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Visits of Rt. Hon. W.L. MACKENZIE KING  
to Canadian Troops in England.

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Canadian Military Headquarters,  
2 Cockspur Street, S.W. 1,  
London, ENGLAND.

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Ottawa, CANADA.

1. A further report is presented. - This deals very briefly with the visits to the Canadian Army of the Rt. Hon. W.L. MACKENZIE KING, Prime Minister of Canada, during his recent stay in the United Kingdom.
2. Mr. King's arrival in England by air was reported in the LONDON afternoon papers of 20 Aug 41, and he returned to OTTAWA on the evening of 7 Sep 41. (The Times, 9 Sep 41). He was thus in this country a little more than a fortnight. He apparently returned to Canada a little sooner than had been at first intended, and in consequence did not have time to visit all the Canadian formations now in this country. During his stay, however, he attended the Canadian Army sports at ALDERSHOT, spent most of one day in visiting the First Canadian Division, and also saw something of Corps Troops.

#### VISIT TO ALDERSHOT

3. On 23 Aug the Prime Minister had luncheon with the senior officers of the Canadian Army Overseas at ALDERSHOT (at the Army School of Cooking) and afterwards attended the Canadian Army Sports. He addressed the troops assembled for the latter occasion.

and greeted them on behalf of the Canadian Government and people.

4. As the fact that there were some interruptions during the Prime Minister's speech has been widely reported and commented upon in the press, particularly in Canada, it seems desirable to make some record of the circumstances here. The writer was not himself present, but has had conversations with a large number of officers who were. The facts are as follows.

5. The troops were not, of course, on parade at the time of the address; they were simply assembled as spectators at an athletic contest, in circumstances in which the usual restraints of discipline are largely relaxed. The weather was most unpleasant, it being a day of heavy and continuous rain; and the Prime Minister's party was late in arriving and presumably the spectators had grown impatient. Officers who were present agree that the interruptions of which so much has been made were the work of a comparatively small number of men; that they were loudest at the beginning of Mr. King's remarks; that he took them in good part and proceeded to make an excellent speech, making an increasing impression upon his difficult audience as he went on; and that he was warmly applauded at the close. While it would perhaps be unwise to argue that there was no discontent behind the "booing" (as the newspapers term it) - for it must be remembered that some Canadian troops have now been in this country for some twenty-one months without seeing action - much of it was certainly intended merely to be jocular; and it would be very easy to exaggerate the importance of this incident, so regrettable from every point of view.

#### VISIT TO FIRST CANADIAN DIVISION

6. On 26 Aug Mr. King paid a visit to the First Canadian Division - the Division which has been longest in this country. The writer was present on this occasion, accompanying the large party

of newspapermen who "covered" the visit.

7. Mr. King arrived at Advanced H.Q., 1 Cdn Div in company with the Corps Commander at about 1200 hrs. He was received by General PEARKES, the divisional commander, inspected the guard of honour (provided by the SASKATOON LIGHT INFANTRY (M.G.)) and took the salute as the guard marched off. The senior officers of the Division were then introduced to Mr. King, who spent a considerable time in chatting with various individuals.

8. In the afternoon, following luncheon at Divisional H.Q., Mr. King proceeded to inspect the Division. The troops had been disposed for the purpose by brigades, and the Prime Minister carried out during the afternoon four different visits, to the three infantry brigades and the Divisional Artillery. The first visit was to 2 Cdn Inf Bde (which in the absence of Brigadier POTTS on the SPITZBERGEN enterprise was commanded by Lt.-Col. E.B. WILSON of the EDMONTON REGIMENT) at OXTED. The next was to the artillery group, commanded by Brigadier TREMAIN, the C.R.C.A., near MARDEN PARK. Mr. King then visited 3 Cdn Inf Bde (Brigadier GANONG), which was formed on the parade square of the Guards' Depot, CATERHAM (where His Majesty presented colours to the CARLETON AND YORK and EDMONTON Regiments on 1 Jul last). Here the ROYAL 22e REGIMENT provided a guard of honour. The final visit was to 1 Cdn Inf Bde (Brigadier KELLER) at REDHILL Football Grounds.

9. On each of these visits the procedure was much the same. On his arrival the Prime Minister was received with a general salute (in the case of 2 Cdn Inf Bde the band of the Edmonton Regt played "O Canada" at this point); he then addressed the troops, and then inspected the parade, speaking to a considerable number of men. He thus made four speeches in the course of the afternoon; and as he spoke without notes the speeches, though similar, were not identical.

10. It is not proposed here to attempt a full summary of these addresses, especially as they were fairly fully reported in the Canadian press. (See, e.g., Gazette, Montreal, 27 Aug 41, and Vancouver Daily Province, same date. These Canadian Press reports appear to be quite accurate.) Among the points made by the Prime Minister, however, were the following.

11. He laid special stress upon the fact that the Canadian Government placed no restriction upon the employment of the Canadian troops, other than that the Government should know what was in contemplation and should have an opportunity to express its views. The Government was prepared to trust the judgement of its generals in the United Kingdom and to support them; it looked to the military authorities and was prepared to accept their guidance. Mr. CHURCHILL had begged him to try to persuade the Canadian troops that "here in this KENT peninsula" they were guarding the very citadel of liberty. (This last remark was made at REDHILL, but Mr. King made similar statements in his other speeches.) On this part of his remarks, attention is directed to the report of The Times, attached as Appendix "A". The quotations are excerpts from Mr. King's first (OXTED) speech. Comparison of them with my own rough notes indicates that while the three paragraphs as printed were not spoken consecutively, or in the same order as in The Times, they are an accurate (probably shorthand) report of words used by the Prime Minister.

12. He spoke of Canadian pride in the troops and of the reports he had heard on every side of their good behaviour. He also thanked the people of Britain for the generous hospitality which the Canadians had received. He referred to his recent tours in Canada and spoke of the United determination of the people of the Dominion to support the forces in the field.

13. At REDHILL, Mr. King remarked that no political patronage had been countenanced in military appointments, and declared that no one would gain preference except by merit.

14. The Prime Minister said that he wished to meet and talk to as many men as possible, and he hoped that officers and men alike would feel free to speak to him, or otherwise to communicate with him, about features of their situation that might be improved. Indeed, he went so far as to offer to carry personal messages back to Canada with him.

15. At OXTED he ended his remarks with these or very similar words: "Here in England you are standing for all that is sacred on this side of the grave. Our thoughts and prayers are with you and will be with you to the end." At CATERHAM he concluded to the following effect: "Nothing in my life ever has been so inspiring as these last few hours. I cannot express what I feel. May God bless and protect every one of you."

16. This inspection was, indeed, a rather inspiring occasion. The weather was beautiful, and the Division made a magnificent appearance, calculated to impress any observer. General McNAUGHTON, who accompanied the Prime Minister throughout, remarked to me at REDHILL at the end of the afternoon that it was his hope that the display would leave Mr. King with the feeling that he had "some strength in his elbow in this country".

17. The Prime Minister appeared thoroughly to enjoy this contact with the troops; and when the day's programme was over he was in no hurry to return to LONDON, but waited about at REDHILL watching the animated scene until most of Brigadier Keller's fine brigade, and the attached troops, had marched off the ground.

#### VISIT TO CORPS TROOPS

18. On 28 Aug (two days later) Mr. King made another visit to the Canadian Corps area. On this occasion he officially opened the LEATHERHEAD By-Pass, an important road-making enterprise on which No. 2 Road Construction Company, R.C.E., have been engaged for almost a year, and inspected a Guard of Honour mounted by the 13th Army Field Company, R.C.E. He had tea in the Officers' Mess

of 1 Med Regt, R.C.A., and there met the senior officers of units of Corps Troops; and that night he dined in the Corps Commander's mess.

19. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister was unable before his return to Canada to visit the Second and Third Divisions, or the Army Tank Brigade. He did, however, visit a Canadian fighter station of the R.A.F. on 6 Sep (Times, 8 Sep 41); while on the previous day he had visited DOVER and other south-eastern towns, and had seen something of the defences there. On 4 Sep, at a luncheon at the Mansion House, he made a speech which was very widely and favourably reported (see Times and Daily Telegraph, 5 Sep 41). On this occasion Mr. CHURCHILL also spoke, and referred to the enforced inactivity of the Canadian Corps in terms which it may be well to set down here (Daily Telegraph, as above):

You have seen your gallant Canadian Corps and other troops who are here. They have not yet had a chance of coming to close quarters with the enemy. It is not their fault, it is not their fault. But there they stand, and there they have stood through the whole of the critical period of the last 15 months at the very point where they would be the first to be hurled into a counter-stroke against an invader.

No greater service can be rendered to this country, no more important military duty can be performed by any troops among all the Allies. It seems to me that, although they may have felt envious that Australian, New Zealand and South African troops have been in action, the part they have played in bringing about the final result is second to none.

20. Mr. King while in this country expressed the opinion that the formation of an Imperial War Cabinet was undesirable, and he has reiterated this view since his return to Canada. The Times of 9 Sep 41 reports that on his arrival back in OTTAWA he "declared himself greatly impressed by the quality and efficiency of Canada's fighting forces oversea".

C.B.S.

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From THE TIMES (LONDON), Wednesday, 27 Aug 41.

While the headline on this account is unfortunate and misleading, the account itself is accurate. See above, para. 11.

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### CANADIAN TROOPS TO STAY IN BRITAIN

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#### MR. MACKENZIE KING'S EXPLANATION

Mr. Mackenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada, addressing the troops of the 1st Canadian Division yesterday, said that he realized how difficult it was for men who had come to this country to fight, to find that the moment of active service was being delayed and postponed.

"Only a day or two ago," he said, "Mr. Churchill told me that he hoped I would realize that the reason the Canadian forces were being retained in these Islands was that he and his colleagues regarded Britain itself as the most important of all parts of the Empire, and that the defence of Britain would be, above all else, the most significant of all the factors that would ultimately determine the outcome of the war."

"Mr. Churchill understands, and I want you all to understand, that so far as the dispositions of the troops are concerned, the Canadian Government places no restriction whatever upon any decision that may be made, other than that the Government itself shall have the opportunity of knowing what is contemplated and an opportunity of expressing views."

"All of us in Canada (he said) realize that, if you are being kept here in the British Isles rather than being sent to some other theatre of war, it is because the British Government itself regards the United Kingdom as the most important of all centres of liberty in the world. It is the citadel of liberty, and you have been given the honour of defending that citadel."

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