

This War--And the Last *A Digger's Reactions*

Finns Are Doughty Fighters: Bombing Of Cities Soon Now

The Finns are doughty fighters, and if they fight a purely defensive war of entrenchments, Russia will find them unbeatable, says Capt. G. D. Mitchell, M.C., D.C.M. in this week's special commentary for "The Mail" on current war events.

Dealing with the war against Germany, he says that the bombing of cities must soon come, but that every hour's delay is strengthening the hand of England and France, whose ultimate victory is inevitable.

By Capt. G. D. Mitchell

A strange war this. Russia following the Nazi plan of power politics.

Tremendous events are culminating inside the fog that envelopes Europe.

Estonia, Latvia, and Luthuania seem to have been swallowed by the bear without a protest.

Now Finland appears to be before the firing squad, her back to the wall.



THE Finns might be regarded as just another minor nation; a fit plaything for power politics.

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Such is not my opinion.

Some of these roving Finns joined up with the A.I.F. Stocky, powerful men, they were incurably cheerful.

I remember asking one:—"Yohnny—don't you ever get homesick?"

"Oh, yes. When I been home two-tree weeks."

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They were interesting studies, the Finns. "Yohnny" Paakola, for instance.

A temperature little above zero was nothing in his young life.

Six of us were struggling to lift a long iron rail that was frozen to the ground.

As sparing of words as he was liberal of grins—he waved us away.

Chunky as a bear he bent over it alone. A twitch of his shoulders, he had freed it from the ground and slung it 10 ft. away.



About the strangest thing that Johnny ever did occurred in the line at Flers.

We were in the worst of the mud and cold of the 1916 winter. Our nights were spent in front-line shell-holes, more than knee-deep in mud.

The main problem that confronted me each sundown, when we left the shelter of our dugouts to man the line, was that of keeping alive till dawn. Sometimes I thought I had lost the fight.

Shell fire was bad, but seemed of no importance compared with the mud and cold.

This night was particularly severe. The cold seemed to be the worst yet, and our vitality was at its lowest ebb.

In addition, a 5.9 howitzer was putting five shells round us at 20 minute intervals. It seemed about an even-money chance of our going skyward.

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ON this night, after two hours on duty, we were allowed to go down in the dugout for an hour.

After an eternity in the cold and

After an eternity in the cold and shellfire, my turn came. It seemed like paradise to sit in the cramped dugout and sleep for an hour. Then I went up to relieve Yohnny.



He was standing squarely behind the Lewis gun when I struggled out to the post. He looked like an amiable, but determined, grizzly bear.

I nudged him. 'Get over, Yohnny. I'll take the gun. Your turn to go below.'

He just stayed fast. It would have been as easy to move a bogged gun.

"No," he replied. "I stop."

"But, dammit," I said, "it's your turn to go to the dugout."

"I stop," was all he would say.

At last, in a burst of unusual eloquence, he explained:—

"Raid go over soon. I might gef a shot at zese —s. You go back to the dugout."

It was no use arguing, so I went, breathing a benediction on all Warlock Finns.

He stayed there through all the dragging hours to the winter dawn, never moving a muscle, never allowing anyone else to take post behind the Lewis gun, never relaxing a moment his unblinking vigil of that gloomy terrain.

An army of such men would be a steel wall.



Strangely enough, I found confirmation of this Finnish characteristic in a book "Charles' Men."

The Swedes, with their Finnish allies, were trying to repel the Russian invaders of the Ukraine about 300 years ago.

A Swedish woman spoke of the Finns:

"They stood by our men strong and firm as the little fir trees that line the roads.

"When they would be called to the fires from where they stood on sentry,

fires from where they stood on sentry, out in the snow, they would refuse to come in, saying, 'No—I stop and watch.' "

If those tough Yohnnies, the Finns, say "I stop," it will go badly for Russian bear or Prussian eagle.

If their leaders have the strength of mind to wage a purely defensive war of entrenchments, and do not repeat the Polish mistake of attempting a war of movement, they will be unbeatable.



They will possibly have as Allies the easy-going Swedes. We had many in the A.I.F.

I had two Olssen brothers in my platoon.

Their happy grins used to crease their faces and seemed to reach right back to their ears.

Withstanding artillery barrages, in attack and in defence, their grins were always there.

They never said much. But those cheerful grins were worth an extra machine-gun on our parapet.



The Swedes should team well with the Finns. Even if we are not called to their sides, our sympathies will be with these two gallant democracies.

'When Does The Balloon Go Up?'

Waiting in the front line for an unknown zero hour, the diggers used to ask "When does the balloon go up?" That question is being asked today.

Hitler, in his lust for conquest, wants time to consolidate his gains. He apparently has been holding his hand hoping for a weak peace to be made.

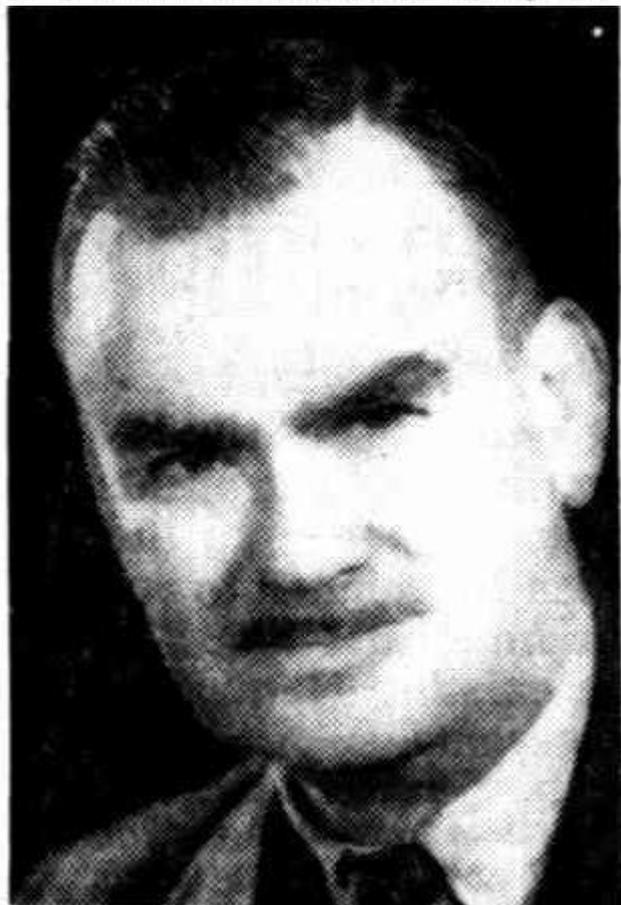
Those who remember the iron deter-

ing for a weak peace to be made.

Those who remember the iron determination of Britain and France in the last war need suspect no weakness on their part.

If Hitlerism is not crushed now, France and Britain will fall in Germany's good time.

Hitler's ramshackle regime will not for long stand under the disillusionment of war on the western front. He is very surely marked for early death.



**CAPT. G. D. MITCHELL, M.C.,
D.C.M.**

The bombing of cities must come soon. But every hour that it is postponed is another hour gained toward the time when we secure overwhelming superiority in the air.

Factories and training schools in Canada and Australia will carry on, however much factories in England are bombed.

But to start those factories, equipment must come from England.

But to start those factories, equipment must come from England.

A long war—a war in which the full manufacturing power of England and the dominions can come into operation—will mean our victory.

A long war, with its constantly tightening blockade, is what Germany dreads.

It took England three years in the last war to develop her war industries to the point where it would be possible to overwhelm Germany.

It will probably be done in half the time in this war.

If Russia comes in against us, time will fight against her, too. In practically every war she has collapsed internally.

This strange quiescence on land and sea and in the air will end soon enough.

But the blockade is working for us all the time.

Every hour more anti-aircraft weapons are being turned out and more men trained to guard the factories.

So every hour gained before real hostilities start is an hour to the good.

In the last war Mr. W. M. Hughes and others fought hard to have large quantities of munitions made in Australia.

Time and transport facilities were against them, and instead some of our workmen were sent to England.

Now the big aircraft training scheme is to be worked out in Canada.

But it is refreshing to hear from the Prime Minister that the home air force is not to be neglected. The Commonwealth's intention is to have three distinct forces—the normal Royal Australian Air Force for home defence, the Air Expeditionary Force for service abroad, and the Empire Air Scheme for the training of flying personnel.

This is wise, for before this war is ended Australia may well be a centre of fighting, and not an outpost.

It would be a long way, under such conditions, to have to recall our pilots

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from Canada.