

## SHORT STORY

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to the conclusion that modern warfare was a cold, thankless, even boring business. Or at any rate, his participation in it so far was. This was what he had returned from New Zealand for. "They are poor and I have much money, they are old and weak and I am still strong." And all he had done for the defence of Yugoslavia was stand on guard beside a road leading to an aerodrome, armed with a rifle and 150 rounds of ammunition.

He had no uniform. He had no military status. He was a citizen soldier with a rifle which he was afraid he would not be able to handle very proficiently, and 150 rounds of ammunition. As he stamped round in the bitter wind which blew up the valley, he reflected that after all he had little stomach for this business of war. But when one occupied the position one did in one's village, he supposed he was doing the only thing possible. Away up the valley he could hear artillery fire. He knew the Germans were there, strange, efficient soldiers on motor cycles, with small machine-guns which they fired from the waist. In an hour or two, probably, they would arrive at the aerodrome. He wished that Mate Simich, his good neighbour and fellow citizen soldier on guard duty, were a little nearer so that he might talk to him.

\* \* \*

IF Wally Martinovich had been a big shot in the town where he had lived in New Zealand, it was nothing to the stature he had assumed on his return to the small village of Krizevc, near Zagreb. The village had buzzed with excitement for days. Strong-faced, short-cropped peasants shook him by the hand and drank endless glasses of wine with him. Wrinkled old people observed to each other wisely that they had always known young Martinovich would do well for himself.

Wally's family shone in his splendour. Wally was rich. Wally had made much money, and now Wally had come back to his own people.

It was pleasant enough being a celebrity in the village of Krizevc, and for a long time the war had seemed far away. Even during the spring and summer of 1940, it just meant bigger headlines in the papers, and new topics to discuss over one's wine. The only direct evidence the thoughtless people of Krizevc had of the storm which was raging outside their doors was that more and more of their young men were being called up for military training and that ten miles from the village a large area of waste land was being transformed into a military aerodrome.

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SUDDENLY Wally Martinovich heard the drumming of aeroplane motors, and shading his eyes with his hand, he saw them, nine single-motored 'planes, flying in threes like black arrowheads against the blue sky. Soon they were over the aerodrome, a little to the east, and as he watched he saw three of them turn over lazily, the sun flashing on their wings, and come hurtling down. The racketing roar of their engines rose to a higher pitch. It was diving right on you, this front one, right on you. You stood still, shivering, waiting for it, but the roar reached a final peak and the bomber levelled out and flashed away, and then came the blast of the bomb.

One after the other they came, and when nine had dived at you, nine more. Wally Martinovich, a quarter of a mile from the nearest bombs, clutched the earth with two hands.

\* \* \*

AT about half-past three there was a lull, but not for long. In the distance came seven, fifteen, no, it must be at least thirty big ones. Low down this time. Like passenger 'planes, but big ones. And then — parachutes. One minute thirty big 'planes, and the next, the sky is filled with hundreds of parachutes. What should a man do? One rifle

and the sky filled with hundreds of parachutes, and each carrying a machine-gun. What is a man to do?

Wally Martinovich fumbled with his rifle, saw that there was a shell in the breech, licked his lips and swallowed.

But the parachute troops were descending as lightly as blown thistledown, squarely on the aerodrome a quarter of a mile from where he was standing.

One, however, caught by a freshening gust of wind, is going to land right on top of you. Swinging a little in his harness he's coming straight at you. No use shifting your rifle from hand to hand awkwardly, what are you going to do about it? Hell, it is straight down at you. What should a man do, and such a big German? One must shoot. Swallow, lick your lips, take aim carefully, get him in the sights now, take two pressures, quick, before he can use his machine-gun.

But at exactly the same moment as Wally Martinovich took the second pressure on the trigger of his rifle the German parachute trooper tumbled to the ground and simultaneously opened fire from his hip with a sub-machine gun.

When the first of the Nazi motorcyclists arrived half an hour later they found the parachute trooper and Wally Martinovich both dead, both carelessly shrouded in the delicate silk fabric of the parachute.



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### 21st Birthday

## JASPER CALDER'S CITY MISSION

THERE are few better known social workers in New Zealand than the Rev. Jasper Calder, Auckland's famous City Missioner. On Sunday, June 15, "Jasper," as he is familiarly known, will celebrate the 21st birthday of the mission, and Station 12B will join in the celebrations with an hour and a quarter broadcast from the Epiphany Church, Karangahape Road.

The Auckland City Mission has been "Jasper's" life work, and the programme which will be heard next Sunday will be a dramatic review of 21 years of hard work among the less fortunate of Auckland's population. There will be a variety of musical items by choirs and choruses, accompanied by Ewart Lynne at a Hammond Electric Organ.



The REV. JASPER CALDER

The programme will also include dramatised scenes of Mission activity at the courts, both juvenile and adult, at the Children's Camp and the Convalescent Home, and "Jasper" himself will give a survey of historical events at the Mission during the past 21 years.

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