

THE MORALE OF THE ALLIED TROOPS

Claude Cockburn writes that the British army is eager for offensive action. . . . Why the Red soldier is a courageous and brilliant fighter. How morale is built.

London (by cable).

WITH newspapers clamoring for the establishment of a second front somewhere, somehow, and the men and women in the British factories making big sacrifices in the interests of speeding production, the question of just what the Britisher in uniform—the man who will be doing the fighting on that second front—is thinking, comes sharply to the fore.

I suppose I know as many and as varied types of soldiers in this country as anyone; and certainly a great many more and much more about them than eighty percent of people who pretend to tell you what the British soldier is thinking and doing. Let us start by saying that the British army's offensive-fighting morale is higher than it has been at any time since before Dunkirk. In the last war there used to be a song which said "I have a pain in my morale, I have lost my nishiateeve." The British army of today has no pain in its morale and it has by no means lost its "nishiateeve." Quite the contrary. The morale and initiative of the men in the British army are such that they are giving a considerable headache to every Colonel Blimp and blunderer who would like to delay the establishment of the second front, and who would like to "conserve our forces" while the Red Army takes the big blow.

The British army—maybe the American army too—has a word for what it feels about the inaction of the moment. The word is "brownd off" which means, in case the phrase is not yet familiar on your side, anything from disillusionment to fed up and bored to death. It was a soldier of my acquaintance who coined the phrase "It's better to be killed off than brownd off." The phrase is now going the round of the camps. And that sums up the whole of one side of what the British army rank and file are thinking. It is not romantic and it is not particularly "heroic," for the prevailing mood of the British army is one of cold common sense. I don't need to repeat here the arguments which are familiar to everyone as to just why it is desirable that even big risks should be taken at the moment when so huge a proportion of the Nazi forces are engaged on the Eastern Front. The point is that these arguments are more vividly appreciated and supported in the army than anywhere else—which is saying a good deal. The army men have a special reason for their attitude in this matter, namely, that the sooner they are allowed to get on with the job, the

sooner will they be out of the army. That is, after all, just what every ordinary conscript taken into this kind of army from his ordinary work wants. That is why the army men are above all violently impatient with all the delays in the creation of a second front and the excuses offered for them.

IF YOU WANT JUSTIFICATION for my statement that the morale of the British army is high, and higher than at any time since Dunkirk, you have only to consider the type of "grievances" most commonly voiced in the army today. For instance: the men of the British army want, of course, more pay. But it is a fact that if you talk to the soldiers—many of the men who were earning good pay according to British standards, at skilled jobs in engineering and steel trades before the war—you find that their pay demands are concentrated on two perfectly practical points. They want either better arrangements for feeding, rehousing when bombed, evacuation, etc., of their families, or else larger allowances to their dependents to enable them to meet these problems themselves. Secondly, they want a scale of pay and allowances which will make it possible for men from the ranks to accept commissions as junior officers. The men know that the officers who have risen directly from the ranks—men who before the war were probably skilled workers in factories and workshops—are the sort of officers they want. But they know equally well that, at present, the pay scales are still based on the ancient and characteristic British War Office assumption that an officer is "an officer and a gentleman"—meaning that he is somebody from a class which it is taken for granted always can provide its sons with adequate pocket money to supplement regular army pay. Only a few days ago we had here the fantastic spectacle of a titled gentleman writing to the *London Times* to suggest that all persons in Britain having in their possession family heirlooms of old lace should send as much of it as possible to a central depot, where skilled ladies of fashion would make up this lace into scarves and other similar articles of dress. These would then be shipped to New York, there sold, and the proceeds devoted to the charitable relief of the poverty-stricken families of junior officers. This plan, reminding one of nothing so much as the futile ingenuity of an educated horse in a circus, is pretty characteristic of the workings of some of the ma-

chinery of the British social setup. The idea that it might be even simpler to raise the pay of junior officers direct, is one which for several months has been engaging the attention of His Majesty's Treasury. In the meantime, we try to reach the same objective by selling old lace on Fifth Avenue. Do not imagine that the average soldier in the British army thinks any more highly of this way of doing things than you or I do.

You will see that these demands are above all practical demands concentrated on the achievement of a reasonable efficiency and a reasonable fairness in the way things are done. It is not a question of the soldiers, now getting the equivalent of approximately fifty cents per day, putting in for an immediate pay raise all around, but rather that they are thinking out obviously practical ways in which things can be improved.

STILL MORE SIGNIFICANT of the state of mind in the army is the fact that wherever you go you find that the majority of men put forward as a principal grievance—long before they come to the question of pay—the complaint that they are not getting enough training, or that too much time which could be spent in training for real modern battle is spent in old-fashioned drill and in polishing buttons or cleaning equipment. It is true that the War Office has issued orders against all this button polishing; it is equally true that in many commands there are officers who simply disregard the War Office instructions probably because they cannot conceive that anybody with dirty buttons can possibly know how to fight. There are also instances known to me of officers who, while perfectly aware of the futility of some of the occupations which they assign their men, quite openly admit that their intention is simply to keep the men occupied because "otherwise they get to discussing politics." The demand for more and more intensive training is, I believe, universal in the British army. Along with it goes, and this is of course characteristic of any army so largely composed of industrial workers, the demand that much more attention be paid to the question of fitting the man to the job and of seeing to it that men with particular knowledge, skill, or aptitude be given full scope for their talents. There are persistent complaints that men who could be of real value in this or that section of the new mechanized army are uselessly kept digging potatoes or scrubbing

floors in camps where, it is claimed, they appear to have been forgotten by the authorities.

It would take too long to list in full the "grievances" of the British army. Moreover, to list them would give an entirely wrong impression of the real spirit of that army. I have chosen the two or three main points about which the army is talking, and sometimes talking very bitterly, because these are the points which in our soldiers' minds are more important than any others. This is an army of tough, hard-thinking men. A very high percentage of them are trade unionists. Compared with the army of the last world war, a very high percentage are active, militant unionists. These are men who feel themselves desperately irked by stupidity or inefficiency on the part of those set in authority over them. At the same time they are men who understand very well the facts of life and politics. They are men who know how to get things done. And they are men who at this moment are determined that nothing and nobody is going to stand in the way of the British army's playing its part in the struggle which these men, and above all the ablest and most militant among them, realize has now become a true war of the peoples against fascism.

CLAUDE COCKBURN.

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Moscow (by cable).

THIRTY years ago in czarist Russia, if you had asked this writer, "What is the Russian army?" she would hardly have been able to reply. Between her, a mere civilian, and military circles was a wide gulf, a different outlook, a difference in education and in customs. More likely than not, she would try to recall everything she knew about the army, more from books than from life. In her mind would be a picture of drab, downtrodden soldiery, barracked far from the centers of cultural and social life. Then she would think of officers, hostile to the soldiers and divided into castes: humdrum, inconspicuous army officers and dashing guards. She would recall familiar pictures of what was known as "army life," garrisons stationed in remote provincial towns, officers' orderlies brutally exploited, privates standing as erect as rulers and saluting every twopenny, halfpenny superior; theaters, restaurants, and even private homes bearing a neatly lettered sign: "Dogs and privates not admitted."

Private—that was the name of a weather-beaten man with close-cropped hair, dressed in a soldier's uniform. He was never to be found at public gatherings or in theaters; soldiers and dogs weren't allowed there. To us Soviet writers it seems simply outlandish that there was a time when such an army actually existed. No dividing line separates our civilian population from Red Army men, and no differences estrange them. And if any of us Soviet writers were asked, "What is the Red Army?" we, too, would not reply at once. Not for any lack of knowledge and not because we would have to collect our thoughts,



They want to fight as well as play. . . .

Black Star

but because any reply to this question must necessarily express that all-embracing feeling that imbues every Soviet citizen. And to tell you of this feeling, to put it into so many words and make it understandable to the reader, one is required to say a great deal.

Our Red Army came into being together with our social system, grew up with it, went through all its stages, and today it is the embodiment of moral and organizational experience accumulated in twenty-four years of the Soviet Union's existence. That is why it is not so easy to describe our army in a few brief words. Therefore, before undertaking any definitions, let me give a few pen portraits of men who have left indelible impressions on my mind.

IN THE SPRING of 1927 I was living on the site of a huge hydro-power project in one of the canyons of Armenia. Our barrack town looked very much like a military camp, except that we civilians were fighting not only nature, but also fighting human elemental conservatism. And here it was a question of organization and education. Most of our workers were peasants who hailed from far off mountain villages. This was the first time they had seen work done on such a grand scale. They made no secret of their skepticism about the whole undertaking, and with typical peasant superstitions foretold that "It won't work."

The river was towered by a cliff strongly resembling a cat, and old peasants feared this mountain as an evil spirit. To make things worse, March produced an inordinately heavy snowfall, followed by a scorching spring. Avalanches of melting snow slid down moun-

tains. The swift river, scene of all our efforts, swelled in no time, flooding not only part of our construction work, but our vital railway line, cutting off communications and supplies. In the barrack town there was no end of superstitious talk about this evil mountain-cat. Things looked bad. Something had to be done at once, both to the construction job and to people's minds. Aid was not long in coming. It came from a Red Army sapper battalion, stationed in a neighboring district. At first, all I saw was a well thought out plan, a division of manpower between two vital sections of the job. Then I saw work begin and, not exaggerating, in a few hours the dam was being restored, yawning gaps were filled in and covered by substantial plants and laid with rails. Later I stood at the tunnel entrance and watched the first engine pass over the newly laid tracks.

Late at night workers, engineers, and Red Army men got together in our combined club and dining room. There were about 400 of us altogether. An old peasant, one of those who always muttered about evil spirits, was sitting with a young Armenian sapper, and over a glass of wine and a plate of well peppered meat, they talked for hours. The old man couldn't read or write, but he possessed plenty of peasant shrewdness. The young Red Army man was literate, straightforward, and had just distinguished himself as a hard worker. They were father and son.

"Well, I am surprised," exclaimed the sapper, addressing everyone in the room as though he were speaking to his father. "Weren't you always complaining about the terrible smoke in our hut, and hasn't Mother all but broken

her back hauling water up the hill from the spring? And now when we are building a power plant which will provide our home with electric light and water, all you do is talk about a mountain-cat." He kept on for about half an hour and there were plenty of eager listeners. It was obvious that this youngster, trained by the Red Army, had grown to be a conscious citizen and here at our dam he helped to bring genuine culture to workers. Naturally his speech would not have had the same effect if he hadn't shown himself at work and if he was not of their own folk, one of their fellow villagers. Nor would the old man even have listened to such harsh words from his own son, had he not seen how the lad had been changed by the Red Army and what a hero he was in the eyes of the other mountaineers. That was when all of us felt very profoundly that our Red Army is an army of working people, an army created not only for war, an army which is flesh of the flesh of our Soviet culture, an army of warriors for advanced and courageous culture.

And here is another incident. I think it was about two years ago, in the Moscow opera, that I sat in a box with a Red Army man and a Red Army commander. There was a gala performance in connection with one

treated the commander to chocolate and told him about Uigurt music.

Now there was nothing new or extraordinary about a conversation between a Red Army man and a commander in a Bolshoi theater box, or about the Red Army man treating the commander to candy. But I remember czarist days, and I couldn't help pondering over this scene. We older people remember the crass inequality that marked relations between officers and privates in the czarist army, and the particularly disparaging attitude of czarist officers to any soldier of non-Russian nationality. They were called aliens, a word that has long since gone out of use. In the Red Army, representatives of hundreds of nationalities inhabiting our Union form one family and are trained in the school of comradeship. One can't even visualize anything resembling a disparaging attitude toward any other nationality or any other people; such things are unknown in the Red Army.

I've met hundreds of men who returned to their native villages after their term of service in the Red Army. They were always kind to the villagers, the best cultural force for work among the peasantry. They brought with them efficiency and organization, know-

people serving in the army by its special decrees encouraging "material interest in war," that is, encouraging plunder and violence. Our educated, disciplined Red Army man, conscious of his moral duty, with high and exacting moral criteria, with a sense of civic duty, accustomed to taking part in public life and in the management of the affairs of state, is faced at the front with a savage who prides himself on the fact that he "doesn't think, fuehrer thinks for him, doesn't know war aims because that is not his business."

And one more characteristic feature: German courage is always fortified by liquor. Our troops, much to their surprise, found that attacking German soldiers were dead drunk. Why do they want liquor at the front? To forget, forget that they are on foreign soil perfidiously attacked, that they are committing murder at every step and are themselves rushing into the jaws of death, to forget so as not to look death in the face but see it through a green haze of schnapps.

A FEW DAYS AGO I met a Soviet tankman, a chap in his early twenties, who arrived in Moscow from the front to receive a decoration. He spoke to us writers and replied to our questions. We knew, as the entire countryside knew, that this roundfaced Ukrainian had just performed a feat of outstanding heroism. Singlehanded, he protected his tank against an assault of the enemy ten times stronger. For hours he battled with death.

"It must have been a terrible feeling. Surely you did not want to die?" someone asked. "No, it wasn't terrible," he replied. "In general there's no time to think of death, and like many others I noticed that when in a rare moment your thoughts do turn to death, you simply can't believe it. You understand, physically, mentally, your whole being revolts against this thought. You simply can't believe this is the end, and you look about and are sure that this is not the end." In other words, our Soviet fighter is urged on not by desire to forget, but by memory: he remembers what he is fighting for and those who are marching shoulder to shoulder with him. In his memory is a crystal clear picture of his people and himself as one of it. And this people is immortal. When any of us address Red Army audiences or write for military papers or visit army units, we regard it as a great honor, for among Red Army men we meet with the expression, as it were, of all that is best in our system. In the Old World they would say that we "mixed with the cream of society." Comradely friendship, noble, lofty sense of duty, and spirit of heroism—plain, simple heroism, not the publicity kind—force and confidence, clear understanding of their place in the fight for advanced human ideals, inspire us when we meet with the Red Army. We know our Red Army cannot but be victorious in battle, and in peacetime it can never be a parasite, for the Soviet Red Army is trained, reared, and created not only for struggle with enemies on our land, but for cultural struggle in any field of endeavor.

MARIETTA SHAGINYAN.



... They can play as well as fight.

Sovfoto

of our national art festivals. During the intermission only the three of us remained in the box and we were talking about music. The commander was Russian, a textile worker from one of the factory towns near Moscow. He wore a decoration for distinguished service. The Red Army man was a Uigurt, a representative of a tiny nationality, which under czarism was doomed to ignorance and physical extinction, but which now had its own culture and its own intelligentsia. He

ledge and a high degree of civic consciousness. What a vast difference between them and the unlucky czarist reservists one found in the old villages. They were always unwelcome because the czarist army had given them only a taste for liquor and a loathing for work.

Little by little we are gaining insight into the nature of Nazi soldiery which perfidiously invaded the Soviet Union. They are horrible and disgusting creatures, for the German High Command is corrupting millions of its

PETAIN AND HIS PLUNDERBUND

Who is this Nazi agent Darlan? The cliques that brought disaster. How they collaborate with Berlin. The cost of collaboration. The power of the underground.

Lisbon (by mail).

THE betrayal of France by her brass hats has been a tradition for the past century and a half. And today France has as her heads a Marshal and an admiral who are handing the country over bodily to her Nazi executioners. It is not generally known that in all the months since the armistice with Germany, the Petain-Darlan government has not yet dared to announce to the French people that Hitler has annexed Alsace-Lorraine and made it part of the Reich. They are silent because to make public this fact might seriously compromise their policy of collaboration. They are also silent about the agreements through which the country is being plundered. Not only must the mills and factories in occupied and "free" France operate for the German war machine but, in addition, the German industrial barons have simply appropriated, without a penny in payment, most of the important industrial units. On March 1, 1941, the German mining companies, the Krupps, Goerings, Flicks, Klockners, Rochlings, took possession of all the iron and steel works, with an annual production of 3,000,000 tons of iron and more than 3,000,000 tons of steel, in eastern France.

The man behind this thievery is Rochling, the German industrialist whom Hitler appointed controller for iron and steel in Lorraine, Maas, and the Moselle. His own smelting plants are in the Saar territory rich in coal, while a few miles away, in Lorraine, is extracted the ore which Rochling needs for his iron production. In the first world war it was reported that Rochling stole the equipment of entire plants from France to be installed at his own works in Volklingen. Nor did his early alliance with Hitler prevent Rochling from continuing to ship armor plate for French battleships until late in the thirties. The then *Chef de Cabinet* in the Ministry of Marine, Jean Darlan, handled some of the correspondence with the Paris representatives of the Rochling interests. Today, under Rochling's orders and in agreement with this same Darlan, raw materials and machinery have been routed to Germany, while in the French factories German supervisors are in charge. And where factories have not been directly appropriated or dismantled, they are run for the Nazi overlords at the expense of the French people. This, in the jargon of Petain, is "economic collaboration."

Who is this Nazi agent Darlan? The control of the entire French state apparatus is virtually in his hands. He is assistant chief of state, minister of foreign affairs, minister of the interior, minister of the navy and merchant marine, and airways minister. During the Norwegian campaign and before the defeat of the French armies, he was placed under the orders of a British fleet commander. This only fed his already bitter anti-British feeling, which was long a tradition of his seagoing family. Darlan is another Laval in uni-

form. During the war Darlan was in contact with Laval. Everything he told Laval was passed on to Axis headquarters within twenty-four hours. He has always been hysterically anti-Soviet, even when an alliance with the USSR could have saved France from disgrace.

Now he and Petain have brought a "new order" to France—an order of catastrophe and shame. Both of these brutal men are constantly proclaiming that Germany is making it possible for French industry to continue. But what they are afraid to say is that the French people are paying for these Hitler orders. Every day 400,000,000 francs, annually 146,000,000,000, must be paid to the Nazis in Paris. And part of this amount is used by the Germans to buy up the output of French industry. To these 146,000,000,000 francs 37,000,000,000 must be added for "liquidation of the tasks arising from hostilities"; and, finally, 97,000,000,000 out of the regular budget, to make a total of 280,000,000,000. Against this figure stands that of the 68,000,000,000 estimated income for 1941. Thus 212,000,000,000, over three-quarters of the budget, remains uncovered. How shall the Hitler puppets in Vichy manage? By loans from the Bank of France and by setting the printing machines to work running off paper money. In May 1939 paper money in circulation amounted to 123,000,000,000 francs, in June 1940, 160,000,000,000, December 1940, 218,000,000,000. Since then Vichy has withheld publication of the figures. A further rise in paper money—from 55,000,000,000 to 60,000,000,000 francs—may be expected. And this leap in paper money is not accompanied by any corresponding expansion in industrial production. The result is the appearance of alarming signs of inflation, in particular the constant advance in prices of consumption goods and food (when they are obtainable), which is now 100 percent over the high levels of June 1940.

Surrender of Alsace-Lorraine, of French industry, enslavement of the French people to Hitler, intended surrender of the fleet and of the African bases, inflation, and finally surrender of portions of the crops and livestock to the Nazis—these form the foundation of the Petain-Darlan "new order."

What are the social forces behind these policies? Numerically they are extremely small. Among them is the clique who see their dream of a military dictatorship finally achieved, though it be dictatorship under the heel of the Germans. There is the Catholic hierarchy, who in the past year have been given privileges in the schools and public life which in the past were denied them under the separation of church and state. Then finally, there is a group of capitalists who are satisfied with the crumbs of profit which fall to them from the German table. Among others in this group

is Pucheux, banker and industrial tycoon, who this summer replaced Belin as minister of economy. Belin, incidentally, was spokesman of the anti-Communist wing of the French trade unions and was awarded a government post to symbolize "the Marshal's unity with French labor." Now he, too, has been junked.

Other details would only confirm why the overwhelming majority of the French people are against the Vichy government—a government kept aloft on the point of German bayonets. This is an awkward position indeed, involving on the average of a change a month either by replacements or shifts in the major posts of the dictator Marshal's government. The workers, deprived of every right to organize and, therefore of every possibility of improving their greatly depressed real wages, are solidly opposed to the government. The peasantry, that French peasantry so proud of its independence, is subjected to the same economic treatment as the peasants in Germany. And they reply by not cultivating their crops and by slaughtering their cattle. The middle classes—artisans without the necessary raw materials, small retailers without merchandise, teachers whose pacifist traditions make them natural opponents of the regime—all these are bitter against the Vichy rulers. Among the artists and scientists, whose works have borne the good name of France throughout the world, not one of them who is worth his salt has raised his voice for Petain. Either they have left the country or gone away to the countryside where they refrain from expressing themselves. And who knows how many of them work in the underground.

The underground struggle is carried on first and foremost by the Communists. As is well known, *Humanite* continues to appear despite the bans, both in occupied and unoccupied France. In Paris, as a matter of fact, *Humanite* appears in different issues in the different *arrondissements*. In the larger cities of unoccupied France, Marseilles, Toulouse, and Lyons, where walls are covered with chalk scrawls attacking the government, fresh issues of *Humanite* appear every other week. With authorized newspapers limited to two sides of a sheet and all of them as much alike as peas in a pod, it is understandable why the mimeographed editions of *Humanite* are simply gobbled up by a news-hungry people. Then there are the brief news letters which are distributed everywhere. This writer, who has had access to almost the entire underground literature of France, has seen no evidence of activity on the part of the former Socialist Party leadership. One section of its deputies and higher functionaries, though not the rank and file, under the leadership of the party's onetime Secretary General Paul Faure, has gone over to Petain bag and baggage. In return, some of them have received permission to continue their publications and start new