving many dead on the battlefields. In the Dneiper Bend, remnants of the ten German divisions are surrounded and being wiped out by Russian artillery. When this is completed, large Russian forces will be released for the drive to the River Bug which is within a few miles of the 1939 border. In the North, the Russian advance has practically isolated **ESTONIA** which was previously occupied by Russia in 1940.

ITALY British troops in the ANZIO bridgehead have now gone over to the attack, after a week of fierce German Infantry and tank attacks. Our line has advanced at several points. Air Force and Navy have assisted the attack. The 5th Army are still held up at **CASSINO**.

AIR OFFENSIVE American and R.A.F. bombers continue nonstop bombing of military objectives in France, meeting little fighter opposition. Fighter planes of all types are carrying out offensive patrols, and our losses have been negligible.