

## "THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE"

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If you'll ask the average inhabitant of Crimea what they know about the Balaclava battle of the Crimean War, more than likely you'll hear; "Yes, I heard something. A lot of Englishmen were killed." At the same time perhaps for all Englishmen (as well as Scots, Welsh, Irishmen, many Americans and Canadians) the image of Balaclava and inglorious battle are merged into one.

Hence, it is not surprising that on arrival in Crimea, representatives of all that nations dream to see this infamous site. The Prime minister of the Great Britain Winston Churchill during the Yalta Conference (February 1945) wanted to see this insignificant hill with a small monument, and here his desire was executed. The author of this article received a letter from Canada from a simple accountant who lives in a wood far away Crimea (from there he is connected by computer networks with the entire world). I was surprised at how he seemed to know everything that happened on that day. He expressed that he has only one dream--to see "Where the Thin Red Line passed". (McLean is Canadian with Scott's roots).

James McLean writes: "I am assuming that you know the history and that England joined Turkey to fight the Russians to stop the Russians from gaining access to the Mediterranean Sea. England always distrusted Russia. The charge of the Light Brigade was one of the most horrific military blunders of all time. The only positive result of the disaster is that a famous English correspondent watched the battle from the heights with the generals and his subsequent articles woke up the British public to the suffering and ineptitude of the English in the Crimea". This was the first time in history that massive photography of war was ever made and that had a major impact when shown to the public".

All care, attention and hopes of the government, society and the press lied within the English cavalry at this time.

With in the present system, only the first sons inherited their father's property. All the other sons had to purchase officer positions. So, of course they willingly came, and were accepted as cavalry members. Indeed, there were so many purchased positions that the number of officers nearly equaled the number of privates. Additionally, each thought that it was his duty to enter his service with a high-quality horse. It was a point of honor. Almost all the horses in the horse regiments were race champions.

Indeed, because of the large number of special horses that were downed at disembarking and killed in action, that all English newspapers proclaimed this lose of quality equines a great disaster.

How did this famous fight come to pass? On October 13, 1854 Lord Raglan (the English army commander-in-chief) and his staff stood on top of the famous Sapun-mount (known not only by subsequently famous soviet troops storm in 1944, but also that it supplied the local inhabitants with kyll - clay that was used as soap, "sapun" - soupy in translation). At 6 a.m. Russian general Gribbe with the group entered the village Kamary (at present Oboronnoye), established their artillery and began a storm of redoubt. (Redoubt — mil. outwork or fieldwork, square or polygonal and without flanking defenses). Afterwards the artillery-shooting Azov regiment began its redoubt storm. Redoubt was taken. On the Turkish side 170 were killed and 10 wounded. The Garrisons of the other two redoubts left their weapons and ran in side of Balaclava. (Local town). Second, third and forth redoubts were also taken without heavy action. From the village Khmelnitskoye the Russian artillery under command of general Ryzhov began its assault. They were moved to Kady-koy (now the northern part of Balaclava), but an obstacle was in their way: the 93-rd Scots regiment. James McLean writes: "There had been two skirmishes earlier in the day which were left out of the movies and the poem also and hence totally ignored. The first was called "The Thin Red Line" which was the remaining (about) 200 wounded and injured 93rd Scottish Highlanders infantry. Using the same tactics that Wellington did to defeat Napoleon at Waterloo, the 93rd Scottish Highlanders were lying down behind a knoll on the road (leading) into Balaclava and as the 4,000 strong Russian cavalry approached they stood up and fired their rifles".

“Turkey retreated, and herein Englishmen covered themselves with glory,” wrote Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (10) in admiration of Scottish bravery. Indeed, this move illustrates an unmatched bravery which was not even duplicated at Balaclava in a Russian approximation of this tactic: “Let them be very close to them and only then shoot.”

After they had fired three volleys, the Russian cavalry turned and retreated. Mainly because, the 93rd was using a new mini-rifle for the first time which fired several hundred yards farther than what the Russians had previously been accustomed to. The Russian cavalry erroneously believed that all the fire power was coming from an infantry unit which they could not see and so retreated.

The General could not storm Balaclava without infantry, especially since their purpose was only to check the enemy; the Russian had already “checked” and turned to the left, to Sapun-mount. Having turned left, they were confronted with a “Heavy Brigade (the English cavalry consisted of Heavy and Light Brigades.) The Skirmish lasted about eight minutes and the Russian cavalry disappeared as unexpectedly, as well as happened

The second skirmish was just a short while later between the 800 men Heavy Brigade British Cavalry and the approximately 4,000 Russian cavalymen. The hogback (causeway) between the north and south valleys had 6 redoubts (small forts) which the British had built, but were manned by their Turkish allies. The Russians had come down the causeway and taken the forts and all of the British heavy cannons. The battles took place because the British wanted their cannons back. The Heavy Brigade engaged the Russian cavalry with a surprise assault from the side, charging uphill at them. The Russian cavalry was completely unnerved and retreated.

Lord Raglan saw from his mount that the Russians were preparing to remove the guns they had seized. He does not know that this is common in other redoubts, but believed so nevertheless. Therefore, he sends Captain Nolan downwards with a dire order for Lord Lukin to attack and do not allow the Russians to export the guns.

Instead of continuing to recover the guns, the Heavy Brigade stopped because the officers had no further orders. This also was a blunder and with the same reason. The field officers in both the Heavy Brigade and Light Brigade did not come up through the military ranks but were officers by “purchased commissions”. At that time anyone could become a field officer if he so desired by buying the rank. They had no military background and only acted on orders from the generals.

In the case of the Light Brigade, the generals on the heights looking down could see everything that was happening and sent orders for the Light Brigade to charge and turn up the valley and recover the cannons. The Light Brigade was in “dead ground” (invisible from the point) and could not see where the cannons or the Russians were. Captain Nolan, an extremely able horseman, came down the precipice with orders from the general about turning and charging up the valley and hitting the Russians from the side. The mistake was that the English Field Officer in-charge headed into the wrong valley. As McLean later writes: “While Nolan was trying to turn the troops he was killed.”

Nolan miraculously got down the abrupt hill and gave the order to Lukin at the mountain’s foot. Because of a direct relief difficult Lord Raglan has not seen - where were taken guns, but he saw in the end of the valley the Russian battery with dozens of cannons and therefore sent the Light Brigade - in a terrible three-kilometer attack.

From here seven hundred brilliant riders of the Light Brigade were sent, from which only each fourth remained alive. Nolan, later recognized Lukin’s mistake (remember, he turned up the wrong canyon) and tried to turn the Brigade left to engage the Russian redoubt. Here he was hit by a Russian grenade and perished. The cavalymen nor the commander knew the importance of his orders.

All the Russians felt assured that there would be no military actions on this auspicious day. Yet here Cardigan’s brigade rushed along the valley. The Russian marksmen opened fire, but the English rushed ahead so fast that they could not be stopped. Hence, the Englishmen drove Ural, and Don’s troops back, and Ryzhov’s hussars too hotly rushed through the bridge. Nevertheless, Cardigan realized that if he advanced any further his troops would be too deep into the Russian rear. Therefore, at even more of a frenzied pace the English troops turned back after the sounding of retreat.

However, the Russian military had noted that this mad attack was not supported by either artillery or infantry. Therefore, the Odessa marksmen, light-batteries and regiments were made ready

the shoot through the valley. If Cardigan had chosen another way as a deviation, history would have been entirely different.

This Lord's magnificent contempt of danger or his easy success simply made him hot. So he send his brigade back by this very same valley, already covered with the bodies of dead Englishmen and their once magnificent horses.

Volley followed volley, the marksmen having advanced the most frequent fire. Then the three squadrons of Uhlans rushed with peaks a-tilt. An individual soldier pursued Cardigan but his horse, renowned throughout all England as a race champion, rushed him quickly from the miserable remains of the famous Light Brigade.

Here began hell - at the left and from the right - from Fediukhin hills and ex-Turkish redoubts rushed swarms of projectiles and bullets on the English cavalry. The attack, taking of batteries and subsequent retreats by the English, all passed under hurricane fire. Englishmen called this place the valley of death. To us this place is simply known as "Golden gorge" because it's the location of perfect champagne production.

The Light Brigade charged the 1.5 miles into the valley with Russian cannons roaring on both sides and cannons and infantry at the other end of the valley. They charged in 3 lines (total of 700 men on horses). Of the first 300, only 50 reached the turnaround and of the 700, only 200 came back. This charge is what the "poem was all about," writes James McLean.

After all this military action, the Cossacks caught the English horses and sold them to there old officers very cheaply. Saved from death, Cardigan was accused of having disgracefully left his brigade and fleeing the field of battle. General Suleiman-pasha was brought to military court and sentenced to death to be later released with a demotion to private for seven years.

Willebrandt was sent to inform the Tsar about the victory at Balaclava. For many days he rode, and after having reported the victory, soon slept like the dead. When he awoke, he found that he had been made a colonel of the artillery. Nikolai kissed Willebrandt and left him in the palace to have dinner and rest.

At Arab-Tabia hill, there is a monument for the lost with a plaque in Russian and English which reads: "In memory of Those who fell in the battle of Balaclava 25<sup>th</sup> October 1854".

After receiving the news about battle "in hot traces," K. Marx and F. Engels nevertheless remarked that "both armies were separated from each other by more than shooting distance and the firing of guns and cannons was nearly stopped. Suddenly one, strange miscalculation made the English Light cavalry rush into a senseless attack. They finished in defeat"<sup>(10)</sup>.

Two films were produced about "The Charge Of The Light Brigade", one in 1936 (Warner Bros.), the second in 1968 (Genres — Adventures, Policy, Drama, War, History).

In the 1936 film (producer, Jack Sullivan) Count Igor Volonoff acts, as well as the exotic, local inhabitant, Surat Khan. The 1968 film (producer, Tony Richardson) was one of first for the young actress Vanessa Redgrave, who is now well known because of her films "Blow-Up" by Antonioni and "The Murder in Orient Express".

The author of this article has seen the Second film during his work on the English cinema company "Sharpe" (the film was not translated into the Russian language and therefore is unknown in Crimea and Russia.) The film makers attempted to reproduce the distinct natural conditions of Crimea while filming in Turkey, but this has resulted in a series of oversights in films, oversights of which it is necessary tell my readers.

The film begins with an animation plot in which the British audience is told why this inglorious war was begun. It goes something like this: the English lion sleeps, the French cock surveys and supervises all that occurs in Europe, a Turkey peacefully grazes in a meadow. Clearly, this peaceful picture will be infringed upon by the visit of the next symbol of "state" - and here he goes, the great Russian bear and begins turn the turkey's neck. The Cock loudly crows and wakes the sleeping lion. The latter stands up and here begins a fight of two giants (what is not understandable is why the boxing ring is in the bear's den, and not in hen-house, or, for example in the lion's den).

The acting persons of film — Lord Lukan, Lord Raglan, captain Nolan...

On screen — ships, coming to huge bay. The sign on the screen read "Calamita Bay". The English sailors disembarked for a week and then? went to the desert (resembling something between the Sahara and Kara-Kum) and eventually went to a powerful river, as big as the Nile with a sign that

said "river Alma". No doubt everyone recognizes our native Crimea (probably a few decreased in sizes for the last 140 years.)

Similar exaggerations are easy to explain even though Englishmen won't admit their mistakes. "The Charge Of The Light Brigade" represents an eternal sadness for Englishmen. Because of this the English want to see the heroism and the difficulties that were overcome by the defenders of the British army in Crimea — and, certainly, we can excuse them for their small-sized inaccuracy.

James Mc Lean writes: "Thanks for the information. I think the film 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' that you saw was the 1935 movie with Errol Flynn. It was very inaccurate historically. The film was made again in 1968 which was much more historically accurate but still had many errors[,] particularly to do with the English officers in order to make a more interesting movie; however the battle itself was fairly accurate. The film was made this time as an anti-war movie and was a scathing attack on military and political corruption."

I think, that after release of last film on this theme enough years have passed and Englishmen should be able to make a new, more accurate film on the same topic and, at last, on the actual site — Crimea (and to thus fill up the empty Crimean budget). The Crimean war has attracted large interest over all of Europe and of course from two young journalists from the Folkisher Beobachter newspaper: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

Many articles were written by them on war histories tracks, such as: "The war in Crimea", "Battle upon Balaclava", "News from Sevastopol." It is interesting that the article "The battle on Alma" as it seems, used non-checked information, and as a result mistakes were made. In the article it is proved that "...in three miles from the sea the river Alma makes the bend look like half-moon... The south coast of river is mostly formed by a cliff with heights reaching 300 ft..." (more than 100 meters). Probably the inhabitants from the villages Peschanoiye and Vilino will be strongly surprised, that very recently their regions had the something resembling The Grand Canyon of Crimea.

James McLean writes: I am assuming that you don't know why this place is so popular for the English and British too; forgive me if I am wrong. Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote one of the most famous English poems ever called "The Charge of the Light Brigade." This is why the Balaclava site is so popular and why two movies were made about it. Every school boy (or girl) learns this poem in literature class (at least they used to; maybe not anymore!). All this because the Great Britain school program includes well-known poems which young Britons are to learn by heart (like our Borodino, conducting the analogy on location and time).

Moreover he testifies and also about one more tragedy of that time: "By the way, you may not know why Scottish Highlanders were fighting with the English. The English would go into the high lands of Scotland to force every able bodied man they came across into their military. If a man refused, the English would murder him and his entire family. If he joined, the English would provide for his family and if he fought very well, his family was better provided for".

However, they knew when they were leaving (the Scots) that they would never come back; they would have to fight until they were killed. Also speaking of the English, did you know that the English were behind what was called "The High Land Clearances". "During the 18th and 19th centuries Highland Scots were forced off the highlands and had to flee their homes; at least 50% either emigrated, were sold into slavery or those who were not strong enough to flee or refused to flee were killed. The reason was that previously individuals did not own land but each clan owned its own territory which was used by all clan members. The English brought in specific land ownership and the land was turned into tracts at large farm land on which there was no place for most of the people so they were cleared out. If you go through the centuries of English history, the evil and murderous deeds of the English rank up there with the worst" (By the way during this time the works of Marx and Engels are also full of lists of abused Scots).

In conclusion, it is necessary to mention that in all of Great Britain (as well as France, USA and Canada) you will come across hotels, pubs and restaurants named Sevastopol, Balaclava, and certainly Alma. (And the Alma square, place of princess Diana death too) And English actors took part in a "Sharpe" serial in Crimea about English heroes too, but on fields of Spain. It showed how to fight for England. While there they drank our champagne "Zolotaya balka" with pleasure (Golden gorge), grown from grapes that were fertilized by bones of their ancestors.

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