

The Observation Post

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1942.

Swearing

The Padre's forceful sermon last Sunday evidently sank home with the result that there has been a decided improvement in the language used in camp, but still the two words he complained about can still be heard in the camp frequently.

Our thinking man must realise the amount of prayer and thought devoted to this matter before coming out in the open and actually using the words, and also using them in the beginning portion of his sermon.

The Padre probably does not look on many things in the same way as most of us, he has a narrower outlook and sometimes we feel that he is not "of us" but there is not a man, who, having heard his straight-from-the-shoulder sermon, will dare to deny his courage and his manliness.

We are going to our homes, are we going to swear before our women-folk and young children? Of course not! Well, how about making one New Year resolution we intend to keep. One that will be comparatively easy because we shall have refrained from swearing at home for at least seven days—that is, if we are proud of our homes. Let our resolution be: "No swearing or blasphemy," or as one Padre put it, "Keep your swearing clean."

"A Merry Christmas"

(By "The Gaddy.")

Within a few days we shall be wishing each other "A Merry Christmas." By "Merry," of course, we shall mean a merry as any Christmas, which is being celebrated under the awful shadow of war, can be. But it is well to remind ourselves that this Christmas, even though it be far removed from the real merriment of a peacetime Christmas, would be even further removed, were it not for the wonderful stand that the Russians have made against the Nazi hordes. Without their stubborn resistance, just what sort of a Christmas would we be "enjoying"?

It is too terrible to contemplate. Therefore, as a tribute to the gallant Russians, I offer a couple of extracts from the Soviet War News, which is published by the Press Department of the Soviet Embassy in London.

They reveal, in some measure, the spirit of the Russian Army.

Here they are:

INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE— DUTY OF EVERY SOLDIER

Pravda writes:—

To-day every division, regiment, battalion and every squadron, every detachment, every individual soldier of the Red Army must be imbued with the realisation that the enemy must not be allowed to advance any further. That is why it is the duty of every soldier to improve immeasurably his fighting initiative. Each must think incessantly how to strike a more powerful blow at the enemy to-day, how to exterminate a greater number of invaders to-day.

An example of such military skill and unshakable fortitude was recently set by Lieutenant Shuklin's gun crew. In one engagement in the Don steppes this gun crew put 14 German tanks out of action. All artillerymen must fight the enemy as Lieutenant Shuklin and his comrades fought.

Soviet Cossacks too are showing the way to fight. The Don Cossack unit commanded by Tatarinov was instructed at all costs to hold an important position. The forces were most unequal. Facing the Cossacks were units of a mountain rifle corps, two tank and two infantry divisions. Fierce fighting developed.

The Germans incessantly launched attack after attack. One village changed hands three times. The Cossacks not only skillfully repulsed the enemy pressure but themselves sought out the weak spots in the enemy's defence, inflicting on him severe blows.

Together with other detachments they exterminated two enemy regiments, killed more than 3000 Nazis, put dozens of tanks and guns out of action and captured 80 German officers and 200 men. This is the manner in which every unit, every detachment, every Soviet soldier must fight.

Every soldier must always try to support his comrades with fire, with bayonets or hand grenades, always giving mutual aid without waiting for special orders. When Red Army man Alejev saw that a nearby group of Red Army men were defending themselves against attacking Nazis, he did not stop to wait for orders, but immediately opened fire. By shooting 14 Germans he eased the situation for his comrades and helped them carry out their task.

Every soldier must act in this manner, in whatever situation he may find himself: whether in attack, on reconnaissance or in defence. At the same time he must guard the ranks of his unit from needless losses, strengthen their positions, employ better camouflage and deceive the enemy.

The war front is thousands of miles long. On whatever sector of this front the Soviet soldier finds himself, in the south or in the north, before the German or the Japanese, he should have one object; not to give the enemy a moment's respite. In sniping, in mortar fire, in shelling fortified positions, in attacks by small groups on enemy fortifications or in massed blows

by tanks, planes and artillery—fighting initiative must be displayed in everything, always and everywhere.

The invaders must be made to feel that death and the fierce hatred of our people pursue them at every step.

Fighting initiative means that each man knows not only his own task but understands the task of his section, platoon and company. The great Russian general, Suvorov, pointed out that every soldier should understand the manoeuvre of his unit.

There have been hundreds of instances in which a rank and file soldier has taken the place of a commander who has been put out of action and successfully completed an operation. The activity and shrewdness of the Soviet soldiers facilitate the success of operations planned by the Command.

In a recent engagement a Red Army unit was attacking an enemy position. A well-camouflaged enemy machine-gun rained a hail of lead, barring the road to our infantry. Mortar-gunner Bondarenko saw this. Making his way to a hillock dominating the battlefield he set up his mortar there and opened accurate fire. The enemy machine-gun was destroyed and the road was opened for our infantry.

Red Army regulations demand determination and activity from every soldier. Every Red Army man must be prepared to go over to the attack on the instructions of his commander or on his own initiative when he sees a suitable opportunity—this is laid down in the fighting regulations of the infantry.

CUNNING IN BATTLE

(By Colonel S. Gurov, Red Army)

In modern war the individual soldier's inventiveness, initiative and cunning are just as important as courage and steadfastness. These qualities are systematically fostered in the Red Army. The great Russian general Suvorov used to tell his soldiers to "fight not with courage only, but with understanding." In the past thirteen months Soviet soldiers have become both more experienced and more cunning. They have learned to guess the enemy's intentions and to trick him.

Two scouts of a Red Army unit, Kuzmin and Dubrin, set themselves to discover how the Germans directed their bombers to their objectives. They soon observed that when the Nazi planes appeared on the horizon enemy signalers sent up flares from the neighbourhood of the Soviet positions. The German pilots relied on these flares as indications where they should drop their bombs.

Not long afterwards Dubrin and Kuzmin captured a large number of German flares. Before attempting anything they carefully studied the methods of the German signalers. Soon it was apparent that white flares indicated Soviet infantry positions, while green flares were used to direct the bombers to our batteries.

NAZIS TRICKED INTO BOMBING OWN FORCES

The following day the Nazi planes made their usual appearance. Simultaneously from right and left, in the direction of the German batteries, Dubrin and Kuzmin sent up green flares. The planes dipped their wings in acknowledgment of the signal, circled over the point from which the flares had appeared, and dropped their whole load on the German artillery. At the same time a white flare went up, and the Germans started wiping out their own infantry as well.

Red Army man Nikolai Yegorov, a signaller, recently had the following experience. He was suddenly attacked by three German automatic riflemen. Yegorov flung himself into the snow and started firing his rifle, but was wounded. The Germans drew closer and closer. Yegorov had only one grenade. He realised that if he threw it in the ordinary way it would kill no more than one of them.

He flung one of his mittens. The

Buried Treasure

(By W.O. IL. L. V. Winks.)

Mac was a medical bloke, a rat easy-going chap who was as cheerful on sick parade as if the flock that he shepherded to the M.O.'s tent was a leave party.

Every man in the Regiment liked Mac. He handed out "two of these and one of those" with a grin you could cut with a jack-knife. He walloped on poultices, soothed septic sores, and measured out dope day in, day out. He was as decent a bloke as any I've met in the army; white all through, and game as a bulldog. But he had a kink all the same.

"Bill, d'you notice that bit of a rise, just before we came to the sand dunes?" Mac shot the question at his clobber as they strolled along at where the Regiment was "resting" after one of the Desert stunts.

"Yes, . . . Why? A rubbish heap, I reckon."

"Rubbish be hanged!" Mac retorted. "You wall-eyed coot, it's a kitchen midden of the ancient people who lived in Palestine long before David put the knock-out on Goliath."

"And what the hell is a kitchen midden?" Bill demanded.

TONS OF FALOOSE

Mac looked with patronising pity at his clobber. "A kitchen midden's a place where the ancients camped. You generally find things in 'em, implements, pots and pans, coins, and whips of other things. Some of 'em are worth tons of faloose. Do you get me?"

Bill was still hazy, but he kept mum.

"I'm going to sneak up there to-night, and have a cut at the midden," Mac declared. "Might strike a pot of old coins worth a couple of hundred quid!"

"Pigs might fly!" With this rude comment, Mac's clobber hopped into his tent.

Mac mooned around after sick parade. His grin was missing, and whenever his clobber came within eye-range, Mac glowered.

"What's got you down, Mac?" I asked.

"Nothing, Corp. Only I'd like to plug that damned idiot Barton."

DOG-EARED BOOK

Then Mac opened out, and put me wise to the whole business. He spouted about archaeology, about Sennacherib and Sesostris, and a lot of other "heads" who hit things up in old times. Mac had a tin of fags, so I let him carry on. He showed me a little dog-eared book about ancient Palestine—picked it up in Cairo. It was by a French bloke, and poor old Mac had swallowed every furphy in it.

"There's tons of buried treasure in this blighted land," Mac declared. "Tons of sand and sorrow," I said.

"Cut it out, Corp! I'll bet you my rum issue for a week that I get treasure out of that mound near the dunes."

"Done!" I snapped.

Mac's dial sprouted the cheerful grin, and he hopped out of the bivvy to get some dope for a chap who was down with malaria.

I "didn't see him again till "cook-house" sounded next morning.

Mac was grinning, but he looked dopey, as if he'd been on the razzle.

DINKY ANTIKA

"Saieda, Corp. I'll trouble you for that rum issue. Struck oil last night

Nazis thought it was a grenade and threw themselves to the ground. As soon as they rose again the second mitten flew towards them and they dropped to the earth. Then Yegorov threw his helmet.

Now the Germans understood that he had nothing to fight with. They rose carelessly to full height and made a dash towards him. But that was just what Yegorov was waiting for. He flung his only grenade. Two Nazis fell. The third tried to run away, but Yegorov tackled him easily. His inventiveness saved him from captivity, torture and death.

DECEIVING GERMAN GUNNERS

Soviet commanders are fond of provoking the enemy into action which wastes his ammunition to no purpose. Red infantry on a certain sector were planning an attack. A Soviet battery had the job of silencing the Nazi guns but did not know their exact position.

The Soviet artillery commander had guns mounted on tractors. One night he had them driven backwards and forwards some distance in front of our infantry formation. The guns mounted on the tractors blazed away at the Germans, who apparently decided that Soviet tanks were concentrating on that sector, for at daybreak they opened artillery fire. That was exactly what the Soviet artillerymen wanted. They smashed the enemy's batteries and cleared the way for the infantry.

There are innumerable ways of deceiving the enemy—dummy fortifications, faked troop movements, and all the tricks of camouflage. To these must be added the cunning of the individual soldier. It is this quality which has often helped Red Army troops to out-manoeuvre the enemy.

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"Go to Jericho! Let's have a squint at your treasure. Bally old M. and V. tin, I s'pose."

Mac's clobber was in the bivvy when we got there. He sniffed when Mac opened his haversack and produced an earth-strained brass pot about the size of a fifty fag tin. It was covered in curious characters—heiroylyphics, Mac called them—and looked pretty ancient.

"Is 'nt it a beaut?" Mac gloated over his antika, rubber it gently with his shirt sleeve, and then put it back gently in his haversack.

"Give you five dizzies for it, Mac."

Mac glared at his clobber, and then opened on me with a free translation from the French bloke's book.

"In B.C. 701, Sennacherib invaded Palestine and put the wind up Zelekiah, King of Askelou, Hezekiah of Judah and a lot of other tin-pot kings. He made Lil-baal, King of Gaza, sit up and think; but that old girl got the oil before the Assyrians swooped on him."

Mac lowered his voice. "His treasure was buried in a mound near the sea, below Gaza!"

"I get you. And you've got the treasure, Mac."

DINNER AT SHEPHERDS

"A bit of it, Corp. Soon's I hit Cairo, I'll take that brass pot to the museum. If I get a hundred for it, Corp., you're on a dinner at Shepherd's."

Mac left on sick parade. I was Orderly Corporal, and it was my painful duty to detail his clobber for cook-house fatigue. Bill went like a lamb to peel spuds and chop up Gypo melons for the stew. After inspection, I told the S.M., who was pretty keen on the "Wonders of the Holy Land," about Mac's discovery. He streaked away for the M.O. tent and froze on to Mac.

"Report to me when the parade's over."

"Very good," quoth old Mac.

Ten minutes later I saw Mac and the

S.M. making for Mac's bivvy, and I happened along in time to be in at the death.

"Isn't it a beaut? One of King Lil-baal's perfume pots. B.C. seven-double-O!"

MADE IN JAPAN

The S.M. grabbed the little brass pot, eyed it all over, and rubbed some caked earth from the bottom. Then a grin, a grin that a Manx cat might have envied, spread over his dial. "Get an eyeful of this!" The S.M. handed the pot over to Mac with his finger on the space he had cleaned.

"Made in Japan!" Mac spluttered, and flung the pot down.

"A beaut! Worth a hundred if it's worth a piastre!" said Mac's clobber, and dodged a water-bottle, and hopped into the open.

Mac's grin was on leave for a week. He cursed the French bloke daily, and wondered how the brass pot came to be on the ground.

His clobber might have given him the linkum oil—but he didn't.

—"Aussie" Magazine.

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