

EUROPE'S LITTLE PEOPLE—1946

Prices High and Goods Scarce, But Belgium Is Forging Ahead

By PAULINE FREDERICK
WNU Foreign Correspondent

BRUSSELS.—It was not a typical Belgian home, but it symbolized Belgium in relation to the rest of Europe. This little country, though it has known the invader more than once, has made an amazing economic recovery and is in a class beyond any of its neighbors in this part of the world.

No, the Van de Vens do not live in an average Belgian home, because greater material advantages than many of their countrymen know have provided them with a modernistic house, in the Hollywood sense, with expanses of glass and chrome, salons, a breakfast room on the second floor, a library, the decor and furnishings bespeaking a trend toward the ultra-smart.

As I sat talking to Madame Van de Ven, I could look across the coffee table with its bowl of narcissi in the center, to the salon with chairs and divan covered in clipped wool, a bowl of scarlet tulips on the table, to the dining room with its full-wall landscape in oils. It was in this setting that Madame Van de Ven talked about living conditions in Belgium as she knew them during the war and now.

"You can get anything you want in Belgium, if you pay for it," she told me. "That was true during the occupation, as well as now—al-

though every week prices are dropping astonishingly.

"During the war, it took ten times as much money to run my house and take care of my family as before the war," Madame told me. "It is now down to five times as much, and I think when it gets to three times that will be about what is expected to be normal.

"Of course, the prices have been very hard on the poor people. You had to buy things on the black market because they were not available otherwise. You still have to buy on the black market if you want many things," she went on.

For example, butter on the black market is roughly \$2 a pound while it has been as high as \$3 a pound. The official price is around 60 cents. Real silk hose bring around \$8 on the black market whereas the official price is about \$1. There has been only one shoe ration during and since the war, so that it is almost necessary to buy shoes on the black market. For an ordinary pair of women's shoes, the black market price would be between \$35 and \$40, whereas if you wanted a pair of stout walking shoes that would last for some time, you probably would have to give the equivalent of \$60. Cigarettes command the usual fantastic price that they do in all countries of Europe today.

There is a black market street in Brussels where anything may be had from American uniforms to potatoes. And clothing coupons can be bought on the streets.

"The black market has been helping to bring prices down," Madame Van de Ven said, and then went on to explain: "The Belgians are individualists. They must be active—even outside the law. When it was said no goods could be produced, people buying on the black market created such prices that the government was forced to do something to increase the supply so as to bring prices down. Because goods are coming on the market, the price of textiles has come down 60 per cent since New Year's and the government is taking steps to close up places that are selling above the official price."

In the food line, the scarcest item is potatoes, with meat running second. Just before the elections, a new list came out which slightly increased the ration for fat, meat, and coffee and, of course, there was a suspicion on the part of many peo-



INTERVIEW . . . Madame Van de Ven and son Johnny in their home in Brussels where Pauline Frederick interviewed them.



JEEP . . . The Van de Ven's camache poodle with Johnny. The German iron cross, once given to Nazi warriors for bravery, now adorns the dog.

ported raw materials into goods for sale abroad. She has plenty of goods for internal consumption, because the outbreak of the war found her plentifully stocked, and the Belgians were able to hide much of their supplies from the Germans which they are now putting on the market. But Belgium must have export business.

Before the war, Belgium was a land of low prices and low wages. When the cost of living began to advance 10 times above normal, wages were raised 80 per cent in order to make existence possible. But at that point the government decided that only a vicious spiral of inflation was in progress, so it put a halt to wage advances and started working on price decreases. As a result, Belgians themselves tell you that the price drops in as short a time as two weeks are "astounding."

Cities in Belgium Still Show Bomb Scars

When I awoke, my sleeper was standing in the rain beside the station platform in Brussels. It was seven o'clock and not yet light. The rest of the train on which we had crossed the Rhine at full flood the night before coming from Germany, had moved on to Calais with its England-bound servicemen.

I noticed right away that there was a difference in the station from that of almost any major German city I had entered in the last three

months. There were no twisted girders and smashed skylights, no crumpled locomotives standing in the yards.

As I came out onto the street, crowded street-cars (trams, they call them here) were hurrying by with people jumping on and off as best they could, as seems to be the fashion in trolley-boarding all over Europe. There was a bustle of civilian traffic to which I had grown accustomed in Germany.



BOONE DESCENDANTS . . . Cecil, Woodrow and J. C. Boone, all claiming direct descent from Daniel Boone, serenade Senator Clyde C. Hoey of North Carolina at the capitol in Washington. The Boone boys live in the Great Smoky Mountains.

In These United States

Farm Toys Replace Guns As Post-War Playthings

NEW YORK CITY.—A back-to-the-farm boom, in playthings at least, was seen at the fair sponsored by the toy manufacturers of the United States and held here recently. Miniature tractors and other farm implements will replace tanks, guns and heavy artillery next Christmas.

In several respects, children will fare better with "realistic" toys than adults with the real thing, it was said. Of doll houses there will be plenty—all sorts of construction sets will be featured. Toy house-keeping appliances, such as model kitchen stoves, will be back.

Tiny street scenes, filling stations will be made of metal or plastic—not of wood! And dolls will again move their eyes and "talk."

Science will be well represented in new play equipment. There will be chemistry sets, utilizing many harmless compounds that were hard to get during the war, and kits on such themes as "fun with electricity." There was no indication, it was said, that any toys will involve putting with atoms.

New games, particularly some that require a good deal of paper stage money, are being planned, and, despite the fabric shortage, costumes for dolls and for children may be somewhat extravagant.

NUBBINS HAS CHECKUP

CHEYENNE, WYO. — Forrest ("Nubbins") Hoffman, who was recently taken to Denver for an internal checkup, was found to be suffering from nothing more than a cold. Hospital physicians who examined him found "Nubbins" within one-half inch of normal height and less than one-half pound underweight. The lad attracted nationwide sympathy two years ago when he celebrated his fourth Christmas several weeks early because it was believed he could not survive a bladder ailment.

DAY FOR ARCHERS

At Trenton, N. J., a special hunting season for archers who want to hunt deer with bows and arrows may be granted by the New Jersey state legislature. The archers may be permitted to hunt deer November 5 to 9, while others would wait for the regular season, December 17 to 21.

Lloyd Beebe, Sequim cougar hunter, killed a big cougar with two arrows from his 60-pound bow after his three hounds had treed the cat, says a report from Port Angeles, Wash.

VET'S HOME A BARREL

DEVIL'S LAKE, N. D.—Ardell Hagen, his wife and small daughter have set up housekeeping in a barrel. The barrel, however, is a huge one formerly used as a hamburger stand. The family will live in the upper half of the barrel, in which Hagen has installed an electric cooking stove, running water, cupboards and sink. An oil furnace in the lower half will do the heating.

STRING IN STOMACH

SIoux FALLS, S. D.—A local doctor had to pull strings recently when he operated on Clarence Kimball. Nearly 1,000 yards of fine string were found in Kimball's stomach. The patient previously had been treated for a narrowing esophagus and in this treatment the first step was to swallow string which introduced steel balls into the gullet to stretch the food channel.

TWO TIMES TWO

CORAPEAKE, N. C.—The most prolific cow in Gates county is owned by George Kittrell of Corapeake, who points out this record as proof: On December 24, 1944, the cow, a registered Guernsey, gave birth to purebred twin calves, a male and a female. Less than a year later, on December 11, 1945, another blessed event occurred at the Kittrells', this time it was twins again—two lively bull calves.

"Off We Go" AVIATION NOTES

PURELY PERSONAL

Some readers have asked whether or not the editor of "Off We Go" is a pilot. Well, we ain't! We might be called a flying reporter, or excess baggage, or something, but we're not a pilot. We took our first airplane ride a score of years ago in an Eaglerock biplane. Remember that plane? It was a two-seater, one behind the other, open cockpit, etc. Later on we took more flights, including a ride with the veteran pilot Clyde Ice in a Ford trimotor job. During World War II we spent three years with the Air Transport Command in various capacities. We were successful in keeping ferry pilots from getting us into hot ships, but we did have a few rides that were full of thrills and chills.

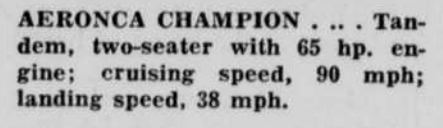
Back to the Eaglerock for a moment: We used a 40-acre field as our airport. Telephone lines, buildings, grain elevators, and a dozen other hazards made flying a little tough. A group of us finally got the city fathers to purchase a quarter-section, 160 acres, for a municipal airport. Most people thought it was far too large then.

Jose Iturbi Nervous

Still personal: One time while we were in the ATC, we flew to Kansas City in a C-47 (military version of the DC-3) to meet Jose Iturbi, the famed pianist. As we started back to the field where he was to give a concert for the G.I.s, we noticed he was jittery and didn't seem satisfied to sit still. At first we thought he was a little scared, but he soon let us know that he'd like to go into the ca'lin with the pilot and co-pilot. Jose, the rascal, is a pilot himself, and he likes to be where the action is! He had something like 800 hours pilot time, we learned. His wish was granted.

MADISON AIRPORT

Lt. Col. E. O. ("Gene") Strouse has been chosen temporary manager of the Madison municipal airport. Strouse, recently discharged from the AAF, served in the RCAF also during World War II. He piloted a B-29 over Tokyo on raids in the Pacific war, and before the war operated a plane at Muscoda airport. —Muscoda (Wis.) Progressive.



AERONCA CHAMPION . . . Tandem, two-seater with 65 hp. engine; cruising speed, 90 mph; landing speed, 38 mph.

Edgar Bergen, radio comic, flies all over California—with Charlie McCarthy a mere profile painted on the side of the plane!

More Private Flying, Says Hogan States from the Mississippi to the Pacific coast will have the biggest boom in private plane flying, according to Everett Hogan, veteran pilot and operator of a Mitchell, Neb., airport. His prediction is based on the more favorable weather and "wide open spaces" where fast flying is easier. Hogan estimated that for the plane owner who rents space, the hangar cost for a year runs from \$400 to \$500. Gasoline on the smaller planes is about the same as for an automobile.

Remarkable Engineering Feat Linked France, Italy

The eight-mile, \$15,000,000 Mont Cenis railroad tunnel in the Alps connects France and Italy. It was the greatest engineering feat of its kind at the time of its construction between the years 1857-1871 says Collier's.

As the work started from both ends, at 3,801 feet above sea level on the French side and 4,236 feet

on the Italian side, and a hump was required in the middle for drainage, drilling not only had to be done in a straight line but at a certain gradient which was ten times steeper on one side than the other. Nevertheless, the passages met with a difference of only one inch in direction and 10 inches in elevation.

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Sugarless Chocolate Cake

INGREDIENTS

2 cups sifted GOOCH'S BEST ENRICHED ALL PURPOSE Flour	1/2 cup shortening
1 1/2 cup syrup	1/2 cup water
1 tsp. soda	1/2 tsp. salt
2 eggs	1/2 cup cocoa
	1 tsp. vanilla

METHOD

Make mixture of the following:
1/2 cup shortening
1 cup syrup
1 tsp. vanilla

Make a second mixture of:
2 cups sifted GOOCH'S BEST ENRICHED ALL PURPOSE Flour.
1 tsp. soda
1/2 cup cocoa
1/2 tsp. salt

Combine all the first mixture with 1/2 the second mixture and mix well. Stir in two un-beaten eggs, then add remaining dry ingredients and beat well.

Mix 1/2 cup water and 1/2 cup syrup—bring to a boiling point. Gradually add to above mixture and blend thoroughly to a velvety texture.

Bake in a loaf in moderate oven until done—about 20 to 25 minutes.

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THAT NIGHT I ALWAYS SAID YOU MADE THE BEST PIES—AND THIS ONE'S A DANDY! WISH WE COULD HAVE 'EM OFTEN!

WE'LL HAVE ALL THE PIES YOU WANT, DARLING, NOW I'VE FOUND THAT WONDERFUL SWEETOSE GOLDEN SYRUP!

—AND BELIEVE ME, I'M SENDING TONIGHT FOR THAT FREE RECIPE BOOK—WE'LL HAVE PLENTY OF DESSERTS FROM NOW ON!

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