

INVITED BY OTTAWA TO PROVE ARMY CHARGES WELSH STICKS BY GUNS

Sunderland Postmaster, Italy Hero, Stands by Statement That Canadian Reinforcements Untrained and Too Few to Meet Need.

Major G. Arthur Welsh, D.S.O. and Bar Croix de Guerre, Sunderland Postmaster and hero of Italian battles has been invited by Ottawa to prove statements made in an interview with a Globe and Mail reporter which appeared in that paper on Saturday, December 2 in which Major Welsh who is well known in this district, having taken a part in the Sixth Victory Loan, declared that "They're dying in slit trenches in the rain, while oratory flows in Canada. And not one word of all that oratory seems to be sending one trained man where he is needed."

Following is the complete text of the interview as it appeared in the Globe and Mail accompanied by a picture of Major and Mrs. Welsh in their Sunderland home;

Sunderland, Dec. 1 (Staff)—In November, 1943, Canadian artillery commanders in Italy filed with their regimental headquarters reports of a serious condition developing in the arrival of untrained in addition to inadequate reinforcements, and ever since then the situation "has been rapidly degenerating," Major G. Arthur Welsh, D.S.O. and Bar, Croix de Guerre, who was known among the Canadians in Italy as "The Tiger" declared here tonight.

Nervously pacing the floor with his shattered leg still in a walking cast, his hands clenching and unclenching with his emotion, slender Major Welsh turned his burning eyes on this reporter and said: "I know they'll say Welsh is playing politics, though I've never been interested in politics in my life. But my God, I've got to talk for those boys over there. They're dying in slit trenches in the rain while oratory is flowing in Canada. And not one word of all that oratory seems to be sending one trained



man where he is needed."

Major Welsh hadn't wanted to talk. He didn't seek an interview. But when this reporter arrived at his big, high-ceilinged home where he has returned to his family and said that a report had arrived that the battery Welsh had commanded in Italy—a battery which won a D.S.O. and Bar, three Military Crosses and four Military Medals in two major engagements alone—was being broken up to make infantry reinforcements, Major Welsh admitted he had been told that. And with that he exploded into a report of things that he knew personally—and it was easy to understand why Maj.-Gen. Chris Vokes said, "Welsh is The Tiger," and the name stuck.

Never up to Strength

Since his unit went into action first in Sicily it has never been up to strength. While under fire before Ortona—where it carried on night and day for 28 days without rest—gunners who came as reinforcements were trained, though casualties were occussing at the time. As typical of conditions, a draft of replacements from an anti-

aircraft unit was sent to his anti-tank unit, and apart from not knowing anti-tank weapons or methods, turned out to be "largely cooks and clerks with little knowledge of ack ack and had to be sent back to regimental headquarters."

These were just a few of the things that were recited by the man whom Canada's Government flew home for a brief visit last spring to help sell Victory bonds because he was such a distinguished soldier and had such an outstanding record in the field. And as he said then, he said frankly: "I'm still in the service. I'm offending all the regulations. I hate publicity and all that goes with it. But God Almighty knows I love those boys—" and he pressed his hands to his eyes—"and somebody has to talk for them because Canada is losing sight of the ball and creating political capital out of the most important issue we have ever faced."

Major Welsh enlisted in the RFC as a kid in the last war, listed as a third-class ground-crew helper. That was the lowest rank in any service. He came out a lieutenant of the RAF. So he knows life in the ranks. He had a distinguished record, winning among other honors the Belgian Croix de Guerre. After demobilization he shunned anything military for 17 years, but after Manchuria and Ethiopia, he joined the militia. In his shy way he said: "I had a feeling inside me something terrible was coming to the world."

Stresses Training Need

Until Canadians realize what modern war is they cannot realize the importance of fully trained (as apart from numerical values) troops, Major Welsh said. For instance: Much fighting occurs at night. Infantry and anti-tank units operate as a team, with infantry moving abreast of the mobile guns. In darkness untrained men wander untrained drivers lose their way. The net result is slaughter of men who are depending on perfect co-ordination of the entire action. And this is entirely apart from the individual functions of men operating guns in moving "tanks" as the men call their mounted weapons, and apart from the "highly technical duties of an infantryman."

"Let me right on this" said Tiger Welsh. "I do not complain about artillerymen being put in the infantry because of the unit. Any man would be proud to be in Canada's infantry. It is the finest as-

sault or shock force in the world today—bar none. But our infantry has been reinforced, insufficiently of course, with untrained men or men trained in other highly specialized technique such as artillery, while artillery itself suffered from lack of trained men. There is all the difference in the world in this war between numerical reinforcements and trained reinforcements, and trained reinforcements.

"Peter is being robbed to pay Paul. And Peter is desperately needy himself. By this I mean, for instance, we smash up anti-tank units to try to fill infantry gaps and we are moving in Italy into the Po Valley which is ideal for Germany's tanks. The boys will be crying for anti-tank regiments there. And what breaks my heart is that this is done by a country which always subscribed to the belief that a man should never be used if a shell would do the job."

Before Normandy opened his unit received its first reinforcements, good men from other anti-tank regiments. After that first "flight," fewer and fewer trained men—apart from fewer in numbers—arrived. The unit, normally about 174 in strength, had gone into Sicily at assault strength—126 essential best-trained men.

After that it expected to be brought up to full strength, according to normal practice. It never did better than to meet assault strength, usually with many untrained men. At one time it went into assault with 91 men. Yet, Tiger Welsh said proudly, and his eyes gleamed "We had the finest spirit in Italy. We had not one neurosis before Ortona, thought we slept in slit trenches and were blasted night and day for 21 days of steady rain."

Of equal importance to training, Major Welsh said, was numerical strength. This was important because "men tire in battle, reach fatigue point and try to carry on. But they endanger themselves and the lives of all their comrades. At full strength, men can spell each other, get some rest. At depleted strength the whole unit rapidly reaches fatigue and total collapse. Canada's forces overseas are in that state now—while they are trying to teach new men how to take care of themselves."

Why he was willing to talk, Tiger Welsh said, was "because the people of Canada must realize that what is beginning to look like a

bit of political skullduggery is no politics —though some would capitalize on it now." The issue, he said, transcended all politics—it was "life and death for men there now and for poor, keen, fine young Canadian boys like those we had sent us direct from Canada with absolutely no training." His unit had received medical corps personnel as replacements, yet in hospital he had seen overworked medical corps personnel who cursed because they couldn't get help.

"That's the story" he said, holding out his arms. "It's true, every word and much more. As he spoke his pretty gray-haired wife, who has carried on his peacetime job of postmaster for five years in addition to rearing their two children, silently twisted her hands in her lap. He went on: "I'm washing up anything I have, I suppose. But I must say this: An officer's duty is twofold, to lead his men wisely and see they do their duty, and to bring them out alive. The last responsibility still lies on my heart. I'm trying to fulfil it."

Major George Arthur Welsh, serving with a field regiment of the Royal Canadian Artillery Overseas, was born July 28, 1897 in Sunderland, Ontario. A merchant at Sunderland, Ont. in civilian life, Major Welsh was educated at the L.C.I. and the University of Toronto where he was a member of the C.O.T.C. He served with the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Air Force in England and France from 1917 to 1919, rising to the rank of Flt.-Lieut. and was awarded the Service and Victory Medals and the Croix De Guerre (Belgian). In 1934 he joined the Victoria and Haliburton Regt. with the rank of 2nd Lt. and won his captaincy in Sept. 1936. His next-of-kin is Mrs. Zella Welsh, his wife, at Sunderland.