

823 245. P.M.
21/11/41 Mr. Simons.

EVE OF THE ATTACK IN CYRENAICA.

Once again the palm trees of the Western Desert have spread across the world's headlines; and simultaneously with the news of our Empire's big-scale offensive we received these pictures taken on the eve of the attack. Pictures of the everyday life of the men who now hold the fortunes of the British Commonwealth of Nations in their strong and capable hands.

A few days ago a stop at the blacksmith's forge was an opportunity for a chat; now the repair will be working flat out to maintain the drive of armoured might. ~~XX~~

Here's a visit to the tailor; ~~M~~ he has a nice range of worsteds and pin-stripes, but he doesn't bother to show it because he knows what they ^{all} want anyway. ~~/~~

Another off duty occupation out here is fishing; those who go down to the sea in short slips get a lot of fun out of it, and the fish don't care so why worry? ^{But} If you hear stories about the catch being so heavy it breaks thenet it must have been somewhere else ~~/~~ All they've had for weeks has been bully ~~b~~beef, but to-day's Friday and here's hoping. The trawl was a flop and meanwhile cook is waiting patiently. ^{Now} All their hopes of fish for supper rest on one man. ~~/~~ Tut, tut! He's got a bite. ~~/~~ Ah, well, they don't like fish anyway. ~~/~~

EVE OF THE ATTACK IN CYRENAICA. (2)

Here's another sidelight on the desert war; water. That's a problem in these parts --- but for the troops near the coast the sea provides the water and the rather complicated distillery makes it fresh for drinking. What is it sergeant-major likes so much? Yes, I know, but he's got water.

This is the Officers' Mess; at least --- it was. But you'll be glad to hear that it's now the Pilots' Mess. So Pilot Officer and Sergeant Pilot in this part of the world not only fly together; they also have a drink and a chat together. That's by order of Air Vice Marshal Coningham; the man in command of the Western Desert Air is obviously a man of commonsense.

Since this newsreel was filmed, action has come to the Middle East with a lightning thrust. These men whom you see ^{lovingly} ~~glancing~~ with our cameraman, are now engaged in a bitter struggle for the world's freedom.

~~They~~ We know they can fight like the devil; that's what gives such dramatic point to these happy-go-lucky scenes. Wish them luck, and pray for them. Get a bit of a lump in your throat when you laugh --- as they wanted you to laugh when they made these pictures. Ah - turn it off - you ~~can't~~ ^{need secret murder when you're in love}

This was the eve of great drama: we didn't know that a tremendous offensive was building up in the staff offices of the army of the Nile, An Olympian clash was brewing.

Why - they're all in love except the officer

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The Mediterranean Fleet is co-operating ~~with the Army as it did when Wavell and Wilson smashed Italian armies from Sollum to~~

~~Banghisi:~~ ~~Quintanilla~~, commanded by the brilliant Admiral, Sir Andrew Cunningham. The 8th Army is led by his brother, General Sir Alan Cunningham; under the command of General Sir Claude Auchinleck — *seen here with his predecessor, Gen. Wavell*

Air Squadrons have hammered the enemy under the Air Officer Commanding Western Desert, Air Vice Marshal Coningham; a steady hammering for many weeks culminating in a terrific twelve-hour air bombardment bigger than anything Africa has ever known. These are Maryland bombers, on an actual operational flight ~~American planes now fly with our old Wellingtons, Hurricanes and Spitfires. And here go the bombs that fall on Axis.~~

This is another occasion on which we may do well to pay tribute to the garrison of Tobruk. For seven months these tough soldiers have played a lone hand --- a sword in the side of the Axis forces who surrounded them on land. The toughness of Tobruk is among the heroic tales of all the centuries.

~~Task... task... task: British and American: Churchill~~
~~has told us our army here is equipped at least as well as the enemy:~~

So the great offensive has begun:
 for the first time in this war it's fighting on equal terms; so the battle is in the hands of the men on the spot and we must leave it to them: wish them luck / --- ~~and God be with them.~~