

The night of the Declaration of War.

Memories are like phantom ships sailing on the infinite sea of the brain. Some are of outstanding beauty and importance. Others of lesser value, but nevertheless to be occasionally remembered with personal interest.

The month of August 1939 had been fraught with anxiety and ~~the~~ turmoil. The dark clouds of possible war in Europe were sailing across the sky of Tahiti, Isle of Dreams. The monthly boats to leave the island were crowded to capacity with escapists. Some, if necessary, to join the colours, others to find a haven where possible military service might be avoided.

Everything that could be turned into cash had been sold at give away prices. Thus it was that I found myself possessed of three good radios with spare valves to match.

All but the very few visitors had gone and I was alone with my responsibilities to attend to. Surely something would happen to prevent the dogs of war being again unleashed after seemingly such a short space of time since 1914.

Inside information by cable showed that a crisis was developing and that zero hour might be expected at any time. August faded into September, while all the world waited.

Late on the night of September 3rd, I was idly ^{turning} the knob of my radio listening to stations in England and America when, out of the blue, the B.B.C. announced a broadcast to the nation by the Rt Hon the Prime Minister. Then the thunderbolt fell. "We are at war with Germany".

My first reaction was one of incredulity. Perhaps it was a hoax. I continued to fiddle round the American stations. Then the announcement came that all stations were cleared for a nation wide broadcast by the President. No mistake. No possible doubt. Great Britain had declared war on Germany for the second time in my generation.

I felt a sense of pride that, although so far away from my homeland and those I loved, I had a job to do to the best of my ability. I stood up, as straight as a ramrod, and quietly sang my National Anthem. Poured myself out a double whiskey and sat down to think.

It was now in the early hours of the morning. Papeete was asleep, very fast asleep. Few would know that danger now lurked in the dark waters that surrounded us, as it was a foregone conclusion that France would declare war within the hour.

My only comforting thought was that Tahiti was half the world away from the theatre of war..And so to bed, and await the buzz and excitement of the morrow.

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