THE WAR-WEEK—Commentary on Current Events

Biggest Battle In History Raging on Western Front

The fiercest battle in the history of the world began last week, when, having pulverized Holland in five days and made deep thrusts into Belgium, the German armies turned head-on in violent and deadly action against the Maginot Line, meeting the French, British, Belgian forces on a front 200 miles long. A titanic struggle was in progress, and the fate of many nations depended upon the outcome

Wrote New York Times' correspondent Archambault: "There is in Paris the general impression that the Germans have launched an offensive of such a nature that it will not end until a decision has been obtained. If the conflict can be continued as a war of movement, that decision may not be far distant — not more than weeks. But if the front becomes stabilized, the campaign may drag on for months . . . . The general battle will be fought, it is believed, on a right-angle front having as pivot the twin French towns of Mezieres and Charleville — from there one section of the front runs northward along the course of the River Meuse as far as Namur and Liege; the other runs eastward parallel to the Maginot Line as far as the Rhine."

Another Napoleon?

Russell Hill of the New York Herald-Tribune, writing from Berlin, told of a possible German plan for the inclusion "in certain eventualities" of the whole of Europe east of the Rhine in a counter-blockade of England, comparable to Napoleon's famous "continental system." The Germans, he said, would attempt to carry out such a plan only if the Allies, by "aggressive" measures, carried the war into the Mediterranan. (It should be noted that the dynamic Nazi policy has always been to counteract possible "aggressions" by striking the first blow).

BRITAIN: The people of England last week were waiting in calm horror for the worst. The German conquest of Holland had moved Nazi air bases to within 185 miles of the English coast, and German spokesmen said that "mass air operations against England could be expected in the nearest future."

"Blood And Tears"

Winston Chuchill, himself, the new Prime Minister, promised only blood and tears and suffering and adversity until one day the victory would be gained. He spoke of the marked disparity of the strength of "our" air force as compared with that of the enemy . . . the new War Secretary Anthony Eden called for the mobilization of 100,000 "minute-men" between the ages of 16 and 65 as an armed guard against German parachutists who might land anywhere in England.

With men of three parties (Conservative, Labor, Liberal) in the Cabinet, it was thought that Britain's prosecution of the war would be much more vigorous henceforth. Herbert Morrison as supply minister, was particularly welcomed by the British press.

Italy Gets Ready

ITALY. During the week indications multiplied that Italy was about to enter the war . . . The War Ministry confirmed that 1,000,000 reservists had been called up; Mussolini ordered Italo-French frontier defenses perfected; plastering of anti-British posters in Italian cities continued despite British protests, and the Italian press raved against the Allied blockade . . . The Vatican newspaper "Osservatore Romano" was burned in the streets because of its expressed sympathy for Belgium and Holland. Mussolini made the declaration that Italian belligerency remained unchanged "until some new developments in Europe throw the country into war." Mme. Genevieve Tabouis, celebrated French journalist, said that foreign observers in Berlin found high Nazis there convinced the time had come for Italy to act — before the great battle on the Western Front had reached its turning-point. Would Switzerland be Italy's first victim?

"Stay Out of Balkans!"

RUSSIA. Soviet diplomats last week told Britain, France, Germany and Italy to stay out of the Balkans. This action followed upon reports of German and Italian troop concentrations near the frontiers of Yugoslavia, and massing of an Allied battle fleet at Alexandria. Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, possible partners in a military alliance with Russia, were informed of the step (Yugoslavia and Soviet Russia agreed to work at top speed on plans for political and military co-operation). The Soviet Government newspaper also warned that if Britain and France went to war with Italy, Turkey and Greece would also be dragged in.

SWEDEN. Declaring, "it appears we can expect nothing from the western powers," Sweden last week blacked out the entire countryside, laid new mine fields and darkened lighthouses following reports of 120,000 German troops massed on the Norwegian border. The "land of the middle way" also turned to Russia for help in settling some of her pressing trade problems.

UNITED STATES. The invasion by Germany of the Low Countries brought a noticeable shift in American policy toward favoring the Allies. Although President Roosevelt said that he saw no change with respect to the possibilities of the United States keeping out of Europe's war, the impact of last week's European developments on the U. S. public mind was terrific. The American people appeared to be engrossed in the progress of the war, forgetting "relief, reform and recovery" . . . An extraordinary arms program boosting next fiscal year's defense spending over the two-and-a-half billion mark was reported in the making; while the Senate naval committee approved an eleven per cent increase in the U. S. naval fighting strength . . .

CANADA: Speeding up of Canada's war effort was expected shortly to come as a result of the Nazi victory in Norway and the smashing of Holland by the German juggernaut . . . Last week the Federal Government had taken "three or four" emergency steps, according to the Prime Minister (we surmised these had to do with acceleration of the Commonwealth air training plan, and with extra precautions on the eastern seaboard), details of which were to be given Parliament early in the session . . . Cabinet changes during the week; Hon. Jas. A. MacKinnon became Minister of Trade and Commerce, replacing Hon. W. D. Euler who went to the Senate; Hon. Pierre F. Casgrain, former Speaker of the House, became Secretary of State . . . The program of legislation facing Parliament comprised: new war appropriations; a budget designed to raise the money; steps to create a system of unemployment insurance on contributory lines; amendments to various acts to bring them in line with war requirements . . . No implementation of the long-awaited (2½ years) report on Federal-Provincial relations was planned . . . During the week, also, Hon. R. J. Manion resigned as leader of the Conservative party, and Hon. R. B. Hanson became House Leader . . . the Communist party of Canada was declared an illegal organization . . .

Gardening ....

GARDEN WALKS

In the smaller garden where visitors and children soon wear grass thin along the edges of the flower beds or between the house and the swing or arbour, regular paths are needed. With a little care they will add beauty to the rest of the garden, too. Most pleasing materials of all for this purpose are flagstones. These are broad, flat, thin slabs af soft stone, usual'' found in abundance around certain river beds.

The stones are sunk flush with the ground and at lea' an inch and a half of grass is left between edges. Sometimes after the sod is cut out the exact shape and depth of each stone, a little sand is added to the bottom of the hole for drainage and to make walk firmer. Built in this way the lawn mower will run right over the pathway

WINDOW BOXES

A brown or green stained window box overflowing with gaily blooming flowers is within the range of almost every person. Even the apartment deweller is able to satisfy a gardening ambition and success is easily obtained. This sort of gardening is highly intensive with many more plants to the sq. foot than would be grown under ordinary conditions. This means that very rich soil should be used and in addition a fairly frequent application of chemical fertilizer during the season. Being exposed on all sides to drying winds, a thorough watering once a day of the window box is advised.

Along the front of window boxes are planted trailing nasturtriums German ivy, lobelia, alyssum and similar plants, with petunias, ageratums, begonias, ferns, geraniums, and other plants especially recommended for this purpose farther back. Shelter from the sun for a day or two should be provided until the plants get established.

Human Bat

For two years an Indian named Gangaram has been hanging by his toes from the branch of a tree in the forest of Eirban, near Bharatpur. He believes he will obtain godly powers. His followers feed him with their own hands so as not to disturb his poise and he sleeps during the night without getting out of his bat-like position.

CURRIE'S SPECIAL ORDERS AT WAR'S TURNING-POINTS

Historic Copies of Order Issued March 28, 1918, When The Allies Were Fighting With Their Backs to the Wall, and Another Issued October 3, 1918, Reflect the First World War's Changing Situation in Its Last Few Months

In those dark hours of March 1918, when the German armies were driving the British back and back, the following special order, copies of which have been carefully kept, was issued to battalions, batteries and Field Companies by Sir Arthur W. Currie, K.C.B., Commanding the Canadian Corps (dated March 28, 1918):

"In an endeavour to reach an immediate decision, the enemy has gathered all his forces and struck a mighty blow at the British Army. Overwhelmed by sheer weight of numbers, the British Divisions in the line between the Scarpe and the Oise have fallen back fighting hard, steady and undismayed.

"Measures have been taken successfully to meet this German onslaught. The French have gathered a powerful army, commanded by a most able and trusted leader, and this army is now moving swiftly to our help. Fresh British Divisions are being thrown in. The Canadians are soon to be engaged. Our Motor Machine Gun Brigade has already played a most gallant part and once again covered itself with glory.

"Looking back with pride on the unbroken record of your glorious achievements, asking you to realize that to-day the fate of the British Empire hangs in the balance, I place my trust in the Canadian Corps, knowing that where Canadians are engaged there can be no giving way.

"Under the orders of your devoted officers in the coming battle, you will advance or fall where you stand facing the enemy.

"To those who will fall I say 'you will not die but step into immortality. Your mothers will not lament your fate but will be proud to have borne such sons. Your names will be revered forever and ever by your grateful country, and God will take you to Himself.'

"Canadians, in this fateful hour, I command you and I trust you to fight as you have ever fought with all your tranquil courage. On many a hard-fought field of battle you have overcome this enemy. With God's help you shall achieve victory once more."

An entirely different war picture is reflected in the special order issued by Sir Arthur Currie on October 3, 1918, when the German armies were on the run and victory for the Allies appeared on the near horizon:

"I wish to express to all Troops now fighting in the Canadian Corps my high appreciation of the splendid fighting qualities displayed by them in the successful battle of the last five days.

"The mission assigned to the Corps was the protection of the flank of the Third and Fourth Armies in their advance, and that mission has been carried out to the complete satisfaction of the Commander-in-Chief.

"In your advance you overcame the very formidable obstacle of the Canal du Nord; you carried by assault the fortified Bourlon Wood, the Marcoing line, and seized the high groud extending along the Douai-Cambrai road. The towns of Oisy le Verger, Epinoy, Haynecourt, Marquion, Sains lez Marquion, Sancourt, Bourlon, Fontaine Notre Dame, Raillencourt, Sailly, St. Olle, Neuville, St. Remy and Tilley are now ours, and your patrols have entered Cambrai itself.

"In the short period of two months the Canadian Corps — to which were attached the Thirty-Second Division for the Battle of Amiens, the Fourth and the Fifty-First Divisions for the Battle of Arras, and the Eleventh Division for this Battle of Cambrai — has encountered and defeated decisively forty-seven German divisions — that is nearly a quarter of the total German forces on the Western Front.

"The victories you have achieved are the fruit of the iron discipline you accepted freely and of the high standard you have reached in the technical knowledge of your arms and the combined tactical employment of all your resources.

"You must therefore with relentless energy maintain and perfect the high standard of training you have reached, and guard with jealous pride your stern discipline.

"I am proud of your deeds and I want to record here my heartfelt thanks for your generous efforts and my unbounded confidence in your ability to fight victoriously and crush the enemy wherever and whenever you meet him.

A. W. Currie,
Lieutenant-General,
Commanding Canadian Corps."

Canada's exports of paper and manufactures totalled $10,707,370 in March compared with $10,102,545 in March, 1939. The exports to the United States aggregated $7,342,328 and to the United Kingdom, $1,159,900.

Moses Caused First Blackout

A man who had heard a radio report about Egypt's "first" blackout last week called a newspaper office in Saint John, N. B.

"Look up Exodus, Chapter 10, verse 22," he said.

The verse reads:

"And Moses stretched forth his hand toward Heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days."

Populace Greet Tommies As British Tanks Speed Into Belgium

This radio photo shows a British tank clanking through the streets of a Belgian village headed for the new front as citizens of the town line the street to hail the incoming British troops.

LIFE'S LIKE THAT — By Fred Neher

"You'll Have to Sue the Seed Store, Sir. . . . I Planted Them for String Beans!!"

REG'LAR FELLERS—The Real Thing — By GENE BYRNES