

ERITREA'S LAST STAND.

From the edge of the Red Sea come these pictures of the Fall of Eritrea. The area covered by our filming correspondents centres around the Capital, Asmara, and its Chief Port, Massawa.

Possibly the best way of telling the sensational story which accompanied these graphic pictures, is to quote from our representative's own dispatch. Originally set out in diary form it makes historical reading - He says:-

On the road to Asmara, I boarded the first tank and, sitting behind the turret, shot pictures. After several miles, we came across an Italian emissary who had come forward to arrange a talk about the surrender of the Capital. Moving on from here we had to fire on several Ascaris who were still shooting it out, not having yet heard of the cessation of hostilities in the area.

Most of them, however, were waving white flags and running about like boys out of school. Groups of soldiers looking like picnickers, and a few settlers in their homesteads, waved greetings to us with cries of "Viva" - it was all rather like a holiday outing.

Two kilometers outside Asmara, we came across the rendezvous. Out of the leading cars came Italian Emissaries accompanied by the Chief of Police and the Bishop of Asmara. The Brigadier approached them and accepted the surrender of the town. Up to this moment I was the only member of the Press to be present. Details of the Armistice were immediately gone into and the conversations carried out in a charabanc. All sorts of things were arranged, including a curfew, the observance of British Summer

Time, and all traffic keeping to the left of the road instead of the right. When it was all over, the Italians departed. There was quite a lot of saluting from the local coppers as we drove in, but I'll never ride in a tank from choice again.

On arrival at the Governor's house, a guard of honour presented arms, as the Brigadier arrived to take possession of the capital of Eritrea. Arms were laid down in token of surrender and the pictures I got of the meeting on the steps of the residence are - to my mind - historical. Then came the great moment when our troops entered. At first the civilian population were sulky, but after a while they came into the tree-lined streets and waved to us.

At a place called Adi Ugri we found a hundred and fifty British prisoners. They had planned to escape and had actually dug a tunnel over a hundred feet long, when news of our arrival reached them. Now they are free once more, on the road again... with Massawa as our objective. A road obstruction nearly made me miss filming the General's meeting with members of the Free French Force.

I was the only correspondent present when it was arranged with Italian Officers at an advanced machine gun post, that British Officers should go into Massawa to discuss matters. It was here that I acted as interpreter, throwing quite a lot of really juicy Italian off my chest. Maybe I was to blame, because it was dark when I got back. The following morning an Italian Officer returned to give an answer after discussions with Rome. He was blindfolded before being taken to Headquarters and, incidentally, he had not forgotten his trousers. The answer was that they would continue

to fight as from 1 o'clock, so it was a case of "let battle commence" all over again. But of course, the end had to come, and finally, travelling in an armoured car, an Intelligence Officer, and an R.A.F. PHOTOGRAPHER, Reuters representative and I, went ahead in the belief that Massawa had fallen. In order not to miss anything, we overtook everything on the road and, to the surprise of everyone, actually entered the town before it had fallen. All the way in we saw destroyed war material, planes, aerodromes and even the radio station - it was all very untidy.

I was in nice time to photograph the head of the British convoy entering the coastal town. Taking a look round the place, I saw where the Italians had driven several tanks into the sea. Ships in the harbour and at the wharves had been scuttled and put out of action - They must have been very angry.

The Admiral defender of Massawa was decidedly camera shy and I was rudely told to go somewhere.

Well, that's that. I don't care much for the place, but it means the end of Italy's possession of Eritrea.