

I'm Alone Issue Recalled In Hectic Prohibition Era

By **PAT USSHER**
 Canadian Press Staff Writer

The schooner and the coast guard cutter faced each other across the heaving waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

Then the wind-swept March air was punctuated with gunfire as the cutter opened fire with her four-pounder.

Within minutes the schooner was sunk and one of her crew was drowned.

The victim was the I'm Alone, a Canadian-registered run-runner, her attacker was the United States Coast Guard cutter Dexter. The date was March 22, 1925.

The sinking blew up a storm between Ottawa and Washington. Sharply worded notes were exchanged.

The United States claimed the I'm Alone was first intercepted in American territorial waters, her master, Capt. John Thomas Randall, maintained that he was on the high seas where "none has jurisdiction of my ship but me."

CHARGED PIRACY

Canada branded the sinking an act of piracy. Washington contended that the action was justified on the grounds of hot pursuit.

The I'm Alone, out of Lunenburg, N.S., was flying the Canadian Red Ensign.

Andrew Melton, wealthy secretary of the treasury of the United States at the time, said the I'm Alone had been a notorious liquor smuggler for years and was designed and built for that trade.

Eventually an international arbitration commission of jurists, one from each country involved, was established. And six years later when the incident was almost forgotten except by those directly involved, it issued its findings.

The outcome: The United States formally apologized to the Canadian government and paid \$25,000 compensation to Canada and \$25,000 to Capt. Randall and his crew.

The sinking was a highlight of the laxest prohibition era in the United States, a 13-year period lasting from 1920 to 1933 during which supplying thirsty Americans with liquor became a career for many Canadians.

AMERICAN-OWNED

The I'm Alone got into the picture in 1924 when she was purchased at Lunenburg by an American named Big Jamie Clark, acting for two New York bootleggers. The cost was \$18,000.

Randall, a dark dapper, confident, excitement-loving skipper from Newfoundland, was hired to command the schooner at \$400 a month. The captain, then nearly 50, included a dinner jacket, a tall coat and six dress jackets in his baggage when he went aboard.

The first voyage was in October of that year. Randall loaded the I'm Alone with liquor at St. Pierre, the French island in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and sailed for the Gulf of Mexico. He had orders to rendezvous with launches operated by bootleggers 30 miles southwest of Marsh Island off the Louisiana coast.

While Randall waited at the rendezvous Nov. 28, the Coast Guard cutter Wolcott came up and circled around. He evaded her after midnight and headed into Belize, capital of British Honduras. He set out again Dec. 7, and this time the mission was completed.

The I'm Alone made a second delivery Dec. 21, 1925, this time after loading at Belize, and carried out several similar trips without incident during that winter.

REJECTED ORDER

The climactic episode began when Capt. Randall took aboard 2,800 cases of rum, brandy and whisky at Belize in mid-March. The I'm Alone with her 11-man crew approached the Louisiana coast March 20. While Capt. Randall waited at the rendezvous point, the Wolcott approached. This time the captain of the Wolcott ordered the I'm Alone to heave to. Boarding was refused. The Wolcott trained her gun on the schooner.

After a lengthy verbal exchange across the water, the Coast Guard cutter's captain came aboard the I'm Alone. He main-

tained the schooner was within territorial waters — 12 miles from the coast by United States interpretation. Randall firmly asserted that he was on the high seas, about 15 miles from shore. The parley ended inconclusively.

A few hours later the Wolcott again ordered the I'm Alone to heave to. Once more Randall refused. The cutter started firing at the schooner but a shell jammed in her four-pounder. Observing this, Randall headed the I'm Alone south away from the coast.

OPENED FIRE

The Wolcott pursued the run-runner for the next 30 hours. March 22 dawned windy and stormy. Capt. Randall says a second Coast Guard cutter, the Dexter, approached.

The Dexter's captain ordered the I'm Alone to halt.

"I'll see you in hell first," Randall retorted.

Then the firing started. Shells whistled through the sails and rick of the I'm Alone and then into her hull, some below the water line. Machine-gun or rifle bullets whined across the deck, showering the crew with splinters.

The liquor-laden ship was quickly holed and began to sink. Lifeboats were lowered and the crew abandoned ship. Randall jumped just before the I'm Alone sank.

The boatman, Leon Malnguy from St. Pierre-Miquelon, was drowned in the turbulence. A member of the Dexter's crew dived into the water and Malnguy's body was taken aboard the cutter. The other surviving crew members were picked up.

Randall and the survivors were taken to New Orleans and held in custody for two days at the U.S. customs house there before charges against them were dropped for lack of evidence of criminal activity.

FILED CLAIM

Vincent Massey, then Canadian minister in Washington, filed a claim for \$380,000 against the American government.

Canada's formal protest in effect asked the United States to prove that the Coast Guard had not committed an act of piracy. The U.S. insisted that the Coast Guard had done its duty.

It cited an anti-smuggling treaty negotiated between the United States and Canada in 1924 which stipulated that each

country had the right to challenge any ship suspected of smuggling, provided it was within one hour's steaming from shore.

Eventually the diplomatic storm calmed and in August, 1925, five months after the sinking, the disputing countries named Eugene Lafleur, KC, of Canada and Justice Willis van Devanter of the United States Supreme Court to investigate and submit recommendations. Later Chief Justice Lyman Duff came over as Canadian commissioner.

Capt. Randall gave up running as a career after the I'm Alone was sunk. He took a series of marine jobs, eventually retiring to Nova Scotia with his family and died in Halifax in the winter of 1944, aged 64.

NOTHING FOR OWNERS

The two commissioners issued their findings on the incident on Jan. 5, 1935. They held that the sinking "could not be justified by any principle of international law." They also concluded that the I'm Alone, despite her official papers and registration, was "de facto" controlled and at the critical time managed" by persons who were all, or almost all, United States citizens and who employed her for running.

Mr. Justice van Devanter and Chief Justice Duff called on the United States to apologize to the Canadian government for the sinking, to acknowledge that it was illegal and to pay the Canadian government \$25,000 in compensation.

Additionally they awarded compensation totaling \$25,660 for Captain Randall and members of his crew or their legal heirs. The sum of \$7,905 went to the captain; \$10,185 to Amanda Malnguy, widow of the drowned seaman, for herself and their three children, and smaller amounts to seven other seamen or their heirs. The commissioner also said compensation should be paid the owners for loss of the ship or cargo.

Sixteen days later the U.S. complied with the findings in a note from State Secretary Cordell Hull to William D. Herried, Canadian minister in Washington.

The long-drawn-out incident finally closed. The first was uttered with gunfire. The last one was written with pen and ink.



finally—
 smoking
 satisfaction
 from a **FILTER**
 cigarette

new
FILTER Player's

THE BEST-TASTING FILTER CIGARETTE

Khrushchev Expects Both Guns A la Butter

MOSCOW (Reuters) — Nikita Khrushchev now believes Russia can produce both guns and butter following a meeting last week of the Communist party central committee and farm experts, observers said here.

The Soviet premier is apparently relying on a combination of youthful enthusiasm, stricter party control and more intensive use of existing resources to double or triple food production in the next 20 years.

In a wind-up speech Friday on the five-day party session, Khrushchev said there was no crisis in agriculture and made it plain that increased agricultural production would have to be made without detriment to the present huge allocations for defence and heavy industry.

Western experts here believe the Soviet agricultural problem is such that big new investments would be needed to make it more productive.

Khrushchev now is saying farms must increase food supplies from existing equipment, though he appears to acknowledge that substantial improvement will take years.

The Soviet press has reiterated Soviet denial of a farm crisis and Khrushchev's own words in the Friday speech were:

"Let the capitalists yell about a crisis. We, comrades, know we have no crisis in agriculture."

He stressed that strengthening Russia's defence was most important — "we shall accomplish it unflinchingly. This is the bedrock of the existence of our socialist state, of its development and its success."

The session apparently plans to establish regional directorates at all levels headed by local party secretaries. The effects of this is to place state and collective farms under the same administration for the first time in Soviet history.

Radio Stations Being Sought

OTTAWA (CP) — Nine bids to establish new radio stations in seven Canadian centres, including double applications in Calgary and Fort St. John, B.C., will be heard by the Board of Broadcast Governors at a Winnipeg hearing opening April 5.

The other centres for which there are applications to set up new AM (amplitude Modulation) radio stations are Chomedy, Que. — where a French-language station is sought; Winnipeg; and New Westminster, Langley Prairie and Abbotsford in British Columbia.

Applications for power increases included:

— Let the capitalists yell about a crisis. We, comrades, know we have no crisis in agriculture."

— Let the capitalists yell about a crisis. We, comrades, know we have no crisis in agriculture."

ESTATE PLANNING

... that coordinates your plans for the protection and future security of your family, can also save needed dollars and facilitate efficient settlement of your estate.

THE ROYAL TRUST ABOUT IT

CANADA'S LEADING EXECUTOR AND TRUSTEE
 57 QUEEN ST., CHARLOTTETOWN, TEL. 694-6226
 G. E. BENTLEY, MANAGER