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Reference: 3/PPDT/T21

RESERVIST AND THE I GROUP (1940)

From: LONDON

To: MOSCOW

No: 1188

18th Oct. 40

To DIRECTOR.

1. BARCH [i] had a meeting today with one of [the members of][a] the I GROUP [GRUPPA IKS][ii]. This was an artillery colonel [iii] who had been in the British Expeditionary Force [EKSPEDITSIONNAYA ARMIYA], but who at present is out of active service and doing a job at the Ministry of Supply because he was seriously wounded. He thinks that he will be returning to service in the regular army in two months' time. RESERVIST [RESERVIST][iv] has agreed to work with us. He has promised to bring to the next meeting in a fortnight's time his notes on the campaign in France and information on the way the British Army is organized.

2. RESERVIST reports that the process of reorganizing the army continues. The organizational structure of the Home Forces [ARMIYA METROPOLII]: command [SHTAB GHRUGA], army corps, division. There are individual garrison districts which are directly subordinate to the C.-in-C. Home Forces, e.g. the DOVER Garrison which includes two infantry brigades and one tank division. The composition of an infantry battalion is: two infantry companies, one machine-gun company consisting of two heavy machine-gun platoons and one anti-tank defence platoon. A brigade consists of three battalions. Each brigade deployed in a war zone has its own independent defence sectors and divisional reinforcements are placed under the command of brigades.

3. Tanks are the main item of the work of the Ministry of Supply. [The following][a] are in mass production: 14-ton cruiser tanks and 25-ton ARMSTRONG-WOLSELEY MK-8's armed with one 37 mm gun and two BROWNING machine-guns (it has been suggested that a machine-gun be tried on the turret for anti-aircraft fire). There were five tank divisions in the British Expeditionary Force in France; he does not know how many tank divisions there are now. 300 light tanks are expected to arrive from SASHA [v]. A battalion of light tanks consists of three companies with 30 tanks per company. A battalion of 25-ton tanks is 40 strong. The different kind of ~~composition can be explained by the shortage of officers.~~

4. In France the British had 25 and 36 mm anti-tank guns. They proved to be too light against the German tanks and were replaced by 75 mm French guns which were successful in action. The sending of units with 49 mm anti-tank guns is now beginning. Anti-tank units are now being brought together into a brigade for training.
5. Artillery batteries are armed with 18 and 25-pounder guns. The LONDON air defense is now using new 6-inch guns as well as the 4.5-inch A.A. guns. They are experimenting with new 4.9-inch A.A. guns.
6. He considers that the War Office [VORONKH MINISTERSTVO] is not making the slightest use of the experience of the French and the coastal defense is based on a network of blockhouses that are weak in design with no allowance made for the maneuverability or strong artillery and tank equipment of the SAUSAGE-DEALERS [KOLBASNIKI] [vi].

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BEIGN [vii]

Notes: [a] Inserted by translator.

- Comments: ✓ [i] BARCH: Possibly Simon Davidovich KURSK, whose official post was Secretary to the Soviet Military Attaché in LONDON. He was appointed in 1937 and is thought to have left sometime in 1946. The covername BARCH occurs as a LONDON addressee and signatory between 3rd March 1940 and 10th October 1940, after which it is superseded by the covername BEIGN.
- [ii] I GROUP: Not identified. See also MOSCOW's No. 450 of 7th September 1940, and LONDON's Nos. 842 of 25th July 1940, 895 of 16th August 1940, 987 of 6th September 1940, 1074 of 26th September 1940 and 1099 of 2nd October 1940.
- [iii] Artillery colonel: see also LONDON's No. 987 of 6th September 1940 for mention of a British Army colonel.
- ✓ [iv] HENKIVIST: i.e. the artillery colonel; not further identified. For a similar usual introduction of a covername see LONDON's No. 842 of 25th July 1940 (IMFHALICHTSIA).
- ✓ [v] SASHA: the United States. For an explanation of this coverword see LONDON's No. 998 of 11th September 1940 (3/PPM/T42).
- ✓ [vi] SAUSAGE-DEALERS: the Germans.
- [vii] BEIGN: Col. I.A. SULLIVAN, Soviet Military and Air Attaché in LONDON 1940-1946. BEIGN's first appearance as a signatory (or addressee) is in LONDON's No. 1119 of 11th October