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THE WAR · WEEK — Commentary on Current Events

Russians Have Used Artillery Arm Effectively In Most Of Their Wars

Within the walls of Moscow's Kremlin stands a giant tube of ornamented metal weighing many tons. It was cast in 1586, just two years after the death of Ivan the Terrible. For centuries it has been called the "Czar's cannon" in tribute to its size. Today it is a reminder that Russians have long counted on the artillery arm and have used it to effect in most of their wars.

The present struggle is no exception, says The New York Times. Russian reliance on artillery as one of the answers to Nazi Blitzkrieg has proved well founded. Among the Soviet weapons praised by military men are a 45mm. anti-tank gun, the Putilov 76.2mm. field piece, a double-purpose anti-aircraft and anti-tank gun, of the same caliber, and a big 152mm. (six-inch) gun mounted on a 52-ton tank chassis. Used in conjunction with aircraft, tanks and the tactic of defence in depth, smash many a Panzer spearhead. Through much of the war their prihary role has been defensive.

Red Pincers Tightening

Last week Russian artillery was being used to good effect offensively. It was playing an increasingly important part in the great Sovet drive on Orel, major Nazi supply base and hinge between the invader's central and southern fronts. For twenty months Germans had been digging in around the city, creating a maze of trenches, pillbodes and strong points miles in depth. To blast a way through the interminable barricade massed Russian batteries laid down drumfire reminiscent of World War I. With their aid the Red pincers slowly tightened, closing in on Orel from the north, the east and the south. After nearly three weeks of ferocious fighting, Soviet legions were within a few miles of their gial. An estimated 250,000 German troops were in danger of entrapment.

Descriptions of the battle by Moscow correspondents pictured enemy reserves being hurled in fruitless counter-attacks against Russian tank and infantry units. The Germns were ordered to fight to the death. Thousands of them did. Their resperate defence apparently was slowing the advance of the Red Army. Nevertheless, the Russians pushed nearer to the vital rail line running west to Bryansk, seized strategic heights north of Orel, crossed the Oka River to the north and south of the city. Red cavalry entered the struggle, seeking to exploit a breach opened by troops pressing up the railway from Kursk.

Widespread Fighting

Activities elsewhere on the long Eastern front were overshadowed by the struggle for Orel. Fighting was reported southeast of Leningrad, where the Red Army appeared to be trying to widen the corridor to the Soviet Union's second largest city. Local clashes continued near Belgorod, where the Nazis' summer drive had come to grief. Moscow communiques told of fresh enemy attacks in the Donbass, evidently aimed at relieving the pressure on Orel, 350 miles to the north.

Behind these vast operations on the Russian front some observers glimpsed the outlines of a new German strategy. It appeared to be a strategy of defence, born of necessity. One of its symptoms was the presence in the Orel sector of a defence weapon Russians have nicknamed "the iron crab"—a mobile armored pillbox for machine gunners that can be transported by truck and buried in the ground wherever needed. The Nazis were also laying vast minefields. From such signs it might be deduced that henceforth the German General Staff intends to husband its dwindling manpower against the day when it must defend Fortress Europe on every side.

Hamburg Under Fire

Target No. 1 for last week was Hamburg—Germany's second largest city, its greatest port, a vital centre of coastal and inland shipping, home of many industries. Eight times in six days British and American bombers swarmed over the sprawling city on the Elbe. Observers estimated that 8,000 tons of bombs were dropped in those 144 hours—a weight greater than that the Luftwaffe loosed over England in the eleven-month "blitz" of September, 1940, to July, 1941. At times the bombs came down at a rate of almost a ton a second—a drumfire of huge explosions. Under the impact, docks, ships, barges, cranes, factories and warehouses shuddered into ruins then burst into flames. Clouds of smoke towered five miles into the sky from fires apparently beyond the control of sleepless firefighters Yet this was not all. Wilhelmshaven, Kiel, Wesermuende, Warnemunde and Wuestrow, all industrial and shipping centres, some of them important U-boat bases — were hit. Inland cities of Hanover, Kassel and Oschersleben—turning out guns, planes and tanks — heard the thunder of planes and the crash of bombs.

What can remain of Hamburg under such repeated and heavy blows only reconnaisance photographs can tell. It seemed clear that important parts of it must be blackened ruins. It was clear also that another objective of the Allies was being realized—the disorganization and extension of the Reich's sorely taxed defences. Pilots on the later raids to Hamburg encountered more planes and heavier flak, apparently drawn from other sections. But that they were not enough was indicated by reports that in the five days, in all raids, 200 German fighter planes were shot down by the Americans alone. The R.A.F. reported its bomber losses were running to only 3 per cent.

Rubber for War

Medium-sized tanks require 500 pounds of rubber, and pontoon-bridge sections over 1,000 pounds. The gasoline tank alone of a Flying Fortress uses 500 pounds of bullet-sealing rubber, while large bombers require over 1,200 pounds. Excavation trucks used by the army with tire diameters of 9½ feet require about 3,500 pounds.

OTTAWA REPORTS

That Farm Living and Operating costs Have Not Risen As Much as Selling Price

Donald Gordon, Chairman of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board has analyzed in the most interesting fashion the Canadian farm economic picture and reinforced with facts and figures the warnings issued by national leaders against the dangers of inflation.

Canada's own dose of inflation after the last war, he said, was small as compared to Germany's, but the benefits conferred on Canadian farmers were equally transitory. Although farm prices in Canada as a whole had more than doubled in the period 1913 to 1920 the apparent improvement in the farmer's position was largely an illusion because farm living cost and operating expenses rose nearly as much.

The slump in farm prices started in 1920 and gained momentum rapidly. In three years they had dropped 50 per cent. But the prices of all those things the farmers had to buy had not fallen as rapidly and taxes and mortgage costs had remained fixed. And by 1923 the farmer had discovered that the relation between farm prices and farm costs had been less favorable than before inflation began.

"And so it will be again," said Mr. Gordon, "if we are foolish enough to let inflation take hold."

The Wartime Prices and Trade Board Chairman declared; "The real interest of agriculture is best served by a long period of stable prices. I have no quarrel with those who contend that the farmers of Canada were not receiving a proper return for their labors and who say that—notwithstanding the improvement of the last few years—their position is still not all that it might be. But today we have not the goods and services available to increase the standard of living, or even maintain it. Our resources are pledged in a war for survival—the most costly of all wars."

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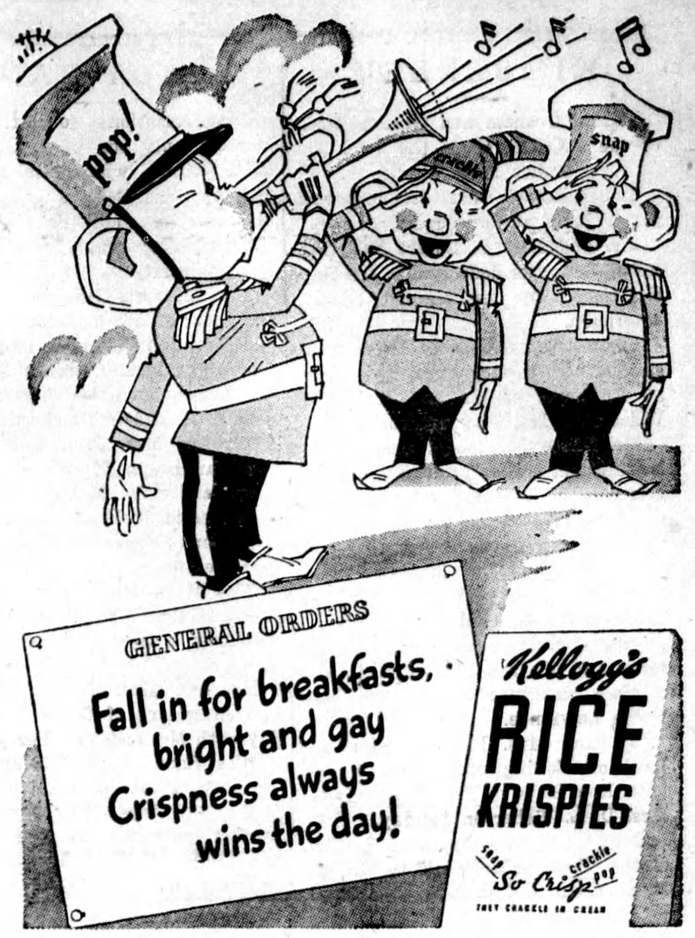
Paying tribute to the farmers for the magnificent job they were doing in wartime food production, Mr. Gordon told the Alberta Federation of Agriculture that "the agonf of war is no time for any agony of war is no time for any more than that, it is shortsighted to believe that concessions extracted from the community by virtue of wartime shortages could be maintained. Intelligent agricultural leadership will make neither of these mistakes. It would rather study and press for action which will insure stability now and postwar."

After praising Canadian farmers for the increase in volume of food production by more than 25 per cent last year despite manpower shortage, Mr. Gordon went on to discuss the economic position of the farmer today. The official index showed, he said, that farm prices had risen 43 per cent since 1939, and if wheat were left out, prices, on the average were 50 per cent higher, aside from subsidies.

The Wartime Prices Board, he said, had not frozen agricultural prices at a relatively low level as some critics had declared. Not only had there been the improvement in prices referred to, but, he added, there had been more adjustments in prices for farm products than for anything else the Board had dealt with.

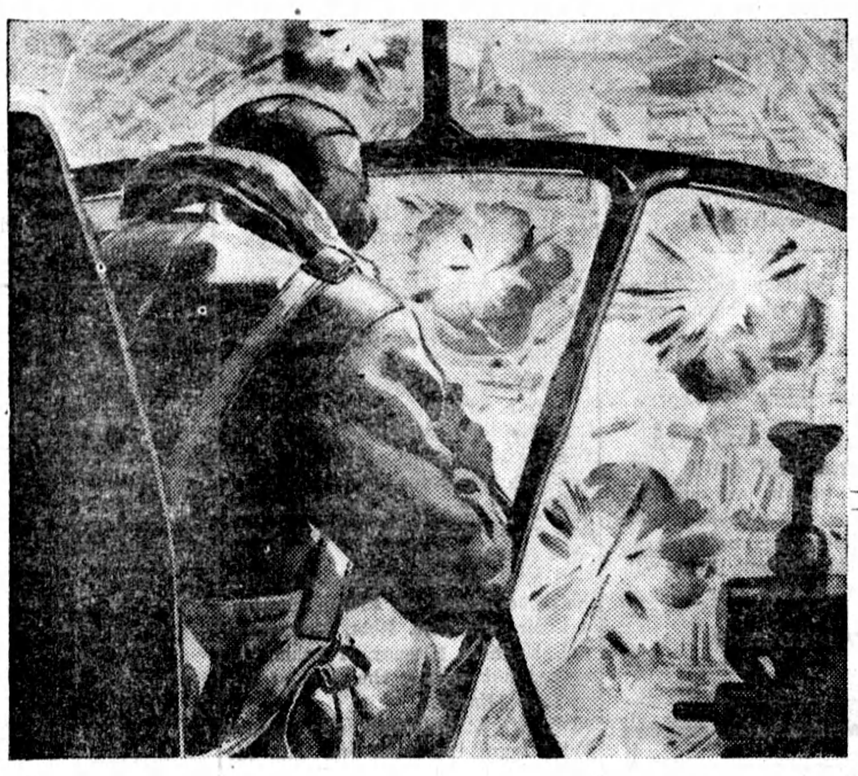
Agreeing that farmers' expenses had gone up also, he declared that "taken as a whole, farm living and farm operating costs have not risen nearly as much as the selling price. The margin between income and expenses is almost double the pre-war figure."

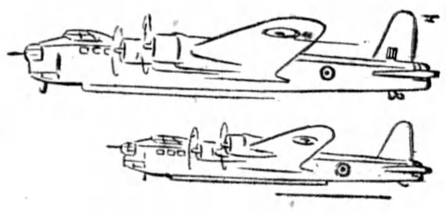


Use of Sprained Ankle Is Advised

Immediate and normal use of a sprained ankle and foot, almost irrespective of the type of local treatment adopted, definitely hastens recovery according to Lieut. Commdr. Paul E. McMaster, USNR, writing in the Journal of the American Medical Association. Uniformly best results were obtained when all pain in the injured part was suppressed by injections of procaine hydrochloride. "Patients who returned immediately to normal activity and used and moved the foot and ankle improved much more rapidly than those who did not," Dr. McMaster said.

GLASSLESS GREENHOUSE... SHATTERPROOF FOR SAFETY...





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REG'LAR FELLERS—The Panzer Division — By GENE BYRNES