



Original lithograph by the author, who is himself part Indian

# NO WAR WHOOPS, BUT...

**Thousands of American Indians today are fighting for the U.S. They've traded tomahawks for machine guns, ponies for jeeps — and they're Grade A fighting men**

**by Charles B. Wilson**

**W**HEN the call for the first Selective Service registration went out, the bulk of the able-bodied men of the Navajo Indian tribe rode into Gallup, N. M., on their horses, completely equipped with food, packs and rifles.

They were all ready to start fighting the man they call "the mustache smeller" that very morning, and their disgust was unbounded when they learned that they were merely expected to answer some questions.

In other sections of the country some difficulty was experienced in getting the Indians to register — because their pride had been hurt by the implication that it was necessary to draft an Indian. That attitude was summed up succinctly on a Sioux Reservation in the Northwest when the Indian agent notified a lad in the carpentry school of the registration date.

Eyes flashing, the young Redman threw down his hammer with a bang.

"Since when," he demanded hotly, "has it been necessary to conscript the Sioux as fighters?"

Whereupon he and eight of his companions stamped out to their ponies and rode off to

the nearest recruiting office, with 14 others following close behind.

Recently I read that American short-wave monitors had picked up a German broadcast by the inimitable Dr. Goebbels, dwelling at length upon the sad fate of the American Indian. Being part Indian myself, it struck me that the least I could do for the good doctor is to give him some more facts for another broadcast.

In view of the injustices described by Herr Goebbels, I am sure he will be interested in knowing that, even before Pearl Harbor, there were over 4,000 Indians in our armed forces, the vast majority being volunteers. This number has risen to over 12,000 since the Jap attack.

### Go For the Army

**T**HE bulk of these boys enlist in the Army. There are so many Indians in the 180th Infantry (Oklahoma-Kansas) that the unit's motto is in Choctaw: *Tanap nanaiya kia alhtaiyaha*, which means, "Ready in Peace or War." Yet a surprising number are attracted to the Marine Corps or the Navy. One Marine detachment on the West Coast boasts

of two full platoons of Chippewas. A number of young braves are training in Naval Flying schools; and a much greater number have enlisted as seamen, following in the footsteps of that outstanding Indian sailor, Commander Francis J. Mee, familiarly known as "Chief," who is currently in command of a heavy cruiser in the Pacific.

Indian names are already appearing in the casualty and citation lists. The first Indian death was that of an Oklahoma boy at Pearl Harbor; the first citation was a Distinguished Service Cross to Private Charley Ball, from the Fort Belknap Reservation, Mont., for exceptional bravery in action on Bataan. And it seems especially significant that the first American general to die in action was an Osage Indian: Major General Clarence L. Tinker, commander of the U.S. Air Force in Hawaii, who lost his life at Midway while leading in person the successful attack on the Japanese invasion fleet.

In the last war Sergeant York's closest rival was Private Joseph Oklahombi, a Choctaw, who, single-handed, stormed a position containing more than 50 machine guns and a number of trench mortars, holding it for four days under a constant barrage of gas and high explosives, and returning, finally, with 171 prisoners through 200 yards of barbed wire under continuous fire.

To those who know the Indian only through the Wild West movies, the thought of him in a tank or behind an antiaircraft gun; in the pilot's seat of a fighter plane — or on the bridge of a cruiser at sea — is strange and un-

real. But, in technical training the modern Indian is on a par with his white brother, thanks to the Indian schools, the CCC and the NYA. The best evidence of this is the high ratio of boys in the service who are grabbed up for motor-truck and airplane maintenance men. The finest automobile drivers in the Army are the Florida Seminoles, who have for years been driving bare-footed through the Everglades, taking in their stride mud and swamps which would reduce many a seasoned trucker to despair.

The Signal Corps is consistently trying to get more Indians. In the last war they proved themselves invaluable for telephone and radio communication. When a couple of Indians deliver messages to each other in their tribal dialects, no code is necessary.

The place of the Indian in the war effort is not confined to service at the front. Even the Pueblos have air-raid wardens and black-outs. In the barren wastes of northwestern Arizona, where hydro-electric lines might attract the saboteur, some 500 Navajo horsemen ride a constant patrol.

### Drill — and Exercise

**I**N BELLINGHAM, Wash., when 30-year-old Leo John came to a Home Guard drill sopping wet, a casual question uncovered the fact that twice a week for six months he had been walking 14 miles from his home to the armory to render this voluntary service.

The number of Indians in service would be much larger were it not for the fact that so many of them have been snapped up by war industries. Over 2,500 Indians are now at work in armament production. Several airplane plants on the West Coast have placed standing orders with the Indian Bureau for as many men and boys as they can get.

When the \$11,000,000 Ordnance Depot was started at Fort Wingate, N. M., approximately 2,500 Navajos were employed on the construction job. In the first days of the operation, construction officers were amazed at the speed, efficiency and enthusiasm of the Indian workmen — surprised that in a vast semidesert area such a variety of skills and versatility could be found in a so-called primitive people. The Indians at Fort Wingate finished their contract two months ahead of schedule at a saving to the Government of \$400,000.

Other Indians, unable to fight or do war work, are making equally impressive financial contributions. Tribes whose individual members don't see \$100 in cash in a year are chipping in to buy a \$100 War Bond every week; others, more fortunate economically, are pouring in funds for Bonds in a tide which promises to top the \$25,000,000 in Liberty Bonds purchased by Indians in the last war.

At the same time an Alaskan tribe voted the Army all the land it might need for an air base — without compensation.

Only a few months ago the U.S. Court of Claims granted a verdict of \$5,000,000 to the Sioux tribe of the Dakotas for lands illegally taken from them years ago. Eighteen years have

elapsed since attorneys for the Sioux started their fight for this settlement. Yet the chairman of the Tribal Council telegraphed Washington: "When our country is at war, we feel that payment of these claims should be deferred. If it will help our country, a few more years of waiting will be patiently accepted."

I suggest, Dr. Goebbels, that you include that official statement from an Indian tribe in your next propaganda broadcast. It will convince your listeners that when the American Indian goes to war, he doesn't mean maybe!

**The End**

