

# WAR'S BACKGROUND

The World War of 1939 began at 5.20 a.m. (Polish Time) on Friday, September 1st, with the German bombing of the Polish fishing village, Puck, on the Bay of Danzig. Great Britain declared war two days later when called upon by her guaranteed ally—at 11 a.m., the same hour at which the Armistice of November, 1918, was signed at the end of the "war to end all war." France came in six hours later.

The last minute negotiations for a peaceful solution of European difficulties, tuning up since Munich, reached a high pitch with Hitler's strident letter of warning to Chamberlain on August 23rd last in which he vehemently averred that his "definite interests were impossible to renounce." The beginning of the drive for Nazi power, however, had taken its root with the German march into the Rhineland in 1935, followed by the annexation of Austria in the spring of 1938. The latter was the first foreign undertaking of the Nazis. Besides welcome supplies of foreign exchange and high-grade iron ore, the Austrian coup brought Germany to the Brenner Pass and put Nazi authority astride the trade routes to the east.

Then came Munich and the Sudetenland which, though it gave Germany a territory as large as Belgium, was no prize at all compared with the alleged political humbling of Britain and France. For the six months from Munich to the capitulation by the Czechs last March, it looked as if Hitler was riding to a fast victory in his drive for a "Continental Empire." Memel, whose return to the Reich would have been a major development as recently as three years ago, was swallowed like a crumb by the Nazi leader.

Since March last, there has been a more or less forcible attempt to stem the Nazi tide. The British, despite the Munich "peace", took the lead in a "stop Hitler" movement, with an arms program so large that it startled even themselves. Peace-time conscription was introduced for the first time in the British democracy. France consolidated her political and military fronts.

Last August 24th came the bombshell of the German-Soviet agreement (only three days after the surprise announcement that Moscow and Berlin had called off their long-time embittered feud) and the resulting disappointment on the part of the Germans to find that Chamberlain and Daladier had not "cracked," as had been hoped, under the shock of the new entente. Instead, the two democratic leaders showed complete lack of animus except to recall, from Moscow, their military missions who had been there in anticipation of an alliance between their own countries and the U.S.S.R. Chamberlain did confess, however, that the pact came to him as a "surprise of very unpleasant character." Immediately, a British bill for emergency war powers by orders-in-council was passed and the hitherto agreed upon five-year Anglo-Polish military pact was signed. For weeks, the alliance had been only an informal pledge without benefit of signature. German newspapers rancorously complained of border violations and mistreatment of Germans in Poland; Polish President Moscicki answered peace appeals from President Roosevelt and King Leopold; every move that Germany made toward war preparations was countered in Britain, all of which made a fast-moving political checker-board. The game was finally called off on Sunday, September 3rd. The sentiments of a nation were expressed in Chamberlain's declaration of a state of war with Germany—"We have done all that any country could do to establish peace. But a situation in which no word given by Germany's ruler could be trusted and no people or country could feel itself safe, has become intolerable. And now we have resolved to finish it." Within ten days of Britain's declaration of war, all the Dominions had officially announced their support. During the same time, a more stringent issue of food ration cards in Germany was paralleled in Britain by a tightening of regulations governing the sterling exchange. Blocked sterling now came into existence. Import and export licenses, exchange permits, control over shipping space, etc., all entered into Britain's immediate war economy. Less than five hours after the declaration of war, Chamberlain had formed his new War Cabinet of nine members. That dynamic statesman of the last war, Winston Churchill, was recalled to his old post of First Lord of the Admiralty and Lord Hankey, once right-hand man to Lloyd George, as Minister without Port-

folio. Anthony Eden was relieved of his guard duty at the Thames and took the Dominion Portfolio.

Hitler's personal role in all this whirlwind drama of diplomacy started late in August while the Fuehrer was still at his mountain chalet at Berchtesgaden. On Wednesday, August 23rd, he summoned British Ambassador Sir Neville Henderson. The violent harangue to which Henderson was subjected was sent direct the following day to Chamberlain. Hitler asserted that Germany had nothing to lose by a war; Great Britain, much, even her Empire; that his people were even more strongly behind him than the previous year and that the British resolve to employ without delay all the forces at their command to fulfil British obligations to Poland) announced in Chamberlain's letter of the previous day, would be followed by the mobilization of German forces.

### Diplomacy in 1939

The prelude to the War of 1939 saw something new in the line of international consultation for, since the beginning of the crisis, unpublicized personal messages had taken the place of diplomatic transmissions. Hitler's telephone talks with Mussolini and his exchange of state and personal letters with Chamberlain and Daladier were frequent. In a message to Daladier, for instance, Hitler's words did not shroud their meaning—"I have set up a clear demand on Poland." It was obviously written with his own pen as his language was completely amateurish and highly personalized compared with the really momentous documents of history.

Authenticated records show that Germany approached her Polish conquest in an unmistakably boastful and paradoxical manner. As far back as June, the Nazi boast of the obliteration of Poland was heralded abroad. In the words of General Franz Holder, German Chief of Staff: "We are now in a position to turn against our principal enemy, Poland. It is not necessary to talk about the period of 'friendship pacts' with Poland which were never taken seriously by our people or the Poles. . . We must keep in mind that our ultimate objective is the total annihilation of Poland. There will be no battles in the conventional sense, but a single shock which destroys the resistance of the enemy and induces him to surrender . . . the army will be defeated, the people demoralized."

Hitler's letter of September 3rd to the British Government revealed astounding statements which were in direct contradiction to those of General Holder made several months previously—" . . . Germany did not have the intention and never has demanded that Poland be destroyed." In no uncertain terms he laid the blame at the British doorstep. The Polish "terrorism" inflicted on Germans residing within Polish boundaries, he said, was becoming all the more unendurable because of the British assurance of support "in any case." His preposterous statement continued that he "was moved by the suffering of the German people who were being tortured and inhumanly treated by the Polish authorities;" that the British Government had destroyed the peace of Europe through its continued refusals of Mussolini's "peace" proposals; that it was responsible for "all the suffering and unhappiness which would come over so many nations."

In later communications between Hitler and the British Government, the German chancellor continued to accuse Britain for any forthcoming destruction of the world. In blazing words that will be remembered for many years to come, he flayed the democratic nations for their stubbornness in refusing to accept the "proffered" German friendship, refused to listen to the reasoning tones of Chamberlain and Daladier and, through his own stupidity and colossal prejudice, plunged the world into a war that may be destined to ruin myriads of lives of still another generation.

The final insincere manoeuvre of the German government came on August 31st. Poland, through Britain, made public that day at 6.30 p.m. her willingness to enter into negotiations with Germany. At 9.15 p.m., a copy of a 16 point ultimatum, prepared by the German government, was presented to Sir Neville Henderson. Two hours later, the German government stated that, as no plenipotentiary had come from Poland to discuss the 16 points, they regarded their proposals as rejected. Obviously there was no opportunity to communicate the proposals to the Polish government for all means of communication between Berlin and

Warsaw had, at that time, been cut off. Germany began her war with Poland the next morning. Even if the terms of the ultimatum could have been accepted, this last-minute action on the part of the German government could hardly be termed sincere.

### War at Sea

On Sunday, September 3, approximately eight hours after Britain's declaration of war, came the first signal that the ensuing conflict was to engender submarine battle on a large scale. For with the torpedoing and sinking of the Cunard liner, Athenia, and the estimated loss of well over 100 lives, the fuse was set off, signaling the beginning of a war of terrorism and a slaughter of the innocent. More reason could have been attached to the act had the boat been rushing to England with munitions or supplies. The British Ministry of Information immediately announced that the Reich was duplicating the same unrestricted submarine warfare that brought the United States into the war in 1917. This news nonplussed the Reich propagandists who set about finding a plausible alibi. An "explanation" was offered—that Winston Churchill had engineered the whole thing to arouse American feeling against Germany. The Germans then turned loose a series of "full-blown atrocity stories" about the Poles, even alleging their foes to have nailed German children to a table and to have crucified a German forester. Goebbels' opening barrage of propaganda, although not always authentic, was effective. Newspapers throughout the world carried, in the first three weeks of the war, many photographs but most of them were of German origin—the only ones available. They showed German victories in Poland—and always with great care to show the Germans in the best light.

Since the sinking of the Athenia, all types of sea-going craft, British, French and neutral, have been sunk by Nazi war machines. Passengers ships, carrying Canadians anxious to return home, were forced to make "zig-zag" trips across the ocean, convoyed part way by British cruisers to be met by Canadian warships for the remainder of the journey. Britain made the plea that warfare be restricted to the military objectives of belligerents but Germany had seen fit to disregard such pleas. The Nazi U-boat menace is, however, being surely overcome. Winston Churchill has stated that possibly one-third of German submarines at sea had been destroyed. Moreover, German merchandise seized and used by September's end totalled some 186,000 tons, more than has been lost by Britain in submarine attacks. Churchill gave his assurance that, before the end of October, the Allied forces hunting down enemy U-boats will be three times as great as at the beginning of the war. Britain has replied to the U-boat menace with a naval convoy system, armed merchant vessels and direct naval attacks.

### U. S. Neutrality

On September 5th, amid an historic stream of proclamations, President Roosevelt told the world of the United States neutrality in the European war and clamped down the U.S. neutrality act's embargo on arms shipments to nations at war. Exempting Canada from the embargo until she formally declared war on September 10th, a considerable supply of aircraft and war equipment was shipped across the border during the intervening week. But, as yet, the U.S. ban has not seriously hampered trade. In many respects, the act had been exaggerated as a handicap to allied assistance. In fact, an estimate of American trade in the third year of World War I shows that only 25% concerned commodities such as rifles, carbines, aircraft and actual arms now embargoed by the U.S. neutrality act. However, it must not be forgotten that aircraft will play a much bigger part in the trade with the democratic countries during the present conflict. Meanwhile, the United States can sell oil, wheat and scores of other essentials that are not arms. It should be realized, too, that if the neutrality act is not repealed, it is likely that American industry will be tempted to rapidly establish shadow industries in Canada for the manufacture of war equipment which, in turn, will mean a great industrial development for this Dominion. On the other hand, there is no doubt but that the repeal of the United States arms embargo would provide encouragement to the allied cause.

The export supplies, moreover, of

many other war essentials, such as sugar, wool and wheat, have been bought up by the British Government and Great Britain is now gradually releasing a part of these supplies to meet the needs in the various parts of her Empire.

### Russia and Italy

As Germany was about to finalize a blitzkrieg (lightning war) in Poland, her new "ally", Russia, marched on September 17th to grab her own fat share, establish a buffer state on her western border and regain control over White Russia and the Ukraine, given to Poland by the Treaty of Versailles; the Nazi and Communistic armies ultimately met and divided the conquered nation between them. Russia could not help being suspicious of her former bitter enemy and Hitler's oft-broken word. But the surprise Russian invasion did not shake Britain from her aim.

When war broke out, the stand that Italy would take was of concern in allied quarters. But Hitler gave Mussolini the official "out" when he stated he did not need Italy's military assistance. With a coastline and transportation system at the mercy of the British and French navies and an inherent antagonism for Germany's new godless ally, there is reason to believe that Italy, if permitted by the belligerents, will continue to maintain her policy of neutrality in her own right—Hitler's word must seem no more trustworthy to Italy than to those countries who tried trusting him before.

### Western Front

Meanwhile, on the western front, the battle, to all intents and purposes, had only been simmering. As a result, many have become impatient of the inactivity of the British and French forces. The lack of public release of war news from this front has caused the Ministry of Information to be dubbed, in some quarters, the "Ministry of Irritation." No doubt, Generals Gort and Gamelin have their own military tactics which have not yet been made public but which, ultimately, will carry the allied cause to victory. Chamberlain stated that Germany's successful invasion of Poland does not alter the British and French determination, that war would end only when there was "an end once and for all to the intolerable strain of living under the

threat of Nazi aggression . . . for there can be no peace until the menace of Hitlerism has been finally removed.

So runs the prelude of a war that may be destined to rock the foundations of civilization as we know it—a conflict brought on by the personal ambitions of a man who rose from the humblest depths to become the leader of a nation which, for the second time in twenty-five years, is straining toward its ultimate objective of world empire.

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Woodbridge's \$5.00 poll tax, which was instituted last year with resultant court summonses, is again demanded in first notices issued Saturday by Constable C. F. Lewis. The demand gives seven days to pay, summary proceedings being threatened at the expiration of that time. Last year only two days grace was given. Another change this year is delivery of notices by registered mail instead of personally by the collector. 42 are in the mail, according to Postmaster Alf. Thompson.

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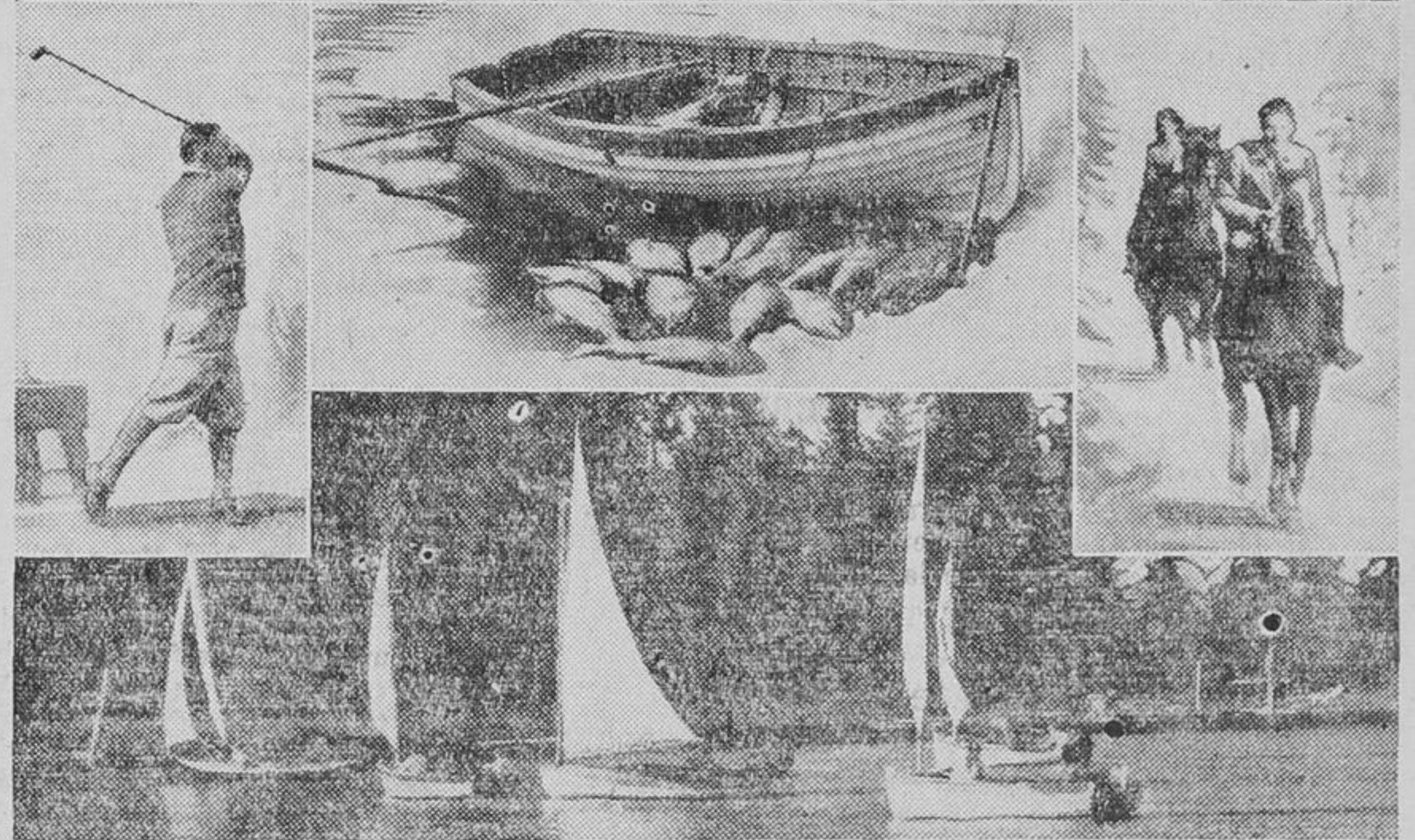
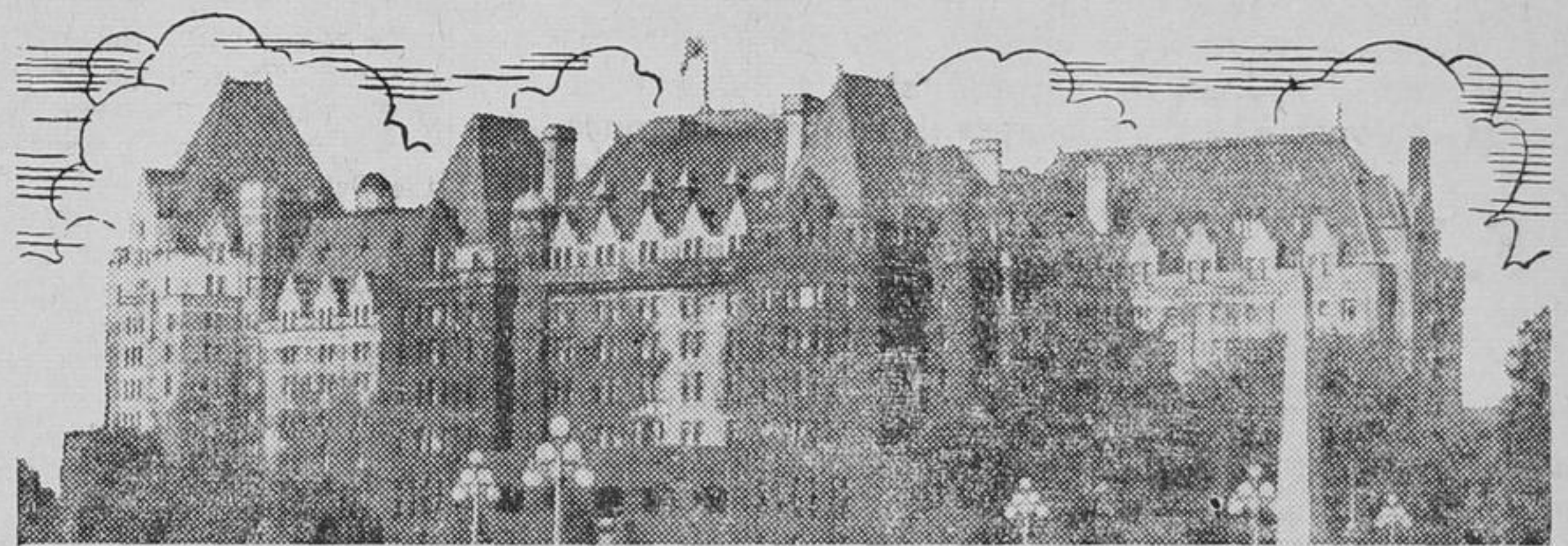
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### Golf, Tennis, Fishing, Riding, Yachting Victoria Sports During Winter Months



Golf, tennis, lawn bowling, riding, hunting and fishing may be unusual winter sports for most of Canada but not for Victoria, beautiful Island capital of British Columbia, where snow is a novelty, flowers bloom throughout the year, and overcoats are excess baggage.

Winter golf is the sport that attracts widest notice to Victoria's wonderful year-round climate, but the West Coast has its pilgrims who are drawn there each winter by the splendid weather and the series of unusual sports and social attractions made possible by the fine weather.

Winter fishing is a major sport in Brantwood Bay where sizeable

grilse and spring salmon are caught by trolling. Fly fishing for steelhead salmon up to 20 pounds is found in east-slope rivers such as the Oyster, Cowichan, Englishman's, Nanaimo, and Big and Little Qualicum.

Best known of the winter attractions is the Mid-Winter Golf Tournament which will be held this year on the Royal Colwood course, March 3-9. Keen competition, a sporty course and good golfing weather, added to the many prizes of which the most important is the trophy presented by Sir Edward Beatty, make the tourney one of the most popular in Canada.

Riding, hiking, lawn bowling, boating are but a few more sports that are as popular in Victoria in winter as in summer. Fiestas are arranged from time to time, named after flowers then in bloom. Probably the most picturesque celebration is the Christmas festival in Old English style, complete with boar's head, yule logs, wassail bowl and carols.

Victoria and the Empress Hotel have enjoyed a growing popularity in recent years. A real impetus has been given this season by the fact that foreign exchange under war pressure makes a Canadian dollar worth considerably more in Canada than in the United States.