THE WAR-WEEK—Commentary on Current Events

SURRENDER OF LEOPOLD BRINGS BLACKEST DAYS

The Allied army of the north, consisting chiefly of the British Expeditionary Force, was placed in a position of supreme danger by the capitulation last week of the Belgian forces under King Leopold and was forced to retreat yard by yard towards the coast under a relentless German attack. With the Channel ports from Ostend to Boulogne strongly compromised, a German bid for final victory seemingly entered the decisive stage. People of British, French, Belgian blood girded themselves for the bitterest days they had ever had to face.

"'Til Facts Are Known"

Branded as treachery, little was known regarding the actual circumstances surrounding King Leopold's unconditional surrender of the Belgian army to Germany. Admiral of the British Fleet, Sir Roger Keyes, special British liaison officer to Belgium since the German invasion of the Low Countries, made a dramatic appeal for suspension of judgment on King Leopold III — "a very gallant soldier" — until all the facts were known. The London Evening News recalled the recent words of the Belgian minister of the interior, M. van der Poorten, that King Leopold was "filled with deep concern for the fate of his troops" who were taking a ferocious battering from the Germans. The News suggested this sentence provided a key to the King's decision.

French Consolidate

Separated from the army on the Flanders front by a wide German corridor, the main body of the Allied forces, retaining the initiative, was consolidating itself on the entire course of the Somme in preparation of a great offensive. German losses were reported to be terrific on all fronts, the Allies claiming that casualties during ten days' fighting totalled half a million . . . On the Aisne all was quiet; near the Meuse the Germans remained aggressive, but were being held everywhere; nothing was occurring on the Maginot Line.

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BRITAIN: Civilian morale in Great Britain was bolstered by the heroic exploits of R.A.F. bombing and fighting pilots who did double and triple duty in the fierce battles raging on the Continent. The Air Force went after targets in the Rhineland industrial area, bombing railways junctions, troop trains, yards and bridges.

Over the week-end a shake-up in the British army high command was made, replacing General Ironside by General Sir John Dill as Commander of the Imperial Staff; General Ironside was put in charge of British home forces who were being prepared against the threat of an imminent Nazi invasion.

Sweeping powers were granted Britain's new wartime government including: establishment of production councils to control the manufacture of munitions, ships and aircraft and to regulate mining and agriculture; authority to impose 100 per cent. excess profits tax to prevent profiteering; authority to take over munitions factories; authority to regulate other industry to prevent overlapping of labor; the right to control banks and the right to regulate wages and hours of labor.

Invasion Seen As Inevitable

Prime Minister Churchill warned that "hard and heavy tidings" may be expected from a situation of "grievous peril"; Information Minister Duff Cooper said that although British must withdraw in Flanders, "we have not lost the war, assuredly we shall not."

The early possibility was foreseen in Britain that with Germans in control of channel ports, London might become but a salient of the western front . . . that big German land guns commanding the Straits of Dover, aided by German planes, could ruin merchant traffic in the Channel and pave the way for the Nazi invasion of Britain, regarded as almost inevitable.

Through Ireland?

Apprehension increased during the week that Germany might attempt to use Ireland as a base of operations against the United Kingdom. Reported activity of the Irish Republic Army gave rise to serious misgivings and prompted the Eire government to take drastic military measures, bringing the army to war strength.

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RUSSIA: Signs were plentiful that the Soviet Union was becoming increasingly perturbed about Germany military aims in eastern Europe, in particular about the possibility of a joint German-Italian drive in the Balkans. Friendliness with the Allies was therefore not excluded from the Soviet program. The Soviet reply to recent British proposals for a trade agreement showed that Russia had by no means closed the door to further talks; and last week when Sir Stafford Cripps, Laborite member of the British House, journeyed to Moscow on an economic mission, chances were seen as "not unfavorable" for improved relations between Britain and the U.S.S.R.

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ITALY: Foreigners prepared to leave Italy as further classes of army reserves were called for duty. Italy's entrance into the war on the side of Germany appeared only a matter of days distant, although it was seen that Mussolini might be fobbed off at the last minute by the relaxation of the Allied blockade in the Mediterranean, or by sweeping territorial concessions on the part of France. All the Italian schools were ordered closed, and civilian motor traffic suspended to conserve fuel. (the ultra-Fascist newspaper Conquiste D'Impero said that if Italy entered the war the decisive battle would be in Egypt: the Italian plan would be to smash the Allies' east fleet and block the Suez canal).

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UNITED STATES: While Congress considered immediate action to finance the U. S.' new $1,000,000,000 defense program, President Roosevelt set up a seven-man commission to supervise its carrying-out; announced a scheme to train 50,000 yearly for the U.S. air force; and made a fervent appeal for aid for war refugees.

The war has brought a substantial reduction in trade for the United States, and deterioration in certain phases of the nation's business and industrial life, but the U. S. steel industry expects the busiest year since the 1914-18 boom . . . . leaders of industry conferring on speed-up plans estimated that the Allied aircraft orders in the U.S. have reached $725,00,000 a recent increase of $100,000,000.

As a part of the American defense program, mass production of new popular-priced (under $2.50) gas masks for civilians was contemplated.

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CANADA: Spurred by the fast-developing crisis abroad, events at home in Canada happened thick and fast. The Dominion Government announced immediate expansion of the military and air forces of Canada as an emergency step to meet the critical situation in Europe, and Prime Minister Mackenzie King intimated at Ottawa that the administration had given consideration to "measures that may be necessary" . . . in other words, conscription . . . the formation of a fourth division of the C.A.S.F. was outlined in Parliament, raising the total of Canadian troops in active service by 60 per cent. . . In addition a veterans' home guard was authorized by the Defence Department . . . Air Minister C. G. Power told the House of Commons that every single air field under the Commonwealth Air Training Plan would be rushed to completion this summer, and that three additional elementary flying schools would be established, one of them at Goderich, Ontario . . .

The bringing down of the Federal Budget was expected within ten days, at which time Finance Minister Ralston would reveal the taxes and other measures by which the government hopes to obtain money to carry on the nation's war activity and keep up curtailed peace-time services . . .

The appointment was announced during the week of J. Pierrepont Moffat as the new United States Minister to Canada, succeeding Jas. H. R. Cromwell. Apropos, the New York Herald-Tribune editorialized: "No one can foresee the outcome of the war, but no matter how it ends, no one can overlook the fateful importance, today and hereafter, of the relations between the United States and Canada."

Rumors flew during the week, contributing to the national state of mind which was bordering on hysteria. We heard that parachutists might land in Toronto; that spies in nun's clothing had been apprehended near Port Stanley; that our next-door neighbor was a "5th columnist", and that we ought to tell the police about him . . . Better substantiated reports crowded on the heels of these rumors: that Queen Mary might shortly come to Canada accompanied by the Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret Rose; that other European royalty might seek refuge here . . . Dowager Queen Marie of Yugoslavia, with two children and two grandchildren; Princess Juliana of the Netherlands and her two babies.

Most cheerful news of the week: Allied and Norwegian forces captured the iron ore port of Narvik.

Radio System Is Simplified

A simplified system of ship-to-shore radio telephone service with one working frequency for all the Great Lakes instead of one for each of the five lakes as heretofore, has been inaugurated.

Effective since May 1st adoption of the system followed an informal agreement between the United States and Canada and was placed in operation with the co-operation of the federal communications commission of the United States.

AGREEMENT WITH U. S.

Actually the recent agreement brings up to date an agreement between Canada and the United States in 1936 when certain frequency bands were set aside for ship-to-shore radio telephone services on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts as well as on the Great Lakes.

Ask for BEE HIVE

P6.3

The Battle of the Tanks

The tank complement of a British Division is at least one battalion of 45 infantry co-operation tanks and one regiment of 45 scout tanks

Sept. 10—
Canada entered the war.

Sept. 31—
First Division with three tank units mobilized.

Oct. 15—
Major-General McNaughton in Command, called for survey of Canada's armoured troops, tank training and production possibilities.

Oct. 31—
Col. E. J. Carter, British tank expert, submitted his report, recommending:
Immediate creation centralized Armoured Corps; unit and combined training at Camp Borden; tank production in Canada to "start now."

Nov. 13—
Ottawa announced British experts to organize our war effort.

Nov. 14—
Toronto Committee wired and wrote Defense Minister urging Col. Carter be retained as adviser on tank training and production.

Nov. 15—
Minister of Defense Rogers wired: **"Our tank organization does not warrant appointment additional senior officers at present."**

Nov. 20—
Toronto Globe & Mail published first of four articles on "Armoured Troops in the Present War" by Col. E. J. Carter. From the articles come these statements:

Hardened steel is the only thing that will bring a man alive through a zone of machine-gun fire and carry him and his retaliatory fire into the hostile line. Tanks are the answer . . . September, 1918, when we were advancing with the Canadians, was the Germans' first lesson in co-operative attack with armoured troops and airplanes. It would not be wise to discount the skill with which they applied it in Poland . . . Of the 1939 war . . . this much can certainly be foretold: **If and when the attack does come it will be made in the greatest numbers and at the highest speed with both land and aircraft. For its aim will be to penetrate the battle ground and reach the control and supply areas before reserves can be brought up to meet it . . .**

If Canada can undertake more her best contribution, in my humble judgment, would be in the recruiting, training and equipping of tank units. **There is no technical problem in the production of tanks which Canada's skilled industries should not be able quickly to overcome . . .**

Nov. 22—
Brigadier E. J. C. Schmidlin, Director of Engineering Services at Canadian Headquarters, technical adviser to the Minister of Defense, visited Toronto to speak of tanks. From the speech come these pearls:

Nobody knows how useful tanks will be in actual "ding-dong" warfare . . . The Polish campaign was no true indication of the power of mechanized armies. The Poles failed to provide the opposition expected of them . . .

The usefulness of the airplane . . . remains to be seen. . . The damage from bombing will be considerably less than expected . . . Bombing a civilian makes him hot under the collar and sends him running for a rifle . . . **The ultimate weapon which wins the war is a bayonet on a rifle carried by an infantryman through the mud.**

Nov. 24—
Major Everett Bristol, for the Toronto Committee, wrote Mr. Rogers asking reconsideration of his decision to do without Col. Carter's expert advice. His letter enclosed an offer of co-operation by the mining industry in "a more ambitious tank program," and **asked permission to bring a delegation to meet the Minister and discuss "what steps can be taken to mobilize the resources of the leaders in the mining industry behind a major war effort."**

Nov. 27—
Mr. Rogers acknowledged this letter without reply.

Nov. 30—
Col. Carter, of the Royal Tank Corps, left Canada for England.

Dec. (?)—
Under the Command of Major-General McNaughton the First Division, CASF, sailed for England, **minus its three tank units.**

Dec. to Feb.—
The Toronto Committee sought ways and means of obtaining Canadian - made tank training equipment. Results: A cheap, easily assembled training vehicle was planned with the co-operation of the Dominion's motor industry. An offer to make test machines without expense or obligation to the Department of Defense was submitted. Regardless of the efforts of staff officers directly concerned the offer was ignored.

Feb. 12—
Major Bristol opened a new offensive, writing the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defense and a high ranking officer on the Headquarters Staff urging action on tanks. He enclosed specially marked copies of Col. Carter's prophetic articles.

Feb. 14—
Mr. Rogers acknowledged receipt of the articles.

Feb. 16—
The Prime Minister's office also acknowledged receipt. This was countered with a last appeal to Mr. King through the offices of a friend.

March 8—
The Toronto Committee received a profound treatise originating with the Department of Defense. **It advised that there was no program for unit or combined tank training at Camp Borden and no likelihood that one would be adopted.**

March 16—
Ottawa repulsed last assault: "We are working on a very comprehensive program of development in wheeled vehicles which has great potential training value."

Somewhere-in-April—
Brigadier Schmidlin, Director of Engineering Services at Defense Headquarters, technical adviser to the Minister of Defense, raised to Acting Quartermaster General.

May 27—
First Division tank units still in Canada, still tankless. Prime Minister King promised a Fourth Division of nine RIFLE BATTALIONS—presumably complete with bayonets and mud.

Pass the Bayonets, Please!

Sept. 1, 1939—
Hitler orders invasion of Poland.

Sept. 27—
Warsaw surrenders to German tanks.

April 9, 1940—
Hitler sends tank troops into Norway, mechanized forces overrun Denmark.

May 3—
Allies withdraw from Central Norway, lacking armoured troops.

May 10—
Hitler's tanks invade Holland and Belgium. Luxembourg overrun.

May 15—
Netherlands surrender all but Zeeland Province.

May 17—
Brussels vacated.

May 19—
Nazi tanks pierce Somme at St. Quentin.

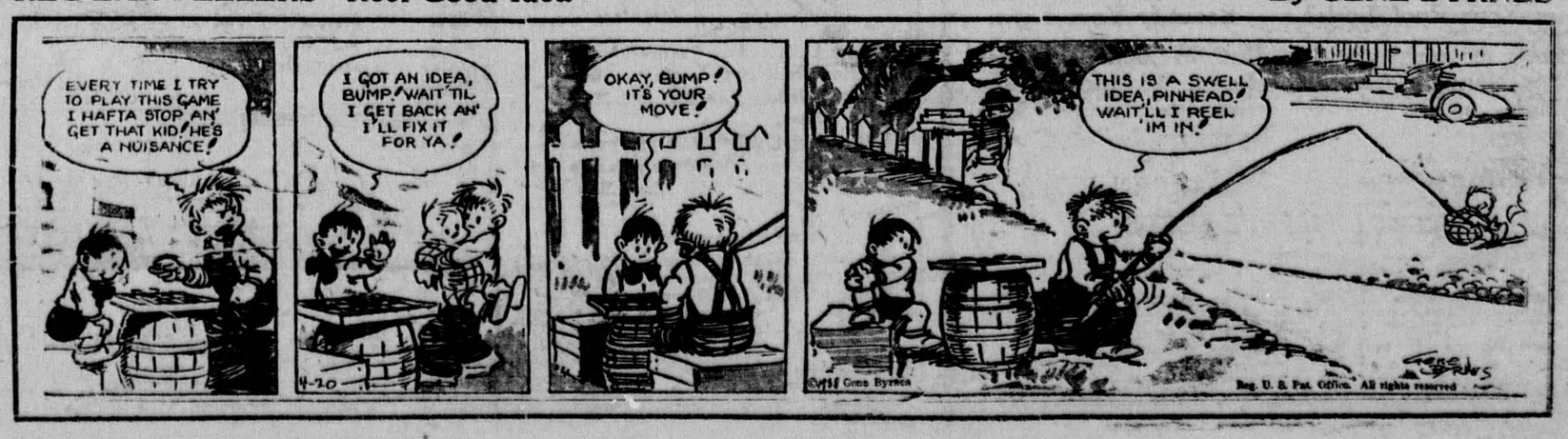
May 20—
German light tanks reach Channel at Abbeville.

May 26—
French command announces withdrawal from Boulogne.

May 27—
General Weygand promises armoured counter-attack.

CALLING CANADA

Written and paid for by "Calling Canada"

REG'LAR FELLERS—Reel Good Idea

By GENE BYRNES