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THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE ARMY

Part One

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CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE ARMY
or the
Social Relations of Militarism

With the growth in size of the army and navy, every working class family has a member, close friend or relative in the service. Everyone in the mass is affected by the situation of their loved ones, and of the army generally; and in turn affects (whether he knows it or not) the morale, training and discipline of the army.

For the army is essentially a social institution. It extends its octopus claws deep into the heart of the vast working class of America. And it tears from that heart the strongest, most promising young men, and sacrifices them on the altar of imperialist war.

Of the many works this writer has had the good fortune to utilize in studying militarism in the U.S., Willard Waller's "War in the 20th Century", (1941), a symposium including the works of so prominent a war and historical analyst as H. E. Barnes, has one of the few unexcelled bourgeois analyses of the social relations of the army, of the struggle of the classes as it is reflected in the army. Such military writers as General Archibald Wavell (now Field Marshall), General Marshall, Major Wheeler-Nicholson (outstanding critic of the U.S. Army), and many others are utilized to round out the argument.

In Trotsky's vast History of the Russian revolution one of the most profound pictures of living, human class relations is drawn. Of Karl Marx's "Das Kapital", even its bitterest enemies have acclaimed its vivid picture of the misery and suffering of the lower class in its struggle against the rulers. This may appear to be accenting the human side of the class struggle, its psychological or broader still its sociological aspect. But to understand so huge a mechanism as an army, one is forced to approach the army as a system of human organization. Waller does this, and thereby reaches heights of clear class analysis rarely approached by bourgeois writers, and to be appreciated by revolutionary writers and workers.

The human approach is not new, as the examples of Trotsky and Marx show. But its application to the army is new, particularly in the U.S. where the advent of militarism is belated. In revolutionary literature we have the powerful anti-militarist works of Karl Liebknecht. Unfortunately Liebknecht's approach was more general, and sometimes more abstract than could be readily understood then and even now by the mass of workers. Significantly his most forceful anti-militarist writings were the brief, simple, fiery appeals to the soldiers from prison.

This analysis is in no sense a complete explanation of the class struggle in the army. That is a tremendous task, which the speed of the war and the necessity of the struggle prevents from being concluded. But this analysis attempts to make a beginning in the direction of analysing the imperialist army. The analysis will show in much detail the social organization which is the army. Before beginning this lengthy dissertation on the most destructive of all human organizations, one last introductory remark is necessary: the quotations and comments are long. They should be, as this is a new problem, a new field, for the American revolutionary movement. In breaking ground for a new house - the house of labor - we will have to plow through much capitalist rot until we have laid the foundation.

DISCIPLINE IS PUNISHMENT

Waller begins: "The army achieves its result of activating a million men with a single will by effectively annihilating the individual will of the soldier. It overrides the individual will; it refuses to recognize that the individual will exists and acts as if it did not exist. The soldier must obey. Orders come all the way down from the top. Everyone obeys someone. Everyone is responsible to someone. But no one is responsible to his subordinates or may be questioned by them. The flow of commands, of will, is IN ONE DIRECTION ONLY." (my emphasis).

How true is the poet Tennyson's line: "There's not to reason why, There's but to do and die." Expressed in more brutal terms, the classic army attitude is stated by the Sergeant to all new recruits: "Shut Up! You're not paid to think."

It is true only in theory that the Army "annihilates" the will of the soldier. That is the tendency, but every capitalist army fails to reach this goal of reduction of men to robots. Actually, in the struggle between the army and the will of the soldier, a working relationship is established, with the army dominant. The soldier's will is subordinated for the while, distinctly NOT annihilated, as witness the breaking up of large armies by upsurges of soldiers' wills which have overcome the army domination.

It is therefore correct to say that the army activates millions of men to fight by DOMINATING their individual wills. Such domination is difficult to obtain and even more difficult to retain. The low pre-war morale in the American Army before December 7, 1941, and the rise in morale after, show how strong that will was. Today, despite heavy propaganda barrages, the illusion of defense against attack is wearing off (particularly since both the German and Japanese imperialists are being pushed back), and the individual will breaks loose. Soldiers are the worst hecklers of military propaganda (go to any army movie where soldiers are present for proof). A constant source of expression for the repressed soldier's will is the cartoon which

invariably makes fun of the officers, never of the soldier. THERE IS NOTHING FUNNY ABOUT THE SOLDIER'S LOWLY AND DANGEROUS LIFE. The army is aided in gaining domination over the soldier by the government with its various forms of pressure, by the fear of jail if disobedient, or of other repression against himself and family.

This military process of molding millions of wills to one task requires ORGANIZATION. The military organization greatly increases the interdependence of individuals. As workers are organized by the mechanism of production itself (in one place, under one management, on one product), so the Army organizes masses of men, teaches them military organization. Many of them are being taught rigid discipline for the first time in their lives. Soldiers develop a language of their own, a political organization for their own, have their own traditions and customs based on their way of life, though all this is basically identical with that of the rest of the oppressed mass.

The flow of commands "in one direction only" is what constitutes a complete lack of democracy in the army. "No one is responsible to his subordinates." Soldiers are thereby EXCLUDED FROM ANY SHARE IN THE DIRECTION OF THE ARMY and thereby of the war. Soldiers have no declaration of independence, no bill of rights, no right to vote for officers, or vote on policy, no right to petition, assemble, voice, recall, no right to organize, no right to free speech. About half the states allow soldiers to vote by absentee ballot for state officials (this is a new development for most of these states, occasioned by the mass sentiment for granting the right to vote to soldiers, in the year 1942). But soldiers are prohibited from voting in national elections, from running for office. And the right to vote has little meaning if restricted to the single state, and if it excludes the right to be voted for!

Despite this obvious lack of democracy in the army, General Marshall, Chief of Staff of the American imperialist army, said (News release, September 30, 1940, two weeks after the draft began): "Our Army will be an Army of citizen soldiers and must be essentially a democratic institution." Hypocrisy! How cheap are these high-sounding words. Compare General Marshall's demagogic fakery to this statement by one of the Army's severest critics, Major Wheeler-Nicholson ("Battleship of the Republic", 1940): "It should be self-evident to any layman that a military machine must be run from the top. AN ARMY IS PURE AUTOCRACY EXEMPLIFIED."

Smashing the soldier's will is attempted by arousing their fear of jail and other dire punishment. The intimidating "Articles of War," (the Army CRIMINAL LAW) are read to soldiers frequently to frighten them into obeying orders under threat of heavy punishment. A soldier is always only one step away from a courtmartial. If he smiles in line he may be severely punished. If he objects to the punishment he faces a courtmartial. Any form of army

tion of the individual will is lopped off with the courtmartial ax. Even inadvertently a soldier may be courtmartialled - for getting drunk, coming in a few minutes late, getting into a fight. In serious situations it is a common army practice to select every tenth man in line and shoot him in cold blood to teach the other soldiers a lesson in obedience. (Marshall Petain, with whom the U.S. Government carried on negotiations for over two and a half years pulled this blood stunt in the French Army in the first world war). Everything the soldier does contains the strong possibility of punishment by courtmartial. Since the rules are arbitrary, totally illogical, and violate freedom of action of the soldier, the soldier is CONSTANTLY BREAKING MANY OF THE REGULATIONS WHETHER HE KNOWS IT OR NOT. Every soldier consequently escapes courtmartial by a hair many times in the army.

Every soldier is in constant day to day struggle with the army rules and regulations - with the army system. "The guardhouse is the omnipresent symbol of American Regular Army discipline...copied from the British and Prussian armies of the 18th century," writes Wheeler-Nicholson. The War Department theory is that any breach of the rigid discipline must be brutally crushed, else other breaches will occur, and smash the entire disciplinary system. This illustrates the terrible fear the rulers of the army have of the soldier in the ranks. They dare not give him any freedom of action. They hogtie and circumscribe his entire life with a mass of regulations and details that bewilder and hamstring his every move.

Despite all the rules and regulations, soldiers never do have their wills smashed. They merely become embittered at the army. They find dozens of ways to get around the rules, shirk duty, avoid assignments, soldier on the job. To smash soldiers' wills would take a lifetime of Jesuit training. Even Fascist training from youth upwards would not succeed. In the U.S. such training is an impossibility for some years to come. The individual will far from being broken is strengthened. The more backward and prejudiced the man the less will he have; the "better" soldier the War Department considers him. The more intelligent the man - class intelligence - the more will he have, and no capitalist government can dominate his will in the army for long. The highly literate American proletariat on the very threshold of a broad class intelligence will never have its will smashed by the rulers.

The real meaning of the saying "the army will make you or break you," or "the army will make a man or a bum of you," is seen in this drive to crush the soldier's will. When the army crushes your will, it breaks you, makes you a bum. When they say "the army builds men," they mean builds blubbing masses of flesh, without any will. That is the "good soldier," the militarist ideal.

Waller continues: "When a man has made the sacrifice of his own private will, it remains for the army to instill in him those habits of obedience which

make him the perfect instrument of the will of his superiors. The army begins to teach him to obey orders...for one reason, because the living together of great masses of men demand regulation of the minutiae of existence, for another, because it is thought good to give the private soldier plenty of practice in obeying orders. Orders are multiplied. The emphasis is upon precision, upon snappiness in executing commands, upon the synchronization of the movements of masses. Close order drill and the manual of arms are well adapted to this sort of training. There is also a multitude of petty regulations..."

The mechanics of dominating the will of the soldier are in sum a gradual accumulation of hundreds of petty restraints on the soldier's will, all constituting the army disciplinary system. Were any ordinary human being subjected to all or even a good part of these dominating restraints, he would immediately rebel or find means of opposing such repression. Knowing this, the Army builds its control of the soldier's will gradually, piece by piece, each time surrounding the soldier with further rules on what not to do. Any soldier can easily describe how the discipline steadily increases in severity from induction station to combat organization.

In this process the army has soldiers do dozens of worthless tasks, without rhyme or reason, mainly for their disciplinary effect. The army does not permit soldiers to think for themselves. It attempts to make them completely dependent on the army for all their needs. Personal freedom (private life) is unknown in the army: It is expressly prohibited. It is an ironic bit of army humor to repeat sadly: THE PRIVATE HAS NO PRIVACY. In the navy, when a man gets shore leave it is called LIBERTY, in contrast to the prison-like lack of liberty on board ship. Similarly with army leave, of which soldiers say: The best thing about the army is the furloagh. The ceaseless repetition of useless drill forces the soldier to toe the line, do the drill correctly. The aim of the officers is to get the soldier to obey without thinking, and instantly.

Close order drill was the foundation of military efficiency and discipline in the foot armies of the world for many centuries. It trained masses of soldiers to walk in step, fire in volleys, always standing close to each other, and in visual contact. The new machine weapons - machine gun, plane, tank, artillery, land mine - have made close order drill certain death. It is as outmoded as the bow and arrow against the dive bomber. Even in the American army, movements are made AT NIGHT only as the general rule, and close order drill on maneuvers or in combat is an invitation to slaughter. Dispersion of troops in the woods and in natural surroundings - as opposed to concentration in close order drill - is a necessity in modern warfare. Yet the United States Army continues to train men in close order drill on the theory that it teaches soldiers to obey commands automatically. In reality this is an admission that the U.S. Army knows of no other way to

soldiers discipline than be a totally worthless form of physical exercise! Not only is close order drill useless in modern war, but on the field of battle, it is never used even by the American army. Remember the British General Braddock's red-coated soldiers marching in close order drill in the wilderness, only to be mowed down by Indian fighters skulking behind trees.

The question arises: if men will obey commands automatically while doing close order drill, will they continue to obey commands on the field of battle WHERE CLOSE ORDER DRILL IS NOT USED? History of the second world war says: NO! Other forms of military drill are utterly worthless and impractical, and breed habits of acting like soldiers, yet not knowing anything about soldiering. The manual of arms - drill with the rifle - is useless in war. So is kitchen police, leaf raking, and the like. For many years the army did its manual of arms TO MUSIC, swinging the rifle gracefully (and uselessly). The Army also practiced saber drill on horseback TO MUSIC. Tra-la-la. The flowers that bloom in the spring. Making beds like hospital nurses is also useless in war where men do not sleep in beds.

Soldiers for hundreds of years were kept in a state of illiteracy. When literacy increased as the necessity of greater intelligence in handling more complicated weapons increases, the soldiers were denied the right to read. Only in the past 100 years have soldiers been allowed to read in camp - and then only official government-approved publications. Every effort is made to control the MIND as well as the body of the soldier. In the U.S. Army, the soldiers are virtually 100% literate. They ask questions constantly.

This problem of controlling the soldier's will is far more important than appears at first sight. Military victory is considered as the destruction of the will to fight in the enemy army. This is Hitler's avowed purpose in trying to annihilate the Red Army, as he was successful in doing to the French Army. The collective will to fight was paralyzed. Wheeler-Nicholson writes: "An army is...an implement to carry out the WILL of a State." It is the chief instrument of capitalist power, and deserves the concentrated attention of the mass in and out of the army. For the will of the army can be smashed not only by defeat in war, but also by uprising at home and in the army.

Colonel Fulop-Miller in "Technique of Modern Arms" (1940) writes: "Singularly, throughout history, we find the recurrent slogan of great military leaders: 'Destroy the enemy's leadership.' Alexander understood this principle as have few leaders...Tamerlane's credo of hate, 'Destroy your enemies,' aimed to break the hostile WILL TO WIN...Napoleon claimed that elan - will to victory - was the decisive issue between two opposing commanders." This illustrates the "annihilation of will" theory in military history. In class war particularly this destruction of leaders and thereby of the will to win is shown by Stalin's Moscow Trials, and the necessity for Fascism to destroy working class leaders and organizations which lead.

Marshal Foch declared: "Victory equals will power. A battle won is a battle in which one declines to admit being beaten...Victory goes always to those who merit it by the greatest force of will and intelligence." This applies with particular force to the working class in its class war against imperialism. It will have to generate greater will power than the enemy in order to make the world revolution.

In considering the problem of dominating the soldier's will, particular attention should be given to what is known as military "justice". Not one single prominent military writer has ever dared in the U.S. to openly criticize the reactionary judicial system of the army as has Wheeler-Nicholson. Here is a sample:

"The Judge Advocate General's Department of our army suffers from that fault in military jurisprudence common to many armies, the inability of military-legal minds to DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN DISCIPLINE AND JUSTICE. This leads in too many cases to injustice."

He has ripped the veil off military "justice," and has exposed it as a variety of discipline, that is, INJUSTICE - PUNISHMENT. Military law is the crudest form of class injustice and intolerance. The Nazis have merely extended this to include the civilian population. The U.S. is quickly overtaking them.

Wheeler-Nicholson continues: "In an autocracy such as the army, justice is liable to be subordinated to the will of the military autocrats, which makes an anomaly in a democratic country." Of course this is an "anomaly" in a "democratic" country. But all capitalist armies are autocracies, NOT democracies, General Marshall notwithstanding. Officers serve on trial boards. Soldiers do not! This is a farce, not a system of JUSTICE. A well known cartoon caricaturing military justice appears in Vagts "History of Militarism." The caption beneath the cartoon reads: "Chairman of the Court: 'The session is over - let the public enter.'" Thus is illustrated the arbitrary, highhanded, secret, unrestrained character of military "justice."

That all capitalist armies are autocracies results from their basis in essentially identical capitalist economies and states. An example of this is, writes Wheeler-Nicholson: "The War Department produced the monumental Industrial Mobilization Plan. It must have been a good plan, for the Germans immediately adopted it. It has worked very successfully for the Nazis." The plan of a "democracy" has worked "very successfully" for the totalitarians. This is the illustration of the identity of economic and therefore military structures. For the army is the will of the state, as Wheeler-Nicholson has pointed out repeatedly in his remarkable critique. It is well to remember that Wheeler-Nicholson is no liberal, but a highly developed AUTOCRATIC thinker who wishes the army to eliminate those features of autocracy which

hinder its efficiency. His ideal is Hitler's army. (NOTE: This is a digression from our main argument about the army as a system of SOCIAL organization. Other articles consider the related political problems - an analysis of the Soldier's Handbook, analysis of the degeneration of the imperial Czarist army and the growth of the first revolutionary army, analysis of the history of the American army and its transformation from a progressive capitalist army into a reactionary imperialist army).

Waller spotlights another aspect of discipline (punishment): "There is a great emphasis upon appearance. It is thought that a man cannot possibly be a good soldier unless he holds himself erect, salutes in a crisp manner, and keeps his uniform spotless...Uniforms are very hard to keep clean and presentable. Private soldiers suspect that buttons are put on the uniforms just because they are hard to shine!"

Brass buttons tarnish easily, overnight if the climate is damp. At the same time soldiers are brutally punished for having unshined buttons! That brass buttons are used because they force the soldier to constantly polish them (at his own expense!) is shown by the fact that the War Department orders all organizations going into combat to REMOVE THE BRASS BUTTONS and replace them with black buttons. Soldiers on maneuvers have discovered that placing transparent nail polish on brass buttons seals them from the damp air for weeks and keeps them shining. The War Department will never stand for this! This again illustrates the army concept of viciousness - which is called discipline.

Two things make it difficult to keep uniforms spotless; one is the dirty, muddy, dusty, conditions of war which makes spots on uniforms; two is the soldier's lack of money to pay for cleaning. Very clever this army. First it pays a few dollars to soldiers, then it makes soldiers use large (proportionately) sums of this tiny pay for the tailor and cleaner and launderer. (NOTE: The revolutionary army will simplify all uniforms, eliminate brass buttons, eliminate saluting by abolishing grades and electing leaders.)

The nonsense about a soldier of necessity holding himself "erect" is best disproved by the practice of even the modern imperialist army, which has soldiers crawl along the ground, wade or swim through swamps, creep through woods, lie prone during bombardments by air or artillery. Erect posture is a parade ground proposition, having little relation to the mechanics of war. But by forcing all soldiers to keep their chins in, their stomachs in, their chests out, their weight tilted slightly forward, feet with heels together and toes at a 45 degree angle, the War Department succeeds in obtaining a uniformity and a routine which is supposed to make men look like soldiers, and at least be forced to do something disagreeable. The more disagreeable the task, reasons the army, the more the soldier will toe the line, and obey instantly. Hans Habe in his book "A Thousand Shall Fall" comments on this

reduction of discipline to its basis, when he says: "Discipline was unpleasantness. The more unpleasant the task, the greater the discipline."

CLASSES IN THE ARMY

Waller writes: "The social system of the army involves a caste-like division between commissioned officers and enlisted men, originally derived from actual differences between the two groups. The officer is a gentleman; the enlisted man is the instrument which he uses in his profession. In all respects the officer is set off from the enlisted man. He wears a uniform of a superior quality and bears glittering insignia of rank. He lives better than the men; draws more pay; stays at better hotels; smokes a different brand of cigarettes. The officer cannot gamble with enlisted men. He cannot carry a package. If he were, with the most honorable intentions, to court a sergeant's daughter, he might be relieved of his commission. In the presence of enlisted men, the officer must always behave with gentlemanly reserve, exacting the last ounce of respect due him and his rank."

Caste differences in the army are derived from class differences in society. The "social system" of the army is derived from the social system of society. The class struggle in society between boss and workers goes on in the army between officer and soldier. Those who imagine the class struggle ceases in the army are mistaken. It continues, and grows in intensity between top and bottom. The army does not constitute the end of the class struggle. As a matter of fact, nowhere in capitalist society is the class relation so naked as in the army. The class struggle in the army is not hidden behind any democratic mask.

All capitalist armies base their social relations on the simple class fact that the SOLDIER SHOULD FEAR THE OFFICERS MORE THAN THE ENEMY (see "The German Army," by H. Rosinski, and the more detailed analysis about "the main enemy is at home" later on). This is so because the "enemy" is vague, indeterminate concept, propagandistically frightening, but geographically and socially removed from the soldier. The officer on the other hand is constantly at the soldier's back, ordering, threatening, always cracking the whip of guardhouse discipline. The main enemy is at home: the officer in the army; the boss in the factory.

In the army, the boss (officer) uses the worker (soldier) as his "instrument". Class relations in the army are far more

open, sharp, developed than in the rest of society. There is a sharp legal distinction drawn between officers and soldiers. Officers eat better food (prepared by soldiers); go to separate toilets (cleaned by soldiers, installed by soldiers or workers). Prior to January 1942 officers were permitted to marry; soldiers were not. And soldiers are not permitted to marry overseas, without the officer's permission. Thus the officer interferes in the personal life of the soldier.

Wheeler-Nicholson writes: "We retain the Prussian officer caste relation and the discarded Prussian military spirit of discipline. This incidentally was changed by the German army as a result of the world war, when it was found that such a system did not stand up under defeat." Saluting in the German army, for example, was universalized: all soldiers saluting one another. Thus the most obvious form of class distinction was pushed out of the limelight. (Compare the U.S. Army's inability to find any other way to create a mass army than the old Prussian, pre-Nazi officer caste system).

Within the officer caste there is a further caste division along racial and other lines. For example, when on rare occasions, a negro, Jew, or working class element enters West Point, the white and rich (or gentile) students give him the "silent" treatment, simply not talking to him, and thus driving him out of the Academy. Even West Point "was patterned on the Prussian model of the 18th century, where the sons of the aristocracy were sent to be made into officers of the Royal Army," says Wheeler-Nicholson. The Prussian model is retained, but the aristocracy of today does NOT send its sons to be officers. It gets its officers from the petty-capitalist class, who are selected by politicians. They carefully select only petty bourgeois sons who can be useful.

Among themselves there is a degree of equality in officer relations, principally in the higher ranks. However, there is considerable distinction between a general and a second looie. And in all social functions of officers, such as dinners, gatherings, balls, and similar affairs, there is a strict seating at the dinner table by RANK. Rank is dominant. Toward soldiers there is absolutely no equality. The soldier is treated as an inferior. The army orders him to treat the officer as a superior. This is similar to the "master race" theory of the Nazis.

The officer is a LEGAL gentleman, a distinction accorded no other section of capitalist society. This is the legal aspect of the CLASS DIFFERENCE between officers and soldiers. Legally

the soldier is a slave who must obey the officer's will at all times, under all circumstances, without thinking, without question - and cheerfully. "The disciplinary system we copied from Europe is primarily based upon the tradition that the term 'officer' and 'gentleman' are synonymous and that soldiers come from the lower walks of life," writes Wheeler-Nicholson. That is the historical root of the legal gentlemen. It is a tradition and a fact that soldiers come from the lower walks of life, and that officers come from the higher walks of life. This does not make officers gentlemen. More than the bars of rank are required. But this does constitute class separation in the army, and is the basis of the class struggle in the army.

Army nurses are all officers in the Nurse Corps. They must be saluted. As officers they are forbidden to associate with soldiers - inferiors - cannot have dates with soldiers under penalty of court-martial, can go out with nothing "lower" than a second lieutenant (which gives rise to the well known army expression: "What's lower than a second looie: Answer: Nothing!"). Even in the new Women's Army no fraternizing of officers and rank and file women soldiers will be permitted. It is significant that almost all the applicants for officer commissions come from the petty bourgeoisie, not from working class women. The rank and file is forbidden to marry and have children, though Mrs Boddy, head of the Women's Army, is married and has two children.

An army joke which expresses in refracted form the class distinction in the army is: A soldier goes to the hospital, and tells the Medical Officer that he has a pain in his abdomen. The officer tells him: "Officers have pains in the abdomen. Sergeants have pains in the stomach. Soldiers have BELLYACHES."

CLASS MEANING OF THE SALUTE

Class distinction in the army is nowhere better seen than in the way soldiers speak to officers, and the way soldiers approach officers.

Waller writes: A considerable amount of army training consists of learning the ritual of respect toward commissioned officers, a subject known as military courtesy. The private salutes when he meets an officer; he salutes first and holds the salute until recognized. Between the officer and the man there is an immense social distance....The private is supposed to ask the permission of his immediate superior, the noncom, before speaking to the commissioned officer. When he speaks to the officer

he refers to himself in the third person."

The "social distance" between officer and soldier is truly immense. It is unbridgeable in present day capitalist society. Class divisions are irreconcilable. Only a system of social inequality gives rise to "caste-like division" of the army.

To refer to oneself in the third person when speaking to an officer is a traditional medieval form of speech of a subject to a king. To speak in the first person is to speak as equals - you and I. To speak in the third person is to automatically speak as an inferior. In the U.S. Army most soldiers simply ignore this slavish mode of address. But when speaking to higher officers, this method of speaking in the third person never varies. As the Army Regulations put it: "Private John Doe reports to the Commanding Officer." Not: "I report to the Commanding Officer."

No soldier can speak directly to any higher officer. He must first get permission of a noncommissioned officer. Thus the unbridgeable gap between officers extends to this rigid restriction on speaking, where speaking by the soldier has to first be subject to the ruling of the noncom. This is death to free speech. There is no free speech in the army. There is only what the apologists for "democracy" criticize Fascism for: "controlled thought."

Those who fondly imagine the U.S. Army is a democratic army should pay attention to saluting, a medieval custom which has been adopted by the army as the homage of the soldier to the officer. The army devotes months of ten hour a day training in saluting until the salute is according to the book. Soldiers must walk to the left and slightly to the rear of officers, must rise when an officer enters a room. An officer leaves a room first, soldiers afterward. Soldiers must get into government vehicles first, and officers get out first. Some of these rules are incredible to the civilian mind. Before the outbreak of war on December 8, 1941, saluting officers in town or anywhere off the military reservation was "optional." When soldiers, trained all day to salute, knew that off the post it was up to them whether or not to salute, they did not salute officers in town, thus decisively rejecting all the government training in subordination. Soldiers salute because of FEAR of being severely punished, if they neglect saluting, and because of ignorance of the full class significance of the salute, though they have a formless, semi-conscious hatred for the salute.

The phenomenon of every soldier saluting every other soldier in the German Army, far from being a symptom of democracy, probably stems from the widespread use of the Heil Hitler salute among civilians and soldiers for many years. This incessant saluting of Hitler carried saluting to its absurd extreme. William Shirer in "Berlin Diary" mentions the phenomenon of all German soldiers and officers saluting one another. Joseph Harsch in "Pattern of Conquest" writes that the fact that all privates salute one another illustrates that the German army has "democratic features". This is a serious error, and shows Harsch's shallowness of thoughts, and misconception of the real meaning of democracy. He has confused the FORM of equality with the CONTENT of increased totalitarian control over the soldier which this universal saluting involves. Besides, basically the army is founded on a society. It is the mirror of that society, only it is a mirror that reveals all the dictatorial structure of capitalist society, and tears off the democratic veil.

Once the soldier gets past the salute, and actually is permitted to speak to the officer he finds another social barrier in his way. Waller says: "The army has even evolved a 'voice of command', a flat, emotionless but vibrant tone which gives the command with complete impersonality...by making his domination an impersonal thing, the officer makes it possible for the men to say, 'We salute the uniform and not the man.'"

The typical army saying "salute the uniform and not the man" indicates a much neglected aspect of the phenomenon of saluting: The officer holds a government "office," and is an officeholder, or, in brief - an officer. The private holds no office, and in relation to government office, is a "private" soldier, one who is not appointed to office. Saluting the uniform and not the man is saluting the government office, represented by the uniform. Saluting the government office is saluting the government which creates and controls the office!

The government has many thousands of offices. Men fill these for a time, are replaced by other men. Personnel changes. The office remains the same. Saluting officers is saluting the government.

The impersonal "voice of command" which officers are trained to use is the mode of speech to lower beings, with whom the officer cannot be personal. The officer considers himself a man. The soldiers consider him a uniform and an office. The soldiers are not considered as men. Officers do not talk to soldiers. Officers command soldiers to do this or that. There is no personal element involved, reasons the War Department,

as the soldier is not a person with thoughts, feelings, but an instrument of the officer.

An example of the soldiers contempt for the officers is the tale of the soldier who read the epitaph on a gravestone: "Here lies an officer and a gentleman." The soldier asked: "HOW COME THEY BURIED THOSE TWO GUYS IN ONE GRAVE?"

Saluting the uniform and not the man reaches ridiculous extremes not understandable to civilians - and which no soldier can understand, as it is beyond understanding. Only the incessant "Heil Hitler" is a rival of this: When the general's automobile comes into sight, soldiers are instructed to SALUTE THE CAR, whether or not the general is inside (there is no absolute method of determining if the general is in the car, and the private is supposed to assume that the general is in the general's car.) Thus we see the phenomenon of soldiers saluting the CAR and not the man. In the Marines, when going or coming aboard ship, the marine salutes the quarterdeck, whether or not he sees the officer, who is assumed to be always on the quarterdeck. But this is the same mechanism of saluting an inanimate object (uniform, car, quarterdeck) and not the man. (See appendix on Marines.)

That the uniform is the chief indication that a man is an officer is attested to by the severe penalties meted out for wearing an officer's uniform. In southern camps the southern white soldiers are instructed to salute negro officers (who are in negro regiments only) should they chance to meet them. The southerners many times refuse to do so. The War Department stock explanation to them is that it is not the man (negro!) they are saluting, BUT THE UNIFORM!

The story is told that two soldiers strolling through a park came up to a statue of a general, and said: "We'd better salute--you never can tell!"

Soldiers like to salute on certain occasions like when an officer is walking with his right arm around a girl. This is the soldier's way of telling the officer the salute can be a pain in the neck, and also it is a joke. Sometimes soldiers make officers salute until their arm gets tired.

The War Department treatment of the soldier as a slave manifests itself constantly. A sample: the army requisitions beds, houses, clothes, food, and men. It orders men for a certain project like one orders ham and eggs. This is the total attitude toward human life.

WALLER: "Subordination to the commissioned officer is also possible because he has prestige...The social distance which we have described is a necessary condition of the officer's prestige, and therefore of the smooth working of the army system."

Prestige is based on authority, which the officer has over his inferiors. They must give respect and obedience not to the man but to his uniform (i.e., to the visual symbol of his government office.) The officer's prestige is the prestige of the government which appointed him, and it stands and falls with that government's power.

The social distance - actual physical separation - between officers and soldiers is based on the government dictate that the officer is above the soldier and must stay above and apart from him at all times. In the cases of attempts at relations between officers (either men or nurses,) and soldiers, social distance is used to force a separation, or firmer methods are taken.

Soldiers are not permitted to come closer than a prescribed number of feet to an officer under most circumstances. In the U.S. Army this "social distance" in approaching one's commanding officer is usually approximately six feet. Separation, social distance, is the key of this relationship.

Even noncommissioned officers are instructed to keep a considerable "social distance" away from soldiers. They are officially prohibited from gambling with soldiers, or from associating with them off duty. Many noncoms disregard this. But this is the War Department attitude.

(The German Army and Navy, in an endeavor to lessen the sharp antagonism between officers and soldiers, has officers and soldiers eat at the same table. (H. Knickerbocker "Is Tomorrow Hitler's"))

The domination of the officer over the soldier is obtained not merely and not even so much by social distance, prestige, and external appearances. The War Department has a well planned policy of dividing the mass of soldiers by giving them grades and ratings, thus breaking them up into competing groups and preventing their united action. THERE ARE 22 GRADES IN THE U.S. ARMY from Commanding General to buck private. Each grade gets more pay than the one lower. Raise of soldier's pay to \$50.00 will not be done because the government likes

The aim is to make the soldier less dissatisfied, raise his standard of living to compare more favorably with that of the taxridden civilians - to make soldiers better fighters. They pay soldiers to die - not to live. It is a social bribe to get soldiers to surrender their class interests completely in the interests of the imperial masters. Ironically enough, despite the extremely small pay of soldiers, THE GOVERNMENT CHARGES THEM INCOME TAX!

Waller: "It is contrary to the idea of the army for the superior to make any direct concessions to the will of the subordinate. In civilian life we surround ourselves with certain rituals of respect to others. We say PLEASE and THANK YOU (my emphasis). One of the first things we teach children is to say PLEASE...All this is a concession to the autonomy of the other person...The officer cannot say PLEASE because the private is not supposed to have any will of his own. That is the nature of the army system."

There is no courtesy in the army. Military "courtesy" is a disguise for domination of the soldier's will by the officer. Military courtesy is a pious fraud. The soldiers are forced to be courteous. It is not necessary that they should feel courteous, as they are not considered to have feelings. The officer by returning the soldier's salute merely recognizes that the soldier is properly courteous - i.e., subservient in the G.I. manner.

Soldiers have no "autonomy" of person. A private has absolutely no privacy. No officer can make concessions to the will of the soldier. But the soldier must obey the officer's will implicitly. This is totalitarianism in its baldest repressive form; the refusal to allow the mass of human beings any personal autonomy, the elimination of any influence of the soldier's will on events. The soldier is treated as a beast of burden. He is allowed no human dignity. He is forced to live on his knees, perpetually bowing and scraping before his master. It has been said of Fascism that it abolishes all considerations of human decency and kindness.

"This is the nature of the army system" too.

Among themselves, of course, officers are polite and courteous. They say PLEASE and THANK YOU, and treat each other as human beings - as much as officers can. Towards soldiers they are entirely different. Sometimes this dual standard toward brother officers and toward inferior soldiers is considered "hypocritical" by those untrained in the peculiar army ways. It is more

than this. It is an entire way of life, where a tiny segment of society is raised above the overwhelming mass, and lives apart.

TOOLS OF IMPERIALISM - THE N.C.O.

Waller: "Like the commissioned officer, the non-commissioned officer must maintain discipline. He cannot, however, employ the same methods. He cannot employ any great amount of social distance. He must live with the men; he is one of them. His office may be taken away from him for any small misdeed and he may revert to the ranks. He must meet the men on their own level, answering their force with his own force and employing the harsh persuasions of army penalties. It is here that the STRUGGLE between the army system and the buck private's private will is carried out. It is the sergeant whom the men HATE (my emphasis.)"

The noncom is the Simon Legree, the man with the whip, the petty straw boss. He is part of the Army bureaucracy, is raised above the mass of soldiers by the social bribe of higher pay, authority, prestige, easier tasks. He must treat soldiers mercilessly, or he "may revert to the ranks." By a process of artificial selection only the rottenest, most brutal and backward soldiers become "good" noncoms. The noncom is the watchdog. He "must discipline," by "employing the harsh persuasions of army penalties." Army punishments (discipline!) theory is punish brutally for offenses however trivial or imaginary, the soldier will learn to obey the hundreds of petty personality-crushing rubes.

The soldiers see the noncom is their deadly enemy. The soldiers HATE the noncom. In the war they learn steadily the noncom is part and parcel of the entire army system which they hate: Officers, army, government! Noncom brutality is army "leadership" at its worst. It is not designed to LEAD men, but to DRIVE men, push them like sheep, with the horrible whip of army penalties.

The struggle between officer and soldier is the class struggle in the army. Severely regimented by military rules, the class sense and class attitudes and developing consciousness of class of soldiers expresses itself in the form of CLASS HATRED FOR OFFICERS.

In military history this hatred of the soldier for the officer is summed up in the dictum of the famous soldier Frederick t.

Great: "The soldier must fear his officer's cane more than he fears the enemy."

Here we see most clearly how fear of the officer is the basis of military discipline.

Against this terrorism by the officers, the revolutionists recognize first of all the class truth that the officers as agents of the capitalists are the enemy. Not the opponent army, but the officer who daily, constantly wars against the soldier mass. This is the class struggle in the army. In a larger sense this is a part of the Marxian theory of imperialist war: the main enemy is at home! ("our own" government and capitalist class.)

Waller: "The army toughens men. It must toughen them so that they can endure hardship, so that they can kill or be killed. ... This is the reason for the long marches completed on aching feet, for the interrupted sleep, the chilly barracks, the hard-boiled noncoms, the unpleasantness of taking orders, the lack of holidays, the parades on any and all occasions, the boxing matches, and all the things which revolt the occasional sensitive soul which is subjected to the regime. There develops in the army a cult of toughness for the sake of toughness; it is a good thing to be tough and the toughest man is the best man. The soldiers fight with one another because it is the thing to do. Each one wants to be able to say, "I can take it and I can dish it out." They cultivate vulgarity and obscenity and the stronger forms of profanity because it is virile to do so; they swear and threaten one another constantly in order to show how tough they are. Refinement, of course, is taboo; coarseness is the thing sought after. In comrade relations, on in time of danger, it is one for all and all for one; in all other matters, it is dog eat dog. Aggressiveness is a necessity for survival in such a group. The character ideal of the army is that of the hardboiled noncom made famous by certain movies."

The army builds - BRUTES. All the fine training of man is wiped out by the army. Personal respect is abolished. Individual will is trampled. Men become beasts of the jungle - the descent of man! The mechanized savagery of war can be carried on only by brutes, unthinking and unfeeling. The possibility of civilization going back to barbarism is enhanced by the tremendous armies of destruction which face each other and kill, kill, kill, themselves, and destroy, destroy, destroy, untold billions of wealth.

The army makes men tougher, fattens them for the slaughter. The army strengthens legs, arms, muscles - builds men - to kill better, kill faster, kill more.

But no capitalist army can teach millions to renounce the habits of a lifetime of live and let live, and transform man into murderous beasts over night! It is a process requiring many long years. That is why the Fascists begin with the youth. And the "democracies" are following in their footsteps.

The army toughens men. The army destroys many men who cannot stand the severe punishments, the harsh army life. Thousands go insane. Thousands are crippled. In combat millions are wounded, millions killed. Years later other thousands suffer from heart trouble and other diseases, induced or aggravated by intensive army training and war shock.

Those soldiers who survive this toughening process cannot become "peaceful" citizens again. They are contemptuous of the culture and refinement which is denied them. They become enemies of the capitalist civilization they are trained to protect.

An example of the method used to rouse the most brutal feelings in soldiers is the oft quoted statement of the American Sgt on the Western Front: "Come on, you sons of bitches, do you want to live forever?"

In the answer to this statement, this coldhearted bloody yell, lies the future of mankind. No, soldiers don't want to live forever. Yes, they want to live. No, they don't want to die just because everybody dies sometime. Soldiers want to live, live, live. Death is not easy. It is most significant that under the leadership of this American Sergeant, representative of the imperial rulers of America, all soldiers were offered as their reward for fighting was CERTAIN DEATH. Isn't that what the sergeant unwittingly revealed in his roar?

General Wavell, British, describes the ideal infantryman as combining "the qualities of a successful poacher, a cat burglar and a gunman."

The army is an excellent career for excellent young - poachers, cat burglars, and gunmen. It is instructive to note that many of the old regular army personnel and practically all national guard soldiers come from the riff-raff and lumpen elements of society: the gunmen, burglars, poachers.