

FALL OF DAMASCUS: FIRST PICTURES

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Title: Surprise Attack.  
Track: Geau Geste.  
Lines: Stagg.  
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Before we received these pictures of the capture of Damascus General Dentz had asked for armistice terms, and effective French resistance was over. We advanced slowly as we were reluctant to inflict losses on our former ally, France.

Free French troops co-operated with British and Indian units in the final assault on the capital. Colonial soldiers from the Cameroons were included in General de Gaulle's forces.

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Indians in tanks and Bren carriers harried the French rear-guard, while Syrians unconcernedly harvested their corn by much the same methods used in the days of Genesis.

Good shooting wrecked some ammunition wagons of the Vichy French. Some were still burning when our troops come upon them. No time was wasted in this village; it was under shell-fire. Leaving the traces of a three-parts beaten foe behind the British and Indian troops regained the open country still separating them from Damascus. Treeless country presenting no cover it had to be crossed under enemy fire, from guns concealed in the hills.. In open formation they resolutely pressed on. Damascus was now ours. The Bren carriers clattered into the town, which claims to be the oldest still inhabited city in the whole world. An abandoned French tank is on the right.

Syrians have no regrets over the rout of General Dentz. Foreign rule is over and now both we and General de Gaulle promise them independence. They are on our side - an illustration of how we can use the political weapon as well as Hitler.

A guard of honour saluted Generals Catroux and Legentilhomme, of the Free French, and the British officers who accompanied them to Government House. Here the Tricolour cavalry pennant now stands for General de Gaulle.

Syrians are within sight of independence. Two months ago their country was in danger of Nazi occupation. We have averted that threat. Where the caravans from Baghdad, Aleppo and Jerusalem converge arose ancient Damascus. It will be there when the Nazis are no more than an evil, hardly credible legend.

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