



9/1/204

Now we knew very plainly, that a war, which turned out to be a World War, had begun when Hitler's Armies invaded Poland.

I was very interested to go out on the street. Soon my mother told me to go to the bakery shop nearby to get our breakfast. My sister at that time was in school already. I hurried down the stairs and entered the street. I really forgot all about going to the bakery. In the street I saw men distributing sandbags to houses. Right away I found my friend and we both looked around with interest.

Our home was not too far away from the "Centraal Station". Naturally it was dangerous to live near rails. German parachutists by the hundreds had landed all over strategic positions in Holland. Many of them were dressed as Dutch Soldiers and Civilians.

I am sure you have heard of the destruction of the Dutch city of Rotterdam. It was terrible. The bombers did not leave many homes standing. People in Antwerp were just hoping that German planes would not come anymore. It seemed this way until the next day came, the 2nd day of the war. The radio announced that German landforces had penetrated deep into Holland. The Dutch People were worse off than Belgian, because they did not have a way to escape the on-rushing enemy. In our own country the Germans were doing slow progress. Bombers came over every day. Antwerp's factories blew a siren whenever enemy planes approached. This siren meant for us to descend to the basement and remain there until the planes left. There was much excitement among the people.

Evening arrived, ending May 11th. Next morning I woke up with a different feeling. I was very worried to hear that the Germans were getting closer every hour. Today the radio reported that Belgian Infantry was repulsing the invader, but that there were bitter losses on both sides. As far as I remember, the remaining part of the day was still. During the night, lights were not allowed to be turned on because of air-raids.

Days went by rapidly but the news of the German attack was not too fast, at least not as rapid as I thought. People were saying that soon we will push the Germans back to Germany. This was of course a great mistake. The announcer on the radio reported that the British and French aid was near.



9/1/24

Sunday, May 12th was the day on which something strange had happened. Even today I do not understand all of it. The incident took place on our street. First, I and my boyfriend were very interested to see two "strange soldiers" wearing foreign helmets. (I thought they were Dutch). Many children gathered around them including us. The grocery store across the street gave the soldiers some food. We were standing near a bicycle repair shop. The soldiers were speaking to the owner. This was not at all the strange part about it. Next moment, our interest took us to the end of our street. There were people gathering. I could not imagine what was happening. There was already a thick crowd, but we did not have a hard time pushing ourselves through. There, in the middle of our street, lay a "Post-card" on which was pictured a "a mother and a child" in her arms. The strange thing about it was that the "card" was slowly inflating. By this time we had two policemen in the crowd. They began to blow their whistles, telling us to leave this place quickly. Some people began to leave, but my friend and I remained with a few other persons. It would have been very interesting to know what this "post-card" was, but at this moment, we heard the nearby's factory's siren blowing. My friend and I started to run to the nearest corner, on which was a Café, or tavern. Soon I could hear airplanes nearing. The Café's proprietor had just come out with some friends, and he had a pair of binoculars in his hand. Now I could see some airplanes in the sky. The man raised his binoculars to his eyes; I heard him say that he had recognized a French Air-fighter. As I heard this, I felt much more at ease about the war. I continued watching the sky. Suddenly I saw an airplane slowly diving toward the earth. There was smoke coming from the plane's tail. I was interested to know if it was an allied or enemy plane, but there wasn't any way of finding out. I watched the plane to see where it was going to crash, but the buildings were in the way. Instead of watching I should have been in an air-raid shelter. Soon everything was quiet again.

Today was the fourth day of the War. Antwerp had been bombed about five times already. My father told me that the harbor was full of bomb craters. Whenever a bomb had fallen in our vicinity, we would hear the glass on our windows shaking.

I have already seen some families packing their belongings. Most of these people tried to reach England. My parents did not figure on leaving, because we thought the Allies would push the Germans back. Today the radio announced that the Germans were doing progress in W. Belgium. In Holland things were going bad. The Germans managed to cut off one part of Holland and another, so that Dutch resistance was very low. Now the Germans were almost near the North of Belgium.

Today the Germans have captured Fort Eben Amaal, which was one of Belgium's most fortified fortresses.