

# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 2, The Year 1919

## HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED



Converted to eBook format by Kollektiv Yakov Perelman, from the on-line version of The Military Writings of Leon Trotsky - Volume 2, 1919 available at [Trotsky Internet Archive](http://www.trotsky.org/internetarchive.html) on February 2013.

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## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

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This book covers 1919, the year that was hardest for us and was the richest in military events. The reader will not find in this book any sort of connected evaluation of our work in the sphere of military organisation or, still less, a history of the military operations. It is merely a collection of documents and materials. So far as I can judge, the collection is full enough, perhaps even too full: there is no lack of repetition, some of the orders are of formal rather than material interest, and so on. But it would really not be appropriate to make any changes in the present publication: while providing no coherence, such changes would at the same time deprive the documents of what is their principal significance, namely, their documentary character.

There is a prejudice to the effect that revolutionary armies are created by means of 'agitation', this being the impression formed by persons who see the matter from outside. It would be extremely harmful if such a notion were to be taken up by revolutionaries in other countries: that would mean that they had gained nothing from our experience. Without agitation, of course, no revolutionary army can be created – nor, for that matter, any other sort of army. But agitation forms only part of the problem. What is needed first and foremost is a correct *conception*: a plan for building the army which corresponds to the social, political and technical conditions and resources of the revolutionary country. Only on this basis can *agitation*, which explains to the working population and to the army itself the aims and tasks of the army's work and struggle, develop a great force of comradely relations, devotion to duty and fighting enthusiasm. And, finally, on the basis of a correct conception and of agitation derived from this, it is necessary to have a clear-cut, immutable, but at the same time flexible, *regime*, as little bureaucratic as possible, that is capable of maintaining from day to day in the necessary dynamic equilibrium such a complex, artificial organism as an army is. These are the three factors of success, which themselves, in their turn, undergo change in the course of building the army: the conception becomes more and more deeply thought-out, agitation becomes more and more concrete, the regime becomes more and more precise. But woe if, in this process, the regime starts to get overgrown with the rubbish of red-tape-ism!

Agitation, just because it *is* agitation, that is, because it is expressed in articles and speeches, finds fuller reflection in the documents included in this book than does any other aspect of military work. The reader must keep this firmly in mind, in order not to fall victim to the above-mentioned prejudice about the allegedly all-embracing significance of agitation. In the military sphere more than in any other, the word merely supplements the deed.

L. Trotsky  
January 8, 1924

# External Situation of the Republic

## ORDER OUT OF CHAOS [\[1\]](#)

\* \* \*

German soldiers are hastening back to their own country from all the countries into which the criminal will of the German aggressors had cast them. On their way home these soldiers are fallen upon by newly-formed Polish regiments, disarmed, and sometimes massacred. The Anglo-French and the Americans have grasped Germany by the throat and, looking at their watches, are counting her feverish pulse. This does not prevent them from demanding of the German Government that what remains of the German forces should engage in battle with Soviet Russia, to stop her from liberating the lands that were occupied by German imperialism. The Belgians, whose country was only yesterday being crucified by German imperialism, are now seizing purely German provinces of the Rhineland. Half way to beggary, cleaned out by their own thieving rulers, the Romanians, whose capital has been, turn and turn about, the booty of the Germans and of the Anglo-French, are them selves grabbing Bessarabia, Transylvania and Bukovina. American troops from across the sea are awkwardly perched upon our cold and hungry North, wondering why they have been brought there. The streets of Berlin, that city not long ago so proud of its iron order, are awash with the bloody waves of civil war. [\[2\]](#) French troops have landed at Odessa [\[3\]](#), though extensive areas of France itself are occupied by American, British, Australian and Canadian forces, who treat the French like the natives of colonies. Restored after nearly a century and a half of suppression, Poland, in a sort of ardent impatience, is involving herself in war with the Ukraine and with Prussia, and provoking Soviet Russia. [\[4\]](#)

The American President, Wilson, patently a sanctimonious hypocrite, a Tartuffe in pious Quaker guise, travels around blood-drained Europe as the highest representative of morality, as the Messiah of the US dollar, chastising, pardoning and deciding the fates of nations. Everyone asks him in, welcomes him, pleads with him: the King of Italy; the traitor Mensheviks who rule in Georgia; humble, ingratiating Scheidemann; Clemenceau, that mangy tiger of the French petty-bourgeoisie; all the fireproof safes of the City of London; and even the midwives of Switzerland. With his trousers turned up, Wilson strides through the puddles of European blood and, by grace of the New York stock-exchange, which did so well to place the last stake in the European lottery, unites the Yugoslavs with the Serbs, estimates the price of the crown of the Habsburgs, between two pinches of snuff rounds off Belgium at the expense of plundered Germany, and meditates whether or not to despatch orangutangs and baboons to save Christian civilisation from Bolshevik barbarism.

Europe resembles a madhouse, and at first sight it seems the Inmates themselves do not know from one half-hour to the next whom they are going to cut up and with whom they are going to make friends. One lesson, though, stands out irrefutably from the troubled waves of this chaos – the criminal responsibility borne by the bourgeois world. Everything that is happening in Europe now was prepared over centuries past by the structure of the economy, the state relationships, the system of militarism, morality and philosophy of the ruling classes, the religion of all the priests. The monarchy, the nobility, the clergy, the bureaucracy, the

bourgeoisie, the professional intelligentsia, the masters of wealth and rulers of states – these it was who prepared the incomprehensible events that are causing the old 'civilised' and 'Christian' Europe to resemble so closely a lunatic asylum.

Europe's 'chaos' is chaos only in form: what it essentially expresses is the highest laws of history, which are destroying the old in order to create the new in its place. The population of Europe are now embattled, using exactly the same rifles, in the name of different tasks and programmes which reflect different epochs of history. Fundamentally, they amount to these three *imperialism, nationalism, communism*.

This war began as a conflict between the great capitalist vultures for the conquest and partition of the world: it is this that constitutes *imperialism*. But, in order to get the many millioned masses to fight, to set them against each other, to sustain a spirit of hatred and frenzy in them, 'ideas', or 'sentiments', were needed that were close to the masses, deceived and doomed to slaughter. The idea of nationalism served as this hypnotic agent at the disposal of the imperialist bandits. The mutual tie between people who speak the same language and belong to the same nation is a great force. This tie was not felt when people lived a patriarchal life in their own villages or provincial districts. But the further bourgeois production developed, the more closely it united village with village, the province with the town, the more did the people who were drawn into this whirlpool come to value a common language, that great medium of material and spiritual community. Capitalism strove to consolidate itself first of all on a national basis, and engendered many national movements: in fragmented Germany, in dismembered Italy, in lacerated Poland, in Austria-Hungary, among the Balkan Slays, in Armenia.

By means of revolutions and wars the European bourgeoisie solved somehow or other, through tearing and patching, some of the national tasks. A united Italy was created, and a united Germany – without German Austria but, instead, with a dozen crowned heads. The peoples of Russia were clamped together in the steel vice of Tsardom. In Austria and in the Balkans fierce struggles continued between nations that, while doomed to live in close proximity, were unable to establish peaceful forms of coexistence.

Meanwhile, capitalism quickly outgrew national frame works. The national state was only a springboard for capitalism, something needed in order to take a leap forward. Capital soon became cosmopolitan. At its disposal were world-wide means of communication, it had agents and servants speaking all languages, and it sought to plunder the peoples of the whole world regardless of their language, the colour of their skin, or the religion of their priests. At the same time as the middle and petty bourgeoisie, and also wide circles of the working class, were still breathing an atmosphere of national ideology, capitalism developed into imperialism, into the striving for world-wide domination. From the outset, the world slaughter presented a menacing picture of imperialism coupled with nationalism: the powerful clique of finance capital and heavy industry succeeded in harnessing to its chariot all the feelings, passions and sentiments fostered by national ties, unity of language, common historical memories and, above all, life in common within the national state. As they stepped forth on to the highroad for plunder, conquest and extermination, the imperialists of each of the contending camps knew how to inspire the masses with the notion that what was going on was a fight for national independence and national culture. Just as the bankers and large-scale manufacturers exploit the small shop keepers and the workers, so imperialism, without exception, brought nationalist and chauvinist feelings and aims under its sway, pretending to serve and to safeguard them. From this terrible psychological

battery the great slaughter was powered and kept going for four and a half years.

But communism appeared on the scene. It, too, had in its time arisen first on a national basis, together with the awakening of the labour movement, amid the first, still uncertain rumbling of the capitalist machine. In the doctrine of communism the proletariat counterposed itself to the bourgeoisie. And while the latter soon became imperialist and world-plundering, the advanced proletariat became internationalist and world-uniting. The imperialist bourgeoisie constituted a numerically insignificant minority of the nation. It maintained itself as the ruling and dominating power so long as it was able, by means of the ideas and sentiments of nationalism, to hold in bondage the broad masses of the petty-bourgeoisie and the working class. At the other pole, the internationalist proletariat was a minority. It rightly hoped to wrest the majority of the people from their spiritual slavery to imperialism. But before the last great slaughter of the peoples even the best and most perspicacious of the leaders of the proletariat did not suspect how much power the prejudices of bourgeois statehood and the habits of national conservatism still retained in the consciousness of the masses. All that became clear in July 1914, which was without exaggeration the blackest month in world history – not because the kings and stockbrokers unleashed the war, but because they succeeded in mastering inwardly hundreds of millions of people, deceiving and ensnaring them, hypnotising them and drawing them psychologically into their brigands' enterprise.

Internationalism, which had for decades been the official banner of a mighty organisation of the working class, seemed suddenly to have vanished in the fire and smoke of the international slaughter. Later it showed itself as a weak, flickering flame among isolated, scattered groups in various countries. The priests and lackeys, learned and unlearned, of the bourgeoisie sought to depict these groups as the dying remnants of a utopian sect. But the name of Zimmerwalds [\[5\]](#) resounded already with an alarming echo through all the bourgeois press.

The revolutionary internationalists kept to their path. As their first task they made a clear appraisal of the reasons for what had happened. A long period of 'peaceful' bourgeois development, with its day-to-day trade-union struggle, reformist hair-splitting and petty parliamentary clashes had created an organisation of many millions, opportunist in its leadership, which laid strong fetters upon the revolutionary energy of the proletariat. By the power of historical events, official Social Democracy, which had been initiated under the sign of social revolution, became transformed into the most counter revolutionary force in Europe and throughout the world. It had knitted itself so closely into the national state, its parliament, its ministries and commissions, it had got so used to bargaining with its friendly enemies, the parliamentary swindlers of the bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeoisie, that it could see nothing in the bloody catastrophe of the capitalist order, when this began, but a threat to national 'unity'. Instead of calling on the proletarian masses to launch an offensive against capitalism, it called on them to defend the 'national' state. This Social- Democracy of the Plekhanovs, Tseretelis, Scheidemanns, Kautskys, Renaudels and Longuets mobilised to serve imperialism all the national prejudices, all the slavish instincts, all the scum of chauvinism, everything dark and putrid that had accumulated in the souls of the oppressed working masses during their centuries of slavery. To the party of revolutionary communism it was clear that this gigantic historical blackmail was bound to end in a frightful crash for the ruling cliques and their lickspittles. In order to arouse in the masses a fighting spirit, readiness for self-sacrifice, and, finally, simple willingness to spend years in filthy, stinking pits of trenches, it was necessary to implant in them very great expectations, monstrous illusions. The disillusionment and

bitterness of the masses would inevitably be proportionate in scale to the deception they had suffered. The revolutionary internationalists (they did not yet call themselves communists at that time) foresaw this, and built their revolutionary tactics upon this foresight: they 'set their course' towards social revolution.

The two conscious minorities, imperialist and inter nationalist, declared war to the death upon each other, and before their rivalry emerged on to the city streets as open civil war it matured in the minds of millions and millions of working people. These were no parliamentary conflicts, which even in the best moments of parliamentarism had been found to have only a quite limited educational effect. Now, the entire people, right down to its most ignorant and stagnant depths, was gripped in the steel claws of militarism and dragged by force into the very whirlpool of events. Imperialism was confronted by communism, which said: 'You are now really showing the masses what you are and what you are capable of, and next will come my turn. The great contest between imperialism and communism will not be decided by reform legislation, by parliamentary votes or by the strike bulletins of trade unions. Events are being inscribed with iron, and every step of the struggle leaves bloody footprints. This fact alone predetermines that the outcome of the struggle between imperialism and communism will not be found along the road of formal democracy. To decide the basic questions of social development by way of universal suffrage would necessarily mean, in present circumstances, when these questions are being put point-blank, suspending the battle between mortal class enemies and appealing to arbitration by those in-between, mainly petty-bourgeois masses that have not yet been drawn into the struggle, or have taken part in it only half-consciously. But precisely these masses, deceived by the big lie of nationalism, exhausted by war, distracted, seeking only a way out, experiencing the greatest variety of contradictory moods – these masses cannot appear as authoritative arbiters in the eyes either of imperialism or, still less, of communism, or even in their own eyes.

To put off the settlement of the argument until the troubled in-between masses have come to themselves and drawn all their conclusions from the lessons of the war – how can that be? Artificial pauses are possible in contests between athletes, in the circus ring, or at the parliamentary tribune, but not in civil war. The greater the tension reached in all the relations, all the needs, all the calamities resulting from the imperialist war, the less the objective possibility that is left for waging the struggle within the limits of formal democracy, by simultaneous universal raising of hands. 'In this war you, imperialism, have shown what you are capable of, but now my turn has come: I shall take power into my hands and show the still wavering, still troubled masses what I am capable of, whither I am leading them, what I want or am able to give them.' This was the watchword of the October insurrection of communism, this the meaning of that terrible war that the Spartacists declared on the bourgeois world in the streets of Berlin.

The imperialist massacre was ended by civil war. The more thoroughly the capitalist war taught the workers to handle a rifle, the more resolutely do they begin to use the rifle for their own purposes. However, the old bloodbath has not yet been liquidated: here and there, fresh bloody conflicts are still breaking out along the line of nations and states, threatening to give rise to a new conflagration. At the very moment when communism is already celebrating its first victories and has every right not to be frightened by particular defeats, the yellow tongues of imperialist flame are still breaking out from beneath the volcanic soil.

Poland, which yesterday was still strangled, dismembered, torn and drained of

blood, is now, in a last, belated intoxication of nationalism, trying to seize Prussia, Galicia, Lithuania and Byelorussia. But the Polish proletariat is already building its soviets. Serbian nationalism is seeking a robber's satisfaction for former humiliations and lacerations in territory inhabited by Bulgars. Italy is seizing Serbian provinces. The Czechs, only just escaped from under the German-Habsburg heel, and drunk with the pseudo-independence offered them by the mighty sharks of imperialism, are raping the towns of German Bohemia and attacking the Russians in Siberia. The Czech Communists are sounding the alarm. Events are being piled upon events, the map of Europe is altering incessantly, but the most profound changes are those that are taking place in the minds of the masses. The rifle which yesterday served national imperialism is today, gripped by the same hand, serving the cause of social revolution. The American stock-exchange, which long and artfully kept the European bonfire alight, so as to enable its bankers and industrialists to warm their hands at those flames, has now sent to Europe its chief salesman, its supreme broker, the honey-tongued rogue Wilson, so as to take a closer look and see if things have gone too far. 'Hee-hee!' the American billionaires were laughing not long ago into their shaven chins, rubbing their hands the while: 'Europe has become a madhouse, Europe is exhausted, ruined, Europe has been transformed into a graveyard of the old culture. We shall now pay a visit to its ruins, we shall buy up its best monuments, we shall give generous tips to the most august scions of all the European dynasties, European competition will die out, industrial life will finally move over to us, and the profits of the entire world will begin to pour into our own American pockets.'

But this gloating chuckle has now begun to stick in the throats of the stock-exchange Yankees. Amid Europe's chaos an idea of order is raising its head, ever more commandingly and powerfully – the idea of a new, communist order. In the turmoil and confusion of the bloody conflicts – imperialist, national and class conflicts – the peoples that have been most backward from the revolutionary standpoint are slowly but steadily drawing level with those whose first victories are already behind them. Out of the prison-house of peoples that was Tsarist Russia, with the liberation of Riga, Vilna and Kharkov, a free federation of Soviet republics is arising in our time, before our very eyes. [6] There is no other way out, no other path, for the peoples of Austria-Hungary and the Balkan Peninsula. A Soviet Germany will join this family, which, a month sooner or later, will also include among its members a Soviet Italy and a Soviet France. The transformation of Europe into a federation of Soviet republics is the sole conceivable solution to the demands for national development of the peoples, great and small, without prejudicing the centralist needs of economic unity – first of Europe and later of the whole world.

In their day, bourgeois democrats dreamt of a United States of Europe. Those dreams found hypocritical and belated echo in the speeches of the French social-patriots in the early stages of the last war. The bourgeoisie was incapable of uniting Europe, because to the unifying tendencies of economic development it counterposed the divisive will of national imperialism. In order to unite the peoples it is necessary to free the economy from the fetters of private property. Only the dictatorship of the proletariat can ensure the requirements of national development within their natural and legitimate limits, and co-ordinate the nations in a unity of co-operation in labour: and this will be a federation of Soviet republics of Europe on the basis of free self-determination by all the peoples inhabiting it. There is no other solution. This union will be directed against Britain, if that country lags behind the Continent in its revolutionary development. Together with a Soviet Britain, the European federation will direct its blows against the imperialist dictatorship of North

America, until the time comes when the Transatlantic republic ceases to be the republic of the dollar – until the triumphant grunting of the New York stock-exchange changes into its death-rattle.

Bloody chaos still reigns in Europe. The old is mingled with the new. Events are piled upon events, and blood is poured out upon blood. But out of this chaos there is emerging ever more resolutely and boldly the idea of communist order, from which the bourgeoisie will not be saved either by its Versailles treaties or by its mercenary bands, or by its volunteer lackeys of com promise and social-patriotism, or by the great Transatlantic protector of all the imperialist murderers.

Already it is not the spectre of communism that is haunting Europe, as it did 72 years ago, when the **Communist Manifesto** was written: it is the ideas and hopes of the bourgeoisie that are being turned into a spectre, while Communism marches across Europe in flesh and blood.

January 13, 1919,

Balashov.

Supplement to **Pravda**, January 26, 1919

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## Endnotes

1. The article *Order out of Chaos* was published as a separate pamphlet by the press of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, Moscow, 1919.

2. The reference is to the January 1919 revolt of the workers and soldiers of Berlin. This revolt was caused by the treacherous policy of the Social-Democratic Government of Ebert and Schiedemann. In reply to the Government's order dismissing the Berlin police-chief, the Independent Social-Democrat Eichhorn, the workers held mass demonstrations. Next day a general strike began. The movement was headed by a revolutionary committee consisting of Karl Liebknecht, Ledebour and Scholz. This committee was supported in its work by the Spartacists and by the Berlin organisation of the Independent Social-Democrats. The Government began negotiations for an agreement, while at the same time assembling armed forces recruited from the bourgeois youth, the White-Guard students and NCOs of the old army. On January 11 under Noske's leadership, the bloody suppression of this revolt began. On January 15 Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were killed by officers who were escorting them to prison.

3. The landing of French troops at Odessa at the beginning of January 1919 took place in accordance with the general plan for Allied aid to Denikin. Foreign and Russian capitalists were interested in the industry of the Donbas and Caucasia. Despite the lack of unanimity on the Russian question between France and Berlin, which became apparent already when the German occupation forces were withdrawing, active support began to be given to the White-Guard movement. At the beginning of January the Allies unloaded some six million shells at the port of Novorossiisk, a large number of aeroplanes at Sebastopol, and 30 tanks at Odessa. During January and February a squadron of French, British, Italian and Greek naval vessels arrived at Odessa and Sebastopol, bringing units of Allied troops destined for garrison service and the guarding of railway lines. Ships both naval and commercial began regularly plying between the ports. The French General Franchet d'Esperey was appointed commander-in-chief of all the Allied troops in Russia.

4. After the departure of the German troops from Polish territory, the leader of the Polish legionaries, Pilsudski, was proclaimed 'Head of the Polish State'. Owing to the evacuation of a large number of big factories to Russia, the Polish working class was scattered and weakened. This circumstance enabled Pilsudski to set up without difficulty a bourgeois government headed by Moraczewski, which at once took up a markedly militant attitude towards the Soviet Government. Already at the time of the negotiations at Brest Comrade Trotsky proclaimed recognition of Poland's complete independence. Our government approached Moraczewski with a proposal to establish diplomatic relations. The Polish Government protested against the

establishment of Soviet power in Lithuania and Byelorussia. On January 2, 1919, our Red Cross Mission was fired on by agents of the Polish Government. At the same time, on Poland's western border (*sic*), conflict flared up in Eastern Galicia, Austrian Silesia and East Prussia. [Austrian Silesia was certainly on Poland's western border, but East Prussia lay to the north (both are included in present-day Poland), and Eastern Galicia (now included the Ukraine) was on its south-eastern border.]

**5.** On the Zimmerwald conference see note 106 to Volume I.

**6.** After the revolution in Germany, the German troops occupying Estonia, Laivia, Lithuania, Byelorussia and the Ukraine rushed back home to Germany. The Red Army, meeting no resistance, began to advance westward and southward. Between November 25, 1918 and January 10, 1919 our forces occupied, in the West: Pskov, Narva, Dvinsk, Minsk, Yuriev, Riga and Mitau. In the Ukraine, when left by the Germans to the mercy of fate, the Skoropadsky government was unable to cope with the rebellious workers and peasants, and fled from Kiev. For a short time it was replaced by Petlyura. But Red units, their numbers continually increased by new formations, were already advancing from the North. On January 3, 1919 Kharkov was taken, on January 12 Chernigov, and on January 18 Poltava.

# External Situation of the Republic

## AT THE FRONTS [\[1\]](#)

Report read in Moscow, in the Hall of Columns in the House of the Unions, February 24, 1919

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First of all, my sincere apology for my lateness, the responsibility for which has not yet been established. An opinion exists that I am the one responsible. But I permit myself not to agree with this: I think somebody else is responsible. We will determine that later, in all honesty ... Punctuality is a great thing, especially in the military sphere, and there can be no doubt that our chief misfortune, our fundamental fault, one may say, consists in unpunctuality, in not being accustomed to carrying out an order precisely and punctually, in having a disrespectful attitude to time. Yet time is a major condition for success. In military operations, the gaining of a day, an hour, five minutes, can sometimes have decisive importance for the outcome of a battle. Today our public and, in particular, our military education must consist in developing the habit of exact performance of everything that it is a person's duty to perform. Once again I express my regret for the abuse of your time, which is so necessary for your work, and I proceed to the substance of the matter before us.

Comrades, we celebrated yesterday the anniversary of the formation of our Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, and yesterday, likewise, at the training course in the building of the former Alekseyevsk Military School, I had occasion to say that, by and large, we have every right to look back with moral satisfaction on the twelve months that have passed in our joint, common work to build the Red Army.

Various peoples in various epochs have found themselves in a difficult situation, comrades, but I do not think that a historian could find another example when a great people was in such a frightful situation, both international and internal, as the Russian people were in at the end of the imperialist slaughter. The collapse of our old army was inevitable. Persons with the old time police mentality might suppose that it was 'agitators' that brought the old army to ruin. Actually, the agitators merely put into words what was happening in reality even without them. Once the revolution had occurred, once the peasant had revolted against the landlord and the official, and the worker against the capitalist and the banker, that same worker and peasant, in the shape of a soldier, had to revolt against the son of that same nobleman or bourgeois, who confronted him in the shape of an officer of the old army. These three processes were closely connected one with another. Once the soldier masses had revolted against the old commanding apparatus, created by the old monarchy and serving it – in the case of some of its members from fear, in that of others, from conscience – once that revolt had taken place, the army was bound to go to pieces. That this was not due to accidental causes we can now see from the example of other countries, from the example of Germany and of Austria Hungary, where the collapse of the old army is taking place, or rather, has taken place, in just the same way as happened here – and no trace has been left of an army that was incomparably stronger than our old Tsarist army, neither in Germany nor in Austria Hungary. Just look: today, Prussia, the most highly militarised, best armed

and disciplined of all countries, cannot raise even a few regiments to defend its eastern border from invasion by the Polish legions.

Thus, the process of disintegration of the old army constructed by the old ruling classes is identical in all countries. This fact allows us to draw two conclusions and to commit them firmly to memory. First, that our old army, like the Austro-Hungarian one and the German, too, broke up not for accidental reasons but through profound internal causes, and that its break up was inevitable: the great chain binding, in a bond of slavery, the oppressed class to the exploiters was broken, and the old army collapsed. [2] There is no going back on that. That is the first conclusion. The second conclusion, which is also of enormous importance, is that after the collapse of our old Russian army, after the collapse of the Austro Hungarian and German armies, *there will follow with the same inevitability the collapse of the armies of Italy, France, Great Britain and America* – of all the armies of imperialism in general, that is, of the armies built by monarchs or by republican bourgeois in various countries, through the enslavement and subjection of their own people, for the conquest and plundering of other peoples. This conclusion is not a phrase such as is sometimes casually thrown out at meetings, it is no mere agitational slogan, but a conclusion of historical science, which was forecast earlier, at the very beginning of the war, and which has now been confirmed by the experience of Russia, Germany and Austria Hungary and will tomorrow inevitably find confirmation in the experience of France, Britain and the other bourgeois countries. Certainty on this point gives wings to our spirit in the present struggle against the imperialism of the countries of the Entente: history will not allow imperialism to survive.

The old army broke up here at a time when our country's life was shaken to its deepest economic foundations. Our agricultural country is, we know, far from having exhausted its agricultural resources, but its railway network, the entire apparatus of its transport system and its commercial and industrial communications, have been ruined, and the country has thus been dismembered. We have some provinces that are inexpressibly rich in foodstuffs, and others that cannot escape from the torments and cramps of hunger. Dislocation of food supplies is, of course, a condition unfavourable for creating an army. But that is not yet all. The collapse of the old army left behind it a fierce hatred of militarism. The old army, which had suffered incredibly heavy losses, had known only defeat, humiliation, retreat, millions of dead and maimed, milliards of money squandered. It is not surprising if this war left in the people's minds a passionate revulsion against militarism, against everything to do with war. And it was under those conditions, comrades, that we began to create an army. If it had been our lot to build it on virgin soil, there would have been greater hopes and possibilities from the very outset. But no, we had to build the army on a soil covered with the filth and blood of the old war, a soil of want and exhaustion, in a situation where hatred for war and militarism held millions and millions of workers and peasants in its grip. That was why many people, not only enemies but friends as well, said at that time that the experiment of forming an army in the next few years here in Russia would remain fruitless. We replied: 'There can be no room for doubt. Neither Germany nor France nor Britain will wait for decades: therefore, whoever says that the Russian people will not create an army for itself in the next few months is saying that history has finished with the Russian people, and their corpse is doomed to be torn to pieces by the kites of West European imperialism.'

Naturally, the Soviet Government and the Party which is in power, the Communist Party, could not accept that nothing would come of these efforts. No, we did not doubt that the army would be created, if only it were given a new idea, a new

moral foundation. There, comrades, was the whole heart of the matter.

An army is, of course, a material organisation, put together, to a certain degree, in accordance with its own internal laws and armed with those instruments of technique that are provided by the state of industry in general and, in particular, of militarytechnical science. But to see in an army only men exercising, manoeuvring and fighting, that is, to see only their bodies, to see only rifles, machine guns and cannon, means not to see the army, for all that is merely the outward expression of a different, an inner force. An army is strong if it is bound together by an internal ideological bond. In the first days of the establishment of the new workers' and peasants' order, the Soviet power said that, despite the terrible calamities the country had suffered, despite the exhaustion and the universal aversion to militarism and war, the Russian workers and peasants would create an army in a short space of time if they felt and appreciated that this army was needed for defending the most fundamental conquests of the working people, if this idea passed through their consciousness, if every thinking worker and peasant understood that the army he was being called upon to build was his own army.

It was from this standpoint that at that time we also evaluated the peace of Brest Litovsk. [\[3\]](#) We signed that peace treaty knowing that there was no other way out, for we had no strength. But at the same time we said: from this experience every worker and peasant will become convinced that the Soviet Government has found itself obliged to make the most far reaching concessions so as to win a respite, even if only a short one, for the exhausted people: and if, after we have honestly and openly offered peace to all the nations and after we have agreed to the most burdensome concessions – if, after all that, we are attacked, then it will be clear to everyone that we do indeed need an army.

At first this awareness took possession of the working masses only gradually. Many of you served, in the past, in our regiments of the first period, and you will remember what those regiments were like at the beginning of last year. The regiments were then something like turnstiles. Under the slogan of voluntary enlistment there entered the ranks of these regiments, to be sure, some very conscious and courageous workers. But others also came in who were people simply unable to settle down anywhere, ex soldiers who had found no application for their capacities, often adventurers, seekers after easy pickings. The regiments were not fighting units, and many times it happened that, when a regiment was sent into battle, it disintegrated at the first moment. We were having shown to us from every angle the un militant mood of the masses. Even some old military specialists, old generals, came to the conclusion that the Russian people were, generally speaking, not a warrior people and that the experience of the last war had demonstrated this fact once again. From another angle, the practical obstacles were pointed out to us: the lack of commanding personnel and, finally, the lack of the necessary equipment, especially artillery. And we really were cut off from everything and surrounded by obstacles. But when the workers and peasants were placed face to face with the, danger of the complete crushing and dismembering of Soviet Russia, then there appeared the will to create an army, and also that very fighting spirit which some had said was alien to the Russian people.

In the past, the fighting spirit of the Russian soldier, that is, in the main, of the Russian peasant, had been passive, patient, all enduring. They took him from his village, put him in a regiment and drilled him: they sent the regiment off in a certain direction, and the soldier went with his regiment, he shot, slashed, chopped, and died ... with each man individually unaware of why and for what he was

fighting. When the soldier began to reflect and criticise, he rebelled, and the old army disappeared. To re create it, new ideological foundations were needed: it was necessary that *every soldier should know what he was fighting for*. That was why this terrible threat of destruction was a necessary precondition for the re establishment of our army. We summoned the best, most advanced workers of Petrograd and Moscow to all our fronts at the time of our greatest disasters, in the summer of 1918, and in this graphic way we forced the mass of the workers and peasants to *understand* that what was at stake was a matter of life or death for our country. After that, approximately in August 1918, came the turn that saved us, a turn which began not in the rear (in the rear, comrades, we are even now very far behind the front) but at the front. It was not the units which had been formed more or less tranquilly, under barrack conditions, that proved to be the most disciplined and combat ready: no, it was those units which had been put together at the front, directly under fire – after waverings and retreats, sometimes panicky ones, they quickly acquired, under the political leadership of advanced and self sacrificing proletarians, the necessary inner tempering.

The enormous importance of a moral idea for the creation of an army has been known not only to every actual commander but also to every writer on military matters. You read in school textbooks, too, that an army can be strong only if it is bound together by some great idea. But that concept became a cliché in the old military manuals, and many of the professors who readily repeat the phrase about an army being strong through a moral idea, through its spirit, are often unaware of what is the moral idea, the spirit of our present army. And for this reason, when we began to build the army by way of conscription, going over from the voluntary principle to compulsory service, and we excluded bourgeois and kulaks from the army, some of the military specialists told us that such an army would be impracticable, because it was a class army, and what we needed was an army 'of the whole people'.

We replied that to have an army of the whole people one must have an idea that is common to the whole people, and where among us was the idea that could unite today our Red regiments with the regiments of Kolchak and Krasnov? Krasnov betrayed Russia first to the Allies, then to the Germans, then again to the French and British. Kolchak betrays Russia to the Americans, Shcherbachev to the Romanians, and so on. I ask, where is that common idea which could inspire at one and the same time both General Krasnov and our worker and peasant soldiers? Such a moral idea does not exist. These two camps are separated by irreconcilable class enmity. Each of these two armies, the Red and the White, has its own idea: one has the moral idea of liberation, the other the immoral idea of enslavement. But to unite them into a single army of the whole people is unthinkable. It is a utopian, false, chimerical notion.

We live in an epoch when a durable and strong army can only be a class army, that is, an army of the working people, of the workers and the peasants who do not exploit the labour of others. Complete liberation of the working people by their own armed efforts is the highly moral idea which serves as the very foundation of our army. Every attempt to create an army on a different basis reveals its inner rottenness. Hetman Skoropadsky, who, happily, already belongs to the realm of the past, counterposed to our class army his own army composed of Ukrainian farmers possessing not less than 25 desyatins of land. He mobilised the kulaks, the bourgeoisie. But the Constituent Assembly, of blessed memory, tried, in the Urals, at Ufa and in Siberia, to build an army not on the class principle but as an army of the whole people. Thus we have before us, as in a chemical experiment being

carried out in a laboratory, three armies: our own Red Army, which conquered the kulak army of Skoropadsky in the Ukraine (an army that proved to be insignificant) and the Constituent Assembly's 'non-class' army 'of the whole people', which disintegrated. All that remained was Kolchak's counter-revolutionary army, and the Constituent Assembly men, the Right SRs, were forced to desert their comrade in arms and flee to us, to the territory of Soviet Russia, to seek hospitality here. [4] And if we are able to offer them hospitality and protect them from Kolchak, it is only because we have built not an army 'of the whole people', mixing fire with water, but our own Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, which has secured the freedom and independence of Soviet Russia. In building our army we kept firmly to the class principle as our basis, to a purely class army which is filled with the idea of labour, of struggle for the interests of labour, and is vitally linked with the working masses of the whole country. These are simple facts, simple ideas, but at the same time they are fundamental and unshakable – without them our army would never have been created. For, in the conditions in which we built it, comrades, in this worn out country, after the imperialist bloodletting, what was needed was the clearest, most indisputable and sacred idea, which would touch the heart of every worker, in order that it might become possible for us to build the army.

A terrible danger loomed up before us, as you recall, late in the summer of 1918. In the West the Germans had occupied not only Poland, Lithuania and Latvia but also Byelorussia, and a considerable part of Great Russia was under the heel of German militarism: Pskov was in German hands. The Ukraine had become an Austro-German colony. In the East the revolt of the Czechoslovaks took place in the summer of 1918. [5] It was organised by the French and British but, at the same time, the Germans told us openly through their representatives that, if this revolt approached Moscow from the East, the Germans would move on Moscow from the West, from Orsha and Pskov: we found ourselves literally between the hammer of German and the anvil of Anglo-French imperialism. In the North, the summer saw the landing of Anglo-French forces at Murmansk and Archangel, and the threat that they would advance to Vologda. At Yaroslavl a White Guard revolt broke out, organised by Savinkov on the orders of the French ambassador Noulens, with a view to enabling the Allied forces to link up, through Vologda and Yaroslavl, with the Czechoslovaks and White Guards on the Volga, by way of Vyatka, Nizhny-Novgorod, Kazan and Perm. That was their plan. In the South, on the Don, a revolt led by Krasnov was developing. Krasnov was then in direct alliance with the Germans, openly boasting of it and receiving financial and military aid from them. But the British and the French realised that if they succeeded in descending the Volga to Astrakhan and their left flank then turned round into North Caucasia and the Don country and linked up with Krasnov, the latter would readily move over into the Anglo-French camp, since for him it was all the same to whom he sold himself: he needed help in order to maintain the rule of the landlords on the Don and to restore it throughout the country. Thus, from the very start, our front began to threaten to turn into a ring that would tighten more and more closely around Moscow, the heart of Russia.

In the West were the Germans, in the North and East the Anglo French and White Guards, in the South there was Krasnov, equally prepared to serve either camp: in the Ukraine was Skoropadsky, the henchman of German imperialism. What saved us at that moment was the fact that Britain, France and Germany were still fighting each other (although even then our White Guards formed a link between them). The great danger was that behind our back, that is, behind the back of crushed and crucified Russia, an agreement might be reached between German and Anglo French imperialism before the European proletariat rose in revolt. At that period our

country had shrunk almost to the limits of the old Grand Duchy of Muscovy, and was still shrinking. The most immediate danger threatened from the East, where the Czechoslovak corps formed an axis to which the counter revolution clung. Our first efforts were directed eastward, towards the Volga.

In what did these efforts consist? As I have already mentioned, comrades, we turned to the best workers of Petrograd and Moscow, we took from the instructors' courses the enthusiasts, the best elements from among the volunteers, the most courageous of them, and we formed small units composed of Communists. We proceeded from the conception that the army is nothing but the armed vanguard of the working class itself, and so we turned to the workers and told them the truth about the situation and demanded that they show initiative and energy. Under the blows of our enemies, before Simbirsk and before Kazan, despite the fact that we had, perhaps, a certain superiority in numbers, we retreated, sometimes in a panicky way, because on the other side was superiority in training and knowledge, and also superiority in fury and hatred on the part of the property owners, deprived of their property, against the workers? and peasants? army. Finally they had the tremendous advantage that we were defending whereas they were attacking, so that they were able to choose our weakest spot. They chose the place on Soviet territory that *they* designated, and the moment that they preferred. We possessed the theoretical advantage (only later did it become a real and actual one) that we were operating from the centre, along internal operational lines, along radii. [6] Being disconnected, our enemies operated and are operating in different places, not as a compact front but in shock groups. We were obliged by the logic of things gradually to form a compact front, and this front of ours now stretches for 8,000 versts. I don't know if historians of war know of any other case when a front has extended over such an immense distance.

On the part of our enemies the war could be and has been waged in guerrilla style, in the sense that small detachments, having selected a certain objective, a particular target, struck at it in order to do us damage. The significance of guerrilla warfare lies in weakening the stronger side. Guerrilla warfare as such cannot bring complete victory, that is, victory over an organised army. Guerrilla warfare does not, generally speaking, set itself that aim: it harasses, inflicts jabs, irritates, destroys railway tracks, brings chaos – that is the advantage of guerrilla warfare as a weapon of the weaker against the stronger. It was intended to do us damage and to weaken us.

Defence would have been incomparably easier if we had had throughout the country a militia, that is, a purely territorial, local army, made up of workers and peasants armed and trained on the spot, so that a regiment corresponded to a *volost* or to a factory, while an *uyezd* corresponded to a division, or two divisions ... Then we could have fought everywhere with local forces. A militia does not mean an army that is weaker, less perfect, as some professional military men suppose. A militia-type army is formed on the basis of compulsory military training carried on outside barracks, in the localities, so that trainers and trainees are not taken away from the factories and fields: they are worker soldiers and peasant soldiers. If we had had an organised militia, the jabs inflicted by our enemies, their guerrilla raids in this direction or that, would at once have met with organised and planned rebuffs in the places where they occurred. That is the ideal army towards which we shall move, the army which we shall achieve. But we were unable to organise it straightforwardly, and found ourselves obliged to take the workers and peasants away from their own everyday habitats and rush them to the front.

We were compelled, as I have said, to direct our army first and foremost towards the East: we had to succeed there at any cost. As you know, that was done – but how? By putting an end, among ourselves, to amateurism and petty localism in military matters. Although the enemy, too, was operating by the method of semi guerrilla raids, he had at his disposal units with a high percentage of officers, excellently organised and ably led by skilled commanders. This guerrilla method employed by the enemy presented a serious threat to us, given the correct, 'scientific' state of things on his side. In order to protect ourselves against it, to exploit our central situation, we needed to put a definite stop to amateurish, home made, guerrilla habits in the revolutionary army. Where this question was concerned, two tendencies clashed in our ranks – to some extent at the fronts but, in particular, in the rear. At first, some of our comrades said: 'Under existing conditions we shall not form a centralised army with a centralised apparatus of administration and command, we haven't either the time or the technical means for that. Consequently, we must confine ourselves to forming small, well organised forces of the regimental type, only bigger and enriched with all sorts of special technical units.' That was the original idea of very many comrades: separate forces, each consisting of two, three or four thousand soldiers, appropriately combining the different arms. This was a feeble method of fighting: if it was not possible to finish the enemy off, to wipe him from the face of the earth, what we could at least do was to worry him and do him some damage. The Germans were stronger than we were in the period when they launched their offensive, and all we could do was to throw our detachments against them so as to hold up their advance and make guerrilla raids into their rear. But we were unable to stop at that. We had to destroy, by planned action, the enemy who was cutting us off from the most fertile and richest provinces of Russia. The variety of our foes meant that we were completely surrounded by fronts. In the East, the Czechoslovaks; in the North, the Allied expeditionary force; in the West, the German offensive; in the South, Krasnov; in the Ukraine, Skoropadsky. This showed that we must concentrate large scale forces in the centre of the country, so as to be able to throw them, along lines radiating from the centre, to where they were needed at any given moment. But if we were to be in a position to dispose expediently of our armed forces at any moment, we had to do away, once and for all, with amateurism in the shape of independent units. To be sure, these independent units quickly renamed themselves 'regiments' and 'divisions'. What existed, however, was merely the *name* of a division: there was no actual division but only guerrilla units which did not recognise any centralised command from above and operated on the initiative of their own atamans or leaders. We experienced many difficulties and conflicts in connection with this matter, because in the amateur guerrilla circles there was tremendous distrust towards those at the centre who were keeping an eye on them and seeking to control them: 'Won't they undermine us,' they said, 'won't they betray us?' This was the first point. The second point was that these units had performed great services in the past in the fight against the Russian bourgeoisie, against the counter revolution; they had shown great heroism and had leaders who had displayed, in small scale, guerrilla warfare, certain talents and military qualities?some of them, at any rate. Hence their doubts, their exaggerated confidence in themselves and exaggerated distrust of command from above. There had to be severe experiences of defeat in guerrilla operations against the Germans and on other fronts, there had to be an ideological struggle, and there had to be repressive measures imposed from above, before some of the new commanders were forced to appreciate that an army is a centralised organism, that fulfilment of orders from above is the necessary guarantee of unity in action. This kind of preliminary work had to be done in order that we might go over from retreat to advance, in order that we might

operate simultaneously before Kazan, Simbirsk and Samara. Only after that did we begin to have successes: we cleared the Volga and began to approach the Urals.

At this point I must, in passing, give high praise to the work done by our Red airmen at the front. There were, certainly, cases of betrayal, of going over to the enemy, but these were isolated cases, and they happened principally in the first period of the war. The overwhelming majority of the airmen are working honestly and devotedly. I observed their work especially closely before Kazan, in the very difficult weeks of August 1918: then, when our regiments were still too weak, with little fighting capacity, the detachments of airmen who were operating before Kazan did literally everything to substitute for our infantry, cavalry and artillery. They took off in all kinds of weather, circled over Kazan and over the enemy's flotilla, they dropped heavy bombs, they established communication with our troops who were operating north east of Kazan and were cut off from us. In the most difficult situations our Red airmen have shown themselves heroes in the last few months, as well: our Red air fleet, which had been completely smashed up, has gathered together its scattered members, and reunited, so that now we have Red warriors of the air of whom our enemies speak with hatred.

On the Southern front the same phenomena were repeated as in the East. A number of units which had come from the Ukraine were operating there against Krasnov, and their ranks included some devoted and experienced fighters. But there was no system of communication and discipline common to the entire army, to the entire front. 'Every man was his own model.' Considering any commander sent from above to establish operational unity as a highly suspicious character, they preferred to play it by touch: if they felt pressure, they retreated; they groped to discover where the enemy was strong; where he was weak, there they advanced. They developed a certain knack in this sort of warfare. Among such outstanding fighters were, for example, our fallen comrades Sievers and Kikvidze, who developed their rather effective methods in fighting against the Cossacks: they knew how to track down, to take evasive action, to throw back, to turn the flank, to smash. But all this was within the limits of small skirmishes, bringing with them small successes or small failures. And the struggle, after all, was going on for months and demanding colossal sacrifices, without any real changes being effected in the situation.

After the influx of the best workers from Moscow, Petrograd and other places into the South, the mass of the Red Army men learnt under their leadership that what was being waged was war to the death, and so they closed ranks and pulled themselves together. But that was still not enough: we needed to re educate the commanding personnel, whom we had recruited from three sources. There had been mobilised, on the one hand, commanders from among the regular officers, and, on the other, we had the new commanders already mentioned, who had learnt their trade as leaders of guerrilla detachments. Finally, we were producing our own Red officers. Most of these proved to be excellent soldiers, reliable leaders for the future, but at first they lacked experience, and so they could fill only the lower positions of command – at best, they could be platoon commanders, or, in rare instances, company commanders. There were many cases when Red officer comrades, after spending a certain time in a position of command, applied to be given permission to fight as rankers for a few weeks. Although very worthy workers, they lacked battle experience. The former NCOs who passed through the instructors' courses had an immense advantage over them in that they had already obtained that experience. By and large, the Red officers are excellent material, and we have succeeded in getting from among them in these last three months many good junior commanders.

The old regular officers, a considerable number of whom were mobilised, have provided many conscientious workers and experienced commanders. For reasons you will understand I shall not give any figures, but I will say this, that thousands and thousands of leaders and commanders, of lower, middle and higher rank, have emerged from among them, and they are fighting valiantly and self sacrificingly on our new fronts, alongside the Red Army men. This has been especially true in those armies which were well organised and firmly welded. There, nobody asked: 'Were you an officer in the old army, or are you a Red officer, or do you come from the soldiers or the guerrillas?' In those armies there has been complete integration in battle.

The turn in the mood of the best elements of the old officer corps took place gradually. For a long time they hesitated, full of doubts about the Soviet power: they were influenced by the bourgeois papers which proclaimed that the Soviet power was betraying Russia to the Germans. They heard that same slander from Milyukov, from Tsereteli, from all those petty bourgeois 'authorities', and so they hesitated, not knowing where to take their stand, which way to go ... When we were surrounded by a ring of enemies on all sides, when it seemed that the days of the Soviet power were numbered, a large number of former officers went over to our enemies, sometimes handing over our units as they did so. We dealt ruthlessly, of course, with those of them that we caught. Not a few of them were executed. But when some excessively hasty comrades said: 'Stop bringing officers into the Red Army,' we replied: 'No, that is a bad idea. We need leaders with knowledge, the army cannot begin from the first letter in the alphabet when we are surrounded by a ring of enemies.' It was not possible that, among the tens of thousands of former regular officers, we could not find a few thousand honourable soldiers who felt they had a bond with the worker and peasant masses of toiling Russia and would be incapable of selling their country to the German, French or British imperialists. Particular betrayals, even though numerous, did not in the least cause us to alter our policy in this matter. And we can now say with complete confidence that this policy of attracting the most honourable and cleanest elements of the former officers into the work of building our army, and into operational leadership thereof, has proved fully justified.

Finally, from among the self-taught, the guerrillas, good, disciplined and solid commanders have been developed. We have one army in which the commander is a former NCO and the chief of staff is a former general from the General Staff. Another army is commanded by a former general, and his second in command is one of the self taught. We have every sort of combination, we have allowed no invariable rule to be established in this matter: everywhere we have tried to bring to the top leaders who are energetic, able and honest. The commissars are enormously helpful to those commanders who lack experience or who are not firm politically. This is also the position in our divisions. At the head of one division stands a former soldier who was not even an NCO, and the commander alongside him is a former General Staff colonel, and between the two of them there are excellent relations and mutual respect, because, when men shed their blood together, that forms the closest possible bond of union.

This situation was not achieved all at once. Over a period of two or three months we established order on the Southern front, by means of intense work, in the face of Krasnov's troops, in an area where the enemy was especially stubborn and strong. We ourselves were sufficiently strong in terms of numbers, but were not centralised. Krasnov's forces, which were well led, operated by means of isolated

raids, vigorous thrusts that were painful for us, and they succeeded to the extent that we feared for the fate of Voronezh, after they had taken Novokhopersk and Borisoglebsk and even bombarded Tsaritsyn, where military supplies of all kinds were accumulated. At the best moments of the conflict, from their standpoint, their army numbered no more than 100,000, including all reserves. But they possessed the tremendous advantage of initiative and surprise, those most important conditions for military success. They did not maintain a front. After making a thrust towards Voronezh and bringing disorder into our ranks, they left a very thin screen around the place and shifted their main forces towards Balashov and Tsaritsyn. Our troops remained generally passive, because we did not possess one single really organised unit that could rightfully be said to belong either to the army of Voronezh or the army of Tsaritsyn. Moreover, we had no unified front. Our principal effort was directed to attaining this. Vigorous organisational and agitational work was needed, on the one hand, in order to counter the secret provocateurs and scoundrels who were trying to worm their way into the army, so as to undermine its morale from within, to disintegrate it and make it helpless, and, on the other, to counter the habits of guerrilla warfare – trying to work in accordance with one's own will alone, not wanting to take account of the overall operational requirements of the given army or of the whole front. In both of these directions we had complete success. In the course of the work, honest and capable commanders came to the top, while the scoundrels who had entered for the purpose of betraying were identified and shot. The best elements among the guerrillas became convinced that it was not possible to get very far on a guerrilla basis. We firmly eliminated those who were unwilling to recognise the demands of operational unity. As a result of this work, a turn took place in the mood of the whole front. In every direction, at Voronezh, at Balashov or at Tsaritsyn, everywhere there was now a feeling of unity of command against the common enemy, unity in the conception of operations and unity in the way they were carried out. 'Now, at last, we feel that we have a front,' said everyone, big and small commanders alike, with joy, when the three armies of the Southern front, internally unified, began to work in harmony.

After that, we went over, on the Southern front as on the Eastern, from retreat to attack, and our attack proved more and more victorious. February was the decisive month. We can now say that Krasnov's army has almost ceased to exist. Its basic nucleus has been utterly smashed and has fled in panic. You know that Krasnov himself has resigned, and has withdrawn from Novocherkassk to Novorossiisk, mainly because he is afraid of the vengeance of his former subjects. Not only is the whole railway line from Novokhopersk [The 'Novokhopersk' line mentioned here runs north-north-west from Tsaritsyn, the 'Likhaya' line west-south-west to the Donbas.] to Tsaritsyn in our hands, and Tsaritsyn again united with the rest of Soviet Russia by a rail link, but also the railway from Tsaritsyn to Likhaya, a very important line which had been in the hands of the Krasnovites, has now almost entirely been conquered by us, with the acquisition of many prisoners and a great deal of war booty. What remains is to destroy with all vigour whatever is left of Krasnov's army. There is a more complex task to be faced in the Donets Basin where the enemy consists partly of the more substantial vestiges of Krasnov's forces, but, in the main, of units of Denikin's Volunteer Army which have been transferred thither from North Caucasia. They are trying to defend the Donets Basin and, along with it, Rostov and Novocherkassk, because they have not yet lost the last rag of hope for help from the Allies. But here, too, there can be no doubt that, after the liquidation of the bourgeois power in the Ukraine, and after the liquidation of the Krasnov front, the precious basin of the Donets will not be kept from us, and the Donets workers and peasants will rule there. [7]

In addition to what I have told you about the Southern front, a few words must be said about the Caspian Caucasian front. There we have suffered some very serious setbacks in the last two months, which might seem quite unexpected, since, not long before, we had conquered an extensive territory in North Caucasia, with some very important places. But this setback was suffered, in the main, quite legitimately, being a result of the crisis and breakdown of guerrilla-ism. In North Caucasia we possessed a very substantial army, made up of those same refugees from the Ukraine, together with units from the Don, Terek and other territories. Among them were not a few very honest and devoted revolutionaries, but there were also quite a lot of adventurers and an even larger number of casual persons whom the counter revolution had derailed and who had settled themselves down around the soldiers? cauldron. The habits of guerrilla warfare, unfamiliarity with precise, formal organisation and correct, formal relations, became established there more firmly than anywhere else, owing to remoteness from the centre. Already last autumn I gave a formal instruction to the delegation of the North Caucasian troops to retain in the army no more than one third of their then numbers, bringing these into proper formation and either discharging the rest or sending them North. 'When you are only one third as numerous you will be thrice as strong,' I assured the delegation. Unfortunately, though, this matter went no further than persuasion, owing to the extreme remoteness of the front and the complete absence of adequate communication with it. The inertia of guerrilla-ism proved too strong. The army retained its huge numerical strength and without fighting any serious battles, it achieved some very notable successes. Instructors were sent to it from Astrakhan – serious, reliable military specialists – but they were returned to Astrakhan, on the grounds that they were not needed. The Red Army has no more dangerous enemy than the complacency of self assured guerrilla-ism which does not want to learn, does not want to make progress. And now we see the result: a swollen army, or rather a horde, has clashed with Denikin's properly organised troops and in a few weeks has been reduced to dust. We have here once more paid a high price for the illusion of guerrilla ism. But this lesson will not have been received in vain. Intense work is now being undertaken in North Caucasia which will, let us hope, have its effect in a very short time. What we have lost there will be repaid to us with interest.

On the Northern front, comrades, after our loss of the Murmansk and Archangel areas, we have remained relatively passive. True, in recent weeks we enjoyed a success, with the capture of Shenkursk. This was a glorious, even though minor, page in the history of our struggle. In very difficult conditions, in which the enemy, in his own words, considered it impossible to move up so much as a field kitchen, our soldiers, clad in white overalls, working through the frozen night, dragged a six inch gun along on sleigh runners, penetrated deep into the enemy's rear, and forced him to flee from Shenkursk. They took prisoners and a great deal of booty and drove the enemy 80-90 versts back towards the North. All that, however, amounted only to a partial success: in general we remain passively defensive on our Northern front. [\[8\]](#)

With a front 8,000 versts long, we should have had, in order to conduct an active strategy, to maintain a numerous army here, there and everywhere. But we do not possess such an army. Consequently, some sectors of this 8,000 verst front remain, for the time being, passive, and our activity is concentrated on other sectors which are, for the moment, more important. In this lies the advantage of our central situation in relation to all the fronts?we are constantly able to transfer and concentrate our forces. But this advantage was created and realised only after we had set up the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, with a single commander

in chief for all fronts, after unity of command had been established on all fronts, and unity of command in the armies on each front. Only after the establishment of a common operational leadership and of the practice of strict fulfilment of military orders coming down from on high did everyone feel, did every single soldier feel, in reality, on the spot, the tremendous advantage that is possessed by a centralised army over guerrilla ism and amateurish methods. Along with this we obtained the possibility of calculating and choosing the point at which we must develop our most active struggle at each given moment. After our successes on the Volga, our main efforts were shifted, as I have said, to the line of the Don front. That is why we have remained passive in the North?and all the more so because in these last two months two new fronts have been opened, regarding which, although we expected them, we could not foresee just when they would again be transformed into active sectors, namely, the Ukrainian front and the Western front.

The military question was posed afresh in the Ukraine by a major political event – the revolution in Germany, which led to revolt in the Ukraine. Here we could see especially clearly the direct link between our military operations and their natural soil, the workers' and peasants' revolution. We are waging a war. But this is not a war like other wars, in which territory is passed from one hand to another but the regime stays the same. Our war is the organised revolution, defensive or offensive, of the workers, a revolution which either defends or extends its conquests. If anyone is inclined to forget that, the events in the Ukraine have loudly reminded him of it. There, our front suddenly tame alive and pressed southward, though at first, to be sure, almost without participation by any regular units. We faced an urgent task there – to get rid of the local, as yet unorganised bourgeoisie, not to allow them to organise after the German army, which had supported the Ukrainian bourgeoisie, had suffered, first, disintegration, and then revolutionary re education, and had returned home to Germany. At that time the guerrilla detachments played a tremendous and absolutely fruitful role in the Ukraine. There as elsewhere, of course, from early on, more regular units of the Soviet forces made their appearance, and the guerrillas increasingly operated like a satellite around a planet. They began to group themselves around the regular units which appeared there in response to the appeal of the Ukrainian workers and peasants, and the Ukrainian command has now been assigned the task of uniting the guerrilla detachments into established units, regular divisions. And this work is going ahead in the Ukraine with great success, because the military executives there possess the advantage of our one year's experience: they have learnt a lot from our mistakes and our achievements. One way or another, though, the Ukrainian front has diverted comparatively large forces – mostly, of course, Ukrainian troops. [\[9\]](#)

It was in these circumstances that we were faced by the activation of the Western front. In the West, military operations were comparatively few and involved few losses. There, what chiefly counted was our agreement with the German soldiers, who opposed the German commanders in a revolutionary spirit, and our direct fraternisation with the German soldier Communists. All this, though, was accompanied by armed clashes wherever the German White Guards or local bourgeois elements opposed us with armed force. As a result of these combined military and political operations we cleared a very extensive territory in the West. But our task there is far from finished. The bourgeoisie of the Western zone recovered from its first impressions, awoke from stupor, and with the help of Western Europe – Britain and France, and to some extent Germany – succeeded in getting together some sort of units with which it threatened, on the one hand, Yamburg, and, on the other, Pskov, and tried to create a threat to Riga. In Estonia the Soviet Estonian army is being combated not only by the Estonian White Guards

but also by the Finnish bourgeoisie and even by small detachments of Swedes, along with German and Russian White Guards – in short, there is a whole international, the White-Guard International, over there in the countries adjoining the Baltic Sea, operating with the support of the British Navy. [\[10\]](#)

If we had allowed this front to get stronger, a considerable danger might have developed there, and a few weeks ago it might have been said that this danger was indeed present. I spent the last few weeks on that sector of the front, and I beheld there again the same picture that at times I had observed on the other fronts. We could not detach tempered units from the other fronts, weakening those fronts in order to send these units to Estonia, and so what went thither were younger units, hastily put together from recently mobilised peasants, who had not yet had experience of battle and had not yet been subjected, either, to political work – and these units scattered at once under the first serious blow from the enemy. As always happens in such cases, there were some direct betrayals – for example, in the division which fought in the Narva direction, a regimental commander led part of his regiment into surrender, so that, naturally, the other half fled in panic. In short, we had there, a month and a half or two months ago, the situation that had been seen on the other fronts six months ago. I talk about all this with such frankness, comrades, because you need to know clearly all sides of the building of the army and of its life, including all the seamy sides. Setbacks must in no case make us throw up our hands. In a revolutionary epoch a revolutionary army is, essentially, a highly strung army which lives by fits and starts cases of crisis and panic occur in it more often than in normal times ... But, on the other hand, if this young, highly strung army is welded together, given an idea, given the necessary tempering, enabled to win its first victory, then its highlystrung nature is transformed into a mighty offensive force, it strives to advance and becomes invincible. That is why the hesitations, the waverings and even the panic stricken retreats of youthful units do not fill our hearts with pessimism. Two or three weeks of vigorous work by the commanders and commissars on the Narva and Pskov sectors of the Estonian front were all that was needed to regenerate that front, and those soldiers who, merely out of unfamiliarity, lack of the most elementary experience, had fled in panic, have now pulled themselves together and have not only reconstituted their units but have regenerated them inwardly. I visited one and the same unit twice, with an interval often days, and on the second occasion I did not recognise it. In this lies the tremendous power of the revolutionary idea and of revolutionary methods of construction. Nowhere else, in any country or in any army at all, can the commander of a regiment say to each soldier: 'You must give your life, if you are called upon to do so, because you are fighting for the interests of your family, of your children, for the future of your grandchildren: this is the war of the oppressed and the working people for their own emancipation.' These simple words, with which we appeal to the mind and heart of every soldier, accomplish real miracles.

In every regiment and every company there are elements of differing quality: the more conscious, the more self sacrificing, are, of course, a minority: at the other pole is a tiny minority of hostile elements, ignorant, corrupt, self seeking, sometimes consisting of kulaks, counter revolutionaries. Between these two minorities, standing at opposite poles, are those who are simply not conscious enough, the uncertain, the waverers, who in their thought and feelings are good, honest working citizens of the Soviet land, but who stand in need of military and political training. And when the commander of some regiment, or some commissar, says to me: 'I can't answer for my regiment, there are self-seekers in it, and when they have to go into action they say: we haven't been given this, we haven't been

given that.' 'It's a bad regiment,' I reply, with complete confidence: 'If the regiment is a bad one then it must be that the commander is bad and the commissar is bad, for these men are the same as are found in other regiments: they, too, are, in the main, honest workers and peasants.' If they see that their leaders are shaky, if doubt creeps into their minds as to whether the commander is running the regiment properly, if they have no moral respect for the regimental commissar, then, of course, disintegration occurs: the self seekers get the upper hand, the best elements, discouraged, hold aloof, and the in between elements don't know with whom to side, and in the event of danger they give way to panic. Where the commanders, especially the lower commanders, are good, where they are honest and firm, where the commander and the commissar of a regiment are good, any regiment will prove to be up to its task. Give me the very worst of regiments, give me 3,000 deserters, taken from wherever you like, and call them a regiment. I will give them a good, honest regimental commissar, a fighting commissar, give them the right battalion, company and platoon commanders – and I affirm that within four weeks those three thousand deserters will provide our revolutionary country with a splendid regiment. And that is not a hope, not a programme, not an idea, it has all been tested by experience, and in the last few weeks we have again tested it by our experience on the Narva and Pskov sectors of the front, which are now held by units that have been welded into unity.

There is one more potential front of which I have said nothing so far, namely, the Karelian or Finnish front. No military operations are taking place there. Finland is not directly at war with us, although she is indirectly fighting us by sending her troops to Estonia, from where they are attacking Yamburg along with the White Guards, Estonian and Russian. But there is no front, in the strict sense of the word, on the Karelian isthmus. However, in recent weeks there has been in Finland frenzied (in the strict sense of the word) agitation in favour of an offensive against Petrograd. They think that we are more vulnerable there, since we have lost command of the Baltic Sea and so the approach to Petrograd is now less well defended. When it was in power last year, the working class of Finland was Petrograd's best shield. But now, for the time being, the bourgeoisie rules in Finland, and their leader, Mannerheim, a former Russian general, has in recent months and weeks been carrying on an agitation for an attack on Petrograd, and the Finnish and Swedish bourgeois press has been saying that Petrograd can be taken with one short, sharp blow, by a raid – for which task, they say, it would be enough to assign just one or two divisions. Furthermore, General Mannerheim has ordered his forces to hold manoeuvres close to our frontier, at Terijoki, and the Finnish bourgeois press has openly written about this in a challenging tone. There has been, of course, no great alarm in Petrograd on this account, for it is comical and absurd to talk of the Finnish bourgeoisie, which barely managed (with the help of Hohenzollern bayonets) to cope with the revolution of the Finnish working class [11], the bourgeoisie of a country with a population of no more than two and a half millions, being competent to do battle with revolutionary Soviet Russia. Nevertheless, profound indignation was aroused among the workers of Petrograd by the idea that the Finnish White Guards, whose swords are still wet with the blood of the Finnish workers, should dare to threaten the working class of Petrograd, our Red, revolutionary capital.

In reply to Mannerheim's manoeuvres we held our own manoeuvres on our border with Finland. We called on everyone to rally to the defence of Petrograd. The greatest and most ardent response to this call came from the comrades who are attending the military training courses in Petrograd. At their unanimous request, the normal activity of these courses was suspended, and all these cadets were

formed temporarily into a mobile unit of superb quality. We held a review of this unit on the former Palace Square, now called Uritsky Square, and in this review there took part an officer of the French army, Captain Sadoul, who has broken with his Government, with the French military mission, in order to defend the Soviet power, and is now working in our military inspectorate. This Captain Sadoul, standing beside me and looking at our young future Red officers and their splendid military bearing, the enthusiasm written on their faces, the inspiring orderliness of their ranks, said with delight that this was one of the most sublime spectacles he had ever seen in his life, adding: 'How sorry I am that the French military mission, headed by General Niessel, is not here: if they were to see your future Red officers, formed into this fighting unit, they would say to their government: beware of attacking Russia, Russia is not defenceless, she has her own Red soldiers and officers!' And to these cadets, these young Petrograd comrades, I promised that if Petrograd were really to be threatened from Olonets [Olonets is a town near the eastern shore of Lake Ladoga, north east of Petrograd, where fighting took place between the 'White' Finns and Red Army units supported by the Red Ladoga Flotilla.], Karelia or the Yamburg front, the task of meeting this threat would be allotted to them – they would be the first in the defence of Red Petrograd, and they responded to this pledge as befits honourable soldiers of the revolution. They assumed this responsibility with joy, and, in particular, they carried out splendidly the manoeuvres in which they took part.

But what happened? What happened was that Mannerheim's fearful enterprise ended in a big fiasco. He moved a few echelons up to our frontier, but the White Guard Finnish regiments held a meeting – oh, horror! – at Terijoki [Terijoki is now, under the name Zelyonogorsk, included in the Leningrad Region of the RSFSR.], at which they declared: 'You are leading us not to manoeuvres but to war with the Red Army: we are ready to defend ourselves, but we don't want to attack Petrograd!' And Mannerheim had to pull his echelons back. In his manoeuvres there eventually took part no more and no less than ... two companies. Thus, this experiment ended in a miserable collapse. The next day, or the day after, an interview with General Mannerheim appeared in the papers, in which he said that for international and other considerations the attack on Petrograd ... would be put off till the spring. Consequently we can wait more or less calmly on that front until spring comes. As for the terrible General Mannerheim, it is appropriate to recall where he is concerned the expressive phrase of our famous satirist Saltykov Shchedrin: 'He promised great bloodshed, but actually he ate a siskin.' It was like that with General Mannerheim: he promised to seize Petrograd with one short, sharp blow, but actually he found a couple of companies to carry out manoeuvres near Terijoki.

Should, however, the position of the Finnish bourgeoisie, or pressure on them by Anglo French capital, compel them to launch an offensive against Petrograd, then, of course, we would have a new front. There can be no doubt that in that case we should not restrict ourselves to defensive measures, but would ourselves strike a short, sharp blow at Helsingfors, for the Finnish working class is waiting for help to come from the Red troops of Petrograd. At the Petrograd instructors? courses, when they learnt of Mannerheim's order for an offensive, the Finnish cadets (they have their own military school) asked to be sent to the front against that hangman. Besides these cadets we have some fine units consisting entirely of Finnish workers. What is even more instructive is that fact that of the 17,000 men compulsorily mobilised by Mannerheim (along with the bourgeois guard), according to his own Finnish bourgeois press, 90 per cent are Reds. True, our Finnish comrades say that this is an exaggeration, that the army contains not 90 per cent but only 70 per cent Reds. But even that is quite enough. It is not for nothing that Mannerheim is

refraining from arming the conscripts. An offensive by the Red forces against Helsingfors would be supported with enthusiasm by the whole Finnish working class. We declared in Petrograd that we are not going to try and create a new front between Finland and Petrograd, but if this front does come into being, on the initiative of our enemies, then we shall take measures to ensure that Petrograd is safeguarded from the Finnish side once and for all, and there is only one way to do that – by establishing in Finland the power of the workers and the poor peasants.

Summing up the position on our fronts, it can be said that the situation is completely favourable. The work that has been accomplished by the Red Army is colossal. In August 1918 our military situation was most difficult – it was the time of the fall of Kazan. After that, in the course of seven months, the Red Army cleared an immense territory, about 130 *uyezds* and 28 provinces, with a total area exceeding 850,000 square versts and a population of 40 millions. In terms of area, that is equivalent to Italy, Belgium and Greece put together, and in population it is equivalent to France. According to the information supplied by the All-Russia General Staff, on which I rely, the towns in the provinces recovered were 166 in number, while the non urban inhabited localities exceeded 164,000. Among the more important towns I will name to you: on the Western front Pskov, Riga, Vilna, Minsk, Gomel, Chernigov; on the Southern front – Kiev, Poltava, Kharkov, Yekaterinoslav, Aleksandrovsk, Kupyansk, Bakhmut, Lugansk; on the Eastern front – Kazan, Simbirsk, Syzran, Samara, Ufa, Orenburg, Uralsk. From the economic standpoint, the region Lugansk-Bakhmut-Slaviansk-Nikitovka is of enormous importance, for its deposits of rock salt, coal, mercury and gypsum: also important are the Ufa-Orenburg area, and the provinces of Vyatka, Kazan, Samara and Orenburg, with their deposits of iron ore, and the area of the Samara Bend, with its asphalt deposits. In the recovered portion of Yekaterinoslav province there are very important metallurgical works. Finally, the line of the front has reached Krivoy Rog, which is rich in iron ore deposits. On the Eastern front we have occupied a number of factories of great military importance, such as the Izhevsk and Votkinsk works in the Samara area, and on the Southern front the cartridge factory at Lugansk. Finally, the taking of Orenburg opens the door to Turkestan, from which we can get the cotton needed for our textile industry. The whole of the East and South are rich grain growing areas. This is the territory that the workers? Red Army has traversed and won for workers? Russia. [\[12\]](#)

Comrades! We cannot conclude from all this that our task has been completed. No, far from that! Today the Soviet power is putting forth every effort to secure peace as soon as possible, even at the price of burdensome concessions, for nothing can be more burdensome for our worn out and starving people than this dreadful war that has been forced upon us. A year ago we signed the peace of Brest Litovsk in order to win a breathing space for our people and our country. The breathing space was too short, for at once we had enemies coming at us from the other side. Not so long ago, the People#s Commissar for Foreign Affairs repeated in precise, official form the statement made by the Soviet Government to all the governments which are fighting against us. The gist of the statement is this: 'You are fighting against the Russian workers and peasants – for what? Do you want the interest on your capital? Concessions, territory? What is it that you want? Tell us, and we will talk in a businesslike way about what we can, what we shall be obliged to give up to you in order that the Russian people may be allowed to work in peace.'

You and I know, of course, that everything we give up now will come back to us, because Soviet Russia is only yielding to the imperialists for the time being. Under

the Brest Litovsk peace, we temporarily surrendered an immense zone in the West, together with the whole Ukraine, to German and Austro-Hungarian imperialism. At that time our bourgeoisie, which itself walked hand in hand with German imperialism wherever it could, accused us of treason, of betraying the country. We answered: 'There is no army, so we are forced to yield. But what we are giving will come back to us.' And while the German regiments came to Russia as oppressors and enslavers, under the yellow banners of imperialism, they went home as revolutionary regiments, under the red banner of communism. The same thing will happen, in the end, as a result of our concessions to France, Britain and America. We say to Wilson, Lloyd George and Clemenceau: 'Everything that you take from us the British, French and American workers will give back to us within a month or two, within six months, within a year, when they establish Soviet power in their countries.'

I am asked, in connection with this, what the position is regarding the Princes' Islands. [The project for a conference between the contending groups in Russia is usually referred to as 'the Prinkipo plan', from the name of the largest of the Princes' Islands – where Trotsky was destined to spend the first phase of his exile. The Turkish name for the group is Kizil Adalar, and for Prinkipo Büyukada.] The Princes' Islands are, as you know, islands in the Sea of Marmora, to which the Anglo-French and American imperialists were going to invite us for negotiations concerning the fate of Russia. They decided, of course, to invite not only the Soviet Government but also all the other so-called governments, White and Black, which have not yet managed to perish because they are supported by foreign imperialism. Krasnov replied that he would not attend a conference with Bolsheviks. He gave this reply very proudly a few weeks ago, but now he himself has had, as an exile, to leave his Don and seek refuge in Novorossiisk. The Constituent Assembly men were previously fighting against us, but now they have come to seek refuge and protection on our territory. The same fate awaits Kolchak as Krasnov. We have declared that we are ready to go to the Princes' Islands, and before the whole world we shall explain there what it is that keeps us in power: we have never been supported by foreign bourgeois governments and we have not sought such support, but, on the contrary, have categorically rejected it. All our enemies – Krasnov, Skoropadsky, Durov, Denikin, Petlyura – all were kept in power exclusively by the support of the foreign bourgeoisie. We have stood and we are standing on our own feet. And we are ready to say that, and to prove it, anywhere at all: in Moscow or over there, where they are, on the Princes' Islands. But they themselves, apparently, have changed their minds, or are hesitating, about whether to invite us to that spot – perhaps because they know that the negotiations at Brest Litovsk rendered great service to the cause of the German revolution. We are not worried about what they decide. If they decide to convene the conference on the Princes' Islands, we shall go there, and we shall continue there the work we did at Brest Litovsk. If they change their minds and decline to hold the conference, we shall wait. With every day that passes the number of these bogus White governments in Russia is lessening, for the Soviet power is scraping them off the face of the earth. As regards the Princes' Islands, they do not attract us, if only because of their princely name. Perhaps, while these gentlemen are pondering, we shall find our own, Soviet islands to which we shall convey imperialists from all countries? but not at all for the purpose of negotiations.

At present, however, today, Soviet power does not prevail in France, Britain and America, and we openly announce that we are ready to buy off the beasts of prey and hangmen who have put a knife to the throat of Soviet Russia. That means, comrades, that our war is in the full sense of the word a war of revolutionary defence: they are attacking us, we are defending ourselves. Even in relation to little

Finland, with its great crimes, we are not taking offensive measures, we forbear because we know that time is working for us. The policy of peace is the policy of the Soviet power. But this policy of peace is not a policy of surrender, a policy of yielding the conquests of the revolution to its mortal foes. No, the policy of peace presupposes readiness to defend to our last breath the conquests of the revolution, if ever the enemy attacks them. We must oppose the spirit of the dishonest agitation which is being carried on in our country and in our regiments by certain party groups such as the Mensheviks and the Right and Left SRs, who write in the newspapers that, since the country is poor and worn out, we ought to 'stop the civil war'. 'There is no need for the Red Army,' say the SRs. Once again let us recall with whom we are at war: in the South, with Krasnov; in the East, with Koichak; in the West, with the Estonian and Finnish White Guards. They are all attacking us and trying to strangle us. Stopping the civil war, laying down our arms, would mean making ourselves defenceless in face of our enemies. We have every right to say to the Menshevik gentlemen: 'So you are for stopping the civil war? Then please address yourselves to Kolchak and Krasnov and tell them to stop the civil war.'

Our civil war is revolutionary self-defence. We have addressed ourselves to all our enemies, informing them of our willingness to purchase peace at the price of the greatest concessions and sacrifices. But our enemies have shown themselves unwilling to come to any agreement, because they have considered the Soviet power to be a mortal danger to them, while at the same time believing that they are strong enough to cope with us. That is why they have not wanted to come to any agreement with us.

Recently, however, different notes have been heard sounding in their camp. Lloyd George said not long ago that it was dangerous to attack us, because the result of this attack has been that millions of peasants have rallied round the Soviet power, and will defend their country with all their strength. We learn from the newspapers that America's President Wilson now considers that the attack by Messrs 'the Allies' on Archangel was a mistake. After our capture of Shenkursk, demoralisation set in among the British and American soldiers, who left their positions and fled back to Archangel. There has been open revolt in Murmansk. On the Odessa front, according to information we have received, the French regiments are demanding repatriation, while the black colonial troops cannot stand the climate and have already been sent home from Odessa. Wilson and Lloyd George are beginning to realise that they made a mistake. Besides which, internal conflict is developing among these gentry. Today Japan's peace programme has been announced: while not calling for Eastern Siberia to be handed over to her, Japan insists that no single country shall have any preference or special concessions in Siberia. This means that these gentry have been forced to limit their aggressive lusts where Soviet Russia is concerned. Why? Because we have become stronger than we were, and they have grown weaker. Under very difficult conditions we have created a strong army, while their armies are breaking up all over the place. And this is happening to their rear as well.

Consequently, our international situation has become better in all respects. But this conclusion must not give rise to complacency, to carefree relaxation: no, we have no right to rest on our laurels. The world wide slaughter is far from having been liquidated, and may burst out again with terrible flames – in the East, on the initiative of Japan, in the North, on the initiative of Britain and America, and in the South and West on the initiative of France, Romania and Poland. Attempts may yet be made to strike us a mortal blow, from this direction or that, at Petrograd or at Moscow.

The bourgeoisie is moribund. But the convulsions of a dying organism are very violent. The sting of a dying fly is very painful. The bourgeoisie is still dangerous. We need to fear the final blow that it may strike. We need to be strong. We need good regiments. We need a good, militant, youthful body of commanders. That means you, comrades! At the moment we have as yet no need to tear you prematurely from your school benches and fling you to the front before your course is finished. We are sufficiently strong to be able to let you peacefully continue with your military training behind the shield provided by our front. But what is required of you is an absolutely conscientious attitude to your work. Our army is a workers' and peasants' army, but that does not mean an ignorant, naive army – no, this army does not reject military science and military technique. On the contrary, our proletarian and *muzhik* army must be equipped and trained in accordance with the last word in military science. Each one of you, after undergoing a short course here, and then having obtained a certain amount of battle experience at the front, must apply himself again and again to military studies, at the military academy or at the school for General Staff cadets which we are opening. Fate has compelled us to concern ourselves with military matters. Since we have to be soldiers of the revolution, a debt of honour enjoins us to be well informed, all round educated soldiers. We shall work, and we shall study!

In our Red regiments you will now find that the demands made upon you are greater than they used to be. We already possess some commanders, and the soldiers have had experience. Consequently, newcomers to the commanding personnel are subjected to higher requirements. You will need to be adequate to the expectations of the soldiers whose fate is entrusted to you as commanders. You will need to maintain a conscientious and honourable attitude to the task that you are called upon to serve.

It is very possible that a long time will still have to pass before we shall be able to stick our bayonets into the ground. Europe offers a spectacle of grim conflict between classes and peoples. Months or years will pass, and then all Europe will be freed from the old oppression and the old exploitation. A federal workers' and peasants' republic will be established throughout Europe, and we shall become part of that republic. When that time comes we shall have no reason to fear for the safety of our frontier. Wherever we look, we shall see only friends and brothers.

This is not yet the situation today. The enemy has not been disarmed. We have no brothers or friends among the ruling classes of Europe and the whole world. We must still firmly grasp our rifle, and everyone must maintain towards his responsibilities the attitude of an honourable and valiant soldier of the revolution. You, especially, as future Red commanders, to whom the working class – the working class not only of our country, but of the whole world – looks with faith and hope. For the bourgeois press of all countries declared at the start that we should not be able to create an army, because we should not have any commanding personnel. Now, however, the bourgeois press of Europe and America has acknowledged that we are forming first class commanders out of conscious workers, honest peasants and the best of our soldiers. That means you, comrades! I believe that you will prove to be up to the task that has been assigned to you. But let none of you ever forget that our army is founded upon a lofty, sacred idea: honourably to serve, arms in hand, the interests of the oppressed working masses. Keep this firmly in mind: that which was the hope of the oppressed peoples, the intimate dream of the toilers, their religious fantasy, what they sang about? that hope of salvation, of liberation, which the working and oppressed people of all lands never

ceased to look forward to has now begun to be realised. We are starting to approach this new realm of freedom. Our enemies are trying to kill this realisation of the most holy, most cherished ideals of the working people. You are the vanguard called upon to defend the revolutionary conquest of the Russian people. In the terrible hour when the workers' and peasants' power turns to you, comrade cadets, to you, comrade commanders, with the words: 'Danger threatens the Socialist Republic', you will answer: 'Present', and you will fight and die heroically, opposing the enemies of the working people.

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## Endnotes

- 1.** On February 23, 1919, on the occasion of the celebration of the anniversary of the organisation of the Red Army, big meetings were held in Moscow. Comrade Trotsky spoke to the students of the command courses in the building of the former Alekseyevsk military school. On the following day, February 24, he delivered his report *At the fronts*, in the Hall of Columns of the House of Unions, to a gathering of the cadets from all the courses in Moscow. This report was published as a separate pamphlet by the publishing house *Sovetsky Mir*, Moscow 1919.
- 2.** The disintegration of the German army began with the troops which occupied the Ukraine and our Western borderlands. The November Revolution in Germany hastened the process, which developed under the influence of the revolutionary movement in Russia. German soldiers often refused to fight against the Ukrainian insurgents, and they elected soviets of soldiers' deputies and regimental committees. The revolutionising of the occupation forces had a considerable effect on the break up of the German army as a whole.
- 3.** On the peace of Brest Litovsk, see, for more details, note 20 to Volume I.
- 4.** On the transformation of the Army of the Constituent Assembly into Kolchak's army and on the fate of the supporters of the Constituent Assembly, see below, Notes 70 and 71.
- 5.** On the revolt by the Czechoslovaks and the struggle against them, see Volume I, pages 273 305 and note 79.
- 6.** The advantage enjoyed by the side which operates on internal operational lines consists in the possibility of combating, unit by unit, at the most favourable moments, the enemy's advancing forces. Mobility and vigour in action always enable such a situation to be exploited beneficially. During the World War, Germany, making use of her dense railway network, offered a brilliant example of action along inner operational lines. The basic feature of the operational conditions in which the Red Army found itself during the civil war was complete encirclement by its enemies. This theoretical advantage was made practical as soon as we had organised a centralised apparatus for directing military operations, when we became able to use all the country's forces and resources (railways, fortified areas, etc.) in short, from the time when our army became a regular army and the whole country was transformed, materially and morally, into an armed camp.
- 7.** The Donets oasis did not manage to hold out on that occasion. After concentrating the Volunteer Army in the Kuban and Caucasia, Denikin launched a vigorous offensive against the left flank of the Southern front (the Tenth Army) at Tsaritsyn. Our forces, weakened by the enemy's uninterrupted attack, held out only with difficulty. The appearance of substantial masses of cavalry in our rear compelled the Tenth Army to fall back northward. On May 19, 1919 Denikin began his offensive against the right flank of our front, at Yuzovka. Makhno's brigade, which held this sector, did not stand up to the blow, and the enemy's cavalry broke through the gap thus made. Despite their strong resistance, the Donets workers had once again to suffer, for six months, the rule of the Whites. (For more details on these events, see the section *The Southern Front*.)
- 8.** On the loss of the Archangel and Murmansk regions see notes 74 and 78 to Volume One.

By January 1, 1919 the British expeditionary force had been joined by American and Italian forces and by detachments of Serbs, former prisoners of war. Besides seizing the territory and riches of our North, the Allies kept trying to break through to the Urals and the Volga, to link up

with Kolchak. By January 1 the enemy, who had already taken Shenkursk, was 70 versts to the North of Vologda. Our Sixth Army was at this time assigned only defensive tasks. However, this army not only beat off the enemy but also sometimes inflicted severe defeats on the White Guards. Our first success was the capture of Shenkursk. Under very difficult topographical conditions, knee-deep in snow, spending the night under the open sky in 37 degrees of frost, the Red Army men stormed Vysokaya Gora and drove the enemy out of the fortified positions that he held. In the course of a single month (down to the middle of February) our army advanced 150-200 versts. The time for decisive operations had not yet arrived.

**9.** At the end of December 1918 the Ukrainian Soviet Government had the following regular troops at its disposal: one infantry division commanded by Kropivivansky and another commanded by Aussem, the latter also including a Red Cossack regiment.

**10.** On the clash between our units and the White Guards in Estonia at the beginning of 1919, see below, note 76.

**11.** On the civil war in Finland, see note 25 to Volume I.

**12.** For the situation at the front at this moment, see Map I.

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **I. The Organisation of the Red Army**

# AN APPRECIATION OF THE STATE OF THE RED ARMY

Answer to questions put by a representative of the Soviet press

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You ask me about the general state of the Red Army. I must at the very outset tell you, as a representative of the Soviet press, that the tone in which the Soviet press talks at present about the Red Army seems to me not quite correct. Undoubtedly the Red Army has already rendered great services. But to speak of it as invincible is as yet premature. Revolutionary policy must be profoundly realistic. A policy of bluff, that is, of outward effects, verbal intimidation, military masquerades, is absolutely alien and harmful to us. From that point of view it must be said that the Red Army still has many shortcomings: there are still some weak units, and the supply services have not yet been brought up to the required level. Nevertheless, of course, it cannot be denied that the Red Army has taken a tremendous step forward during the last three or four months. This advance was made possible by all the preparatory work accomplished earlier.

We went over all at once from volunteering to the compulsory call-up of a number of age-groups. The success of this mobilisation necessitated a ramified apparatus of local military administration. This apparatus had been created. The credit for this belongs to the former Military Council, which correctly perceived its principal task as consisting in the creation of district, province, *uyezd* and *volost* military commissariats.

From its first day this Supreme Military Council made the basis of its programme the correct regulation of army formations, and it worked out what their establishments should be. But these formations did not come into being, owing to shortage of manpower, and this was due to the absence of an apparatus for carrying out mobilisation.

That was why military operations amounted to the establishment along our threatened frontier of a thin screen of volunteer units of dubious reliability. Behind this screen, intense work went ahead to create the mobilisation apparatus. [19] As soon as it was more or less ready, we made a first experiment by mobilising two age-groups of workers in Moscow. The experiment succeeded splendidly. It was extended to other provinces, and everywhere that there was an apparatus that was more or less suitable, and the will to use it, mobilisation was carried through impeccably.

The Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, which was set up in conformity with Soviet Russia's international situation, inherited from the Supreme Military Council all the necessary pre-requisites for regulating formations and for work along the right lines. But, as has been frequently reported to the appropriate institutions, with a military apparatus alone we should never have achieved the results that are now before us. The mortal danger hanging over Soviet Russia placed the War Department at the centre of attention for the Soviet power and all Soviet institutions, and resulted in a powerful influx of first-class Soviet forces into the ranks of the War Department, especially into the field institutions and field armies.

One has to have observed the process of improvement of the unreliable units and training of the young ones in the army at the front in order to appreciate the huge, really decisive importance of the infusion into the military apparatus of the revolutionary will to secure victory at any cost, and it was just this will that was contributed by the revolutionary Soviet executives, the old Communists, who put themselves at the disposal of the army.

True, it must be mentioned here that a certain proportion of the executives who have appeared at the front recently are not up to their task. And that is not surprising. Among the many thousands of commissars, organisers and agitators there could not but have percolated through some dozens, sometimes hundreds, of people who arrived where they were by accident, even some careerists who had attached themselves to the Communist banner. At the front they encounter the strict discipline which is called for by the military situation and which keeps everyone aware that, out there, it is not an amusing game that is being played but a war that is being waged to the death. Obviously, those accidental guests of ours, with their false Communist passports, experience very great dislike for the way things are done at the front, and often they try to spread their own sentiments among those around them, and to introduce these sentiments into the rear.

The political departments of the armies and fronts, which are headed by highly experienced and reliable comrades, are tirelessly digging out and eliminating such undesirable elements from among the Communist executives. Communist cells have been formed in the Red Army units, and they play an immense role in the education of the army. Here too there have been, to be sure, and are still observable, defects and misunderstandings. Some soldiers imagined that the title of Communist entailed privileges, and we saw an influx of such privilege- seekers into the cells. Communist cells which had been formed in haste sometimes displayed a tendency to compete with the commanders and commissars and to take over the running of a unit. Other Communists shirked the primary duties of a soldier of the Red Army.

I speak openly about these phenomena with all the greater freedom because they are exceptional, and evoke a resolute and firm rebuff from the overwhelming majority of the conscious executives at the front. The Party and military authorities have explained firmly that a Communist in the Red Army has no more rights than any other Red Army man – but only more duties.

As you know, the problem of the attitude towards the military specialists has been an acute one. There was a time when this question greatly worried wide circles in the Party. Now, after hundreds of authoritative Party executives have themselves worked at the front and discovered for themselves the state of affairs, no 'problem' remains regarding the military specialists. In this sphere there is not and cannot be any question of bringing up that matter on grounds of principle. It is a matter of practice and individual estimation, of the combining of forces, of drawing in suitable executives and pushing out unsuitable ones, of prosecuting traitors and giving all-round support to honest, conscientious and competent executives.

As you know, our Commander-in-chief is a military specialist. I hope that it will occur to none of the comrades who know of Comrade Vatsetis's outstanding work to reproach the Soviet power for having recruited this military specialist. In command of the fronts stand military specialists, that is, officers of the old army with higher military training. The armies are headed by both military specialists and young Soviet commanders who have been through the school of guerrilla warfare. As time goes by, such Soviet commanders will increasingly come to take over command of

large military formations, for in our epoch the experience and the role played by particular individuals increases rapidly.

Have there been cases of betrayal? Certainly, there have. They are inevitable under conditions of civil war. As well as betrayals by military specialists we have seen mutinies by conscripts. But nobody would take it into his head to reject conscription. The question has to be put in a different way: we need to appreciate that betrayals by individual specialists, when they occur nowadays, are quite unable to shake the front, still less to deal it a decisive blow. We saw that already in connection with the Muravyov experience, [The Muravyov mentioned here is the officer who commanded the Red forces defending Petrograd in November 1917, then commanded the Red forces in the Ukraine, and finally commanded on the Eastern front, against the Czechoslovaks, When he tried to lead his troops against the Soviet Government, in support of the Left SR revolt, he was shot by his own men.] when our army was as yet incomparably weaker than it is today, and was not distinguished for its steadiness.

This is not, I repeat, a question of principle, of counterposing an 'anti-officer line' to an 'officer line'. That is misunderstanding and childishness. We need to select good executives from everywhere that they are to be found, to place them in the appropriate positions, to co-ordinate experience with revolutionary will, and by so doing to strive for the results that we need.

A few months ago we formed the Central Supply Administration, and put old military workers at its head. Things didn't work out, even though there were, alongside the military specialists, some old Party workers acting as commissars. The former lacked the will to succeed, while the latter did not have the necessary understanding of the requirements inherent in the task. But during these thirteen months of the Soviet regime, military work at the province and district level has already trained new specialists for us.

Today, for example, we have appointed to head the Central Supply Administration a Party executive who has behind him a serious record as an organiser. [\[20\]](#)

On the other hand it must be said that, in the process of joint work, a number of military specialists have become fully linked with the Soviet power and even with the Party.

The fate of those officers who fled to the Ukraine and to the Don cannot offer any encouragement, either, for breaking with our authority and betraying it. On the Don and with Denikin, officers serving in the ranks make up entire companies and battalions, which are surrounded by an atmosphere of hatred from the working population, and know that they can expect no quarter. In the Ukraine the officers have besmirched themselves by entering the service of Skoropadsky and Wilhelm, and they are now left without support and will perish if Anglo-French aid does not reach them in time.

Meanwhile, that section of the officers who from the very outset placed themselves at the disposal of the government of Soviet Russia has enjoyed every opportunity to work for strengthening the country's military might. It is not to be wondered at if, among those officers who took up a hostile attitude towards the Soviet power under the influence of ignorance and calumny, there has been a mental turn-round. They have seen that the only force which during this period has remained equally hostile to German and to British imperialism was and remains the Soviet power.

I am reliably informed that such a turn-round has also occurred among a considerable section of the officers who are in the Ukraine. Many of them would like to get out of there and into Great Russia, but are afraid of encountering severe punishment. The policy of the Soviet power is not a policy of retrospective vengeance. It is governed by revolutionary expediency.

That is why, in full agreement with the leading institutions of our Party, I consider it completely possible to allow into Soviet Russia those of the former officers who come to us in a penitent spirit and state their readiness to serve in whatever post is assigned to them.

Some comrades are sometimes worried by the thought that Bonapartism will arise among us, out of the soil of the revolutionary war. That is really an anxiety which should cause nobody any sleepless nights. No doubt we have some ambitious ensigns who read Napoleon's biography. But the whole political setting, the class relations, the structure of the army, the international situation all rule out the possibility of Bonapartism. Above all, this possibility is ruled out by the powerful role played by our Communist Party: it guides the country's entire life, it makes peace, it wages war, it organises the army, it supervises the commanders, both great and small. Any scheme, whether among the military or elsewhere, to oppose the Party, to use the army for purposes alien to the Communist revolution, must inevitably suffer miserable failure. The mere notion of making such an attempt would not arise in any sane person's brain.

Regarding the further course of military events I can say no more at present. The situation is, in general, extremely favourable for us: in the East, where a fight is going on between the SRs and the Kolchakites, and in the South, where the Petlyurists are gravitating towards the Soviet power and the Communists grow stronger every day. In the West we are advancing further and further, which means, of course, that the line of our future battles lies ever further away from Moscow – if matters do come to large-scale, decisive battles with the forces of Anglo-French imperialism. The Defence Council is now carrying through with all possible vigour the militarising of the country's forces and resources. The productivity of our war factories is rising – in some of them it has risen very considerably. We have undoubtedly become richer than many suppose in the matter of supplies. We need to mobilise our wealth. In particular we need to collect in the small arms at present held by the population. This is now being done. In the rear there are many formations which will be hurled into battle at the decisive moment. Our shortcomings are many, our tasks are immense, but we have every justification for looking to the future with confidence.

That is all I can tell you.

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## Endnotes

**19.** On the screens, see note 48 to Volume I.

**20.** The Central Supply Administration of the Red Army was formed on June 1, 1918. All the main supply administrations and institutions were placed under its authority. The Central Supply Administration was headed by a Council consisting of a Chief Supply Officer, who was a specialist, and two commissars. This form of organisation lasted until December 1918, when, with the appointment of Comrade Mezhlauk as head of the Central Supply Administration, the principle of one-man management was introduced.

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **I. The Organisation of the Red Army**

# A CONTRIBUTION TO THE EIGHTH CONGRESS OF THE RUSSIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

A talk with representatives of the press [\[21\]](#)

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**I** shall not, unfortunately, be able to take part in the Party Congress, which will be of exceptional importance and at which, in particular, the work of the War Department will be discussed.

I do not think that the question of the Party programme will give occasion for disputes and heated arguments. The formulation of the programme cannot, of course, be regarded as irreproachable, but I think that, by and large, this task will be disposed of. It may be that there remain just a few formulations here and there still needing to be clarified.

What may give rise to big debates and conflicts of opinion at the congress is the question of organisation. In some fairly extensive circles of the Party there can be no doubt that dissatisfaction is to be observed with the work of the Party's central apparatus.

Comrades complain of the inadequacy of systematic guidance from the centre, the absence of correct distribution of the Party's forces, and so on and so forth.

However, I consider it necessary to say that a good deal of the criticism that we hear on this matter is too sweeping.

Our Party of the working class has had to give answers to questions of world importance under historical conditions without precedent. It has had, depending on changes in the world situation, to alter its own course – not, obviously, in the sense of principle but in the operational, the 'manoeuvring' sense, so to speak: from the offensive it has had to go over to a temporarily defensive position, to discern the most dangerous enemy at each given moment, in internal and external politics alike, to concentrate the Party's whole attention and all its forces now on one, now on another urgent task, and so on. I think that this aspect of the conduct of our Party's policy has been well performed, and our Party has emerged with honour from very great difficulties. But precisely the gigantic scale of events has created ever new combinations of political conditions and groupings and has to an extraordinary degree hindered correct, systematic work, correct assessment of all the Party's forces and correct allocation of these forces to different branches of work.

Thus, when our military situation greatly worsened last summer, the Party, on the initiative of the Central Committee, gave many thousands of its best executives to the front. Such a re-shuffling of the Party's forces could not, of course, be carried out in completely orderly fashion, with proper evaluation of the qualities and capacities of each individual. But that resulted from the very situation itself.

In the 17 months of its existence the Soviet Republic first expanded, then contracted, then expanded again. These processes could not be foreseen, of course, by any Central Committee. They took place with extreme rapidity and

evoked direct organisational consequences. In the first period there was a spontaneous scattering of Party forces over the whole expanding territory of Soviet Russia. Then there was an equally spontaneous concentration of these forces within the boundaries of Great Russia. Then, once more, an equally rapid dispersion of Party forces over the liberated regions, though in this last period the distribution of Party forces undoubtedly took place in a more planned way.

Finally, we have to pay attention to yet one more important circumstance which the comrades from the provinces are inclined to ignore. In the first period of the Soviet regime an extraordinary growth of spontaneous separatism was observed. Local executive committees and Party organisations, occupied with fresh and pressing problems in the localities, became almost completely cut off from the centre, troubled themselves little about establishing links with it, and were even inclined to regard any intervention from the centre, whether Party or departmental, as interference, an enormous amount of energy was expended in that period in establishing the most elementary links between the centre and the periphery and restoring some sort of centralised apparatus that could function.

After that crisis had passed, a phenomenon of the opposite kind began to be noticeable in Party circles. The localities often started to demand of the centre more than it was really in a position to give. Unable to cope with local tasks owing to their tremendous complexity and novelty, the comrades in the localities often groundlessly blamed the centre for not giving them guidance. No doubt the congress will, in this matter too, in a purely practical, businesslike way, so to speak, pose and decide all the relevant questions.

The other acute issue is the military question: I am personally very sorry that I cannot take part in the debates on this question: with the Central Committee's approval, I am again leaving for the front. *But I feel no disquiet regarding the decision that the Party may take where further work in building the army is concerned.*

By force of circumstances we were obliged to concentrate our main efforts, most of the Party's executives and a considerable share of the country's material resources in the War Department. Thanks to the intense work that we were compelled by those circumstances to carry out, we acquired great experience in building the army.

Some comrades thought, at first, that the army would have to be built in the form of well-organised guerrilla units. This view was widely held in the period following the breakdown in the Brest-Litovsk negotiations. Those who defended this view proceeded from the conception that we had neither the time, nor the material means, nor the necessary commanding personnel, to build a centralised army.

However, the work took a different road. The guerrilla detachments were transformed into a provisional screen behind which work went on in the rear for the building of a centralised army.

After several months of exertion and failure, the Party succeeded, thanks to a great concentration of forces, in breathing life into this work.

Opposition to the recruitment of military specialists was very strong, and to a certain extent given justification by the fact that, especially in the period of our external reverses, the majority of the military specialists held back from work, and sometimes even went over to the enemy.

The Central Committee, however, considered that this phenomenon was of a transient character, and that if we managed to cope with our other tasks we should, at the same time, get the military specialists to work in the way we wanted.

The facts showed that we were right. We created at the fronts an army with a centralised apparatus of administration and command, and we went over from retreat to advance, from failure to big successes.

Many of the most serious and responsible Party workers who left for the front as determined opponents of our military system, and, in particular, of our appointment of regular officers to responsible posts, became after a few months' work convinced supporters of this system. Personally, I do not know of a single exception to this statement.

There were, of course, among the comrades who left for the fronts, not a few chance elements, and even real adventurers, who had found the ground under their feet had become too hot in the rear and who, having, by fair means or foul, made their way into the Party, then tried, at the front, to play tricks to their own advantage upon the military leaders.

When they found themselves up against a firm regime there, and sometimes actual repressive measures, such elements naturally set up a howl of resentment against our military regime. They are a minority, of course, but their criticism reinforces the dissatisfaction with the War Department which exists in some Party circles.

The causes of this dissatisfaction are numerous. The army now absorbs forces and means to an extent that violates the laws and interests of work in other spheres. The comrades who serve in the Red Army, being always subject to the imperative pressure of its needs and requirements, sometimes, in their turn, exert pressure in an extremely sharp form upon workers and institutions belonging to other departments- This then produces a sharp reaction on the part of the latter.

War is a very harsh and severe business, especially when it is waged by an exhausted country which has undergone a revolution and is setting before the working class immense tasks in every sphere. Discontent with the fact that the army and the war are exploiting and exhausting the country seeks ways of expressing itself, and is far from always directed to the right address. Since it is not possible to deny the need for the Red Army and the inevitability of waging the war that has been forced on us, all that is left is to attack the method and the system.

However, of the previous, principled presentation of the question, advocating purely guerrilla units, headed - by revolutionary workers, without any participation by military specialists and without any attempt to create centralised army fronts and state-wide apparatuses of command - of that principled presentation of the question not a trace remains.

For example, the criticism expressed in the resolution from the Urals Regional Committee is abstract, fortuitous and shape less in character, and amounts - if the Committee will pardon my saying so - to a mild grumble.

The military specialists, they claim, are needed, but we should act, so far as possible, as though we did not need them. We ought, they claim, to create a body of Red commanders - as though the War Department were not already doing this.

It would be a good thing if the Congress were to ask the Urals Regional Committee just how many Red officers it has contributed, what is the percentage of Communists among the Red officers from the Urals, what is the quality of the units formed by the Urals Regional Committee, and in what way these are superior to the Red regiments formed in other places. It must be said, in all conscience, that this superiority would not be apparent.

I have more than once had to put it to our comrade critics 'from the Left': 'If you consider that our method of formation is bad, create for us one single division by your methods, choose *your* commanders, show us *your* way of carrying on political work: the War Department will help you by providing all the resources you will need.'

Such an experiment, even if it succeeded, would, of course, be far from possessing demonstrative force, because they might be able to find a choice complement of both Red Army men and commanders for a *single division*. In any case, though, our critics might have learnt something from trying this experiment.

But alas, I have met no desire among them to take up this challenge, and criticism has shifted from one question to another, keeping up its irritated tone but remaining, in general, absolutely abstract and formless.

### **En Route\***

March 17, 1919

\* **En Route (V Puti)** was the title of the newspaper published from Trotsky's train.

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### **Endnotes**

**21.** The Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) was held in Moscow on March 18-23, 1919 (see note 69 to Volume 1). Comrade Trotsky's theses entitled *Our policy in creating the army* were included in Volume I. Owing to Comrade Trotsky's departure for the Eastern front, the fundamental report on military matters was given by Comrade Sokolnikov. After a co-report by Comrade Smirnov a prolonged debate on military policy took place in the special military commission of the Congress. After discussion, the Congress approved the theses presented by Comrade Trotsky.

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **I. The Organisation of the Red Army**

# OUR TASKS

Interview given to a *Rosta* correspondent

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On the Eastern front I convinced myself of something about which, moreover, I had no doubt even before I went there: namely, that our setback on that front is not dangerous, and still less catastrophic, in character. [\[22\]](#)

The setback constituted by the loss of Ufa is, of course, a serious one. The retreat by our units was not halted everywhere, and where it was halted the necessary steadiness was not achieved in every case. However, if we consider the conditions in which our war is being fought we should rather be surprised that we do not suffer isolated setbacks more frequently than we do.

We are fighting on a front 8,000 versts long. Our army has grown quite large, but if we take into account the incredible length of the front, it is clear that we are compelled to stretch our military manpower to an extreme extent. The reinforcements that we send are often, so to speak, semi-finished, in need of further processing, and before they become integrated into the organism they may for a certain period even weaken it.

The question of reinforcements is now the most important sphere of work for the military authorities. The army at the fronts has been defined and established, the cadres have been formed and tempered in battle. It is necessary, therefore, to keep the numbers of the fighting armies up to the required level. (Their losses in dead and wounded and, most important, through illness, are rather large.) At the same time, the reinforcements must be of the right quality, from both the military and the political standpoint. The sources from which reinforcements are drawn are the holding units in the rear. All the human material passes through them. Consequently we must keep these holding units at the proper level, both militarily and politically.

It has to be said plainly that the political side is lagging badly here. The reasons for this are known. All the political workers are over-burdened with all manner of Soviet work, and the result is that agitation is very much neglected: not only in the countryside and in the army, but even among the workers, the agitation and education sections are not coping with their task, and cannot cope, since they do not possess the necessary forces. The best agitators are filling various responsible posts. There remains another method – drawing into the work the Party organisation as such, that is, obliging every responsible political worker, regardless of the post he occupies, to perform work in the sphere of agitation and enlightenment, both generally and, in particular, in the army.

Some extremely light-minded people who are unable to forget anything and don't want to learn anything continue to say that the reinforcements are poor politically because the work of formation has been handed over entirely to military specialists. But that is the purest nonsense. It is precisely at the head of the local military administrations in the rear – the commissariats in the *uyezds*, provinces and districts – that more or less responsible political workers have been placed. Under the new establishments, the military specialists have simply been turned into technical

assistants. [23] Thus, all power is in the hands of the political worker who acts as commissar. Blaming the shortcomings in political work on the military specialist simply means indulging in enervating gossip.

Our task now is to create a firm nucleus of conscious workers in every holding battalion. This will be, so to speak, a leaven which must be safeguarded, and expended only in proportion as it naturally increases. Around this nucleus the less conscious elements will crystallise. All experience testifies how important it is not to allow alien class elements, which in practice means kulaks, into the army. Here, however, we come up against the difficulty of defining the line that distinguishes the middle peasant from the kulak. This question will be decided quite differently in different provinces, depending on the local conditions of economic life. But the military commissars, acting on their own, cannot decide this question. We touch here, generally speaking, on the fundamental question of our policy towards the middle peasant. Since this question has been put on the order of the day as the most important one, both in practical life and in the decisions taken by our leading institutions, there can be no doubt that practical methods for distinguishing between a middle peasant and a kulak will be laid down as fully as is necessary for the guidance of local workers. And this will make it possible for us to keep kulaks out of the Red Army and to oust them from the sphere of military training.

Among the causes that have influenced the lessening of staunchness on certain sectors of the front I cannot refrain from pointing to the itch to criticise which has seized hold of some comrades. I do not at all mean to imply that criticism of military policy is impermissible, or even undesirable. It is both permissible and desirable, although up to now nobody has offered any criticism that has substance to it. They merely catch up with the work of the War Department several months late, and, retaining their itch to engage in criticism, try to find, so to speak, new points at which to apply it. What is certainly impermissible, though, is that political workers who do not share the viewpoint of our military system, or who merely feel a vague hostility toward it, should be allowed to work at the front. An army is not a discussion group, and this is especially the case when it is an army engaged in battle with the enemy. We need workers who believe in their work and are competent to perform it, without looking over their shoulders, or sideways: otherwise it will not prove hard to 'loosen up' even the very best of armies.

If, I repeat, we keep in mind the length of our front and the extent of the territory over which the Red Army has fought its way during the winter, the prolonged preparation our enemies have carried out for their simultaneous spring offensive, the link between this offensive and the carefully prepared revolts, to which the Left SRs have contributed their experience of illegality and their illegal apparatus, we can say with complete confidence that the army has stood up splendidly to the united onslaught of our enemies.

I hope and believe that the period immediately ahead will see successes for us.

March 27, 1919  
Kazan-Moscow

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## Endnotes

22. On the situation on the Eastern front at this time, see below, note 70.

**23.** During the existence of the Supreme Military Council and in the first period after the organisation of the military commissariats (see note 48 to Volume I), the latter were headed by military specialists, each of whom was flanked by two commissars. From the second half of 1919 new establishments were introduced, under which responsibility for military work, in the military districts, provinces and *uyezds* was placed on the military commissars: military leaders from among the specialists were appointed to work with them as technical assistants.

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **I. The Organisation of the Red Army**

# IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS IN BUILDING THE ARMY

## Letter to the Revolutionary War Councils of the Armies and the Fronts

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In recent months the armies of the Soviet Republic have suffered very serious setbacks, but have also had very important successes. Our setbacks have been due, if we leave partial factors aside, to one fundamental cause: *inadequacy in the supply services*, which has prevented us from sending reinforcements to the front in good time. The inadequacy of the supply services has, in its turn, been due to a considerable extent to the extreme insufficiency of organisation at the centre: the Central War Procurement Council has sometimes come under the War Department, sometimes under the Supreme Economic Council, while the Extraordinary Supply Committee has stood between these two departments, lacking its own apparatus, and the Central Supply Administration is concerned with distribution, and has no organisational link with the procurement organs. Now, under the influence of the severe lessons we have been taught, an organisation has been set up which, provided it is vigorously and completely set in motion, will give the desired results. Comrade Rykov has been put in charge of the entire work of supply for the armed forces, and the apparatuses of the Central War Procurement Council, the Extraordinary Supply Committee and the Central Supply Administration have all been placed under his authority. [\[24\]](#)

The fundamental reasons for our setbacks have not always been clear to wide sections of the Party. Moreover, the very fact that there have been setbacks has evoked a mood of alarm which is the more intense the further one goes from the front. This is also understandable. Those who work at the front not only know better what the reasons are for the setbacks, they also see more clearly that, essentially, not a great deal is needed in order to bring about a turn and secure victory. In the rear our set backs on the Southern front, which are certainly very palpable, have again given rise, along with panicky moods, to a wave of 'criticism' directed against the foundations of our constructive work in the military sphere, which have taken shape through long experience and collective work by many Party workers. Most loudly do we hear resounding, in the Party press and at meetings held in the rear, the voices of those Party members who make quick visits to the front and then give out their superficial observations as the latest conclusions from military practice. Also of no small importance in the rear are those executives who have been removed from the Revolutionary War Councils of various fronts owing to their patent unfitness for responsible military work. The result is an utter distortion of the actual state of things. In some circles of the Party, for example, we find an attempt being made to re-kindle the argument about the military specialists, at a time when, in those of our armies which are to some extent well-ordered and organised, this has long ceased to be a matter for argument. At the same time, the real questions which have arisen from the development of the army are left without any serious, practical discussion based on the experience we have obtained. The desire expressed by the Congress for periodical conferences of responsible Party workers active in the War Department is extremely difficult to satisfy, especially at the present grave moment. Such a conference would possess significance and authority provided that it was attended by the most responsible workers, but it is quite impossible to take them away from the front in these critical days and weeks.

Direct exchange of views between the most responsible workers in the army can be accomplished to some extent through written communications in the form of reports, resolutions and so on, where the most important and urgent questions relating to the construction of the army are concerned. The present circular deals with some of these questions.

## PROBLEMS OF SUPPLY

Experience has shown that unification of each front [The term 'front' is used in this work both in its usual sense and in that of the group of forces responsible for a certain front more or less what is called in British military terminology an 'army group'.] is effective, in the main, operationally. In the supply and political spheres the armies lead a life that is actually, to a considerable extent, independent of the front command. Attempts to secure an excessive degree of centralism in these spheres have up to now led to unfavourable results. Our railways work too slowly for it to be possible for us, relying upon them, quickly to manoeuvre military freight from the centre of a front. For this reason, supply to the armies of a front cannot be based on front depots. The decisive role is necessarily played by army depots and reserves.

The task of the front supply organs must therefore consist not in actually concentrating material reserves under their control and distributing them as required, but in ensuring that each army has in good time the supplies that it needs for a protracted period, and in establishing in every army a reliable, business like, enterprising supply apparatus which can independently issue all supplies with the necessary accounting and the appropriate economy. In other words, the role of the front supply organs is predominantly that of middlemen and that of super visors and inspectors.

While not aiming at excessive centralism in front supply work, we need to establish at the front some organs of guidance, vigorous and possessed of initiative, whose task will consist in setting up a mechanism of army supply which can ensure rapid and timely provision of footwear, rifles, grease and cartridges from army stores to the soldiers who need them. We must eliminate, at all costs, the criminal red-tapeism of the army supply organs and the barren bureaucratism which has succeeded the chaos which previously prevailed, not replacing but merely supplementing it. Indents go up from company level through regiment, brigade and division to army, taking an extremely long time, and the equipment asked for is sent down through the same channel by which the paper went up. Mean while, the units which asked for the supplies in question have changed their composition, have been transferred, dissolved, attached to different formations, and soon. As a result, the boot never reaches the soldier's foot. We must ensure that the army supply organ has before it a clear picture of the entitlements and deficiencies of every unit, a picture continually checked through tours made by its inspectors, and through operational and political reports. The army supply organ must itself direct the through goods-trains and columns carrying the appropriate equipment to the units most in need of this, the transport to be accompanied by clerks who can issue the necessary articles on the spot and see to the relevant book-keeping. We have to make the supply chiefs look out for a soldier's bare foot or empty bandolier, so as to see to it that the former is shod and the latter replenished, without waiting passively for the indents to come up and busying themselves with paper work that takes no account of the mobile character of the war, which calls for rapid initiative and mobility on the part of the army supply administration.

To give the army supply service a wide degree of independence, to place substantial stores at its disposal, to teach it to use this independence in the interests of the cause and to punish severely all sluggishness, bureaucratism and uneconomic expenditure of public property – that is the task of the front supply administration and of the centre which stands behind it.

With this kind of regime the army units will need to resort much less than now to 'bagmanship' ['Bagmanship' alludes to the illegal, speculative activities of the 'bagman' – persons who set out from the towns into the countryside, equipped with bags, in order to buy grain privately and then sell it at inflated prices in the towns. Trotsky is saying that, owing to the deficiencies in the regular supply service, army units were having to engage in this kind of activity in order to feed themselves.] and other such forms of supply. Nevertheless, taking account of the volume of the requirements of our nine regimental divisions, [25] the inadequacy of means of transport and the variety of places in which the divisions have to operate, we need to allow for the fact that no foresight on the part of the higher organs can exempt the divisional apparatus from the necessity of satisfying some requirements through independent procurement activity in the localities. This type of activity is at present semi-legal and sometimes illegal in character, and for that very reason it often goes beyond the limits of strict necessity. This also applies to the borrowing of equipment from the depots of different institutions – mainly, of course, those of the War Department – when moving along the front line or during a retreat. Insofar as independent procurement operations on the spot, or borrowing from local depots and stores without the appropriate authority, are due to urgent need, this kind of activity cannot, of course, be subjected to regulation. Nevertheless, it can and must be legalised and brought to order through the working out of general instructions governing these matters. We have to instil in unit commanders and commissars, and in the local authorities, the realisation that, while maintaining absolute respect for centralism and proper form, they must put the interests of the cause first and foremost, and in those cases in which it is obvious what these interests are, independent initiative must be exercised by the appropriate command, acting with the appropriate Soviet authorities, on their own responsibility. Thus, when our forces withdrew from some *uyezds* of Kharkov, Kursk and Voronezh provinces, the nearest command did not take the decision to requisition the horses which it needed so badly. In the localities, the commissariats referred to the absence of permission from the district to take this action. As a result, the horses were left for Denikin's men who used them to chase the Red Army forces still further off. In justification of this disgraceful conduct, some commanders and commissars mentioned their fear of being court-martialled for arbitrary conduct. A penalty should be imposed for this sort of passive washing of hands, a penalty not less severe than that for arbitrary squandering of public property not justified by circumstances.

## THE POLITICAL DEPARTMENTS AND THE COMMISSARS

After the political departments of the fronts were reduced to small cells, a further tendency was observed to shift the centre of gravity of the work from the political departments of the armies to those of the divisions. This tendency was absolutely correct. Nevertheless, it ought not to lead (as it has been seen to lead in a few cases) to the almost complete abolition of army political departments, which has made it impossible to carry out constant supervision and guidance of the work of Communists in the fighting units. It remains one of the principal tasks of the political department of the army to guide by all available means the work of the commissars, especially the regimental commissars, on whom, to a considerable

extent, the organisation of our army rests.

In some Party circles the criticism has been put forward that commissars sometimes reduce their role to formal supervision of the work of the military specialists, with a view to ensuring that no counter-revolutionary measures are taken, and do not concern themselves with the actual content of this work. This sort of thing happens, undoubtedly, to the extent that, in general, we have bad commissars, bad political departments and weak Revolutionary War Councils. The commissar is not, of course, called upon to *replace* the regimental commander or the head of the supply unit, nor even less to *oust* them, when they are present, but he is indeed called upon to *supplement* them, not only through vigilant supervision, so that all the regiment's needs are attended to, but also by showing direct Initiative, direct creative effort, hand in hand with the commander or the head of the supply unit. And this is what happens wherever the commissar is up to his job, when he sees himself as the responsible representative of the workers' and peasants' power, and when, remaining free from vain concern about precedence or trivial fault-finding, he wins for himself the leading position in the regiment through his vigilance, thought fulness and indefatigability.

One of the most important duties of the army's political department is the bringing forward of suitable candidates for the responsible post of regimental commissar.

## PROBLEMS OF FORMATION

The Red Army which is now in action was formed and, indeed, is still now being formed, in two ways: from guerrilla units, generally irregular or semi-regular in character, which arose in the process of the civil war, and from formations that came into being in the rear, organised by the military districts in accordance with the regulations laid down by the All-Russia General Staff. Both types of formation have been subjected, and continue to be subjected, to further processing at the fronts, and only as a result of that do they become units capable of combat.

The poor state of a number of units sent from the rear to the front has naturally evoked complaints from the workers at the front, and has even given rise to a demand for the ending of all the work of formation done in the rear, reducing the role of the rear to that of supplying raw human material as reinforcements for the units operating at the fronts. Some even extend this view retrospectively to the initial period of the building of the army, declaring that it was a mistake ever to have attempted to build divisions in the rear.

It is quite obvious, though, that until some more or less solid and reliable cadres had been created at the fronts, the building of the Red Army could not proceed otherwise than by way of formations organised in the rear. In the creation of those staunch divisions that we now have at the fronts the formations organised in the rear, with their proper organisation of supply and transport services, and so on, played a role no less important than that of the non-regular fighting units.

However, even after reliable divisions had been created at the fronts, the task of army-formation could not be reduced to the mere providing of reinforcement drafts. The progress of operations, the increase in the number of the fronts, always required that both front commanders and the central command should have at their disposal from time to time a fresh reserve in the shape of new formations. In the

most recent period a considerable number of units have been formed in this way, especially in the fortified areas. The Revolutionary War Council of the Republic has endeavoured to keep these formations close to the fronts, empowering the latter to exercise general observation over them.

It is extremely important to check over all the experience we have accumulated in this sphere. Some responsible workers affirm that, in the last analysis, those regiments have proved to be the best that were formed in the rear, where they were given proper organisation from the start, and then subjected to education and tempering at the front. It seems absolutely necessary that each Revolutionary War Council should carry out, on the basis of all the information available to it, a survey of the regiments that make up its armies, noting the history of each regiment's genesis, that is, whether it developed from a guerrilla detachment or was formed in the rear in conformity with staff establishments, or came into being as a combination of both. Only such a survey will provide us with precise pointers for further constructive work.

We have to create and develop an army under conditions that are quite exceptional and without precedent in their difficulty. While aiming at complete accuracy in military formation, we must at the same time avoid any stereotyping. We need to evaluate carefully the experience obtained from our own work, so as to avoid the riding of 'hobby-horses', such as the mechanical centralisation of supply work, the demand for complete abolition of formations organised in the rear, and so on. It is therefore absolutely necessary that the Revolutionary War Councils of the armies should formulate their conclusions concerning all the questions raised in this letter, after subjecting them to preliminary discussion by the most responsible workers, both military specialists and political executives.

In view of the extreme difficulty of taking responsible workers away from the armies for a conference, especially in the present grave period, a questionnaire like this can serve to a certain extent as a substitute for the exchange of experience which we need, and provide valuable material for further measures to be taken in the interests of developing and strengthening the Red Army.

Replies, even if only in preliminary form, must be submitted not later than August 15.

July 12, 1919  
Voronezh-Kursk

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## Endnotes

**24.** Unification of all the supply organs in the Republic was effected by a decree of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee dated July 9, 1919. The principal provisions of this decree were as follows: 'In order to unify the entire work of supplying the Red Army, apart from the supply of products furnished by the People's Commissariat of Food, and to increase the productivity of factories working for defence, and also the speed and accuracy of the distribution of articles of supply, both in the rear and at the front, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee has decided: (1) to appoint Comrade A. Rykov as Extraordinary Plenipotentiary of the Workers' and Peasants' Defence Council for Supply to the Red Army and the Red Navy: (2) to include the Extraordinary Plenipotentiary of the Defence Council in the membership of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic: (3) to subordinate all the supply organs of the People's Commissariat for Military and Naval Affairs, central and local, in the rear and at the front, together with the Extraordinary Commission for Red Army Supply and the Central Department for Army Procurements, with all their local organs, to the Extraordinary Plenipotentiary of the Defence

Council, on whom are conferred unlimited powers to appoint, dismiss, arrest and prosecute all officials subordinate to him or concerned with the work of army supply.'

**25.** The establishment laid down in Order No.220 provided for a large quantity of means of transport. An infantry division was to have 612 vehicles for food transport purposes alone, not counting 184 vehicles for each infantry brigade and the regimental transport. In reality the quantity of means of transport available was much less than that laid down in the establishment, and this caused great difficulty in the organising of supply to military units.

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **I. The Organisation of the Red Army**

# GUERRILLA-ISM AND THE REGULAR ARMY

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In the struggle against the disintegrating insurgent movement, a certain confusion of concepts has occurred which may subsequently lead to serious practical inconveniences. This applies especially to the concept of *guerrilla-ism*. In articles in our newspapers and in speeches this has of late come to be identified usually with absence of discipline, Makhnovism, Grigoryevism, banditry, and so on. And yet guerrilla-ism, which coincides to a considerable extent with the concept of 'small-scale war', constitutes (if not as a legitimate offspring, then as a legally-adopted child) an element in official military doctrine. While war, generally speaking, has as its aim the overthrow of the enemy, *small-scale war* ('guerrilla') has the task of causing difficulties to the enemy and doing him damage. From the angle of the organising of operations, small-scale war is characterised by a large degree of independence of the separate units.

Semi-spontaneous insurgent actions such as we have seen in the Ukraine always include a guerrilla element. But guerrilla-ism by no means always signifies the action of spontaneously-arisen unarmed or poorly armed detachments. Guerrilla warfare can be a method of operation for thoroughly well-formed mobile units which, for all the autonomy they enjoy, are strictly subordinate to an operational headquarters. In fighting now against the Makhnov movement in all its manifestations, including the pseudo-Communist ones, we do not, of course, reject the necessity and expediency of guerrilla activity. On the contrary, we can say with confidence that this will assume increasing importance as the war goes on. Certain critics have frequently charged our method of waging the war with ponderousness, contrasting to this the need for a lighter, more flexible, more mobile strategy, allowing greater independence to separate mobile units. Proceeding, amongst other things, from this notion, Tarasov-Rodionov (see his laughable 'theses' in **Voyennoye Dyelo**) [A. Tarasov-Rodionov, a brigade commander during the civil war, became a writer after 1921. His novel about the Cheka, **Chocolate** (1922), appeared in an English translation in 1933. He was among the accused in one of the trials of the late 1930s and either died in prison or was executed in 1938.] has argued that it is unnecessary and even harmful to recruit military specialists whose thinking has become petrified in the concepts and practices of positional warfare. [26] Tarasov-Rodionov's 'proletarian' strategy, which is incompatible with the passivity and temporising of positional warfare, calls for mobility, local initiative and impetuosity – counting always on finding fresh sources of supply in the enemy's rear.

Leaving aside for the moment the question of the direction in which our strategy will develop, one cannot refrain from noting at this point that the methods of 'proletarian' warfare which, in Tarasov-Rodionov's view, render the old 'positional'-minded officers useless for us, are actually neither more nor less than a precise description of the methods and procedures of Dutov, Kaledin, Kornilov, Krasnov and Denikin. It is they who do not maintain a solid front, it is in their armies that great importance is assigned to mobile units, mostly of cavalry, it is precisely the method of guerrilla warfare employed by Shkuro, Pokrovsky and others that consists in feeling for the enemy's weak spot, so as to avoid his main nucleus, thrusting into his deep rear and finding there fresh sources of supply from the bourgeois and kulak elements of the population. Thus, this strategy, which 'Communist' phrasemongers try to legitimise as the new proletarian strategy, considering it to be beyond the

brains of Tsarist generals, has in practice been applied, up to now, most widely, persistently and successfully, by none other than those **same** generals. Experience testifies that 'small-scale war' or guerrilla warfare, in the sense of the word defined above, can in certain circumstances be an extremely sharp weapon in the hands of *both* of the classes contending in a civil war. But when one is proposing, essentially, that we learn guerrilla methods from Kolchak (ski-ers!) or Denikin (cavalry!), it is silly to chatter at the same time about the 'positional' obtuseness of Tsarist generals.

'Small-scale war,' guerrilla warfare, as a predominant type of warfare, is the weapon used by a weaker against a stronger adversary. The stronger tries to destroy, to annihilate the weaker. The latter, aware of his weakness, but not giving up the struggle, and evidently expecting that some changes will occur later on, strives in the meantime to weaken and disorganise his stronger enemy.

'Large-scale war' (with huge masses, unity of front, centralised leadership, and so on) is aimed at exterminating the enemy. 'Small-scale war' (light, mobile units operating with a considerable degree of independence of each other) is aimed at weakening and tiring out the enemy. Durov, Krasnov and Denikin counted for a long time on getting help from outside. Their task was to hinder the Soviet power, not to let it have any rest, to cut important regions off from it, destroy railway communication with the borderlands, and prevent the development of broad, planned economic work. The natural method of the weaker side was small-scale war.

The Soviet power has been all the time, and is still, the stronger side. Its task, to crush the enemy so as to free its hands for socialist construction, has not altered since the day that Soviet power arose. In the first period, when the Russian White Guards' hopes of aid from Germany, and later from France and Britain, were quite realistic, and when the White Guards confined their activity, for the time being, to weakening the Soviet centre by blows struck from the borderlands, the Soviet power strove to eradicate without delay its enemies in the borderlands, so as not to allow them to survive until intervention came from outside. Consequently, even in the period of its initial military weakness, the Soviet power sought to form a centralised army and to establish a continuous front, to oppose the disorganising guerrilla raids of the enemy.

Thus, it was precisely the political position of the proletariat as the ruling class that led it to adopt the more ponderous forms of military organisation, in contrast to the 'Tsarist generals' who, as rebels, focused their experience and ingenuity upon the development and application of mobile, guerrilla, 'small-scale' warfare. Looking back at the conquest by the Whites of Siberia and Archangel, and their brief conquest of the Volga towns, or at the enemy's successes on the Western front, and to a considerable extent also at Denikin's successes in the South, it is impossible not to see that the principal role in all these operations was played by raids, breakthroughs, and deep turning movements, supplemented by revolts or conspiracies in the rear, or in the Red Army itself - in other words, just those methods which Tarasov-Rodionov puts forward as specifically proletarian, as against the positional methods of the generals.

But here it must be said that, the less hope that remained for direct intervention from Europe, and the more seriously that Denikin's own successes developed, like Kolchak's earlier, the more noticeable it became that both of them tried to form a more or less continuous front and a centralised administration of large military

groupings, that is, to go over from 'small-scale' warfare as the *main* form to 'large-scale' warfare, which is merely supplemented by the raids of 'small-scale' warfare. What was expressed in this change of strategy on the part of Kolchak and Denikin was that, once they had lost hope of military aid from without, they had to take upon themselves the task of not just weakening but actually destroying the Soviet power with their own forces. This was what necessitated the transition from small-scale to large-scale warfare – the reason for the inevitable downfall of Kolchak and Denikin, since a mass White-Guard army is bound to disintegrate.

Well-conducted 'small-scale' war imposes on every participant demands that are certainly not lighter than those of 'large scale' war but, on the contrary, heavier. I repeat, one must not confuse a rebellion that lacks military experience with guerrilla warfare as such. The revolt of the Ukrainian peasants against the German occupation and Skoropadsky's rule, or the revolt of the kulaks against the Soviet power, differed profoundly in their methods from the operations of Generals Shkuro and Pokrovsky. In the one case we have groups that rebel in a semi-spontaneous way, quite chaotic, organised and armed somehow or other, and aiming their blows gropingly. In the other case we have properly-organised units, everything well-thought-out down to the last detail, with a big percentage of trained men (officers), with well-adapted equipment and armament, and carrying out well-calculated military operations, free of any element of 'adventurism'.

It is quite clear that what we have here are two profoundly different categories, which cannot simply be fitted into the pattern of 'generals' strategy and 'proletarian' strategy, as Tarasov-Rodionov wants to present them, but which represent different conditions, different stages in the civil war, and are at different moments a weapon wielded sometimes by one or the other of the contending classes and sometimes by both at the same time.

Our Red Army arose from Red Guard detachments and rebel peasant detachments, which only later were brought together for more or less thorough formation in the rear. The Red Guard and peasant detachments were able to achieve successes only in the period of the first stormy revolutionary upsurge of the working masses, when general confusion and dismay reigned among the almost unarmed possessing classes. Unified operational leadership could be given to the Red Guard and rebel detachments only to an extremely limited degree. The operational lines were in fact the lines along which the revolution itself developed. The detachments advanced along the line of least resistance, that is, in the direction in which they encountered the greatest sympathy and co-operation, where it was easiest to stir up revolt by the working masses. In that period the command could not set itself independent operational tasks, and was, in the main, not free to choose the direction of its blows: it could only unify to a certain extent the pressure exerted by the detachments, which advanced almost like the waters of melting glaciers rolling down mountainsides.

If we conceive guerrilla warfare as a method of light, swift manoeuvring and sharp thrusts, it is clear that the rebel detachments, through their very primitiveness and the extreme inexperience of their fighters and commanders, were least of all suitable for genuine guerrilla operations.

Contrariwise, it was much easier for Denikin, who had at his disposal a large number of regular officers (allegedly forever in the grip of 'positional' obtuseness) to form well-constructed mobile detachments capable of carrying out precise and absolutely responsible enterprises of a 'guerrilla' character.

It would have been the purest nonsense if our central command, hypnotised by the patterns of positional warfare, had not sought from the very start to bring more flexibility and initiative into operations and to accord an adequate place to cavalry raids, but in the initial period all our efforts in that direction came to grief on the inadequacy of trained human material.

Guerrilla operations call for very high qualities on the part of commanders – from the leader of the unit down to the senior soldier in one of its sections – and a high level of military training among the rank-and-file. It was just this that we lack ed. Besides which, we hadn't enough cavalrymen and saddle horses. If we see mobile warfare as the speciality of the working class (which is a one-sided view) and see cavalry as a necessary factor in mobile warfare (which is quite right), we shall have to recognise, not without surprise, that cavalry flourishes most successfully in what are precisely the most backward parts of the country – on the Don, in the area of the Ural-Host, [The Ural Host were the Cossacks of the River Ural (also known as the Yaik), which runs southward from the Ural Mountains into the Caspian Sea.] in the steppes of Siberia, and so on. A whole series of the most outstanding of our foes, such as Kornilov, Dutov, Kaledin, Krasnov are or were cavalrymen. . .

The same situation was to be observed over half-a-century ago, in the civil war in North America, where the reactionary, slaveowning Southern states enjoyed a tremendous superiority in cavalry, and, in accordance with this, and also with the generally higher level of training of their numerous commanders, were distinguished by incomparably greater capacity for manoeuvring and initiative than was possessed by the revolutionary and progressive Northerners. [\[27\]](#)

The shortage of cavalry, an arm most difficult to train, obliged our command to try to create a mounted infantry that would be capable of mobile warfare, but owing to the low level of the infantry units and the shortage of saddle-horses, this task was not accomplished, either, during the first period of the civil war.

Newcomers to Marxism are trying to deduce from the aggressive psychology of the proletariat, in one breath, its military organisation and its class strategy. In doing so, alas, they fail to notice the fact that to the aggressive character of a class there does not always correspond a sufficient number of ... cavalry horses.

From all that has been said, a conclusion follows which is the opposite of that drawn by Tarasov-Rodionov: the low level of military training and education among the Red Guards and the rebel masses, and later among the conscripts, the extreme shortage of commanders who were both qualified militarily and wholly devoted to the revolution, and the almost complete lack of cavalry naturally forced the Soviet power to adopt a 'mass' strategy and a continuous front, with features of positional warfare – which was, at the beginning, highly unstable.

Contrariwise, distrust of worker and peasant manpower, an abundance of experienced, White-Guard-minded commanders, and a comparatively plentiful supply of cavalry impelled the military leaders of the counter-revolution to take the road of light, mobile detachments and well-calculated guerrilla 'ventures'.

But, as has been mentioned, it would be theoretically imprudent to assign these two types of warfare to the contending classes, merely changing the addresses. In fact, we observe changes in both types. Having won certain successes, the White-Guard generals are proceeding to conscript the peasants and even the workers and to form a numerically-imposing army – which will, naturally, lack mobility and

.manoeuvrability. Alongside these ponderous 'positional' armies, the White Guards are forming special units or corps endowed with a considerable degree of operational independence.

On the other side, the Red Army, too, in the process of many months of intense struggle on various fronts, with a great variety of natural conditions and operational situations, has trained within itself a number of excellent units with seasoned and enterprising commanders. The efforts of the first period to create guerrilla detachments resulted only ... in laying down an establishment for a manoeuvring battalion, but they did not produce mobile detachments really competent to perform guerrilla tasks. We now possess all the prerequisites for such detachments, although even now we are having to overcome substantial difficulties in creating a cavalry force. These difficulties will get fewer the further we penetrate into the Orenburg steppes and the faster we advance into the Don country.

Introducing greater mobility and initiative into the fighting activity of the Red Army is now much more feasible than was the case a year or six months ago. But in this sphere we are in need, to a considerable extent, of learning precisely from the 'Tsarist generals', and, moreover, from those who are fighting on the other side of the barricade.

In conclusion, it can be said that, as a result of protracted civil war, the military methods of both camps are drawing closer together. While we are now giving very close attention to the creation of cavalry, the enemy, who long since followed our example by carrying out mass conscription, has begun to form his own political departments, agitational centres and agitational trains. We observed the same rapprochement in the methods and procedures of both camps in the imperialist war, as well. When they fight one another for a long time, enemies come to learn from each other: they scrap what in their practice has proved useless and master what they were at first lacking in.

But without in the least belittling the importance of technique, organisation or operational leadership (in all these spheres, as I have said, a certain equalisation is taking place), we can say with complete confidence that, in the last analysis, the outcome of the struggle will be decided by whose 'agitational centres' prove to be the stronger, that is, by whose idea proves the more convincing for the masses of the people and capable of uniting them in that spiritual bond without which no army can exist. But on that matter there is no room for doubt. Along our front moves the train named after Lenin, Comrade Kalinin's train; [Kalinin travelled along the Southern front in an 'agit-prop' train. V.M. Purishkevich, an extreme reactionary politician of the Tsarist period, was with the White forces in the South at this time, editing a newspaper in Rostov-on-Don.] along theirs moves the train of ... Purishkevich.

The outcome of the struggle is predetermined. All that is left is to hasten the victory, by not departing from the road taken, by not getting caught up in pseudo-proletarian doctrinairism, but learning from life in whatever form it appears, even in the form of 'enterprising' Tsarist generals.

July 24, 1919

Kremenchug-Romodant\*

The journal **Voyennoye Dyelo**, No.25 (54)

\* Romodan is the junction of the Gomel-Kremenchug and Kiev-Poltava lines.

Voronezh-Kursk

## Endnotes

**26.** Comrade Tarasov-Rodionov's theses were published in two issues of **Voyennoye Dyelo**, Nos.17, 18 and 19 of 1919, under the title: *Building the army*. There were twenty theses in all. Here are a few extracts from them:

"The relatively small size of the Red Army, as compared with the army during the imperialist war, which is due to military and economic conditions, renders positional warfare impossible and replaces this by war of manoeuvre, which obliges Communists in the army to study the history and art of manoeuvring operations in previous wars. The building of the Red Army must also be subordinated to the manoeuvring character of the class war ... War of manoeuvre requires the successful and intensive formation of cavalry, which had been done away with in the positional warfare of recent times, and also the formation of light field artillery, commandos on horseback and on motor-cycles, armoured cars and armoured trains, and it makes it necessary to disregard completely the use of mortars and gas and also the other cumbersome types of weapons which are the last word in bourgeois military technique ...

"The heads of the apparatus of the bourgeois military state, the responsible organisers and administrators of the imperialist positional-warfare army, the leaders of bourgeois politics, generals and general staff officers, since they do not understand and do not recognise the class politics of the proletariat, but consider bourgeois methods of warfare to be apolitical, independent of class and solely correct, cannot be of any use to the Red Army and are therefore not needed by the Red Army."

**27.** The civil war in North America lasted four years from 1861 to 1865. Problems concerned with a general contradiction between economic interests and emancipation of slaves led to an armed conflict between the aristocratic landowners of the South and the industrialists of the North. The presence of a cadre of commanders and of masses who were accustomed to bearing the burdens of war gave great advantages to the conservative South. The North, with a predominantly urban population (which, to be sure, was larger than that of the South) and a complete lack of commanders, had at first to suffer a number of defeats. In the end, the Northerners won.

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **I. The Organisation of the Red Army**

# THE SITUATION AT THE FRONT

Talk with representatives of the Soviet press

\* \* \*

The imperialist states have built up their armies over a period of decades, and have then gone to war. Socialist Russia has been compelled to go to war before it was able even to begin seriously to build an army. There are some military pedants who do not want to understand this: they criticise our military operations without realising that what we are having to do in these operations is not so much to apply an already available force as to create it.

The Southern front has passed through the same stages as the Eastern front, but on a larger scale: first we had no army, just separate weak units; then came the first serious organisation, big successes, inadequate reserves, setbacks, retreat; a renewed heroic effort, concentration of forces and resources, a turn – and a fresh decisive advance.

The methods of organisation in the South were the same as in the East. Not long ago, Soviet Russia celebrated the anniversary of the creation of the Fifth Army. [\[28\]](#) This was the first of our armies to be based on regular methods of construction, combining military technique and military knowledge with the revolutionary spirit of communism. Many Fifth Army men were subsequently transferred to the South, and then shifted again from before Voronezh to the front before Ufa. The spring crisis on the Eastern front was due basically to the fact that the fabric of the army had been worn out before sufficient reserves had come up. Exactly the same factor underlay the crisis on the Southern front.

With this difference, though, that the crisis of the Southern armies proved to be incomparably more protracted. There are two reasons for this. In the first place, Denikin turned out to be a more serious opponent than Kolchak: there can now be no doubt about that. In the second place, the Eastern front was more or less homogeneous throughout its length, whereas the Southern front was weakened on its right flank by the Ukrainian guerrillas.

## UNITY OF VIEWS AND METHODS OF WORK

After our Southern armies, having reached Rostov and Novocherkassk, had been forced back several hundred versts, with very heavy losses, we had to begin, in our approach to the task of reviving the Southern front, by ascertaining whether the leading personnel possessed unity of appreciation, method and operation. At a series of conferences of responsible workers from all the armies of the Southern front the experiences of the past months were subjected to critical evaluation, and as a result of these conferences, resolutions were adopted unanimously (in one case with a single contrary vote, and in another case with two abstentions) which established the fact that the methods of building the army which had been followed by the Soviet power had been tested in hard experiences and setbacks and had stood up to this test, and that in subsequent work for reviving and developing the Southern front no changes of principle were called for in military policy, but, on the contrary, the prevailing principles had to be implemented more consistently and

systematically.

It might have been feared that in the Ukraine, where the fascination of victorious revolutionary rebellion remained alive for a long time, it would be difficult to achieve the necessary unity in the matter of implementing the principles of a regular army. But this turned out not to be the case. At the conference between the Communist group in the Ukrainian Central Executive Committee and responsible workers in Kiev a resolution was adopted unanimously which recognised that the salvation of the Ukraine lies in eradicating anarchistic rebellion and creating proper centralised military units of the Russian Red Army type. The differences that existed amongst us at the time of the Eighth Congress have now completely disappeared.

Many misunderstandings have been cleared up in the course of events, and particular prejudices have died out. With those comrades who, it seemed, were separated almost by a gulf from the 'official' military policy we are now working hand in hand, and it occurs to nobody to recall, in our practical work, the differences that existed between us previously.

The establishment of this complete unity of methods in army-building was in itself already a very solid guarantee of success in reviving the weakened Southern front.

## **EINFORCEMENTS**

Armies need reinforcements. In the last two months these reinforcements have been supplied, to an adequate extent, not so much from the new age-groups that have been conscripted as from the so-called deserters. I say 'so-called' because what is meant, essentially, is the hundreds of thousands of peasants who have not deserted from anywhere but who simply did not answer the call-up, because we failed to get control of them either through our agitation and organisation or through our punitive measures. The planned struggle against evasion of military service, under the pressure of Denikin in the southern provinces, brought about, as is known, a mighty influx of draft-dodgers into the Red Army. They arrived in a very good mood, regarding themselves not as deserters but as 'volunteers', tried in every way to make up for their delay in arrival, and have already provided us with tens of thousands of excellent soldiers. There can be no doubt that the course adopted towards the 'middle peasants' favoured this development.

## **SUPPLY**

The most difficult question was that of *supply*. Undoubtedly, a great deal of loss was suffered where this was concerned owing to the extremely vague way in which the problem was conceived at the centre. Under the influence of the lessons of events, we took a step forward, bringing the former Extraordinary Commission for Red Army Supply close to the central department for army procurements of the All-Union Economic Council and the Central Supply Administration, the distributive organ of the War Department. This was a step forward on the road to creating a People's Commissariat of Army Supply, with a firmly organised centralised apparatus and the same regime of strict discipline as in a military organisation. Such a commissariat does not yet exist. The central department for army procurement works with far less intensity and precision than are needed. But I have no doubt that Comrade Rykov, who now bears the responsibility for all the work of

army supply will get the necessary results. A certain degree of success has already been achieved even now. We know what we possess, we know how much is being expended, we know what we shall receive tomorrow, and consequently we are quite confident that we shall not suffer a breakdown in the sphere of army supply.

At the same time, intense work has been accomplished in bringing order into the distributive apparatus in military units. Much remains to be done in this sphere. The path followed by a cartridge, a boot, or a shirt between leaving Comrade Rykov and reaching the soldier in the firing-line is too long. This path must be shortened. Precision in accounting must in no case affect the speed, mobility and manoeuvrability of the supply apparatus. We need to develop the same degree of initiative in this sphere as in that of operations. Ultimately, success not only in our positional warfare but also in our long-drawn-out war of manoeuvre will be three-quarters determined by the quality of our supply organisation. In order to ensure victory over Denikin we must create such a combination of bases, means of transport, accounting and distributing organs that the Red Army man, as he advances, will be well-fed and not eaten by lice, that he will have foot-cloths and boots on his feet, and that his rifle will be cleaned and oiled in good time. And substantial success has been achieved in this direction. Just as, within the framework of the Soviet state as a whole, we manoeuvre, transferring our best workers from other departments to the place where application of the efforts of Communists is most needed today, so, within the framework of the War Department, at the front, in the separate armies, we are learning and teaching others to transfer temporarily the best and most responsible workers to that branch whose functioning is most important at the given moment: from the political departments of the armies and divisions and from the tribunals we are temporarily transferring executives to supply work, so that they may introduce into it firm principles of accounting and rapidity in distribution.

## **HOLDING UNITS**

The holding units are the reservoir from which the active armies are reinforced. The crisis on the Eastern front was, in its time, a crisis of reinforcements which, in turn, was to a considerable extent the result of inadequate holding units. The same thing has now been repeated on the Southern front. As in the spring in the East, so now in the South, we have made every effort to develop our holding units and bring them up to the proper level. From the purely theoretical standpoint it would be right for these holding units to be concentrated in the hands of the military districts of the rear, under the control of the General Staff. But the lean centre, from which we have removed many thousands of the best executives, is not now able to cope with this task. As I have said already, first we began to fight, then we set about creating an army. That is why our army was formed, to a considerable degree, in the fighting zone. Our holding units are stationed in the area near the front, which is richer in food-supplies, and are serviced directly by the workers of the active armies. In order to form an opinion of a particular army it is enough to get better acquainted with its holding units. It can now be said with complete confidence that the holding units of the Southern front have been brought to a high level. Continuous provision of good reinforcements to the advancing armies has been fully ensured, and this means we have ensured that our victorious advance will itself prove to be continuous.

## THE MEDICAL DEPARTMENT

The situation is worse at present where the medical department is concerned. Besides organisational shortcomings, for the removal of which measures have been taken by agreement with the People's Commissariat of Health, the blame for the bad situation of the medical department lies with the passive attitude maintained towards this matter by the Soviet organisations and the institutions of the Party and the trade unions. Bourgeois states which possessed colossal resources at the beginning of the imperialist war found themselves unable to cope on their own with the provision of aid to the wounded and sick soldiers and resorted to enlisting the co-operation of the public's initiative. The impoverished proletarian state needs to a still greater degree the co-operation of Soviet voluntary initiative. We need to develop the widest agitational and organisational work in the country, under the slogan of aid to sick and wounded Red Army men. We must organise a Day of the Wounded Red Warrior. Committees for aid to sick and wounded Red Army men must be formed in every place of any size. Thousands of Communists, and especially Communist women, must be brought into the medical apparatus. A roster of Soviet organisations must be arranged, to cover the railway stations, so as to check on the trains carrying wounded that pass through them. A sharp and attentive Soviet eye must be kept on the military field-hospitals. The Red Army man must be confident that the working masses are not only taking care of his family but will also carefully and lovingly look after him, when the cruel mechanism of war thrusts him out of the battle-line.

## THE GENERAL SITUATION

The general situation can be regarded as fairly good. The Soviet Republic has obtained a second base in the Urals. We are advancing almost unceasingly in two main directions, towards Omsk and towards Aktyubinsk. The richest part of Siberia lies already under the Soviet banner.

A turn has been effected in the South. This has best been shown by Mamontov's raid. The White-Guard cavalry broke through deep into our rear, but our forces did not falter, continuing their planned and confident advance southward. True, Denikin has conquered a very large part of the Ukraine. But there is nothing durable, nothing solid about this occupation. Its success was due exclusively to the rail-bound way the war is being fought by the Ukrainian insurgents. In a 'field' campaign Denikin would have been beaten, for extremely small forces are operating on his side on the Ukrainian front. But, because he has before him a disorganised and scattered guerrilla movement which clings to the lines of the railways, Denikin is making huge leaps by way of chess-moves from one railway junction to the next, conquering extensive spaces that are quite out of proportion with his actual strength. This entire occupation of the Ukraine will prove to be a miserable house of cards as soon as a blow is struck at its main nucleus and its bases.

The Western front still lacks independent significance: it is a derivative magnitude of the Eastern and Southern fronts. Our setbacks in the South encouraged the Polish gentry and the White Guards of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. After the liquidation of Kolchak, a decisive blow on the Southern front will mean liquidation of the robber efforts of impotent Polish and Romanian imperialism and the banditry of the Yudeniches and Balakhoviches. Our capture of Pskov shows that we have already strengthened our position in the West. [\[29\]](#)

From the Southern front, where I several times visited all the armies and was with numerous divisions, I have returned with the profoundest confidence in the invincibility of the Red Army. Complete unanimity of thought and deed prevails among the Communists who are building the army. Many thousands of military specialists have not been tempted in the least by Denikin's temporary successes, and continue honourably to work along with us, as is shown, incidentally, by the eloquent appeal of the former officers now serving in our 13th Army to the officers of the White-Guard forces. In the Red Army units there is a profound and intense striving to advance and conquer. The morale of the peasant reinforcements is excellent. Supply is getting better ordered week by week. The material available is greater than many suppose. The apparatus of army procurement will soon be taken in hand and will thereby fully ensure that the army's needs are met. Our second base, the Urals, has doubled the sources of our strength. Calm, confidence, endurance, intense work – and our victory is sure!

August 26, 1919

Moscow

*Izv. V. Ts. I. K.*, No. 183 (741)

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## Endnotes

**28.** The first directive to the Fifth Army was issued on August 11, after our loss of Kazan. The formation of this army had started at the beginning of August. The army guarded the approaches to Moscow and was destined to strike the main blow at the Czechoslovak forces. On September 10 the Fifth Army, together with the Arsk group of the Second Army, fought its way into Kazan, and subsequently this army began a rapid advance in the direction of Ufa. The Fifth Army was successful in performing its tasks on the Eastern front right down to the ultimate routing of Kolchak.

**29.** On Yudenich's first offensive and its failure, see note 76.

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **I. The Organisation of the Red Army**

# CONCLUDING REMARKS

At the Conference of Representatives of the Central Directorate of Higher Military Schools and the Command Courses, October 14, 1919

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A substantial amount of the discussion was taken up with enumeration of our economic shortcomings, and it must be said that the picture drawn is a pretty miserable one. To a considerable extent, these shortcomings are to be explained and excused by the pressure of objective conditions which it is not in our power to correct in a short time, and which will be put right when we have liquidated the civil war and go over to peaceful economic and cultural Construction – when of course, the need for Command Courses will be less than it is now. All the same, among the shortcomings and defects listed, extremely scandalous are those the blame for which lies entirely with the relevant supply organs, particularly and especially with the billeting administration. That our authorities in charge of billeting were good for nothing has long been no secret so far as I am concerned. That here, under our very noses, our billeting administration was incapable of arranging courses, has today been confirmed, and I think that we shall now set on foot a very serious inspection in order to check on how the courses and course-students are accommodated in Moscow, why they are accommodated badly, who it was that failed to take the necessary measures in order to provide them with better accommodation, within the limits of ordinary possibilities. We shall set up a commission here, composed of representatives of the Central Directorate of Higher Military Schools, the Defence Committee, the Army Inspectorate, the State Control Commission and the Moscow Cheka. People have complained here that the Moscow Cheka wrecks courses, but in this case it will help to create courses, by calling strictly to account all those who have neglected to take the measures necessary to ensure the minimum conditions needed in order for normal work to be possible.

As regards textbooks, we shall see to it, as has already been done where the Military Academy is concerned, that the necessary measures are taken by the Central Supply Administration:

it must mobilise all the textbooks we possess, and must make the provision of textbooks either its own responsibility or that of the Central Directorate of Higher Military Schools, and do this not just on paper but by providing all the resources needed.

As regards rations and fodder, all the problems will be practically solved by the transformation of Moscow, in a certain sense, into a fortified area. The food situation promises to get better for the whole country, because in the Volga area and further, beyond the Urals, where Kolchak reigned for a long time, the peasantry are showing themselves extremely generous in the collection of grain, and the autumn grain-procurement operation of the People's Commissariat of Food has been crowned with success, exceeding all expectations, so that there is hope that the food situation will improve.

The biggest scandal is the delay in monetary payments. We have brought this matter up more than once. Here, too, an inspection is required, so as to bring the guilty face to face with their responsibilities. This disgraceful situation can be

tolerated no longer. The fact that, in Moscow, courses cannot obtain their money when it is due and that work is being held up on this account is an absolutely intolerable state of affairs.

That is all in connection with the supply side, but we shall make it the responsibility of the Central Supply Administration to check with the greatest thoroughness on absolutely all the requirements of the courses – those held in Moscow, first and foremost – and to satisfy them as far as possible: otherwise, we are wasting our time in establishing courses which are not able to get down to work. If, when you build a cart, you omit the fourth wheel, you haven't got a cart.

The question of the personnel of the courses and the instructors has been clarified here, and we have discovered that there are very big deficiencies. A substantial proportion of the personnel needed for the courses has been transferred to the front as a result of the mobilisations: this transfer was due, of course, to the difficult situation, but it was undoubtedly a mistake, all the same. We now have to put this process into reverse, that is, to seek out at the front the persons whom we need. This will have to be done jointly with the All-Russia General Staff and the Field Staff. We must seek out those experienced commanders who have been through the fires of the civil war but have fallen victim to fatigue or wounds and who, though they have recovered, are not capable of filling directly operational posts of command, so as to put them in their right places and entrust them with the appropriate responsibilities in our command courses.

As regards the commissars, I think that we must now, with the help of Comrade Kursky, whom we have asked to check over the commissar personnel of the courses, pick out those who have shown in practice that they are able to cope with their responsible task, and attach them to particular courses, so that they do not spend their time hurrying from one course to another, which, naturally, serves no useful purpose apart from physical training.

As regards the courses themselves, the make-up of the student body, I think that it has been rightly said here that the time has come for us to stop bringing on these courses comrades who are completely unfamiliar with military matters. They must have previously lived as Red Army men and received elementary training. A sufficient number of volunteers has now entered the Red Army from among the advanced workers of Moscow and Petrograd. These include not a few conscious and even older fighters, revolutionaries, and it is these men that, after they have spent a certain time in the army, we ought to bring in for these courses – not freshly conscripted workers and peasants, who are so much lumber hindering the general progress of the course studies.

It is certainly also true that the curriculum needs to be reviewed. This curriculum was drawn up on the basis of old- time experience plus a guess at what new experience would amount to. Today we have, besides that guesswork or, so to speak, anticipation of experience, actual experience which has been empirically appreciated. Here, too, we must set up a commission, with participation by the All-Russia General Staff – we shall settle this matter in the next few days – and draw into its work both the responsible commanding personnel of the army in the field and a certain number of the most outstanding Red commanders who have been at the front and have developed their powers more or less successfully. Only such a commission can tell us what the school of war has given them, what they lack, and what aspects require to be accorded maximum attention.

As regards the political department of the Central Directorate of Higher Military Schools, what is needed here is a direct order to the Political Directorate of the Revolutionary War Council. We shall issue such an order. Among the excellent workers who have been taken from various posts and are now mobilised in the Red Army, a certain number must be assigned to work in the Command Courses.

The complaints about too much theory and the insignificant amount of practical studies are undoubtedly justified, for they are confirmed by statements made by the Red Commanders who, having arrived at the front, often ask permission to continue as rank-and-file Red Army men until they have accumulated the necessary elementary experience and are able to take up some positions of command.

This situation is often due to material conditions and practical difficulties, absence of the necessary means of transport, and so on. Here, the Central Supply Administration must, operating through the appropriate persons and commissions, check as soon as possible, from this standpoint, on the arrangement of studies, so that their theoretical character may not be the result of a lack of the necessary aids and resources.

I wish, further, to say a few words about the length of the period of instruction. There have been fully justified complaints that the course is too short, that its duration ought to be approximately doubled, if not trebled. This would, certainly, be desirable, but I think that it is possible even within the limits of a short period to get better results if better use is made of the time. And so that better use may be made of the time, better material conditions are needed, together with stricter criteria where the administrative, commanding and teaching personnel are concerned: that is to say, we must promote those who cope well with their work, reward them, place them in better material conditions in every way and increase their allowances, give them more responsibility, entrust the best courses to them, so that there may be no sluggards, idlers or traitors here. We know that such persons do exist: at least, some teachers on the courses here in the Kremlin were arrested and confessed to being agents of Denikin, so that in this case, the Moscow Cheka not only did not disrupt the courses, it purged them for the good of the cause. Consequently, if we examine the commanding personnel closely from the standpoint of the energy they show, their zeal in relation to their work, it is necessary that the conscientious and energetic ones among them be given a certain degree of material and moral satisfaction. I fully support the proposal which has been made here for increasing the pay of the teaching and commanding staff of the courses and improving their material conditions, but not on an equal basis – with a certain gradation, rather, so that, as I said, the best among them are paid and rewarded better than the others. For this to be done, of course, we shall need a measure of inspection and surveillance: supervision will be required.

One of the comrades said that it is not necessary that a specialist be invariably appointed to be in charge of courses. I do not think we have any such hard-and-fast rule. What we need is somebody who will work well. If a specialist runs courses well, looking after all aspects of the work, we can leave him in charge even without a commissar. If a commissar works well, we will give him a specialist as his assistant, or remove the specialist altogether. It is time that the courses went over to the system of one-man management. In the case of those courses where the commissar has shown himself a man with a firm hand as organiser, we must say to him: you shall be the one in charge here, and, if you need a specialist, you will be assigned one as an assistant. If the man in charge copes well with his task, he

should be given complete authority. Where two men work well together, complementing each other, both should be left in post. It was mentioned here that the course-students are not homogeneous from the military standpoint. There are former NCOs and there are young workers and peasants who have never handled a rifle. However, along with better selection of teaching staff and more careful employment of them, we really need to form the students into groups for study. We must form separate groups on the courses, enabling the more successful of them to finish earlier, while the less successful are allowed an extension of their period of study. In this matter the person in charge of the courses must be permitted to develop his own initiative – under supervision, of course, by the Central Directorate of Higher Military Schools. It is obviously stupid to make combatant NCOs of the old army proceed in step with some village lad of 19 who has to be taught the ABC of military matters. Naturally, they cannot be put on the same footing. And, within the bounds of Moscow, we must carry out a redistribution. To some courses must be sent men who have had military experience, while other courses are reserved for the less well-prepared, who must be allowed a longer period of study. Initiative is called for in this sphere. It may be that some students will need five or six months, others less. If matters are arranged so that a certain proportion of the students complete their course in three months, I think it should be possible, once the well-prepared have been separated out, to agree to a lengthening of the other courses. I think this problem deserves to be worked on.

About the question of the fronts. Here, I cannot entirely agree with the view that the fronts are disrupting the courses. The fronts complain that they are sent poorly-prepared material, unsuitable for the actual forms of warfare. On the Eastern front this spring we were harassed by soldiers on skis. Our commanders were completely unprepared for that. In the South we have cavalry. In the North the war is being fought in defiles, with a huge deployment of artillery and use of engineering personnel and materials on an enormous scale. Thus, where we are concerned, every single front has its special features, and special features such as the late war did not possess, because in the old positional warfare all kinds of forces and materials were used on all sectors of the front. We have some excellent commanders on the Northern front, but if we were to transfer them to the Southern front they would lose their bearings, at first. In the North one of these commanders is accustomed to conquering inch by inch – the British have brought up a colossal quantity of artillery. In the South we see guerrilla warfare being waged on a huge scale. A quite different training is required. What could be done about this? We proposed to the commanders of the armies and the fronts that they take certain already-organised courses under their wing and introduce into them the modifications that ensue from the conditions of their own particular front. The first experiment was carried out with the Third Army, which was fighting in the Perm direction. The proposal made was as follows. The courses would continue to be courses, the general curriculum would remain unchanged but the army was given the right to introduce those changes which were derived from the peculiarities of its own front. The army would divide the students into groups, each bearing the number of a division so that the students knew in advance that they would be joining the Third Army, one group going to such-and-such a division, another to a different one, and from time to time the instructors would take a group to visit its own division. In this way the students would gradually grow into their respective divisions, becoming used to them. All the Red commanders would enter the Third Army, and even the specific divisions previously indicated to them. That was the idea. It is necessary, evidently, to check on what the armies do with these courses. If the armies cannot make suitable use of them, we shall take the courses away

from them, with ignominy and a reprimand. But some armies are showing very great enthusiasm and a live, creative spirit in this matter. For checking on this, here again there is no other means but inspection by a commission of the Central Directorate of Higher Military Schools, the Field Staff, the Political Directorate and the All-Russia General Staff. This commission will have to see what use the armies have made of the courses assigned to them. Orders have been given that the courses be developed, provided with everything they need and placed on a better ration-scale, for the fronts and the armies are better-off than the rear. If this is not done, if transfer of a course to control by an army proves detrimental in its effects, we will take the course away from that army and give it back absolutely to the Central Directorate of Higher Military Schools.

Also brought up here was the question of the Moscow Brigade. I think that we must now set up a conference between representatives of the Central Directorate of Military Schools, the Moscow Defence Committee, and the divisional staff, and come to an agreement that the forming of the course students into a single special brigade, and its inclusion in the division, should not affect the normal work of the courses – defining strictly the extent to which they are to be subordinate, and to whom. I think that such a conference can achieve all the results needed. It must be said that, in so far as this arrangement will entail participation in manoeuvres, war games and so on, it will be of very great educational value. When, in Petrograd, on the frontier with Finland, we included the course students in a combined force and organised a war game on that frontier, this proved to be a very good thing. The course-students were happy about it. Especially useful was the big discussion of the war game that was held after it was over, with all the courses taking part. All this was very important, because here the shortcomings of practice could to some extent be made up for. But in any case, whatever use is to be made of the composite brigade in the period of preparation for positional warfare in Moscow – let us hope that it will not have to be put into practice – this can be clarified through an exchange of views and I shall insist emphatically that it must not become detrimental in any way to the progress of studies.

I wish, further, to bring it to the attention of the commissar comrades, and of all those in charge of courses who are interested not only in their own narrow sphere of work, but also in the general situation of our country, that we can now treat it as no more than a bad joke when agents of Denikin appear on our courses. This experience may be repeated in the period immediately ahead, which will be, in the full sense of the word, an unfavourable period for us on the Southern front. It has already been established more than once that the majority of the regular officers have received no political education at all. Even the most honourable men, who may be excellent workers, exist with purely philistine sentiments if they have not had elementary political education. When Mamontov broke through to Tambov, it seemed to all the philistines that this meant the end of the world revolution and that Mamontov was settling all questions by means of a few thousand of his cavalrymen. Now, when the offensive has assumed a rather serious character, in the direction of Moscow, there must, naturally, develop among a section of the commanding personnel, and therefore also among the instructors on the courses, a certain palpitation of the heart: what is going to happen, they wonder, and how will they treat us? And so on. And since there are in Moscow a certain number of White-Guard agents – true, these are fewer since the crushing of the National Centre [30] – it is likewise possible that some of the commanding personnel may be caught on that hook. I think that, here, the Political Directorate and the commissars must keep in mind not only the courses but also the comrade commanders and instructors, because, while being teachers where military matters are concerned, they are

pupils as regard politics, and sometimes, where politics is concerned, they know a great deal less than does a 19-year-old worker from a Moscow or Petrograd factory, as a result of his education and experience of life. So that, in order that they may not become, in the future, clients of the Cheka, they must now be made clients of the Political Directorate; that is, more attention must be given to their political consciousness, and they must be made to understand that the fate of Russia and of the world revolution will be decided not by the Denikinites and the Cossacks but by the world revolution of the working class.

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## Endnotes

**30.** The National Centre was a counter-revolutionary organisation oriented towards the Allies. Here is a brief history of this organisation, taken from the information in Comrade Krylenko's speech as prosecutor. Already before the October revolution, in August 1917, a conference of public men was held in Moscow, under Rodzyanko's chairmanship, which set up a Council of Public Men with this programme: (a) struggle against Soviet power, (b) restoration of private property, and (c) recognition of constitutional monarchy as the only acceptable form of government for Russia.

In March 1918 two counter-revolutionary centres were formed in the Soviet Republic at about the same time: a Right-wing centre, under the overall leadership of the former minister Krivoshein and Professor Novgorodtsev, and a Left-wing one, the so-called 'League for the Rebirth of Russia', which brought together Popular Socialists, Right SRs, the **Yedinstvo** group and Right-wing Mensheviks. As a result of a split on the question of the Brest peace, a section of the activists of the Right-wing centres formed a new associated, the 'National Centre', which leaned towards the Allies. The offensive by Kolchak and Denikin aroused hope in these organisations that the Soviet power would soon fall, bringing together delegates from the Council of Public Men, the National Centre and the League for the Rebirth of Russia. This group was linked with Denikin and with a military organisation in the city of Moscow. All these organisations were discovered in August 1919 and their case was heard before the Supreme Tribunal of the All-Russia Central Executive committee between August 16 and 20, 1920. The accused in this case were Shchepkin, Leontiev, Urusov, Professor Kaptelev, Professor Melgunov, V.I. Rozanov, S.A. Kotlyarevsky, Kishkin, D. Protopopov and many others. The majority were sentenced to be shot, but a section of them later benefited from an amnesty, their sentences being changed to various period of imprisonment and detention in a concentration camp.

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **I. The Organisation of the Red Army**

# OUR IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS

Speech at the conference of political workers in the Red Army, December 12, 1919

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The problem of one-man management has acquired central importance. I suppose it is because this is a new problem. There are not a few tasks that are a great deal more urgent for us, and more important from the practical standpoint, than this one, the importance of which, though great, is such at present only from the standpoint of principle. It was Comrade Smilga who first raised in the press the question of going over to one-man management. [\[31\]](#) This matter, as something for immediate and practical discussion, was raised in the War Department with a view to its being settled as quickly as possible.

The considerations of principle which have been adduced against the merging of commanders and commissars are not very convincing. Some comrades said: there have been such a lot of revolts and conspiracies, and yet you want to abolish commissars. This argument could, however, be turned round in the other way. It could be said: although we have had commissars, there have been revolts and conspiracies. There are, of course, still some cases of betrayal. It happens that commanders go over to the other side: they have to be caught and shot, but this is not always done by the commissars. A special department attends to this, the Political Department whose responsibility it is in the given situation.

One cannot say that the institution of commissars has proved to be a guarantee against individual acts of betrayal and flight to the enemy's camp. The establishment of the institution of commissars signified a political assurance: in so far as the mass of the Red Army men were utterly lacking in confidence in the commanding personnel, and in so far as the commissars acted as intermediaries between the commanders and the mass of the Red Army men, the commissars served as sureties for the commanders. I presume that this period is now behind us. The mass of the Red Army men have now realised that we had to recruit the military specialists. The masses who have taken part in battles and have been in difficult situations have seen commanders at work, and have seen how some died at their posts while others ran away. Comrades, a colossal proportion of our commanding personnel have become casualties in battle, and among them have been former officers. The Red Army men know this. And now the institution which served as a sort of screen for the commanders is no longer needed for that purpose. The army has become sufficiently consolidated.

Another argument is put forward, to the effect that this institution serves as a school for commanders. But it was quite properly observed here that, if it is a school, then it is an artificial one, which detaches the pupils from the work to be done. If we are dealing with a former private soldier, we make him a section commander, if with a former NCO we make him a company commander; we send him on a command course, and subsequently to the academy. After all, we do possess schools in the proper sense of the word. In so far as someone needs military experience, he can get it as a Red Army man or as an assistant to the commander.

We need to take a much more direct line where this question is concerned. When

we created the institution of commissars, we saw in it, of course, not just a school for commanders, but a political institution of a certain kind. The institution of commissars was, so to speak, a scaffolding. When a house is to be built, you first set-up scaffolding. Our Soviet construction work in the military sphere is, if considered as a building job, a very unwieldy affair, generally speaking, and it calls for a great deal of work in addition to the direct leadership provided by the commissars. This edifice is now reaching completion. The scaffolding can gradually be dismantled, but, of course, only gradually, so that the edifice does not collapse and so that the people who are on the building site don't get killed.

I insist on the principle that every unit must be headed by a commander. One must not bisect the personality of the commander. The commander must enjoy authority both in respect of command and morally, in the political if not in the Party sense. It would, of course, be ideal if he enjoyed authority in the Party sense, too, but if he has moral-political authority, so that the mass of the Red Army men know that this commander will not deceive or sell them, then that is quite sufficient. I consider, furthermore, that measures need to be taken in this sense, starting with the least healthy of our institutions, namely, the supply organs. In this connection everything needs to be thought out calmly. For example, it would be risky to appoint as commander of a regiment a Communist who lacked experience in this field, but in the supply organisation, the apparatus includes an enormous number of Communists working along side specialists. It has to be said that the specialists in this apparatus frequently work as badly as can be. The efficient workers among them can be counted in ones and twos, so that the Communists are obliged, to a considerable extent, to duplicate the work of the others. In this field, we can leave a minimum number of indispensable specialists and turn over all the rest of the work to the Communists. If, for example, a Communist is not yet technically competent to take charge of the work by himself, we can leave a specialist with him as assistant. If the specialist is a very good worker, but there are no grounds for trusting him completely from the political stand point, one can always arrange for him to be kept under observation. And it is not at all necessary that this be done through a commissar. The observer can be a typist, somebody from the office staff, even a driver, but there is no reason at all for this task to be imposed on a commissar. Let us take, for example, the army medical department, in which the principle that a Communist must be in charge everywhere is applied so strictly. Yet one has to admit that this is the rottenest institution we have!

In any case, comrades, I ask you to believe that we are not indulging in any leaps where this problem is concerned. I am against issuing an order that, where the commander is a Communist, the Communist commissar is to be removed. Such a decision would cause great embarrassment both to the commissars and to the specialists. What, for example, about those commanders who are neutral or who joined the Party only yesterday? Who is to decide whether or not they need to have commissars attached to them?

Moreover, I want to direct attention to some practical problems which must play a very big role here.

The first fundamental problem is the insignificant number of our bayonets as compared with the overall number of conscripts. We have mobilised millions, but our bayonets are numbered in hundreds of thousands. Somehow, an enormous number of soldiers have slipped through our fingers! In this sphere, our fundamental task is to establish a stricter system of registration. We must introduce service books for the Red Army men, so that it may be known what each man has

received and what he possesses. Commissions for combating desertion have been introduced by order in our armies, commissions each composed of a commissar, a commander and a commissar from the Political Department. These commissions come under the Central Commission on Deserters. The provision of a service book for each Red Army man is a very important measure towards ensuring that all Red Army men are registered. Later, we issued an order that the Revolutionary War Council of an army, or the commander and the commissar in each division, were to keep a sharp eye open to ensure that there were no superfluous men kicking their heels about the place. Groups without any definite assignment are frequently formed in our localities, and there are a very large number of such groups. We have mobilised several millions, and we still have to call up the 1901 age-group, and the next period of mustering for checking will give us something, but that is not enough. Battles lie ahead, and we must learn to have a more economic attitude to our human material, because otherwise we may miscarry through internal difficulties of an organisational character.

First and foremost, we need to achieve, in a word, a more correct correlation between the number of bayonets and the number of conscripts. We must not allow a single conscript anywhere to loaf about in idleness.

Then, we need to set up a leading organ charged with looking after army property. We are now supplying the army better than we were doing a year or six months ago – we all acknowledge that this is so – but the expenditure of material that takes place in the army goes beyond our resources. The figures of the indents made by the Central Supply Administration or the Central Army Procurement Department are fantastic: tens of millions of pairs of underwear, many millions of overcoats, boots – for example, three or four pairs of boots per year per man! This is not normal. Such excessive expenditure goes on everywhere without any supervision, and so we need to establish a good regime in the company and the regiment. It is not possible to establish this through the administration of the Political Department, and there is no point in attempting that. What we need is simply to introduce individual clothing and equipment records. Comrades, I don't want to frighten you, but I do want to say that, although we have not been brought down by Denikin or Kolchak, we may yet be brought down by overcoats or boots.

Next, I should like to touch on the question of the guerrilla movement, which is a question of great importance for the South and East. On the Southern front the guerrilla movement is already being liquidated. A certain opportunism has been shown where the guerrilla movement is concerned, and this has recently done us some harm. In some armies there have been attempts to include guerrillas in active units. Where this question is concerned, comrades, those of you who have come from the Southern front must go back with profound conviction and desire to put an end at all costs to these disgraceful measures. Commanders of active units must not admit volunteers into the ranks of the regular forces. Those commanders who do so must be court-martialled. This applies especially to those Ukrainian elements who, in their own words, burn with the desire to fight: three-quarters of them burn with the desire to loot. These elements cannot in any circumstances be allowed to join active units straightforwardly – only those of them who have joined a holding battalion and spent at least a month there, proving that they wish to be good Red Army soldiers. As soon as we make contact with the guerrilla units they at once exercise a bad influence on the active units: therefore, no military participation by guerrillas in our active units is to be permitted in any circumstances, and if any commissar shows weakness in this matter, the Political Department must sound the alarm over all the direct lines, both at the front and also to us here in Moscow. Such

occurrences are impermissible, and no guerrilla units must regard this as an insult, but must understand that this is our rule, that nobody is allowed to join the Red Army unwashed and unkempt. First of all, he has to take a bath, then he has to listen to us at meetings, then he has to work under supervision by one of the senior comrades – such is our regime, which has been given legal force. If we are firm about this and apply our principle undeviatingly, not a single guerrilla detachment will see it as an insult, but will know that this is the Red Army's rule. In this sphere we must observe the greatest consistency. If some rebel unit gets through to us, it is better to let it dive back again, to the front against the Whites, and show there what it can do, than to let it disrupt our ranks.

In those units of our army which are in contact with Makhno's forces we must strengthen the complement of Communists, and ensure that they have commanders and commissars there who are capable of exercising maximum influence, because disintegration takes place in unstable units of our army when they come into contact with Makhno's forces. The commissars must carry out extensive agitation against Makhnovism in every unit, by the spoken and the written word. It is understandable that Makhno's name enjoys popularity at present. He is capturing towns and railway lines. But it has to be appreciated that Makhno will just as easily surrender the Ukraine to Denikin as take it from him. As soon as Makhno sets foot on Soviet territory he will act treacherously towards the Red Army. No opportunism must be shown where Makhnovism is concerned. We have an order relating to this [32] from which we must not retreat one single step. [Subsequent note by the author: This refers to secret order No.180, – L.T.]

As regards the formation of a Ukrainian army, I must say this. We are not, of course, against forming a Ukrainian army, but in the Ukraine at present everyone is in such a shattered state psychologically, where discipline is concerned, that we need to approach the formation of such an army very cautiously. The most that can be done in this direction, to start with, is the forming of four or five model regiments. How are we to go about that? We have to select the best Ukrainian fighters, Communists and sympathisers, and send them on Ukrainian command courses of longer duration than usual, if only for six or eight months, and there either train them or else distribute them among the best courses in Russia, so as to form certain cadres: then build military units around these cadres, including in them, so as to establish discipline, some experienced comrades from other units. In this way we can proceed toward the mobilising of the Ukrainian workers. But we shall not proclaim general mobilisation in the Ukraine at present, because a Ukrainian conscript whose psychology has been shattered and who is still greatly influenced by the kulak element, will pass through our barracks only so as to get hold of a rifle and then return home. You know that the question of disarming the entire peasant population of the Ukraine is bound up with this. It may be that we shall have to organise the most reliable cadres of the garrison troops, the battle-police and the special-assignment forces, singling out particular individuals, and use them to disarm the whole population in the area where the army is operating. We must, all of us, give our most serious attention to this matter.

Now we must say something about the question of the feeling of military ambition. Our army is too anonymous, and our Red Army men and our commissars are too little seized with military ambition. Our military censorship has reached such a pitch that the newspapers always write about the N Army, the N regiment, the N unit. When I was in Petrograd I issued an order to the Seventh Army. A military censor – a woman, as it happened – informed a representative of the newspaper **Petrogradskaya Pravda**: 'I am closing you down for disobeying Trotsky's order.

You mentioned "the Seventh Army" in your paper. But, after all, Yudenich has taken many thousands of prisoners, and they know very well not only the numbers of our armies but also the number of every division and every regiment. We shall have to request the military censorship to give us a little 'constitution', so that we are allowed to make mention of our major military operations. Of course the Revolutionary War Council of an army realises very well that, if it has a new unit, then this fact must be concealed, but, if an army has been holding a sector for six months, the enemy knows quite well that he is faced on this front by the 26th Division or the 28th, and it is senseless to write 'the N Division' when we ought to be popularising the 28th Division, so that every soldier will strive to uphold the honour of his own division, while another division will strive to equal its achievements and distinguish itself. After all, this is a perfectly legitimate feeling of emulation. Popularity is necessary. In those cases when the political workers feel doubt as to whether a particular fact should be made public, they must clear this question through the commissars of the army and the Revolutionary War Council.

Now, comrades, about the command courses. Things there are not as they should be. In order to bring the command courses up to the right level we must lengthen the period of instruction. This is bound up with the problem of the commissar personnel. The more Communists we put through these courses, the better the situation will be.

Now, about agitation in the enemy's ranks. It is obvious that the Political Directorates as a whole, especially the Political Departments of particular armies and divisions, must now, when we are advancing victoriously on all fronts, give special attention to disintegration in the ranks of the enemy, and literature specially adapted to particular fronts needs to be prepared. Publications of this sort are already being brought out in some armies and divisions – in some cases they are excellent, in others not so successful. These publications must be sent here. The need for centralism in this matter is obvious. Publishing activity for the purposes of agitation among the enemy must be developed to the utmost.

Turning to another question, I have received a few letters stating that, in certain headquarters and even higher centres of authority, drunkenness is flourishing. A struggle against that phenomenon must be started. The commissars not only fail to show the necessary vigour in this struggle but are sometimes guilty of drunkenness themselves. Measures will have to be taken, through the Political Directorate, to ensure that drunkenness ceases. We are moving into regions that are rather well-stocked with alcohol in all its forms, and we may take a heavy fall as a result of that. Mamontov's cavalry destroyed themselves through drunkenness and looting. The greatest vigilance is called for here. It would be especially easy for the army to disintegrate in the Ukraine.

I have received letters to the effect that in some units the practice of striking soldiers in the face is even flourishing. One such statement reached me through Maxim Gorky, saying: 'They beat us!' Even some Communists have told me frankly: 'I hit him in the teeth with the butt of my revolver.' It is one thing to shoot a man in battle, under fire, for some offence, but if a Red Army man knows that he may be struck in the teeth, that is such loss of moral dignity, such foulness, that it must be eradicated at all costs. Respect for the personality of the Red Army man must be ensured.

In connection with the problem of one-man management, we must regulate the procedure for promulgating orders. We have said that commissars' orders are

invalid unless signed by commanders. Has the commissar or a member of the Revolutionary War Council of an army the right to issue an order dealing with administrative or supply matters without getting the signature of the army commander? No, of course not. Yet this does happen, and it is wrong that it should happen. A complaint on this account has been made by one of our best army commanders. Comrade Tukhachevsky, who was on the Eastern front. He says that he has always had excellent relations with his commissar, but that this question has not been subjected to regulation and ought to be settled.

In conclusion I want to say a few words about the optimistic tone being used about peace. Our Party press continues, as though by inertia, to talk about peace. However, things are far from going that way. In Copenhagen, for instance, there is talk of deporting Comrade Litvinov on the grounds that certain elements are allegedly gathering around him and he is carrying on agitation. [33] The Allies are still pretty strong, and the strong man never gives in without a fight. They are very well aware of the state of our transport and our supply services, and it is to their direct interest to wear us out. They are waiting for us to reach the Black Sea, where, perhaps, we shall find ourselves up against Arabs, Negroes [By 'Arabs and Negroes' are meant the French colonial troops from North and West Africa who were sent to the Ukraine.], Indians and the like. Perhaps our Political Departments [For the history of the Political Directorates (or Administrations) and the Political Departments (or Sections) see Erickson, J.: **The Soviet High Command** (1962).] ought to learn African languages too! It would be extremely dangerous if the impression were to be created in the army that we are finishing the war, entering upon negotiations, and so on. This is not so at all and, when we send commissars out to carry on agitation in the army, they need to have our declaration on peace, which has received no reply so far, and also the statement issued by Comrade Smilga, that a very severe, harsh winter lies ahead of us and that we must shorten this period of great hardship for the army and the country by exerting the maximum effort.

This can be ensured by our Communist Party, in the shape of the political organs of the Red Army.

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## Endnotes

**31.** The proposals advocated by Comrade Smilga were set forth in his speech in December 1919 at a conference of political workers. Objecting to the system of collegial management, Comrade Smilga proposed that, instead of the War Councils, special commissars be appointed to whom the political department, special section and revolutionary tribunal should be directly subordinate. These same commissars, as he saw it, *should have charge of the apparatus for making awards. In addition, Comrade Smilga considered it possible: (1) to grant commanders the right to issue orders by themselves and (2) to abolish commissars in those institutions and units which were headed by persons of proven loyalty. Comrade Smilga's article on one-man management was published in No.2 of 1919 of **Voyennoye Mysl**, the organ of the Revolutionary War Council of the Eastern Front.*

**32.** Order No.180 (secret), dated December 11, 1919.

**33.** With the defeat of Kolchak, Yudenich and Denikin, the British Government – the leading force in the European counter-revolution – recognised that the plan to conquer Soviet Russia by force of arms was impossible of realisation. Our government turned its whole attention already at the – December 1919 Congress of Soviets to considering the problems of restoring the ruined economy. It was in December 1919 that Comrade Litvinov began his negotiations with O'Grady, the British Government's representative in Copenhagen.

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **I. The Organisation of the Red Army**

# MORE EQUALITY!

## Letter to the Revolutionary War Councils of the Fronts and the Armies and to all responsible workers in the Red Army and the Red Navy

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The Communist order signifies equal or, at least, similar conditions of existence for all members of society, regardless of the work they do or the difference in their abilities. We shall move towards this goal as soon as our society becomes richer and as, at the same time, the grossest and most unjust survivals of the old order are eliminated. We are now living in a *transitional* epoch. Old habits and practices still have great power over men. Also, the material goods necessary for life are in extremely inadequate supply. We are forced to apply, where the distribution both of means and of forces is concerned, a system of *priority*, that is, to guarantee workers and material resources first and foremost to the most important branches of state activity. This is the reason for the privileged situation which is undoubtedly enjoyed in Soviet Russia by our military organisation. The slogan 'All for the front' meant and continues to mean the weakening of local Soviet, party and trade-union institutions, the weakening of educational work, the weakening of the supply of food to the workers, both men and women – so as to guarantee to the armed forces of the Soviet Republic everything they need. In this way it has come about that for a worker to be put on the Red Army's ration-scale means his attaining something like an ideal which is beyond the reach of most people.

The working class and the revolutionary section of the peasantry understand what the Red Army means and the need to meet its needs first and foremost. If that consciousness did not exist, the Red Army would not exist, either. We are reassured of the readiness that there is to support the Red Army with everything it requires every time that we test it, whether by forming volunteer reinforcement squadrons or by collecting warm clothes, and so on.

Nevertheless, the mass of workers, living on hunger rations, cannot but watch closely that the army shall not demand for itself more than is actually necessary, and that all supplies for the army shall be actually delivered to their proper destination. Since, in this respect, of course, all is not well, there exists among the worker masses a natural dissatisfaction with the irregularities, injustices and abuses of some of the organs of the War Department.

To this must be added the fact that inequality exists within the military organisation – inequality which in some cases is quite explicable and unavoidable, but which in other cases is not at all due to necessity, but is excessive and sometimes downright criminal.

Every Red Army warrior fully accepts that the commander of his unit should enjoy certain privileges as regards lodging, means of transport and even uniform.

An honest and thoughtful Red Army man knows that a commander must be able to study a situation, make dispositions, and so on, in conditions which more or less facilitate the performance of these tasks. If the commander catches cold, or in any other way falls ill, that has repercussions for the unit that are much more serious than sickness on the part of a rank-and-file soldier, however brave he may be. It

would, of course, be desirable that every soldier in the Red Army should have to the same extent everything that he needs. But, on campaign, this is not possible, especially not in our exhausted country. And, consequently, the overwhelming majority of Red Army men recognise without murmuring, through their common sense, that it is necessary for their commanders and commissars to enjoy certain material privileges which ensure the interests of the common military cause.

But these privileges must result precisely from the needs of the work. It would, of course, be very fine if every infantryman could be transported by motor-car. But we have only a tiny number of motor-cars. It is quite natural if light cars are assigned only to commanders and members of the Revolutionary War Councils of armies, and, in particular instances, to the commanders and commissars of divisions who have to travel round units spread over a very wide area. Just as comprehensible is it that a battalion commander should have a horse to ride. The Red Army man will not argue against these privileges, or, if he does, one can always explain them to him and, in most cases, convince him.

Every soldier understands that the first pair of boots and the first overcoat must be given to the commander, for, if the worst comes to the worst, a barefoot Red Army man with no overcoat can stay behind in his hut, whereas a commander must always be in a position to fight.

But when the motor-car is used for merry outings, before the eyes of the tired Red Army soldiers, or when commanders dress with flashy foppishness, while their men go half-naked, such facts cannot but provoke exasperation and murmuring among the Red Army soldiers.

Privilege is, in itself, in certain cases, inevitable, I repeat – an unavoidable evil for the time being. *Ostentatious indulgence* in privilege is not just an evil, it is a crime. And the mass of Red Army men can, by and large, very well distinguish where necessary privilege, due to the needs of work, ends and where abuse of privilege begins.

Especially demoralising and disintegrating in its effect on the army is any utilisation of privileges which is connected with violation of the established regulations, decrees and orders. This means, above all and in the main, evening parties with drink, with women present, and so on and so forth.

Phenomena of this sort are by no means exceptional. Every Red Army man knows about them. They talk a lot in the units – often, of course, with exaggerations – about the feasting and boozing that goes on 'at headquarters'. When setbacks occur, the mass of Red Army men frequently – with or without good grounds – see the reasons for them in the excessively gay life led by the commanders. Besides which, when retreats take place the tired and often half-shod soldiers notice that there are numerous women *in* the headquarters and supply trains, and so on.

The question of leave also plays a considerable role. The Revolutionary War Council of the Republic has frequently discussed this question with great care and has always reached the conclusion that it is quite impossible to introduce a system of leave for Red Army men. It is obvious that the rules governing this matter apply equally to rank-and-file soldiers and commanders and commissars. However, it is no secret to anyone, and least of all to the Red Army men, that commanders and commissars often get leave under the guise of official missions. For example, the deputy head of a divisional ordnance depot receives a visit from his wife (which

itself is contrary to regulations) and then is sent on a seven-day official mission so that he can see her home. Yet, among the Red Army soldiers of the depot guard, there are men who have not seen their families for three years.

Such happenings as these are quite intolerable in the Red Army, which can develop only on the basis of growing internal solidarity among all its members.

The Red Army has been formed through extraordinary efforts by very many thousands of conscious and dedicated workers. Beginning with isolated guerrilla detachments or hastily-formed, unstable regiments lacking inner cohesion, it has been transformed into a powerful organisation which already possesses its own traditions and public opinion. Those Red Army men who have fought with the army for two years and more have learnt and are teaching younger comrades how to understand both the positive and the negative aspects of the army's organisation, the legitimate and illegitimate privileges enjoyed by the commanding personnel, and so on. In the Red Army the *best* soldier does not mean at all the *most submissive and uncomplaining*.

On the contrary, the best soldier will nearly always be sharper, more observant and critical than the others. By his courage and resourcefulness he will, of course, acquire prestige among the Red Army men, and by his critical comments, based on facts that are accessible to all, he will pretty often undermine the prestige of the commanders and commissars in the eyes of the mass of the soldiers. To this it must be added that counter-revolutionary elements, agents of the enemy, make conscious and skilful use of the circumstances I have mentioned in order to stir up discontent and intensify antagonism between the rank and file and the commanding personnel.

There can be no doubt that the heart of our army is absolutely sound. But even the soundest organism needs to protect itself, for, otherwise, harmful phenomena may undermine it. Our Party's last conference put on its agenda the question of mutual relations between the 'summit' and the 'base' and the need to bring them closer together through comradely ties. [\[34\]](#) This task must, as a whole, and even first and foremost, be put before the leading elements in the army.

The army cannot, of course, be compared to a Party organisation. An order must remain an order and military discipline must remain discipline. But the formal power of orders will be the more indestructible, the more fully that the advanced forces in the army succeed in eliminating the most abnormal phenomena, softening the inequality that exists, and bringing the 'summit' and the 'base' closer together.

In view of the immense importance, from the standpoint both of principle and of practice, of the problems raised, I request the Revolutionary War Councils of the fronts and the armies to discuss what measures can be taken to eliminate abnormal and unhealthy phenomena from the life of the Red Army. It would be desirable to convene conferences on this problem, to be attended by the most responsible workers in the armies and divisions.

The guiding principles for such a conference could be, I think, formulated roughly as follows:

1. Without setting ourselves the impossible goal of immediate elimination of all and sundry privileges in the army, to reduce these systematically to the actually necessary minimum.
2. To eliminate as quickly as possible all those privileges which are not in any

way derived from the needs of the service and which inevitably offend the Red Army men's sense of equality and comradeship.

3. To reaffirm in full force the existing orders and regulations concerning leave, official missions, prohibition of entry by women into the areas where the army is operating, prohibition of spirituous liquor, and so on.
4. The Revolutionary War Councils themselves to take the lead in combating breaches of the regulations and orders referred to.
5. To pay careful attention to all complaints from Red Army men regarding wrong and unjust actions in the sphere of supply, illegal privileges and indulgences for some at the expense of others.
6. In those cases in which guilt and [?] ill-will is clearly revealed, to bring the guilty to public trial in the presence of representatives of the interested parties, with wide publicity given to the sentences passed, along with the appropriate commentary.
7. To watch carefully that counter-revolutionary provocateurs do not stir up discontent through fictitious rumours about all sorts of privileges and advantages enjoyed by the commanders and commissars, and, in cases where clearly malicious spreaders of such rumours are discovered, to bring them to public trial in the presence of delegates of the interested parties.
8. To intensify supervision of the work of the supply organs, strengthening them and in every way increasing the effectiveness and precision of their work.
9. To intensify the work of political education.

I request you to inform me through the proper channels, as soon as possible, about all the measures you take, and also about your views on the problem posed, so that I may report to the Central Committee of the Party and the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic.

October 31, 1920

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## Endnotes

**34.** The All-Russia conference of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), held at the end of September 1920, took place against a background of serious defeats on the Polish front. After a long discussion of this question, the conference decided to try [?] for peace with Poland so as to concentrate all forces on the fight against Wrangel.

A very important item on the agenda of this conference was the question of the tasks of Party work. After discussion about relations between the leading circles of the Party and its rank-and-file, a resolution was worked out which contained a number of practical measures for improving the state of the Party and combating abuses, excesses and bureaucratism. At this conference the first members of a Party Control Commission were elected (on a provisional) basis, until the Party Congress), and the tasks of such a commission were defined.

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **II. Commanders and Commissars**

# ORDER No.75

**By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's  
Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, January 10, 1919, No. 75, *Gryazi***

[*Gryazi* is the junction of the Kozlov (Michurmsk)-Voronezh and Orel Tsaritsyn (Volgograd) lines.]

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The internal service regulations require that commanders obtain precise knowledge of the soldiers under their command, keeping close track of their daily lives, education, development, military actions, mistakes and merits. Commissars are in the same way required to keep careful observation of the life of all the soldiers in their respective Units. The principal task in this sphere consists in enabling fresh forces to develop and bringing forward youthful talents from among the mass of the soldiers. Among our soldiers there are many capable, resourceful, courageous men. Many of them sometimes lack only the education and training needed to occupy a position of command with dignity and honour. Such capable and industrious soldiers must be singled out, given the opportunity to study, sent on instructors' courses, and promoted to positions of command. Up to now this work has been done on a scale that is quite inadequate.

I invite the Revolutionary War Councils of all the armies to pay special attention to this aspect of the work, to direct regimental commissars and commanders, acting through all battalion, company and platoon commanders, to draw up special lists of soldiers who by their work have put themselves in line for positions of command, to correct these lists on the basis of experience, and to insert in them notes concerning the special characteristics, abilities, qualities and knowledge possessed by each of the soldiers whose names are being put forward, and to send these lists monthly to the Revolutionary War Council of the army, which will pass them on to the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic.

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **II. Commanders and Commissars**

# ORDER No.82

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's  
Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, March 2, 1919, No.82, Moscow

## A Necessary Elucidation of the *Internal Service Regulations of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army*

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The internal service regulations which have been established as obligatory for the Red Army as a whole say nothing about the rights and duties of commissars. In order to prevent any misunderstandings and incorrect interpretations it is necessary to provide the following indications.

Commissars play a tremendous role in the building of our army. It can be said with complete confidence that we should not have had an army capable of fighting had it not been for the heroic, self-sacrificing work of the commissars. At the same time, it is perfectly clear that the institution of commissars is not a permanent institution, but has arisen from the transitional character of the present epoch in the building of the army.

When this work began we had hardly any commanding personnel who were aware of the tasks confronting the army and the spirit that had to inspire it. This situation made it necessary to split in two the organs of administration and command in the army: the technical side, rights and duties in the sphere of operations and command were assigned to the commanders, while the political, educational and supervisory rights and duties were assigned to the commissars. This type of organisation, as experience has shown, has produced, by and large, excellent results. Working hand in hand, commanders and commissars have created on our fronts armies of which the Soviet Republic is rightly proud. But, at the same time, all the work that has been done in building the army has prepared conditions which will lead, sooner or later, to the establishment of complete one-man management in the sphere of administration and command.

During the past year, many thousands of Red officers have been trained in the spirit of the new army. Many old commanders have become intimately linked with the new army and are filling with honour responsible posts at the head of the revolutionary forces. Thousands of commissars have obtained military experience in this period and are successfully taking command of their own units. All this is preparing conditions for the duties of commander and commissar to be combined in one person, bearing responsibility in military, political and moral respects alike for the unit entrusted to him.

The internal service regulations, which were not conceived just for a few weeks or months, were drawn up with a view to the future system of complete one-man management in the running of army units.

As regards the present transitional period, these regulations must be supplemented by the regulation concerning commissars and all the subsequent orders and instructions defining the relations between commissars, commanders and soldiers of the Red Army, Communist cells, and soon. The responsible role to

be played by the commissars continues for the present to remain in full force.

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **II. Commanders and Commissars**

# ORDER No.97

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's  
Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Red Army and the Red Navy, May 12,  
1919, no.97, Kozlov

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Reports have been received that among the commanders mobilised in recent weeks there are some who patently avoid fulfilling conscientiously their duty to the working people. These reports do not indicate, however, what penalties have been imposed upon the saboteurs, open or half-concealed. Yet it is clear that if Red Army men who desert are to be subjected to stern punishment, commanders who commit sabotage must be punished with twofold severity.

Thousands and tens of thousands from among the old regular officers are honourably and courageously fighting in the ranks of the working people. These are all those who refused to sell the blood of the Russian workers and peasants first to the German Kaiser and then to the Anglo-French and American stock-exchanges. These men, the best representatives of the old corps of regular officers, are working at every level of our army organisation, at the front and in the rear, and they enjoy deserved confidence and respect on the part of the Red Army and the entire Soviet country.

But among these regular officers there were also elements who, while not going over to the enemy camp, tried and are trying to avoid fulfilling their duty in the Soviet ranks. They are trying to conceal themselves in various rear institutions in the capacity of 'indispensables'. And when a mobilisation measure thrusts them into the ranks of the army, they do everything they can to avoid work, responsibility and danger.

I order the relevant commanders and commissars to observe with the greatest attention and thoroughness the work done by the commanders recently brought into the army. The Field Staff is to work out, in agreement with the All-Russia General Staff, a scheme of credentials reports on the members of the commanding apparatus. At the same time, the Revolutionary War Councils and the appropriate rear institutions are to remind all saboteurs, idlers and self-seekers among the commanding personnel that the laws of war punish ruthlessly.

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **II. Commanders and Commissars**

# STEEL AND GOLD

## On the problem of acts of treachery in the Red Army

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Our torpedo-boat *Karl Liebknecht* has captured in the Caspian Sea a steamer on which the well-known Black-Hundred murderer General Grishin-Almazov [A.N. Grishin-Ahnazov served with Kolchak in Siberia, then transferred to the Southern front, where he acted as governor of Odessa on Denikin's behalf.] was taking a letter from Denikin to Kolchak. Grishin-Almazov shot himself. His steamer and its crew were taken into custody. The documents captured will be published within a few days. In his letter to Kolchak Denikin writes, among other things, that there is no hope of aid from the Allies in the form of troops, since the Allies themselves are now on the eve of just such 'miraculous events' as we have experienced – that is, they are on the brink of proletarian revolution. Even Denikin has been obliged to understand and admit that. The French, British and Italian bourgeoisies no longer possess any armed forces. The robbers of the Entente scuttled shamefully out of Odessa and Sebastopol. After that, they launched a campaign against Petrograd, and promised in all their newspapers and broadcasts that the Northern proletarian capital would fall within a few days. But Petrograd stands. The Petrograd front is comparably sounder than it was a month ago, and the Anglo-French bands have been compelled to reveal their military impotence before the whole world.

But this does not mean that the imperialists are giving up. No, they are putting to work all the resources they possess, in order to save themselves and to crush us. They are exciting the imperialist appetites of the Polish, Romanian, Lettish, Estonian and Finnish bourgeoisies, so as to set them on the Soviet federation. At the same time they are not only helping the Russian bourgeoisie and rural kulaks to create their own army but are trying with all their might to introduce corruption and treachery into the ranks of the Soviet regiments.

The Anglo-French imperialists are using to this end individual members of the Russian commanding personnel.

The officers of the old Tsarist army were split by the revolution into three parts. One part, under the banner of Kornilov, Kaledin, Krasnov, Denikin and Kolchak, rose in arms openly against the Russian workers and peasants, and sold Russia successively to the Germans and the French and British. At the opposite pole to them was the group of officers, awakened for the first time by the events of revolution, who sensed the great truth of the working class and honestly and sincerely took their places in its army. Thousands of former officers have given their lives heroically, without name or fame, in the ranks along with the proletarian and peasant soldiers. Finally, there was a third, large group in the middle, frightened and worried men, who drew their heads in and tried to hide from the great events. When the Soviet forces are victorious, when the flame of revolution bursts forth in other countries this middle group of officers starts to lean towards the Soviet power, either from sentiment or from calculation, and marks itself off in every way from the supporters of Denikin and Kolchak. When the wave – of revolution momentarily subsides, when, under the combined onslaught of our foes, the Red Army momentarily retreats, the spineless, idea-less and cowardly section of the officers looks with fear in the direction of Denikin's bludgeon, and produces from its

midst a fresh lot of deserters and traitors.

To this is to be added the work accomplished by Anglo-French and Japano-American gold.

'I buy everything,' said gold: 'I seize everything,' said steel. But the Allies' steel hangs powerlessly in the air, for the workers' hand, itself armed with steel, will not allow any more blows to be struck at the working masses of Russia. But the Anglo-French predators have accumulated a lot of stolen gold. They are now prepared to give away a considerable amount of their booty if only they can thereby capture the Petrograd they hate, and then Red Moscow, and strangle workers' and peasants' Russia. The bourgeoisie of the Entente countries possess natural agents in the shape of Russia's former landlords, capitalists, counter-revolutionary generals and officials. They have their own organisation, their own system of communications. Under the blows of fate, the counter-revolutionary elements in Russia have in the past year made considerable progress in conspiratorial, underground work. They often infiltrate our regiments in the guise of Red Army men, and carry on corrupting agitation there, relying on the kulak elements.

But the principal efforts of the Kolchakite and Denikinite agents of foreign imperialism are directed at the commanders of the Red Army. Partial and temporary setbacks on the Western and Southern fronts have created favourable soil for traitors' work. Without political views, the so-called 'non-Party' officer, unable to keep his bearings amid great events, soon loses his nerve and, when he sees that we have suffered defeat on this or that sector of the front, and hears of defeats on other sectors, he easily draws the conclusion that all is lost. Or it would be more correct to say that this conclusion is suggested to him by hired provocateurs. They whisper in his ear: 'If you want to save yourself, cross over to the side of Denikin and Kolchak. There is great strength there, with help from the Entente countries: there is food and gold.'

On the Western front, where the Anglo-French imperialists are operating more zealously than anywhere else, through the Baltic ports, there have been a few cases recently of treachery by commanders. Commanders of regiments or battalions have handed over their units to the enemy, taking advantage of the soldiers' lack of consciousness or of their difficult military situation.

On the other hand, those paid agents who still remain among us exploit such cases of treachery in order to inspire the Red Army men with distrust and hostility towards the entire commanding apparatus. On the right they say: 'Officers, go over to Denikin, Kolchak, Mannerheim and Hailer.' On the left they whisper: 'Red Army men, is it worth your while to shed your blood when you are being betrayed by your commanders?' [The Polish General Hailer commanded a Polish force fighting against the Germans in France during the World War which returned to Poland after the Armistice and fought against the Bolsheviks.] All the imperialist armies are now breaking up and decomposing. The Red Army alone is holding together and growing, despite partial setbacks. We see this not only from the example of Russia but also from the experience of Hungary, where, after a series of defeats, the armed proletariat has thrown back its enemies and is pressing them even harder. But the imperialists, unwilling to surrender, are striving with all their strength to infect with the poison of their putrefaction the young organism of the Red Army. Vain efforts!

Of course the treachery of particular commanders does substantial damage to the army. But these cases cannot seriously shake its might. The military apparatus

created by the working class is flexible and tough enough to cope with the last convolution of the dying beast. Treachery will be crushed by the united forces of the soldiers, the commissars and the commanders themselves.

Those who are concerned first and foremost in this matter are the overwhelming majority of the honourable commanders.

This majority, who already have so many services to the Soviet country to their credit, will not allow isolated scoundrels to drive their poisoned splinters into the body of our army and spread panicky suspicion of the commanding apparatus as a whole. Shoulder to shoulder with the commissars, our commanders will expel from their midst the wretched hirelings and traitors.

The extensive influx of Communists into the army must at once raise the level of its consciousness. And in the last resort it is on the consciousness of the workers and the advanced peasants that all the intrigues of our enemies have been and will continue to be broken.

Agents of imperialism are trying to disintegrate our army. '*Closer to the Red Army masses!*' shall be our answer. We must send, not only from the centre but also from the departments and administrations of the fronts, armies and divisions, the best workers we have, tempered Communist proletarians, into the lower levels of the army, the regiments, battalions and companies, those basic cells of the revolutionary army.

Strain every nerve, dig deeper, tighten up – that is our programme of action!

A commander with an enthusiastic attitude to his work will be devoted to the army, and will not be bought. A commander who is indifferent and careless is either a traitor or a candidate for treachery. He must be cast out ruthlessly.

The commissar is the political leader and inspirer of a regiment. The soldiers and commanders are his responsibility. He watches over the interests of the workers' revolution. And if a commissar is not like that, he must be removed at once.

The Communist cells must be checked and purged again and again in the light of experience in the struggle.

This has been our road up to now. This it will remain in the future as well. We shall merely redouble our efforts now that temporary setbacks on two fronts are causing fresh outbreaks of treachery.

If the imperialists' brigand steel has not destroyed us, neither shall we be destroyed by the treachery of Anglo-French gold. [\[1\]](#)

June 17, 1919  
Voronezh-Kursk  
'En Route', No.54

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## Endnotes

[1.](#) Trotsky's metaphor is taken from a poem by Pushkin:

'Everything is mine,' said gold;  
'Everything is mine,' said steel.  
'I buy everything,' said gold;  
'I seize everything,' said steel.

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **II. Commanders and Commissars**

# **ORDER No.118**

**By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's  
Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, June 27, 1919, No.118, Voronezh**

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**I** have frequently received requests from instructors who have recently been mobilised, asking that they be released and returned to the place where they were previously serving. These requests usually include a statement that the Soviet Republic will go to wrack and ruin if the given mobilised instructor be not returned to the place where he was previously serving. Such requests and solicitations are out of place and essentially indecent. Every one of us, that is, above all, every Red Army man, would very much rather be working as a peaceful shepherd, blacksmith, weaver or turner and thereby contributing to promote the welfare and development of our country and of all mankind. But the predatory bourgeois enemy is trying to seize the workers' and peasants' country by the throat and strangle it. Under these conditions every peaceful worker is obliged to defend the freedom, independence and future prospects of the working people. The mobilised instructors must show an example of courage and staunchness in the struggle, and not try to shirk performance of their burdensome but inescapable military duties.

I issue this warning: let nobody send me any more such requests, or I will publish the names of those concerned for everyone to see, as the names of citizens who are trying to become legalised deserters.

## II. Commanders and Commissars

# ORDER No.121

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Red Army and Red Navy, July 9, 1919,  
No.121, Voronezh station

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In connection with the treacherous conspiracy by a section of the commanding personnel on the Petrograd front [35] articles have appeared in the press which are being interpreted as a sign of change in Soviet policy in military matters, particularly where the military specialists are concerned. According to reports from the political workers, rumours of this kind are being extensively spread among the commanding personnel, and this is giving rise to feelings of alarm and uncertainty. I therefore consider it necessary to make clear that Soviet policy in military matters remains unchanged, for it is not the product of the fantasy of particular individuals or groups but results from the collective experience of many hundreds of thousands of workers and peasants.

The honourable commanders of the Red Army – and they are the overwhelming majority – will, as before, enjoy the confidence and backing of the Soviet power, as its valued collaborators in most responsible posts.

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## Endnotes

**35.** A section of the commanding personnel of the Petrograd front organised a plot against the Soviet Government at Kronstadt, Oranienbaum, Krasnaya Gorka and Krasnoye Syelo. Their organisation was linked closely with Yudenich and set itself the aim of capturing Petrograd with the troops of the North-Western Army. The plotters made contacts on two dreadnoughts (the *Petropavlovsk* and the *Andzei Pyervozvanny*) and counted on their support, as well as on help from the British fleet. The leader of this revolt was Neklyudov, the commander of the Krasnaya Gorka fort. The premature launching of the revolt, the failure of the crews of the dreadnoughts to go over to the rebels, and the absence of British aid had the result that on June 12, 1919 only Krasnaya Gorka was held by the conspirators. After bombardment from Kronstadt, Krasnaya Gorka was retaken by a detachment of sailors on June 16.

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **II. Commanders and Commissars**

# COMMANDERS MUST KNOW HOW TO OBEY

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On one of the Ukrainian sectors of the Southern front the commander of an infantry brigade gave an order to the commander of a cavalry regiment that was subordinate to him to despatch a certain number of troopers to a flank. The commander of the cavalry regiment answered: 'I have no cavalry for you, and you have a whole brigade of infantry.' This case is characteristic of a system of relations under which serious and lasting victories cannot be won.

The order to despatch the cavalrymen was given in the name of the brigade commander by the chief of staff of the brigade, a former lieutenant-colonel, a modest but conscientious worker. The commander of the cavalry regiment doubtless regards himself as a 'Communist', otherwise he would hardly have resolved to give such an insolent answer. In a few places commanders who are Communists (i.e.,pseudo-Communists) consider that everything is permissible to them, especially when they are dealing with non-Communist officers. This disgraceful practice must be extirpated, and the sooner and more ruthlessly the better.

A Communist commander must be a model of discipline. Discipline signifies a certain conscious link and subordination between people who are striving towards a common goal. A regimental commander who, instead of carrying out a battle order, replies insolently to his superior officer will, apart from everything else, never establish the necessary subordination in his own regiment. Wilful persons may frighten, but they are incapable of establishing firm control.

Under the answer given by the commander of the cavalry regiment there was only his own signature. But where was the signature of the commissar? If there had been a good, disciplined commissar in that regiment, he would not only have refused to sign an order so incompatible with proper organisation, he would have demanded that the regimental commander immediately carry out the battle order. Had the regimental commander refused, he would have arrested him on the spot. Evidently, in the present case, the commissar was not available, but the commander of the cavalry regiment, regarding himself as a Communist, did not conform to any regulations and infringed a battle order without even informing the commissar about this.

Perhaps, though, there was no commissar at all in this regiment, since in some places it is thought that commissars are needed only where there are 'military specialists'. A gross delusion! There ought to be a commissar in every regiment. And supervision of certain commanders who, in words, are 'extremely revolutionary', is just as necessary as supervision of doubtful 'military specialists'.

A Communist commander is always a most precious acquisition for our Red Army. Only he must be a real Communist, that is, a man of duty and discipline from head to foot. However, we still have amongst our officers a considerable number of commanders who demand unquestioning subordination to themselves but are completely insubordinate towards their own immediate superior. Moreover, they justify this either by reference to their Party-mindedness or to some sort of special mandate received from authoritative Soviet officials. Such pseudo-Communists do

more harm to the army than the worst traitors from among the White-Guard officers. A traitor causes the army material loss, goes over to the enemy, and that's all, whereas a pseudo-Communist poisons the consciousness of his unit by criminal demagogery. While failing to obey an order he will brag about his 'Party-mindedness', shout about the interests of the revolution, and at the same time treacherously disrupt the co-ordination of military operations.

Not all Makhnovites belong to the Anarchists: some of them wrongly regard themselves as Communists. Makhnovites under a Communist flag are very much more dangerous than under an Anarchist or Left-SR flag.

Only when we have cleansed the Red Army of disorganisers shall we ensure its complete steadfastness in battle.

July 18, 1919

Vorozhba station

[Vorozhba is where the line from Kursk joins the Konotop-Sumy line. ]

*En Route, No.64*

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **II. Commanders and Commissars**

# A.P. NIKOLAYEV

MAY THE MEMORY OF THIS RED GENERAL LIVE FOREVER

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One of our brigades on the Narva front was commanded by a former general of the old army. Aleksandr Panfilovich Nikolayev. In the course of our defeats before Yamburg Comrade Nikolayev was taken prisoner, along with others, by the frenzied White-Guard bandit Balakhovich. [S.N. Bulak-Balakhovich joined the Red Army in 1918, but in November of that year took his regiment over to the Whites at Pskov. At first he co-operated with Yudenich, but later quarrelled with him. In 1920 he co-operated with the Polish forces against the Red Army in Byelorussia.] Several hundred men were shot or hanged by Balakhovich in Yamburg. Among those tortured by the counter-revolutionaries was Brigade Commander Nikolayev. Local inhabitants have told comrades visiting Yamburg, among them Comrade Zinoviev, the details of Comrade Nikolayev's death, describing him as a real hero. This former general of the Tsar's army not only did not abjure his bond with our Red Army, on the contrary – he threw down a challenge before his executioners and died with the cry: 'Long live the rule of the workers and peasants!'

In his lifetime, Comrade Nikolayev's name was a modest one, known only to a small circle of persons. This name must now be made known to the entire Red Army, to the entire country. Comrade Nikolayev was one of those representatives of the old officer corps who took to his heart the profound truth of the labour movement and identified himself forever with the cause of the Red Army and the workers' and peasants' revolution.

Comrade Nikolayev's body has been found and will shortly be brought to Petrograd, where the heroic proletariat and the Red garrison will do honour to the remains of the Red general.

May the memory of Aleksandr Panfilovich Nikolayev live for ever in the hearts of the working masses.

October 5, 1919, Orel.

*En Route*, No.87

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **II. Commanders and Commissars**

# ABOUT THE MILITARY SPECIALISTS

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The second anniversary of the Soviet order is approaching, and this second anniversary finds us in the midst of a ferocious civil war. However, the past year has not gone for nothing: it has taught everyone who it is that is fighting and for what – the historical significance of the Soviet power. To everyone who is not blind, this year has shown that the Soviet power is no accidental and temporary happening, but the outcome of profound historical necessity.

The overwhelming majority of the regular officers of the old army entered the Soviet epoch without knowing even the ABC of socialism. It is not to be wondered at if the first period of Soviet power brought very great confusion into the minds of these officers. The privileged and titled top ranks of the officer corps made skilful use of this confusion so as to draw the broad, democratic mass of the officers into White-Guard conspiracies, revolts and so on, making them, like the peasants they conscripted, the cannon-fodder of counter-revolution.

The hostility and suspicion felt by the masses towards the regular officers was a natural consequence of the previous epoch, when every officer, regardless of his personal origin or political sympathies, had objectively, as an officer, to serve as a tool in the hands of the privileged classes. The regular officers could and can overcome this hostility and suspicion towards them in only one way: by taking their stand unquestioningly on the ground of the revolution that has been made, recognising sincerely, honestly and finally that there can be no return to the old order, and devoting their powers and their knowledge to the cause of the struggle for the independence of our new workers' and peasants' Russia, which is striving for the country's complete rebirth. This process is being hindered, however, by old associations and old prejudices which are artificially kept alive by the political agents of the bourgeoisie. The result has been that officers have been drawn into a number of adventures, conspiracies, and revolts, and many hundreds and thousands of them have gone to senseless deaths.

True, at the same time, a very considerable number of regular officers have broken away from the White-Guard camp and are serving on Soviet territory, in Soviet institutions – principally in the Red Army. However, this section of the officers, too, lack clarity and understanding in their attitude to the Soviet order, and far from all of them show the necessary honesty and straightforwardness. A substantial share of the blame for this is rooted in the officers' failure to grasp the meaning of the revolution which has taken place and the prospects which it opens up.

The officers, like many other categories of the intelligentsia, did not at first take the trouble to understand the meaning of Soviet power, because they regarded it as ephemeral. It would not be pointless to re-read today the bourgeois newspapers of 1917-1918, with their continual prophecies of the inevitable and proximate downfall of the Soviet power. The offensive of Krasnov and Kerensky against Petrograd in October 1917, the revolt led by Kaledin, Alekseyev, Dutov and Krasnov, the offensive by the Germans after the first negotiations at Brest, the revolt of the Czechoslovaks, the Anglo-French occupation of the Murman coast and Archangel, the Japanese landing at Vladivostok, Romania's attacks, the Yaroslavl

rising, the Anglo-French landing on the Black Sea coast – all of these events, and many more, provided grounds for ever renewed, persistent forecasts of the near and certain collapse of the Soviet regime. And yet, during this period, how many changes took place, 'how many governments, not to speak of ministries, fell in other countries. The Soviet power not only stood firm amid this maelstrom of world events, it even became incomparably stronger than before.

Two years ago we began with small volunteer detachments, today we have a mighty army; two years ago we were opposed by mighty imperialist armies, but, since then, the German and Austro-Hungarian armies have left the stage, and the British and French armies are not only being demobilised, they are being disrupted internally, undermined by the spirit of revolt. Not for nothing did Denikin write to Kolchak that 'Britain and France have caught Russia's disease'.

Finally, in the most recent period, the prophecies of impending downfall of the Soviet power became especially frequent, owing to the difficult situation at the fronts. Only a few weeks ago, the Southern front presented very great danger for us. The forces of the Polish bourgeoisie were advancing from the west through Smolensk and Mogilev towards Moscow. In the East our advance into Siberia had been halted and we had begun to be pushed back. Petrograd was threatened with mortal danger by Yudenich ... These successes were achieved by our enemies thanks to the tireless work of British gold and British weapons. Thrown against us was everything that could be mobilised by means of bribery, lies, hounding and terror. But it was enough for the working masses to sense the terrible danger, for forces to be found that sufficed to give the enemy a decisive rebuff. At present we are advancing in the South: Yudenich has been hurled back from Petrograd: in the East we are continuing to harry and beat Kolchak: in the North the British have themselves abandoned the Archangel territory. We are emerging victorious from the great duel with the combined forces of militarism. Those who forecast our death have themselves either perished or will soon do so. But we are alive and growing stronger.

Thus, the Soviet order is no temporary or accidental and transitory phenomenon. The bourgeois order of militarism, free trade and wage-labour seemed to the diehard serfowners when it first arose to be something accidental and ephemeral. But it was the serfowners who perished and the bourgeois order that developed. So is it today with the Soviet, communist order. It has come to take over from the bourgeois order. It is smashing all obstacles in its path. Whoever is unwilling to march in step with it will be cast aside, crushed and annihilated. Their Serene Highnesses the Princes Lieven and their like, and adventurers like Kolchak and Denikin, dreaming of a crown, cannot, of course, reconcile themselves to the new order, just as the serfowners could not reconcile themselves to the emancipation of the peasantry. [The Lievens were a family of 'Baltic barons' who were prominent in the diplomatic, administrative and military services of Tsardom. Prince A.P. Lieven commanded White forces which fought in Latvia and then, as part of Yudenich's army, on the Petrograd front.] But the mass of the officers, the ordinary workers among them, can and must reconcile themselves to the Soviet regime. To do this they need only realise that this regime is an immutable and long-lasting fact of history, that they will have to live, work and bring up their children within the setting that it provides.

One of the simplest and at the same time most powerful factors repelling the officers from the Soviet regime is the hardship of their material existence: ceaseless difficulties with housing, food, fuel, means of communication and so on. The Soviet order seems to them, owing to these circumstances, to be an order of meagreness

and poverty, bordering on beggary. Actually, this is the greatest of delusions. The ruined state of all Russia was our inheritance from Tsardom and the War. This devastation was worsened by the civil war, that is, by the new attacks made against us by bourgeois agents who wanted to turn back the wheel of history. Present-day Communism, unlike the primitive Christian sort, does not in the least signify levelling-down into poverty. On the contrary, the development of the Communist order presupposes a powerful growth of the productive forces of industry and agriculture, of technology and science, of art in all its forms. Hunger rations and cold dwellings are not Communism but a calamity brought upon us by the crimes of world imperialism. The Soviet order is trying to ensure plenty, warmth and comfort for everyone. Is this practicable? Of course it is. Give us two years of peaceful labour, of the concentration of all our powers, all our energy, all our enthusiasm, not upon civil war, but upon economic creative work, and we shall, with our combined forces, not only heal the gaping wounds of the national organism but also effect a mighty advance in all directions.

Autumn 1919.  
From the archives

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **II. Commanders and Commissars**

# THE RED ARMY AS SEEN BY A WHITE GUARD

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There has fallen into Soviet hands on the Eastern front a report presented to the Kolchakite White-Guard command by the former commander of a brigade in N division, Kotomin, who went over to the Whites. This report is a document which is exceptionally instructive in many ways.

## THE SELECTION OF WHITE GUARDS

Kotomin is, as we can see from his report, someone who is not stupid, not without powers of observation, and not lacking in character. He is acutely hostile to the Soviet power. He does not state in his report what the reasons of principle are for this hostility of his – he feels no need for such reasons of principle. His hatred is purely organic, a class, social hatred. We do not know what Kotomin's own origins are, but it is perfectly clear that the way of life and habit of thought of the bourgeois-noble milieu have saturated him through and through. The ideas of communism do not interest him. As will be clear to everyone, he quite fails to consider whether communism will be achieved, whether people will live better and more easily under the communist order, and so on. Instead, he firmly feels and knows that the rule of the Communist Party has done great harm to the privileges by which he and his like have lived and flourished, and he is filled with great hatred for Communists, his hatred being the fiercer the more conscious, disinterested and self-sacrificing a particular Communist worker may be.

Kotomin was a member of the League for National Rebirth. [36] He joined the Red Army (it is not quite clear from the report whether as a volunteer or as a result of conscription) with the aim of bringing disintegration into the ranks of the revolutionary regiments. It maybe, though, that Kotomin is in this matter embellishing his past record for the eyes of the White-Guard command. Kotomin chose officers with a White-Guard outlook for the headquarters of the brigade which was entrusted to him. 'Wishing to form my headquarters staff from former regular officers who were opposed to the Bolsheviks, and having information from the League for National Rebirth, of which I am a member and to which I applied in Tula, I at once engaged as chief of staff Lieutenant-Colonel Nelidov (of the 10th Ingermanland Regiment), who, while a member of the secret organisation in Tula, commanded a battalion of volunteers.' And, subsequently, Kotomin steadily recruited White Guards to his staff, and along with them sniffed out sympathisers in the headquarters above them.

## ANTISEMITISM

In selecting the elements he needed, Kotomin at once came up against the commissars. In his report Kotomin very carefully singles out the Jewish commissars and demonstrates his hatred of them in the most emphatic way.

It is worth while saying a few words about this question. The Jewish commissars are far from constituting such a big percentage of the total as is maintained in

White-Guard reports, leaflets and newspapers. But it is undoubtedly a fact that the percentage is fairly high. Kotomin, like many other anti-semites, sees the reason for the considerable number of Jewish commissars as being due to the special abilities and talents of Jews. He twice speaks of their 'great talent'. Such an evaluation of the Jews certainly calls for no objection. It is a fact that the Jews are a predominantly urban people, and that they form a very high proportion of the town population. The Tsarist regime, which established very harsh conditions for the Jews, impelled not only the Jewish workers, like the Russian workers, but also petty-bourgeois intelligentsia elements of the Jewish community to take the path of revolution. Among the considerable number of Jewish Communists who have joined the Party in recent times there are quite a few the source of whose Communism is not so much social, not so much a matter of class, as national. [Kotomin cites the example of a brigade commissar, a Jew named Sh., who 'knew how to fix it' so that not he but another commissar was sent to the front with the brigade. According to our investigation this did indeed happen. But Kotomin says nothing about Sh. having been summoned before a Party court. The party knows no national differences, where either heroes or self-seekers are concerned. (Note by Trotsky)] These are, of course, not the best Communists, and the organisation of Soviet power relies not upon them but upon the Petrograd and Moscow workers who were steeled in the old underground.

Anti-semitism means not only hatred of the Jews but also cowardice in relation to them. Cowardice has big eyes, and it endows its enemy with extraordinary qualities which are not at all inherent in him. The socio-legal conditions of life of the Jews are quite sufficient to account for their role in the revolutionary movement. But it has certainly not been proved, nor can it be proved, that Jews are more talented than Great Russians or Ukrainians.

## DIFFICULTIES FOR TRAITORS

'When the brigade arrived at Simbirsk on April 18,' Kotomin reports, 'Front headquarters appointed as chief of staff a Jewish Communist who had graduated from the Red General Staff Academy, a very clever young man of 24 who had completed his studies at a neuropathological institute in Lausanne or Zurich. This Red General Staff officer was a highly undesirable element from my point of view, and I made every effort to get rid of him. Mature, clever, hardworking, cheekily defiant like all Jews generally, he eventually got on bad terms with everybody, and to my great joy I was able to get rid of him in the first days of June ... After V's departure, the post of chief of staff was again filled by Lieutenant-Colonel Ya., who, by force of circumstances, was unable to come over along with me, because his family had been registered, and, if he had come over, it can be said with almost complete certainty that this would have entailed the severest penalties for his family, possibly even going so far as shooting. It must be noted that, in general, the situation of those regular officers who have family ties and who have joined the Red Army either voluntarily, in order to carry out a definite task, namely, the disintegration of Bolshevism, or as a result of conscription, is nightmarishly frightful. In connection with my going-over I had talks with the commander of my N regiment, Captain L, with the commander of X regiment, K, as well as with the chief of staff, Lieutenant-Colonel Ya., and they are all dreaming only of the time when they will be in a position to join one of the Volunteer Armies. Because of their family ties, however, this going-over will have to assume the form of their being taken prisoner, so that their families may not be subject to penalties.'

'Nightmarishly frightful,' as we see from Kotomin's words, is the situation of an

officer who joins the Red Army with the innocent aim of disintegrating a unit, or of treacherously leading it under the exterminating fire of the enemy, or deserting it in a moment of danger and going over to the Whites. Treacherously attempting to kill hundreds and thousands of Red Army men, persons like Kotomin indignantly denounce the Soviet power which holds their families responsible for their treachery.

## THE REGULAR OFFICERS AND THE SOVIET POWER

How does Kotomin estimate the attitude of the regular officers towards the Soviet power? 'Nearly all the regular officers,' he says, 'with rare exceptions, are conscious and honourable enough to appreciate fully all the harm that has been done through the usurpation of power by the Bolshevik-Communists, they want with all their hearts to break with the Red Army and are its irreconcilable foes.' However, this appreciation, obviously made because the White command wants to hear it, is subsequently refuted by a number of facts and statements provided by Kotomin himself. True, Kotomin names a number of commanders who have gone over to the Whites or who have carried on vigorous activity aimed at disintegrating their regiments but he also, in passing, mentions other examples. Thus, divisional commander V, when conversing with Kotomin, 'expressed the view that, if he is serving in the army, he considers it his duty to serve honourably, and concluded with the statement that he does not understand the non-party attitude, since he considers that the question must be posed thus: "either with us or against us".' And here we find the commander of a regiment, Staff-Captain Ryakin, a Knight of St George, 24 years old, 'a very brave and resolute man who has recently taken over his regiment – definitely a dangerous man, for he serves with zeal, risking his life at every step. Thus, for example, with 150 soldiers of his regiment, when during the night of July 22-23 the village of Verkhtechinskoye Metlino was captured without a single casualty (either dead or wounded) he took prisoner 300 men of the 45th Regiment, captured two field kitchens and five machine-guns. The regiment, although it includes many Communists, is held together by Ryakin alone.' The neighbouring regiment is commanded by Captain L who, in Kotomin's opinion, 'is held back from going over to the Whites only by his family ties'. Later, the report names a number of commanders and workers in the supply service who either went over or would have liked to go over to Kolchak. But here we come upon 'divisional commander Captain Vinogradov – and his son, who is the divisional adjutant: they are definitely dangerous men, devoting all their energies to their work'. Kotomin likewise describes two commanders of artillery sections, Mukhin and Bobrov, as 'definitely dangerous' men, that is officers who are honestly and energetically doing their duty. There is, finally, a third type of officer described by Kotomin, an example of which is former Staff-Captain N, who is 'not well trained from the military standpoint, and lacks resolution: he is wholly in the hands of his commissars and divisional staff, towards whom his attitude is extremely ingratiating'. Along with this we find another such type, a former ensign, 'extremely irresolute and cowardly, but who knows how to keep on good terms with the command, and so stays in favour with them'. We have no reason to object: such people do exist.

In the concluding section of his report, devoted to general observations, Kotomin returns to the subject of the regular officers. 'All of them,' he says, 'with extremely rare exceptions, are hostile to the Soviet power, but they must be divided into several groups. The first, which is the least important, consists of those who are actively combating Bolshevism in various organisations, or who are working in

organisations or have voluntarily joined the Red Army and are trying in every way to disintegrate it and prepare it for a revolution. The second group is the largest; cowed and weak-willed, without resources and largely where they are through conscription, they work under unremitting surveillance by Commissars and Communists, and work fairly well, but without doing anything special, since in their hearts they dream only of the day when Bolshevism will have been eliminated in one way or another. A third group consists of officers who are so wearied by everything and so lacking in staunchness, that they are prepared to agree with any authority whatsoever, so as to be left in peace without their private life being disturbed.' Later, though, Kotomin makes an extremely important correction to his own account of the political outlook of the regular officers. 'The feeling among the commanding personnel of units which have come from the rear to the front,' he says, 'is in almost every case, without exception, exactly the same: a desire to go over to the Whites so as to be rid of the nightmare of the Bolshevik regime. The only factor that holds them back is their well-founded anxiety about their families, whom the Bolsheviks have registered, and so they all look forward impatiently to even the slightest push effected by the Whites, in order that they may go over, if only in the more or less camouflaged way of being taken prisoner, so as to safeguard their families. The feeling among the commanding personnel, including the regular officers, of the front-line troops is diametrically opposed to this, in view of their direct community of interest, as having earlier volunteered to go to the front, with the upholding of the Bolshevik power of Soviet Russia.'

Thus, Kotomin quite sharply contrasts the front-line officers with those from the rear who have been recently taken by conscription from various Soviet jobs and sent to join active service units. The difference noted in Kotomin's report undoubtedly does exist. In those units which have been at the front for a long time, the commanding personnel is made up to a considerable extent of volunteers who joined the Red Army in the first period of its formation. But, also, those commanders who were called up a year or more ago, in the conscription of officers, have mostly succeeded in becoming closely bound up with the Red Army and are to a greater or lesser degree filled with its spirit. The active White-Guard elements have managed by this time to go over to the enemy, and, as a result, that section of the commanders drawn from among the regular officers of the old army who have been working in the Red Army for a year or more, and have passed through defeats and victories along with it, are an extremely valuable element, bound to the army not merely by considerations of pay and rations, but also by an inner spiritual bond, by shared efforts and shared sacrifices. Officers who, having established themselves in various peaceful occupations in the rear, stubbornly and persistently avoiding mobilisation, find themselves mobilised all the same, are frequently in a bitter mood when they arrive at the front, and constitute rather favourable human material for the White Guards. Kotomin was on the Eastern front with a brigade of that sort, formed in the rear and provided with officers conscripted in the rear. Kotomin's own generalisation about the almost universal hostility of the regular officers to the Soviet power must therefore be taken as applying mainly to these men whose service in the rear has been disturbed, to their disquiet.

## THE GENERAL STAFF

Kotomin singles out the General Staff officers. 'It must be supposed,' he says, 'that a considerable percentage of them belong to the League for National Rebirth, but there are certainly others who work for conscience's sake and render immense

service to Bolshevism. Although I know very many of the General Staff officers working in the Red Army, I can say nothing about the true nature of their work, which will undoubtedly be clarified in the future, since very precise information about this exists at the National Centre. In general it can be said that the majority of the old General Staff officers are installed in posts in the rear, with only the younger ones serving, either voluntarily or under compulsion, at the front.' Kotomin's hope that it may be possible to effect a precise political registration of the General Staff officers with the help of the National Centre is now out of date, as the Cheka has effected not just a pretty complete 'registration' of this National Centre, but also its liquidation.

## THE NCOs AND THE RED OFFICERS

'The next category of the commanding personnel of the Red Army,' writes Kotomin after concluding his account of the regular officers, 'consists of the junior commanders, up to the level of company commander, but at the front even the seconds-in-command of particular units are drawn from among former NCOs and even private soldiers. This category can be divided into two groups: a smaller one unconditionally devoted to the interests of communism, with which their personal interests are inseparably linked, and a larger, predominantly made up of conscripts, who are almost hostile to Bolshevism. Both groups of this category are poorly qualified from the military standpoint, and represent no particular menace.'

'Among the commanding personnel of all categories there are also Party members, or sympathisers, especially at the front, whose interests are merged to such a degree with the interests of Bolshevism that they must certainly be regarded as the most dangerous element in the Red Army.'

'There are among the commanders also persons with a certain past, sometimes criminal, but these are gradually being eliminated from the army as a result of the Soviet power having recognised them as a dangerous element, not to be tolerated.'

'As regards the so-called Red officers, the whole mass of them are men without education. Although they mostly belong to the Party, they have little stability. Their average general and military training is below the level of that formerly acquired in a good regimental NCOs' school.'

In this appreciation, of course, the facts are refracted through the prism of a White Guard who has fled to the camp of Kolchak. We see, too, that Kotomin contradicts himself. Nevertheless, there are also some correct statements to be found here. It is undoubtedly the case that among the conscripted NCOs there is a certain percentage of kulak elements, whose proper place is in the rear levies and not in positions of command. Undoubtedly it is also the case that the conscripted NCOs in the units formed in the rear are far from always distinguished by the necessary battle-readiness. However, many of these undergo complete regeneration at the front, producing numerous excellent commanders who are now at the head of very large formations, up to division and cavalry corps level, inclusive.

Typical of the White-Guard colonel is his contemptuous evaluation of the Red commanders. All the same, however, it is true that the preparation provided by the command courses is inadequate, needs to be improved in many respects, and must be supplemented in the future by command courses of a more advanced type. The

reform, improvement and development of military training is a most urgent and important task.

## **REAR AND FRONT FORMATIONS**

'Between the units at the front,' says Kotonlin, 'and the units formed in the rear, there is a sharp difference. In the first there is a substantial preponderance of Communists. In the aggregate of volunteer Red Army men in these units there are almost no regular officers. In the second category, though, the majority of the soldiers are conscripts, and the commanders are mostly regular officers. The first category are more staunch, whereas the second are easily susceptible to demoralisation, and less staunch.' Here a very important question of our military policy is touched upon, and we cannot ignore Kotomin's testimony. Those units which were formed, or re-educated, at the front, he declares, are incomparably more staunch than those which were formed in the rear. And that is understandable. As regards the raw mass of Red Army men, they can be welded into fighting units only if given the appropriate military and political leadership, day by day. In young, freshly-formed units the immediate importance of the commanding personnel is incomparably greater than in old-established, seasoned units. In the latter, too, cases of betrayal occur, but a traitor's going over to the enemy does not disintegrate the unit, and it is even rare for this to do the unit any serious harm. The fresh formations that have come up from the rear are another matter. A well-organised group of characters of the Kotomin type are capable, right from the start, of disrupting a unit almost irreparably. It is all the more important in the case of new formations to select experienced commanders, if only, to some extent, from among such as have been through the fire of the Red Army at the front. Rear formations, if brought into action gradually, with the necessary precautions (especially where the commanding personnel are concerned), soon acquire the colouring of the military milieu around them and become combat-ready front-line units.

## **THE COMMISSARS**

Of very great interest is that section of the report which is directly concerned with the work of the Communist Party in the army and the role played by its representatives. 'The commissars,' writes Kotomin, 'are the best of the Communists, and must be divided into several categories. The first (the smallest, in my view) does not exceed 5 per cent and is perhaps much smaller. These are the idealist Communists, who believe strongly in the idea of socialism and are energetic to the limits of human endurance – workers who put into their work everything they know, all their vigour and determination, without exploiting the advantages of their position. The remaining 95 per cent, and perhaps more, are men who think that communism can bring them great advantages, which they exploit to the full. These include both workers who hope to improve their personal position through socialism and peasants (of the poorest sort, of course) who count on being able to do well for themselves at the expense of the more prosperous, without having to work for it, and also the dregs of the other classes, mostly youngsters and failures, and, of course, almost a majority of Jews, whose dream is not at all of the establishment of communism but of obtaining world domination for themselves.'

'The role played by the commissars in the army is enormous. They maintain the

spirit of class antagonism among the soldier masses. In battle they, both in person and also acting through the Communist cells which are being organised to an ever greater extent, urge the units forward, keeping close watch on everyone. They check the work of the commanders and their behaviour in action. They carry on ceaseless agitation, making use of every suitable case and exploiting every fact, however small, that can be used to emphasise the advantages of the Bolshevik way of life. What is particularly striking about the commissars, especially those at the front, is how amazingly hard-working they are. This is due of course, to their youth, to the fanaticism of their idealist leaders, and to the strict Party discipline: they bear great responsibility before the senior commissars for any negligence, and are moved both by desire for promotion and by fear of denunciation, as spying on one another is prevalent among them to the most persistent and merciless degree.'

Once again, let us not forget for one moment that the report was written by a double-dyed White-Guard traitor. He divides the commissars into two groups. Five per cent, in his opinion, are disinterested, idealistic Communists, while 95 per cent are persons interested in the material results of communism. This classification is actually the result of bourgeois obtuseness. By the disinterested Communists Kotomin evidently means only those who have come from a bourgeois milieu, those who have, in their time, voluntarily broken with their family background and the privileges of their situation, and devoted themselves to the cause of the working class. As for the proletarian Communists, Kotomin views them as persons who 'hope through socialism to improve their personal position'. Of course the aim of communism is the betterment of the position of the working masses, of the toilers of town and country. Communism is advantageous to the working class, that is a fact beyond dispute. But this does not mean at all that each worker Communist, each member of the oppressed class who gives his life on the barricades or serves as a commissar, is fighting for his own personal advantage. The disinterestedness of his work and the moral value of his heroism is no lower, no less, than that of the man of bourgeois origin who has won for himself the right to fight in the ranks of the proletariat.

The mercenary 'Communists' – that is, pseudo-Communists – are those who are guided by immediate personal interest, who have wormed their way into the Party because it is the ruling party, and who try to avoid difficult and dangerous posts and lead a parasitic life. It is quite obvious that, after all the purges which have been carried out, the proportion of such elements is certainly not 95 per cent. They can barely amount to more than five per cent, especially in the army in the field. Kotomin himself is really aware of this, for the role of the Communist Party would be inexplicable if the ideologically disinterested Communists amounted to no more than five per cent. What speaks in Kotomin here is his embittered class instinct, his hatred of the proletariat which has proved able to bring forward from its midst many tens of thousands of dedicated nameless heroes – his endeavour to endow his enemies with features of petty-bourgeois self-interest, bourgeois greed, so as thereby to justify and dignify himself and his White-Guard milieu. Influenced by this psychological need, Kotomin tries to contrast the commissars at the front with the commissars in the rear, making it seem as though the small minority capable of self-sacrifice had all been sent to the front. This allegation is sufficiently refuted by events. Every fresh danger at the front causes an influx of Communists into the active units. There has never been a failure to answer the call of the Central Committee. On the contrary: local Party organisations have met their obligations twice and thrice over, and the places of those Party members who have fallen are being filled by young proletarians who, in the atmosphere of Party organisation, soon acquire the revolutionary tempering they need. Petrograd remains a model in

this respect.

## **MUTUAL RELATIONS BETWEEN COMMISSARS, COMMANDERS AND RED ARMY MEN**

'Under pressure from the centre,' says the report, 'and also, of course, through awareness that the Communists cannot get by without the help of regular officers, the attitude of the commissars, especially the more conscious among them, and especially in recent times, has become more and more courteous, even to the extent of allowing the officers a certain degree of freedom in operational decisions. At the same time, along with this, secret surveillance, especially of the senior commanders, has been intensified, and has been taken to extreme lengths. For example, the commissars live in the same room with the men to whom they are attached, accompany them everywhere, and surround them, and all commanders generally, with devoted Communists, so that every step taken by every member of the commanding apparatus is known precisely to the commissars and to the cells. At the same time, the commissars uphold the prestige of the commanders, strictly punishing even those commissars at lower levels who engage in demagogic attacks on the commanders.

'Striving to win full popularity among the soldiers, the commissars and Communists do everything they can to draw the masses over to their side: through increases in pay, through giving the soldiers all manner of benefits and privileges, by making a tremendous effort, they are gradually getting the mass of the soldiers accustomed, so to speak, to the institution of commissars and ready to see in it their defender and protector in all matters. The prejudice that there formerly was among the conscripts against commissars and Communists is gradually abating. This is due solely to the fact that the soldiers at the front are placed in very good conditions, and are constantly being electrified by the commissars with unrealisable promises – and, what is most important, to the fact that the Whites are retreating, which they explain in accordance with what the Communists say, by the strength and justice of the Communist cause in the present war.'

Even in the White-Guard colouring given it by this renegade, the work done by the commissars and the Communist cells appears before us in all its immeasurable revolutionary-educational significance. That close bond which has been formed everywhere between honourable commanders and commissars Kotomin tries to represent as artificial politeness on the part of the commissars. Actually, close collaboration under wartime conditions often results in deep mutual attachment. How many instances there have been when, in connection with transfers, particular commanders and commissars have persistently asked not to be separated. The improvement in relations between commissars and commanders is due not so much to 'pressure from the centre' as to the mere fact of the selection of a large number of experienced, battle-tested commanders, to each of whom not only his commissar but every Red Army man under his command is dear.

In various parts of his report Kotomin speaks of the prevailing antipathy of the conscripts (mostly peasants) to the very fact of conscription, and to the Soviet power. That the politically backward peasants do not show that enthusiasm regarding mobilisation into the Red Army which we observe among the advanced workers is an undoubted fact, but, having crossed over into Kolchak's camp, Kotomin can see for himself how the Siberian peasants are reacting to conscription

by the White Guards. While, in general, the peasant fights unwillingly, in those places where he has to choose between the Soviet power and the rule of Denikin and Koichak, in the overwhelming majority of cases the peasant consciously opts for the Soviet rule. The regeneration undergone by the conscripted peasants at the front is not merely admitted but is sharply underlined by Kotomin himself. 'The prejudice that there formerly was among the conscripts against commissars and communists is gradually abating,' as we have already read in this report: 'the mass of the soldiers are getting accustomed, so to speak, to the institution of commissars and are ready to see in it their defender and protector in all matters.' One cannot imagine a more striking admission from a White Guard of the organisational importance of the commissars and of all the revolutionary-educational work done by the Communists in the Red Army.

We have quoted the most substantial parts of the renegade's report. There are not a few of these Kotomins, sworn enemies of the working class. But the enemy often notices things that we ourselves overlook through familiarity. That is why careful study of the conclusions drawn by this White-Guard report can be of considerable benefit to responsible workers in the Red Army.

October 13, 1919  
Moscow  
*Izv. V. Ts. I. K.*, No. 231

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## Endnotes

**36.** On the 'League for the Rebirth of Russia' see *supra*, Note 30.

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **II. Commanders and Commissars**

# CONCERNING THOSE FORMER OFFICERS WHO ARE STILL IN THE CAMP OF THE WHITES

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The attack upon Russia by the Poland of the gentry has finally revealed, even to the politically backward elements in the country, that the struggle being waged by the White Guard generals under the slogan of 'Russia one and indivisible' was and is a contribution to the plundering and enslavement of the Russian people by foreign aggressors. Under the impact of this fresh lesson, a movement has appeared among that section of the former Tsarist officers who are still in the White-Guard camp, aimed at breaking with the traitorous, anti-national policy of the Denikins and Wrangels and entering the service of the Soviet power in its fight for the freedom and independence of the working people of Russia. According to information received by the Soviet Government, this movement among the former officers in favour of submitting completely to the workers' and peasants' power is in many cases being held back by fear of punishment for offences committed in the past against the working people.

The workers' and peasants' government therefore considers it necessary and timely to issue this statement:

All those former officers who, in one way or another, contribute to the rapid liquidation of the White Guard forces still remaining in the Crimea, Caucasia and Siberia and who thereby facilitate and hasten the victory of workers' and peasants' Russia over the Poland of the gentry will be exempted from any penalties whatsoever for deeds committed by them while serving in the armies of Wrangel, Denikin, Kolchak, Semyonov and so on.

This announcement is published for general information, so that the Soviet authorities, both military and civil, may be strictly guided by it in all appropriate cases.

June 3, 1920. *Izv. V. Ts. I. K.*

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **III. Going Over to the Militia System**

# THE MILITIA PROGRAMME AND ITS ACADEMIC CRITICS

\* \* \*

Professor Svechin, of our Military Academy, has criticised the militia programme. His criticism aims to show that a militia, besides being not very useful militarily, is incompatible with an epoch of civil war and is a lifeless survival from democratic ideology (**Voyennoye Dyelo**, No.40-41).

The writer's point of departure is an extremely simple one: a militia is the reflection in arms of a whole people, of all of its classes and parties. In an epoch of civil war, however, only one party, one class, can rule. Such a dictatorship will be the more secure the less the army has of militia-type amorphousness, the more fully every regiment is 'steeled with its own corporate regimental spirit'.

A viable army is inconceivable without the authority of commanders, but militia commanders, as school instructors, will possess no real authority.

Hence the conclusion: 'Give back to the barracks its wonder-working powers, make use of its qualities for meticulously moulding the Red Army man into that type which is now missing on the battlefields, and you will see smiles, hands stretched out, grain pouring forth and the factory wheels beginning to turn.'

Having thus annihilated the militia, Professor Svechin proceeds to deal with the supplementary question: why do the Soviet Army's leaders not renounce the ideal of the militia? The military academician has no hesitation in explaining this: it is, you see, because they 'are not resolute enough in breaking with the old militia programme of the Second International'. How far we have progressed, if you please! Yet there are misanthropes who groundlessly accuse the military specialists of not wanting to assimilate the principles of the new world-outlook. True, it must be admitted that it is not quite clear from Svechin's article whether he is dismissing the Second International in the capacity of a secret supporter of the *Third*, or as a semi-explicit Bonapartist and one who still kneels before Wallenstein's camp. [37] [Wallenstein, the most outstanding general on the Imperial side in the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), was a pioneer in methods of military training and building a modern regular army. Schiller wrote a play about him, entitled *Wallenstein's Camp* (1798). 'It portrays the soldiers with their lusts and their diverse beliefs, their courage in battle, and their greedy violence in pillage; above all, it emphasises their devotion to their leader and their trust in his superb generalship.' (**Oxford Companion to German Literature**)] (See his article in **Voyennoye Dyelo**, No.15.)

But let us come back to the military and political arguments against the militia. According to Svechin, as we have heard, the militia cannot be 'red' because it reflects all classes and tendencies in the country. But why does this not apply equally to a standing army? If it is based on universal service, a standing army equally reflects all the contradictions of class society. After driving the propertied classes from power, the proletariat, in order to sustain and consolidate its dictatorship, first disarmed them and then kept them out of its new military organisation. Professor Svechin has forgotten one little thing: the class character of the Red Army and the strict class basis of universal military training. All citizens who exploit the labour of others or who have discredited themselves as counter-revolutionaries are debarred from military training.

But a militia-type army does not pass through the barracks, with its 'wonder-working powers'. A militia cannot give its regiments 'the necessary steeling with a corporate spirit'. This holy faith in the self-sufficient power of the barracks seems a little anachronistic in an officer of the old Russian army – in 1919! After all, this 'wonder-working barracks' with its capacity for meticulous moulding saved nobody and nothing. And it was not only our Russian barracks that failed to save, but also the most barrack-like barracks of them all, the most carefully conceived and methodically run, the most highly perfected – the German barracks. It would appear that Professor Svechin either does not want to think about that fact, or else he is unable to. He has heard something about the collapse of the Second International. But he has heard nothing about the collapse of barracked armies: he has simply not studied that sort of thing.

Svechin recalls the arming of Party workers in the July days of 1918 and draws this conclusion: '*In a period of civil war only a Party militia is conceivable, since the Party, with its moral influence and education, to some extent takes the place of the barracks.*'

That is not badly put. Undoubtedly, those best and most necessary features which Svechin hopes to get from the barracks are indeed fostered by the Communist Party: discipline, capacity for concerted action, subordination of the individual to the collective, a high degree of self-sacrifice. We need no proof that our Party has in fact given and is giving its members that sort of training. But, after all, this has been and is being done without the aid of barracks!

Furthermore, the Party's methods are directly opposite to the methods of the barracks, which Svechin would like to perpetuate.

The barracks is compulsory, whereas the Party is a voluntary union in all respects. The barracks is hierarchical, whereas the Party is an ideal democracy. The Party selected its members in the hardest underground conditions, summoning them to self-sacrificing struggle, and neither promising nor giving them any reward. And today, when it has become the ruling power in the land, the Communist Party lays very heavy burdens upon thousands and tens of thousands of its members, placing them in the most difficult, responsible and dangerous posts. Party discipline, despite all trials, has not wavered and remains unshakeable. Yet the ties of Party membership are of a purely voluntary, non-compulsory character. The Party [is the] direct opposite of a barracks.

Professor Svechin seems to have forgotten that the revolutionary underground Party, with its voluntary discipline, engaged in struggle with the wonder-working barracks of the autocracy, defeated it, and wrested power from the hands of the classes that relied on the stupefying ('wonder-working') properties of the barracks.

If it is not possible to introduce universal military training, this is true to the same extent and for the same reasons as it is not possible at present to engage in extensive economic and cultural constructive work. We have been obliged not only to postpone the organisation of universal military training but also to close down Soviet labour schools. When, being attacked in my workshop, I seize hold of the barrel of a rifle I have not finished making, and use it to get rid of the bandit, that does not mean that the rifle is useless or is not needed for that purpose. As of now, they have prevented me from finishing it, but, after smashing the bandit's skull with the barrel, I shall finish making the rifle and will then be better armed and defended than I was before.

In order to reconstruct our armed forces on militia principles and thereby to make them incomparably stronger, we need to gain a new, more or less protracted historical 'breathing space'. This will enable us, in the sphere of building our armed forces as well, to apply more broadly, fully and systematically that lengthier, deeper-going and more reliable method which Professor Svechin himself admits 'to some extent takes the place of the barracks' – the method of Communist unification and education. In the period of a new and more protracted historical breathing-space the present Red Army will produce excellent cadres for developing and strengthening universal military training and forming a militia-type army.

Professor Svechin is right, of course, when he says that the Party replaces the barracks only 'to a certain extent'. The Party, as a party, does not give its members military training, and we are talking specifically about the army. But nobody would deny that if 3,000 Party members were to spend a month or two at a military school ('the barracks') they would form a splendid regiment. Communists, conscious builders of a new world, have no need of the 'education' given by the barracks. All that they need is military training, and since, owing to their ideology and receptivity, they quickly master whatever they study, their period in barracks would merely be equivalent to a short course at a military school. But the entire working class, the working people as a whole, are only the mighty reserves of the Communist Party: the backward strata will be raised up and from them will emerge an ever larger number of conscious enterprising elements. The revolution awakens, teaches, educates Ignorance and darkness are conditions unfavourable for a militia. But that is precisely the basic historical task of the Soviet power – to raise the working masses up from their vegetable existence half-outside of history, to rescue them from that deadly darkness in which they have for so long been exploited, subjected to 'meticulous moulding' in those barracks that are being exalted as jewels of creation. If Professor Svechin thinks that the Communist Party has taken power in order to replace the tricolour barracks [The tricolour referred to here is the flag – white-blue-red in horizontal bands – of Tsarist Russia.] by a red one, that means that he has not mastered very well the programmes of all three Internationals.

The objection that under a militia system the command would not enjoy proper authority strikes one by its political blindness. Has the authority of the present command of the Red Army been established in barracks? You can ask any combatant officer about that. A commander's authority is based today not on the salutary hypnosis of the barracks but on the authority of the Soviet power and the Communist Party. Professor Svechin has simply overlooked the revolution and the enormous spiritual upheaval it has brought about in the Russian working man. To him the ignorant, drunken mercenary, poxed and numbed by Catholicism, who served in Wallenstein's camp, the Parisian apprentice who, led by journalists and lawyers, destroyed the Bastille in 1789, the Saxon worker and member of the Social-Democratic Party in the period of the imperialist war, and the Russian proletarian who, for the first time in world history, took power – all these are to him more or less the same cannon-fodder to be meticulously moulded in the barracks. But isn't that a mockery of the history of mankind?

For a militia to be created, Svechin explains, it is necessary that there be no civil war. And for the creation of a standing army? Civil war begins with the break-up of the army, which did not result from the civil war but preceded it. Victorious civil war creates a new army, in its own image and likeness.

But is civil war, in the narrow sense that Svechin gives it – that is, class war within

the limits of one and the same nation, an inevitable law of social existence? Civil war signifies an acute period of transition to a new order. It is succeeded by the fully consolidated rule of the working class, which will, without interference from within, develop its economic and cultural work, eventually dissolving the old bourgeois elements into the organic texture of the new society, leaving no social soil for other classes, with their particular interests and claims. When it has fundamentally completed this task, the proletarian dictatorship will be dissolved without trace in the new Communist order, that is, in a harmonious co-operative society which by its entire organisation rules out the possibility of internal wars.

The Communist regime will thus have as little need of the barracks for educating its members as the primitive society of equal herdsmen and hunters had for ensuring the common defence of their pastures, their quarry and their families from an external foe. Between Communist community life and the primitive hunting tribe there certainly lies a very long historical path, with all the gains that have been made along that path. But at each end of it we find something similar. The primitive tribe was not yet divided into classes, and Communist society will have superseded class divisions. There was no antagonism in interests in the one, nor will there be in the other. Consequently, in a moment of danger, voluntary and conscious participation in struggle by all members of the community, trained in the arts of war, will be achieved in good time, without the need for any artificial 'corporate' spirit.

The development of the Communist order will run parallel with the growth in the spiritual stature of the broadest mass of the people. What the Party gave in the past, mainly to an advanced section of the workers, will be given increasingly to the entire people by the actual organisation of society, with all its internal relationships. If the Party has in this sense 'replaced' the barracks, so that it has given its members the necessary cohesion and made them capable of self-sacrificing collective struggle, communist society will be able to do this on an incomparably vaster scale and higher level. The corporate spirit, in the broad sense, is the spirit of collectivism. It is fostered not only in barracks but in a well-ordered school, especially one which is connected with physical labour. It is fostered by the co-operative principle of labour. It is fostered by broad, purposefully organised sport. If the militia is based on the natural, occupational-productive groupings of the new society, the village communes, the municipal collectives, the factory unions, the local labour societies, bound together by community of school, sporting associations and circumstances of labour, then the militia will be infinitely richer in 'corporate' spirit, and this will be a spirit of much higher quality, than is the case with barracks-bred regiments.

Svechin himself knows an example of a 'combat-ready' militia – the German *Landwehr* of 1813-1815 [The *Landwehr* of 1813-1815 was the patriotic volunteer force, in which university students (*Burschen*) were prominent, that was formed in Prussia after Napoleon's retreat from Moscow, in order to contribute to the liberation of Germany from French domination.], when all Germany was gripped by a single sentiment, when the most complete civil peace prevailed, professors and students in their masses swelled the ranks of the *Landwehr*, and so on ... Svechin quotes the German example as proof that a combat-ready militia requires a high level of national development. This, evidently, has to be understood to mean that the level of national development in the Russia of 1919 is lower than that in the Germany of 1813. It is hard to conceive of a proposition more monstrous, more caricatural, more historically ignorant than that! A few thousand German students have hidden from the military professor the ignorance, the darkness, the slavery both political and spiritual, of the worker and

peasant masses of Germany at the beginning of the 19th century. And even those few *Burschen*, with whom Svechin, because of his bourgeois-intellectual cast of mind, identifies the German people, were in their development at an infinitely lower level than tens and hundreds of thousands of advanced Russian workers. True, the *Burschen* knew Greek irregular verbs, but of the laws that govern the development of human societies they knew less than some professors at military academies. And that's murderously little.

Professor Svechin is right in this respect, that in the Germany of 1813-1815 there was no civil war. The advanced elements of the bourgeoisie at that time reflected the interests of all the slumbering or semi-slumbering, classes of the German people in the struggle against foreign conquerors. The war was a war of emancipation: the bourgeoisie played a progressive role. They enjoyed the support, active or passive, of the mass of the people.

But reviving a ruined economy, restoring and developing industry, making its products available to the peasants, establishing proper economic exchange between town and country, providing the peasants with calico, horseshoes, doctors, agronomists, schools – that means establishing a most profound bond between country and town, bringing about the closest unanimity of the country's masses. For this we need a lengthy breathing-space, during which the working class will finish off what remains of capitalism, raise the level of the productive forces, bring about unity of the working people, and thereby create the most favourable conditions for a militia-type army.

We need to develop and prepare in good time the military-technical elements of this army, for a militia is not something that can be improvised. Svechin is quite right when he says that the German militia of 1813 became fully combat-ready within eighteen months or two years. But was this militia organised, prepared and based upon a serious degree of military training of the masses? No, it was based entirely upon an upsurge, an improvisation. Whoever looks at a militia in that way naturally not have any confidence in its combat-readiness. But a militia is not an improvisation. The communist militia and its precursor, the class militia, must be prepared and organised with all the thoroughness of a regular army.

But in that case, what will this future army be for? After all, 'the Soviet Government', as Svechin writes, with misplaced playfulness, 'has pledged itself not to wage any wars other than civil ones.' Of course we have 'pledged ourselves' not to wage aggressive wars of conquest and pillage, imperialist wars. We have never served and do not intend to serve the interests of dynasties, privileged castes or capital. But that means that, having finished off the exploiters and established labour order in their own country, the working class of Russia will defend this new order with all their strength, heroism and enthusiasm against any attempts made upon it from without, and, if necessary, will go to the aid of a class risen in revolt in another country, so as to help them finish off their bourgeoisie.

The course of the revolution in Europe may give us a breathing-space of one, two, three or more years. It is hard to prophesy. The roads of history will be less linear than ever in the epoch that is beginning. The revolutionary jolt we have given to the West may, in three, five or ten years' time, come back to us in the form of an imperialist attack by American or Japano-Asian capital. While developing and strengthening the new economic order we shall need to build and strengthen on this basis a new system of armed forces – a militia-type army. The cadres for this will be provided by the Red Army of today. Time spent in barracks will be reduced to

the strictly necessary minimum. Education in the spirit of discipline and solidarity will give us a harmoniously ordered society that will absorb and transform into institutions the ideas of the Communist Party.

Professor Svechin's little jokes about the imperfections of our system of universal military training are worth no more than any other petty-bourgeois-intellectual jokes about the difficulties and contradictions of building communism in the spheres of production, transport and food-supplies under the frightful conditions bequeathed by imperialist war and encirclement by the rest of the world. But what is really deathless is the attempt made by this military academician to explain that we are in favour of a militia merely because we have still not broken sufficiently with the ideology of the Second International. We are very much afraid that the worthy professor has incautiously wandered into a province which is somewhat strange to him, for there is much too good reason to suppose that our author learnt about the difference between the Second and Third Internationals in the course of some political 'universal training' course with a very short, less than 96-hour programme.

August 5, 1919

The periodical **Voyennoye Dyelo**, No.25 (51)

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## Endnotes

**37.** To show what Professor A. Svechin's views were on 'Wallenstein's camp', here are two sentences from his article *Cultural and class types of army*, in **Voyennoye Dyelo**, No.15: 'Proper building of the Republic's army will begin only when it masters its fear of the coming of a general on a white horse, renounces all reinsurance measures in the shape of the militia, universal training, War Councils and little councils that deprive every commander, and particularly every army commander, of real authority ... In its isolation from and independence of civilian influences, its anti-militia character, its toleranom (religious, political and social), and its concentration of all forces upon the formation of a special soldierly world-outlook lies the immense constructive power of Wallenstein's camp.'

## **Problems of Building the Army**

### **III. Going Over to the Militia System**

# BUILDING THE RED ARMED FORCES

Speech in the debate in the commission on studying and using the experience of the World War of 1914-1918, November 28, 1920 [\[38\]](#)

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In the course of the debate a striking analogy emerged, namely, the similarity between the building of our Red Army and the building of the Russian army during the first period of the Great Northern War. [The Great Northern War (1699-1721) resulted in the replacement of Sweden by Russia as the dominant power in the Baltic region, and Russia's emergence as a major European power. In order to create a modern army, Peter the Great enlisted the services of specialists from Western Europe. It was during this war that the city of St Petersburg was built, on territory conquered from the Swedes: forced labour was used, and thousands died working to lay the foundations in the marshy ground.] Quite recently I happened to read some works devoted to this period, and I was impressed by this similarity. It is to be observed if one compares the initial stages of what was one and the same process. Peter built an army from scratch, or almost from scratch. We are doing the same thing. In the approach to this task attempts were made at rationalisation, that is, at building the army in accordance not with tradition but with reason. This is what, above all, strikes one by its similarity. These attempts to imbue the task with rationality did not always, however, produce favourable results, and big mistakes were made, both in that time and in our own.

It must be pointed out that it is not so much that there is a similarity between the building of Peter's army and that of the Red Army as that the entire period of transition to standing armies in the Europe of the 16th and 17th centuries had features in common with the period we are living through. The need for a standing army made it possible to create a regular army with a lengthy period of training. This regular army seemed at first to be self-sufficient: they adapted themselves to it, and based upon it the linear tactics of those days.

What was striking in the period of the Red Army's infancy – from which it has not yet emerged – namely, tactical immobility, fear of being outflanked, was also typical of the 18th century. What is the explanation? This happened because our development as individuals – and the individual I have in mind here is the army – is identical with that of the species, the type. The development of a baby presents a typical picture of the development of mankind as a whole, though on a reduced scale. In primitive times man walked on all fours, and only gradually, as he acquired experience, did he come to walk upright. It is the same with the building of an army. Peter began at the beginning. We too began at the beginning and passed through the history of the development of all armies in general: from guerrilla-ism we passed, or are passing, to the regular army. It would be very interesting to trace through the ages, through the centuries, the development of the art of war and to distinguish the features typical of the transition from one age, one century, to another.

From the scientific standpoint, a comparison between our epoch and that of the Great Northern War is not accidental or arbitrary in character: there is a scientific basis for it, even though within very narrow limits. This is explained by the fact that we are reproducing a certain phase in the development of Peter's army. One can observe, for example, a certain analogy as regards the attitude to specialists. In Peter's time they were foreigners: the mass of the people of that time expected

that these men would deceive and betray them, and so on. In the period we are living through, owing to the rupture that took place between the old army and the new, there has been distrust which has gradually disappeared as new military leaders, who have come from among the masses themselves, have felt the need to learn from the specialists and, as a result, to respect them. Under Peter the military commanders learnt from the foreigners and, as a result, learnt to respect them. Many such analogies could be drawn.

I proceed to the question of how an army is to be built during actual war. This question was linked in the oddest way in some of the speeches made here with the question of a militia, with the word 'militia' being used quite arbitrarily. One of the speakers identified militia with 'Makhnovism'. It is possible to find similarity between our epoch and Peter's, but I cannot understand how anyone can compare 'Makhnovism' with a militia. What is a militia? If we contrast it with a regular army, what are the features of the latter that we have in mind? Protracted training in barracks, a certain psychological cohesion, automatism. Since these did not exist in Makhno's forces, that means, it is said that they constituted a militia. But allow me to point out that a militia is built in conformity not only with negative but also with positive characteristics. Let us look at it in another way. Figures were quoted here. In the beginning there were two corps, then considerably more appeared, which means that the material existed out of which these could grow. It may be that the latest contingents have not undergone barracks training to the full extent, or, if they have, it was a long time ago, and the effects of this training have worn off. Consequently, what we have here is two-thirds militia. If you want to understand the concept of militia in a vague, philistine sense, as meaning an army put together in haste, without passing through the barracks, you will be right. From that standpoint all the armies taking part in the imperialist war were militias, closely and organically based upon regular armies. What is it that we want? We want to form precisely the opposite of this, namely, a regular army based upon a militia. More than three million soldiers of the Tsarist army gave themselves up as prisoners of war. What sort of regular army is it in which such masses surrender? It is not a regular army, but the worst sort of militia, an incoherent herd of men with rifles in their hands. The best front-line regiments did not surrender: with them it was different. The basis, the cadres, proved too few, the army had grown beyond them. The limit to this growth during the world war was exhaustion of the nation's entire resources.

The proposal was put forward here that we form 75 corps immediately, but it would be still better if we could transform the whole nation into a regular army and create another nation which would sustain this first nation. However, these are unrealisable dreams: a division of labour is inevitable. Some body has to cultivate the land, to do the ploughing, while somebody else does the fighting, or gets ready for war. Germany contributed the most where numbers in the army were concerned. France contributed even more in the last year of the war. And what happened? This very foundation proved inadequate, and in the first period of the war a division was made between active regiments and reserve regiments. A little later on in France, when the reserve regiments had become seasoned and combat-ready, Joffre did away with this distinction. Those reserve regiments constituted an untrained mass, a 'militia' in the everyday sense of the word.

Thanks to the fact that the Germans had better railways, better barracks and better schools, this 'militia' was in their case considerably more useful than in ours, with our poverty and backwardness, the ignorance of our peasantry, and so on.

What do we want now? We want to create a regular army on the basis of a militia serving as a system of education. In that connection the problem of readiness for war, external and internal, arises. This question was considered too schematically during the debate. It was made to appear that our Red Army is suitable only for internal war, and we shall have to form a new army to wage war externally. I cannot agree with this. Let us take the period of the Great French Revolution. The army was formed then almost in the same way as ours. I say 'almost' because the change was not so profound. That revolution – radical, but bourgeois – only half-demolished the old army, and the new army was formed by an amalgam with the old line regiments and on the basis of universal military service. It was formed in the first place to put down internal revolts: at the same time, however, the British made their landings, and the troops were sent to the Vendée to put down the revolt there so that the army did not exist merely to perform internal tasks. At first the army was no good, as was to be expected, but in the process of internal struggle it developed, grew strong, and eventually conquered all Europe.

Of course, both the army of the Great French Revolution and our army had to develop on the basis of a certain idea. This idea was intelligible to the leading circles but it could also take hold of the deepest depths of the people. Glib Uspensky describes an idealised type of the old-time soldier, Kudinych. [In 1871 Uspensky visited Western Europe. It was the time of the Franco Prussian War, and what he saw of this led him to write an article, entitled *A Tender Conscience*, in which he denounced what he regarded as the brutality and vindictiveness of the Prussian soldiery. He contrasted them with an ex-soldier of peasant origin, named Kudinych, who was ending his days as a bird-scaring in Uspensky's kitchen-garden, and whom Uspensky presents as typical of Russia's soldiers of those days. If you ask Kudinych about the various peoples he has fought against in the Tsar's service, – the Poles, the Hungarians, the Circassians – he speaks well of them all, and cannot understand why they 'revolted'. He is a good soul, rather childlike, with his head full of superstitions, who would not, on his own initiative, hurt a fly: but, in the Tsar's army, he has hurt many human beings. Kudinych is meek, with a strong sense of having 'sinned' during his life; and Uspensky finds him much preferable, as a type, to the Prussian soldiers he had seen at work in France.] I do not refer to Shtukaturov, who is marked by automatic thinking and extremely meagre personal feelings, his diary recalls that of Nicholas II – 'Had a meal, played cards' – reflecting hardly any feelings. I speak of Kudinych, who, though lacking individual consciousness, was nevertheless splendid material in the hands of commanders like Suvorov. Suvorov knew the undifferentiated mentality of the primitive milieu and, because of this, performed miracles.

However, as new relationships developed, the army began to break up. The revolutionary army began to be built along with the civil war, with the revolution, with the break-up of the old army. The civil war in America also began with the building of an army. Before that struggle began, the army in America consisted of barely 10,000 regular soldiers. The analogy is instructive and interesting even in matters of detail, such as the contrast between the North and the more reactionary South. The local planters, with their households, living in steppe conditions, with the development of cattle-breeding, had much in common with the kulak society of our south – the Don and Kuban regions. The Northerners had no cavalry, and this was why the South enjoyed superiority in the first months of the war. Eventually, the Northerners learnt their lesson and started to beat the Southerners.

Our civil war is in reality not just an internal war, it possesses an international character. Yudenich would not have been in a position to fight if he had not formed an army resembling the mercenary armies of the 16th and 17th centuries. The White Guard Yelizarov records, in his personal account, how distressing he found it when he had to meet Yudenich secretly in someone's flat because the British did not

allow meetings at which a British agent was not present. Without foreign aid Yudenich could not have fought: everything in his army was foreign, up to and including the airmen. And if our struggle has not assumed an openly international character, that is only because Britain is not in a position to move her own forces against us: she has had to egg on the Finns and Letts, arming and inciting them, threatening to leave them without bread, to cut them off from the rest of the world, if they won't fight against us. If Britain were to land forces of her own in Finland and Estonia, would that alter the picture of the civil war? No, the change would only be quantitative: two or three more corps would be added, and the war would become harder to fight. But its historical significance would remain as before: the working masses of Russia fighting against world imperialism.

We have entered an age when the distinction between external and internal wars, between civil war and international war, has been erased. The international ties have been drawn too tight by previous development, the peoples have been bound closely together in a common fate. In every country, just as today in our own, the bourgeoisie feels firmly linked with the British bourgeoisie and the British monarchy. At the same time, you will not find a single British worker who is against us: they are all for us. This fact, the world-wide growth in support for us, rules out the possibility of direct war between us and them. In the same way, internal war imperceptibly and inevitably passes over into external war.

I mentioned earlier that in every viable army there is a moral principle. How is this expressed? For Kudinich the religious idea lit up the idea of the Tsar's power, lit up his rural existence, and that served as his moral idea, even if it was a primitive one. At a critical moment, when the old idea had been shattered but Kudinich had not yet found a new one to live by, he let himself be taken prisoner. The alteration in the moral idea entailed the collapse of the army. Only the presence of a new, fundamental idea made it possible to build the revolutionary army. This does not mean that every soldier understands what he is fighting for. That is certainly not the case. It is said that a certain SR who had fled to the South, when asked about the reasons for the Red Army's victories over the Whites, replied that the Red Army knows what it is fighting for – which, of course, does not mean that every single Red Army man knows this. And so it is, thanks to the circumstance that we have a large percentage of conscious people who know what they are fighting for, that our army possesses a moral idea and is therefore victorious.

Discipline means, essentially, compulsion by the collective, subordination of the personality, the individual, an automatic subordination inherited from traditional psychology; but, in our case, along with that, there are perfectly conscious elements, that is a people who know for the sake of what it is that they are subordinating themselves, and are imbued with this spirit of subordination. These elements form a minority, but a minority which gives expression to the idea that is felt by all the masses that surround it. In so far as it becomes imbued with the idea of solidarity of the working masses, the element which is not completely conscious – and this element makes up three-quarters of the entire army – subordinates itself to the ideological hegemony of those who express the idea of the new age. The more conscious men shape the public opinion of the regiment, and of the company, which inevitably subordinates itself to this, and so discipline acquires a basis of support in public opinion. Without that, no discipline can stand firm, and least of all the severe discipline of the transitional period.

Peter built his capital by means of the cudgel because the international situation of the country demanded this. And if he had not done it, the general change that

took place would have been dragged out over a long period. The pressure from the higher technique of the West evoked in the advanced elements of the people a sense of the need to pull themselves together, to cut their hair and shave their beards, to learn new ways of waging war. Peter, in promoting a new moral idea, acted with ruthlessness. The people suffered under him, but nevertheless submitted to him and even, through their best representatives, gave Peter their backing. The broad masses vaguely sensed that what was happening was inevitable, and supported him. In this sense, the revolutionary army does not differ in principle from other armies. A moral idea is always needed, but one with a new content, corresponding to the new level attained by mankind.

Coming back to the militia system, I should like first of all to ensure that the word 'militia' is not understood merely as the antithesis to a regular army, but is defined more precisely. A regular army is usually understood as being a standing army, properly organised, trained in barracks, and with a psychological automatism that has been achieved in that way, something which is of very great importance. In contrast to this concept, people understand by a militia an army put together in haste, without psychological automatism, and either acting in an impulsive way or else not acting at all, but surrendering. In present-day wars, insofar as these are inevitable, nations do not surrender until they have exhausted all their economic and all their moral and physical resources, in the sense of the human material at their disposal. At the same time, the type of regular army which existed up to our day has now outlived itself. In war time it is replaced by the worst type of militia: by that hermaphrodite which is based on the old, very narrow organisation of cadres.

The mathematical deductions that were made here are inescapable. On the one hand we need, as was said here, 75 corps, but if we are to form these corps in peacetime, we shall have to base them on a foundation of production which does not detach people for a period of three to five years from the economy and the production-process: and that can be done only by bringing the regiment close to the field, the factory, the village, so that these constitute so many regimental, brigade and divisional districts. This is the basic conception regarding the organisation of training, fulfilment of which depends entirely on our own forces and resources and on the breathing-space which history will allow us. We shall work for perhaps five to eight years on the new army – let us call it in the meantime just 'new', we'll put the 'militia' hat on it afterwards. During this period we shall recover our breath a little, conditions of life will become easier, our economic culture will improve, the factory wheels will turn – and, undoubtedly, more resources will become available for building the army. Internal conflicts and disturbances will disappear under these conditions.

The education of the militia army can be brought up to the average level of the regular army. We shall have begun with the 16-year-olds. As regards the first ten or fifteen years of life, what will be of, enormous importance will be pre-call-up preparation and militarisation of the schools. What is it that is attractive about a good army? Precision of performance and consciousness of responsibility: act when the commanders can not see you just as though they can! And our task is to imbue the entire social order with that principle.

We were recently visited by an American engineer, a pupil of Taylor, whose system is based, as you know, on precise calculation of the worker's movements. This principle would, of course, be of very great value in the army: upon this basic principle, on which all human culture is founded, namely, achieving the maximum results with the minimum expenditure of energy, all tactics are essentially based.

Taylor's system plays a great role in America. The engineer I have mentioned says that the Taylor system can be fully developed only under the socialist order. This idea must also be introduced into military technique, into the army of the socialist state. And, since an enemy threatens us, we shall imbue with this idea of military education, of precision and assiduity in behaviour, the entire education of our children and youth – militarising, in the best sense of the word, our entire country.

What does militarising mean? It means inculcating the sense of responsibility and, therefore, forming the best type of cultured person. But it is said: if war is going to come within three years, we shall not succeed in doing this. I think that there are no grounds for such fear. If Britain cannot fight us now, in three years' time she will find herself in such hot water that all the Lloyd Georges and Clemenceaus will be scalded with it. She will be in no state to attack us. A great historical storm is going to break out within a few years, the thunder of which will then be heard by all. Perhaps the countries of the East will take up arms against capitalism in ten or fifteen years' time. That is problematical, but it may happen. If the Entente ends its war against us now, we shall gain a big respite. If they do draw us into war during the next three years, say, we shall not have finished building the militia. It is said that we shall not have completed the creation of the militia-type army, while we shall have lost the old one. But that is not true at all.

We have to adapt the apparatus of the Red Army, its cadres, to the territory of our country, to the districts. When demobilisation takes place we must have a definite plan, in conformity with a basic militia system, that is, we must select the best cadres, the sound and strong ones, and place them territorially so that they become the cadres of territorial units, in each of which will be included, and to which will be assigned, a definite number of citizens of the appropriate age-groups, so that, when he is in the factory, a citizen may feel that he is a member of his own regiment. Does anyone suppose that, with our present poverty, we could maintain for five years a Red Army of the present size? Of course not. Not a single country, even one much richer than ours, would be in a position to do that. But we do possess this advantage, that we have already passed through an acute period, a period of revolution, and we are demobilising soldiers who will not go out into the country as bearers of the idea of revolt and destruction, which is what will happen in Britain and France, but soldiers who, regardless of any disagreements there may have been in the Red Army, have demonstrated their moral superiority over the other armies that have arisen in Russia. These soldiers will arrive in the villages as a factor of order.

The transition from mobilisation for war to mobilisation for labour will not be so very difficult. By means of these soldiers we shall mobilise industry and introduce universal labour service, and not just on paper but in reality. Why are we organising universal training at the same time as a regular army? Because nobody has told us beforehand how long we shall have to fight. Consequently, all active work in our country, all cultural construction, has had to be carried on in accordance with the prospect that in five years' time, say, we shall be forced to fight on all fronts. Therefore, we have to be well prepared in every respect. The difficulties, under our conditions, will be of a territorial character. Our country is large, the communications are poor, the apparatus for mobilising people is weak. This means that the enemy can invade before we have set our militia army on its feet. There are also technical difficulties, but these apply to the regular army as well. In the present state of the roads in Russia mobilisation would be so difficult that operations must always be planned on the assumption that the enemy has succeeded in invading us.

The name Jaurés has been mentioned here. Let us trace his thinking on the matter of mobilisation. To the ruling circles of France Jaurés [Jean Jaurés's book *L'Armie nouvelle* was published in 1910. It presented arguments in support of a bill for the reorganisation of the French military system which was printed at the end of the book.] spoke more or less like this: 'Germany has the greater capacity for offensive war, while we have the greater capacity for defensive war, which may develop into offensive war. But, under these conditions, it may happen that the Germans will invade us.' Much was written in the papers about the violation of Belgian neutrality. That was an episode of the war which was disagreeable for the peasants and workers living on the frontier, but it was nothing more than an episode in the overall perspective of the war. In general, said Jaurés, you should have in view the establishment in good time of a line of defence-on your own, French territory. In accordance with the tempo of the organisation of the militia army, this will be divided into districts. Work out how long the Germans will take to reach this defence line, and in what numbers they will arrive at it. Here they will be held up by local territorial corps, frontier units and militia. All the remaining forces will be concentrated towards this line. That was, roughly, what Jaurés said.

It was mentioned here that those who are to use special types of weapon will need longer periods of training. Under the militia system, these specialists must also go through a military school: let us call it a barracks. It will, of course, be a higher type of barracks. These military schools can be concentrated in the zone which is threatened. France did not listen to Jaurés, and replaced the two-year term of service by a three-year term. It turned out that with the three-year term the total size of the army amounted to 360,000 men – a mere trifle, yet they thought that an army of that size would serve as the battering-rain that would successfully solve the problem of achieving final victory. France lost her Northern *departements*. She would have lost them under the other system, too, but, given the militia system, this loss would have been premeditated, whereas, in the event, it took place contrary to all the expectations of the General Staff. Only later, with the help of the British and the Americans, did the French manage to go over from the defensive to the offensive. This shows that Jaurés was right when he warned France that the traditional imitation of Napoleon did not square with either the contemporary economy, or the political outlook, or the military potential, or the situation of France.

We are faced with a quite realistic task. Not a single country and ours less than any other – can maintain a standing, regular army that would be adequate to the actual demands of a serious war on a world or a European scale. And if a country were to try to maintain such an army, that army would be a mongrel, and at the first attempt to absorb into it the huge masses of conscripts, it would split asunder at every seam, through internal political contradictions. The army and the people must be brought close together. In the actual process of production the people must be brought closer to the army, while the army is brought closer to the labour-process, to the factory and the field. We shall in this way return to the primitive epoch when no training was needed, when every shepherd and cultivator took up his cudgel and went off to fight. This will take us back to the times when there was no class struggle, when there was only a single fraternal family based on poverty. We want to bring the peoples of the world into solidarity with each other and to unite all culture – economic, technical and spiritual. This task is capable of accomplishment, but at present we can see only its first beginnings. If, two years ago, some sage had said that Russia would be opposed first by Germany and then by Britain, Japan and America, nobody would have believed that we should come

out victorious. And the longer we survive, the smaller are the chances of anyone destroying us.

I did not agree with Jaurés so far as his political concepts were concerned. Those who interested themselves in his book [391] noted that he described a gradual reconciliation between all the classes of society in a democracy, without a revolution, without civil war – a peaceful socialisation of society. The world war exposed the utter insignificance of French democracy. The Tsar of Russia and the King of England decided matters as they wished, while democracy was left aside. And it was not by universal suffrage that questions began to be decided in the epoch of armed conflict, but by the relation of forces between different nations, and, later, between different classes. In Germany they have universal suffrage and a constituent assembly. Kolchak, too, had a constituent assembly. But neither here nor there are questions of peace and war settled by formal voting. In our country the constituent assembly was dispersed, and later, when we had learnt to fight with weapons, we dispersed Kolchak's constituent assembly as well. The masses of the people are learning in an organic way to build their life on new foundations.

The organisation of the army must also be adapted to this circumstance. At its foundation we place the workers, as being the most conscious element, and then the peasantry, starting with the poor peasants. It is them that we take as the sure support for the new idea, since the oppressed masses have always been the bearers of progress. It was fishermen, shepherds, poor men who were the bearers of the idea of Christianity, which overcame the ideas of the pagan world. We, too, begin with those elements, since they are the foundation for an army that is an army not of the aristocracy or the privileged, but of the proletariat. Jaurés's idea was correct in the sense that he wanted to bring labour and military organisation closer together, but mistaken in that he hoped that it would all happen without a revolution, through the working masses, and even part of the propertied classes, the middle classes of the bourgeoisie, rallying round the flag he raised. His aim was correct, his path utopian.

This aim will have to be reached by a bloody path, if we want, within the setting of general historical development, to create something well-constructed. In the matter of building the armed forces this must be related to the ideas of the militia system, understanding by militia not crude, ignorant guerrillaism, that is, rebellion which degenerates into the Chetnik [The 'chetniks' (from Serbo-Croat 'cheta', a band) were the semi-patriot, semi-bandit units which carried on a guerrilla struggle in the parts of present-day Yugoslavia which were under Turkish rule until 1913.] activity that I came to know during the war in the Balkans. 'Makhnovism' is one-tenth idealism and nine-tenths plundering and violence. It can play a progressive role in one place and a reactionary role in another, but it has nothing to do with the militia. The militia signifies correct organisation and calculation of human material, and it detaches the masses as little as possible from their labours: this is its principal merit.

It is said that such a thing has never existed, that there is no precedent for it. Of course there isn't. But we are innovators in many fields: we have begun a lot of things at the beginning. Such a militia has not existed before, but the pre-requisites for it have been there. In civil wars, in national wars, in the last imperialist war, we have seen how standing armies have been brought into being in a short time. Consequently, the historical prerequisites for a militia have been created, the culture of the masses has been raised to a higher level, and it is just this that is required for a militia. Let us take the average village *muzhik* – one like Kudinych. At first, Kudinych fought the Poles without knowing why, and then he died in the

kitchen-garden defending his master's property. But, later on, this Kudinych woke up. The awakening of his individual personality at first found expression in his smashing, destroying and inflicting every kind of humiliation upon the commanding personnel. The anarchic, Makhnovite tendency was present in the revolution also as an expression of the awakening of Kudinych's individual personality. When Kudinych broke out into anarchy and destruction, he came up against another, a conscious Kudinych. What was needed here was a new form of mutual relations, and this was furnished by the idea of socialism, of solidarity and collaboration between men. The new Kudinyches are disciplined, they fit themselves into a system, and they will not put up with it when other Kudinyches, alongside them, go through a phase of mischiefmaking. These new Kudinyches themselves call out for discipline. We know of examples where soldiers have sentenced their own comrades to be flogged, or even to be shot. It is not at all the same thing when some aristocratic commander punishes a *muzhik* as when a hundred Kudinyches sentence the hundred-and-first Kudinych to some punishment or other for stealing a pair of trousers. What we see here is an expression of the idea of conscientious behaviour.

This is the foundation on which our new militia-type army can be built, and we shall build it. To this end we shall use in a planned way the material provided by the Red Army, we shall employ a system of militarisation of labour and of the schools, so that the people's labour may be put to use in this huge economy of ours with a greater degree of rationality, so that everyone may feel that he forms part of a single colossal collective.

The petty-bourgeois individual egoism, the self-seeking which is encountered in the life of bourgeois society manifests itself in barbarously crude forms: a man locks himself in his room, and everybody else can go to hell. As time goes by, collectivism, solidarity will increasingly take hold of people and within a century we shall have risen to a higher plane, both materially and, to an even greater degree, spiritually. All this will happen through collectivism, which will become, if you like, the new religion – though of course, without any mysticism. As I see it, a new religious bond between men will arise in our epoch, in the form of the spirit of solidarity – and it is with this idea that we must imbue the army, the people, the school, the factory and the village. At present this idea appears utopian, because we are poor, lice-ridden, reduced to beggary, we have to worry about every crust of bread, and as a result elements of animal egoism and brutality have awakened amongst us: but even now it is possible to observe the conditions for a higher, a more humane culture, with the growth in the productivity of labour, which opens up vast possibilities. Britain has seized us by the throat, of course, but she won't hold on for long. Kudinych has awakened everywhere – in the village, in the *volost*, in the *uyezd*. We shall draw him into constructive work, and our children, those who will be grown up in ten years' time, will all be filled with the idea of solidarity.

We shall unite education and work with the army. We shall link with it all the various forms of sport. And by building the brotherhood of the people upon the idea of solidarity we shall ensure that the militia idea will eventually produce, within this broad setting, very great results indeed. At the same time, this militia idea is a matter of unquestionable historical necessity for us. Sooner or later the war will end and we shall not be able to maintain an army such as we have now. We shall, of course, retain a certain number of divisions to guard the frontier districts. It is said that, if we follow this line, we shall be combining incompatibles. That is not so. The army of the French Revolution was based on an amalgam with the old Royal army. There was a difference in technical structure here, but no difference in ideas, for the Convention succeeded in imbuing the old line regiments and the new volunteer

forces with one and the same spirit, which united them. Within a year or two no difference could be discerned between them: the distinction had vanished. Our respected theoreticians of the art of war should be asked to work out a military programme for Russia from the standpoint of a militia system: mobilisation, the line of concentration of forces under a militia system, the minimum of troops of the line necessary during demobilisation, the minimum necessary for defence of the frontiers, depending on the immediacy of danger, the distribution of military schools and barracks, and their concentration in accordance with the requirements of a militia system.

These are problems of enormous importance, which call for theoretical elaboration so that they may be given practical solution.

From the archives

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## Endnotes

**38.** The 'Commission on Studying and Using the Experience of the World War of 1914-1918' was formed at the end of 1918, under the All-Russia General Staff. Besides its work on the history of the world war, the Commission organised public meetings on various military questions. At the first such discussion on November 21, 1920 an address was given by Comrade Vatsetss on the subject of 'the building of an armed force under fire and the effect this has upon strategy'. At the second public meeting, devoted to the question of the militia-type army, Comrade Trotsky spoke.

**39.** reference is to Jaurés's book **L'Armée nouvelle**. A Russian translation – a very poor one – is available, entitled **Novaya armiya**.

## **Problems of Building the Army**

### **III. Going Over to the Militia System**

# THESES ON GOING OVER TO THE MILITIA SYSTEM

(For the Ninth Congress of the Russian Communist Party)[\[40\]](#)

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1. The approaching conclusion of the civil war and the changes for the better in Soviet Russia's international situation make urgent the question of radical changes in the sphere of our military activity, in accordance with the country's pressing economic and cultural needs.

2. At the same time we must be clear that, so long as the imperialist bourgeoisie remains in power in the most important countries in the world, the socialist republic cannot consider itself secure.

The further course of events may at a certain moment cause the imperialists, who feel the ground slipping away under their feet, to hurl themselves into bloody adventures directed against Soviet Russia.

This means that the military defence of the revolution has to be maintained at the proper level.

3. To the present period of transition, which may last for a long time, must correspond an organisation of our armed forces such that the working people acquire the necessary military training with the least possible distraction from productive labour. This system can only be a Red Workers' and Peas ants' Militia constructed on territorial principles.

4. The essence of a Soviet *militia system* must consist in bringing the army close in every possible way to the process of production, so that the manpower of particular economic areas is simultaneously the manpower of particular military units.

5. In their territorial distribution the militia units (regiments, brigades, divisions) must coincide with the territorial layout of industry in order that the industrial centres, together with the agricultural peripheries which surround them and gravitate towards them, may constitute the basis for the militia units.

6. Organisationally, the workers' and peasants' militia must be based upon cadres that are fully trained in military, technical and political respects, and that maintain a permanent record of the workers and peasants whom they train, so as to be able at any moment to draw them forth from out of their militia districts, surround them with the apparatus constituted by these cadres, arm them, and lead them into battle.

7. Going over to the militia system must inevitably be a gradual process in conformity with the military and the international diplomatic situation of the Soviet Republic, with unfailing observance of the condition that the latter's defence-capacity must always be kept at the proper level.

8. As the Red Army is gradually demobilised, its best cadres must be allocated territorially in the most expedient fashion, that is, most closely adapted to local conditions of production and way of life, so as to ensure that there is an apparatus ready to administer the militia units.

9. The personal composition of the militia cadres must then be gradually renewed in such a way as to ensure the closest ties with the economic life of the given areas, so that the commanding personnel of a division which is situated in a territory that includes, for example, a group of mining enterprises, with a rural periphery attached to them, shall consist of the best elements of the local proletariat.

10. With a view to bringing about this renewal of the cadres, command courses must be distributed territorially in conformity with the economic and militia districts, and the best representatives of the local workers and peasants must be put through these courses.

11. Military training on militia principles, which is to ensure that the militia-type army possesses a high degree of combat-readiness, shall consist of:

1. pre-call-up preparation, for which purpose the War Department will work hand in hand with the Education Department, the trade unions, the Party and Young Communist League organisations, the sport institutions, and so on;
2. military training of citizens of call-up age, taking a shorter and shorter length of time, and with the barracks increasingly modified towards the pattern of a military-political school;
3. brief recalls for refresher training in order to test the combat-readiness of the militia units.

12. The organisation of militia cadres assigned to the task of military defence of the country must be adapted to the necessary extent to the performance of labour service, that is, it must be able to form labour units and to supply them with the necessary apparatus of instructors.

13. While developing in the direction of becoming a communist people in arms, the militia must, in the present period, retain in its organisation all the features of the dictatorship of the working class.

February 28, 1920

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## Endnotes

**40.** The Ninth Congress of the Russian Communist Party was held on March 29-April 4, 1920. The items on the agenda were: the Central Committee's report, the immediate tasks of economic Construction, the trade-union movement, organisational problems, the tasks of the Comintern, going over to the militia system, etc. The theses were adopted by the Congress, together with a resolution, on the basis of Comrade Trotsky's report.

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **IV. Deserion and Tribunals**

# WOE TO DESERTERS!

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**A** deserter is a man who, in a moment of difficulty, abandons his comrades, seeking, above all else, to save his own skin. A deserter is a worthless member of the family of labour:

The workers and peasants are waging on all fronts the last, hard battle against their sworn enemies. Upon the outcome of this battle depends the question of whether the working class and the peasantry are to live or die. For, if Kolchak wins, the flower of the working class will be drowned in blood.

While the honourable sons of the working people are straining all their efforts in the struggle, self-seekers are trying to escape from the ranks of the army and hide themselves in villages and towns. In various parts of the Soviet land many agents of Kolchak are active, seeking to incite ignorant or corrupted soldiers to desert. 'Let them fight without me, and when they've won, I'll come back to a ready-made situation' that is how the self-seeker argues.

The coward runs away, and so the brave man has to shed his blood for two. And that is not all: the coward and self-seeker who flees from the barracks or from the march-route takes with him his equipment, and often his rifle as well. The honourable soldier sometimes has to fight at the front without any boots on his feet, because the deserter has taken boots with him.

The army in the field is filled with anger against these despicable runaways. The Red warriors have long been demanding that the Soviet power make a big broom of barbed wire, and with it sweep the deserters out of all the country's nooks and crannies.

And it is indeed high time! We cannot tolerate for one more hour a situation in which ne'er-do-wells, traitors, parasites on the community stretch themselves out on top of the stove while honourable, self-sacrificing fighters are shedding their blood for the cause of the working people.

*Woe to deserters!* From now on they will be relentlessly hunted down, from one end to the other of the Soviet land. All Soviet authorities, trade unions and Party organisations are required to take part most vigorously in the struggle against desertion. The chairman of house committees and of village and *volost* soviets will henceforth be held strictly to account for conniving at the presence of deserters, whether directly or indirectly. Those who shelter deserters will be punished in the same way as participants in acts of treason.

An end to our long-suffering attitude! The last hour has struck! Deserters shall find nowhere either refuge or hiding-place. The workers' and peasants' power will strike them down with the heavy hand of revolutionary punishment.

*Woe to deserters!*  
Woe to those who betray the working people!

May 3, 1919  
Simbirsk

*En Route*, No.40

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **IV. Deserion and Tribunals**

# DESERTERS HELP KOLCHAK

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In their fight against the capitalists, the workers use the method of the strike. However, among the workers there are corrupt, depraved or absolutely ignorant and cowed persons who disrupt the struggle of the working class during a strike by remaining at work, thus helping the capitalist against the proletariat. They are called strike-breakers. The workers have always shown very great and perfectly justified hatred towards strike breakers. The worst of the latter, those who are consciously sold to the capitalists, have sometimes been thrown into blast-furnaces or otherwise done to death. Those strike-breakers who are ignorant are worked on verbally, and if that doesn't help, then often force is used on them as well.

What strike-breakers are in a workers' strike against the bourgeoisie, deserters are in relation to a fighting army. Our war is wholly and exclusively directed against the bourgeoisie. Our army is the army of the workers and peasants. The struggle is being carried on for the sake of the whole future destiny of the working people of Russia and of the whole world. This war is disrupted by deserters, who try to shift the weight of war and its sacrifices from their shoulders on to those of the steadfast and honourable fighters, who thus have to carry a double burden.

*Deserters are military strike-breakers.*

But the crime of the deserter is incomparably more serious than that of the strike-breaker. A strike against capitalists is always waged by a section of the workers and on some sectional issue. The war is being waged by the whole working class, and on no sectional issue but for the entire destiny of our country.

By means of a strike workers decided such questions as whether the working day should be half-an-hour longer or shorter. In this war the workers and peasants are deciding the question of who shall be master in the land of Russia – the working people or their oppressors.

If the hatred felt by the conscious workers towards strike-breakers was justified, how much more justified and holy is the wrath of the soldiers against deserters.

By weakening the army, deserters prolong the war and increase the number of its victims.

*Deserters are helpers and servants of Kolchak.* The war against Kolchak demands a fierce struggle against deserters. All honourable citizens, commanders, commissars and Red Army men must take part in this struggle, followed by the workers and peasants in the zones adjoining the fronts. It is necessary to create, such a situation, such a feeling in the country that a deserter will find no place to lay his head, like Cain, who committed a treacherous act against his brother. A deserter's own village must refuse to give him food or lodging. The factory where he shows up must drive him out with ignominy. His father, mother, brother, sister, wife must spurn his hand and demand that he at once set about cleansing himself of his dishonour by returning to the army.

When he runs away from his regiment, a deserter betrays not only the regiment, not only the army, but the entire working people. Therefore, the entire people must

take up arms against deserters.

*Deserters are accomplices of Kolchak.*

There can be no place for an accomplice of Kolchak in the family of the honest working people.

*Workers, peasants, soldiers!* From now on, let no quarter be given among us to runaways, self-seekers and deserters. Let them wander like the plague-stricken, away from villages and towns, until in every single one of them conscience awakes and says: 'There is only one path of salvation for you: go back to your unit, of your own free will, and by bravery in battle wipe from yourself the shameful stain of desertion.

May 3, 1919

Yakusha-Melekess

[Melekess is east of Simbirsk (Ulyanovsk), on the line to Bugulma and Ufa.]

*En Route, No.41*

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **IV. Deserion and Tribunals**

# ESTABLISHED SOVIET DESERTERS

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The fight against desertion is failing to deal with one particularly baneful and evil form of avoidance of military duty: namely, those deserters who have hidden themselves in various Soviet jobs in which they still evidently consider themselves as 'reserved'. These are all 'indispensables'. Every institution and administration, every department has its 'indispensables'. This applies to all departments without exception, including the War Department. While the most responsible political workers have been taken and sent to the front, Soviet bureaucrats are keeping back valuable, qualified military specialists in posts of secondary importance. Gunnery experts are 'indispensable' specialists in the co-operatives; without a cavalryman the book-keeping cannot get done; military engineers are ensuring that the graphic arts do not fail to flourish. Methods have been devised for reserving these 'indispensables'. In case of need, these gentry move from one institution to another, until they find the place where they are most indispensable.

Some leaders of Soviet institutions have decided to stick up for the 'indispensables' on the grounds that they are good workers. As if good workers were not needed in the army!

Legalised Soviet desertion is a disgusting sore. The army is short of commanders, but the needed commanders, unlike ordinary deserters who hide in the forests, are seated in places of honour in Soviet institutions.

It is time to apply all the laws about deserters and those who shelter them to the legalised indispensables in Soviet institutions, and to those who have legalised them.

The hidden commanders will be chased out, to the front. An end will be put to established Soviet desertion.

June 28, 1919  
*En Route*, No.55

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **IV. Deserion and Tribunals**

# CONCERNING MILITARY TRIBUNALS

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The activity of our military tribunals, like that of all revolutionary tribunals in general, should have very great educational importance. A tribunal passes judgement on actions that run contrary to the new revolutionary order which is taking shape.

A tribunal is one of the instruments of compulsion at the disposal of the workers' state, which demands of all citizens the observance of definite relationships, a definite co-ordination of conduct, a definite discipline.

Our tribunals do not act in accordance with any written code. The new order is only in process of formation. It is taking shape in conditions of fierce struggle, amid difficulties hitherto unprecedented in world history. A revolutionary sense of justice will be forged in the fire of this struggle. This cannot be set out in advance in the paragraphs of any code. The struggle is passing through periods of upsurge and decline, of advance and retreat. The same actions possess different significance at different moments: the tribunal always remains an instrument defending the conquests and interests of the revolution under all the changing conditions. Its sentences are conceived in conformity with the changes in circumstances and the needs of the revolutionary struggle, and with the class origin of the offender. Revolutionary justice, including revolutionary military justice, does not dress up in the mask of equal rights for all (which do not and cannot exist in class society): revolutionary justice openly proclaims itself a fighting organ of the working class in its struggle against bourgeois enemies, on the one hand, and, on the other, against violators of discipline and solidarity in the ranks of the working class itself. Just because our revolutionary justice has cast aside all the hypocrisy of the old justice it has acquired immense educational importance.

It is necessary, however, that the tribunal shall itself clearly appreciate its own importance, and that it shall see its decision not just from the standpoint of punishing a particular action but also from that of revolutionary class education. Of immense importance in this connection is the actual *formulation of the sentence*. Yet, as often as not, there appear in the pages of our army newspapers sentences which, though probably quite appropriate to the circumstances of the given case, are quite incomprehensible to anyone who was not present at the hearing of the case and is unaware of all its circumstances.

Let us take two or three examples. The revolutionary military court of the N-th Army sentenced Citizen S, for taking part in a White-Guard revolt, his guilt having been proved, to six months' imprisonment, the time he spent in preliminary custody to be deducted from this period. The same revolutionary military court sentenced Red Army man K, for repeated desertion, to be kept in prison until the complete liquidation of the Czechoslovak and White Guard revolt in the Urals. No more information is given in the statement issued by the revolutionary military tribunal. There can be no doubt that publication of sentences in this form can play a demoralising rather than a deterrent or educational role. Proven participation in a White-Guard revolt is punished by six months' imprisonment!

Either this sentence was criminally lenient, or else there were in the given case

circumstances that justified the leniency of the sentence. One may suppose that the latter possibility is the more likely. If so, then these exceptional circumstances ought to have been set forth, with all definiteness and precision, in the formulation of the sentence, so as to avoid conveying the impression that someone who takes part in a White-Guard revolt runs no greater risk than six months' imprisonment.

Even more astonishing is the second sentence. For proved desertion on two occasions the guilty man was sentenced to imprisonment until the end of the White-Guard revolt. Since a deserter's purpose is to avoid danger, and since danger will continue to threaten so long as the war lasts, putting a deserter in prison until the end of the danger period fully coincides with his purpose in deserting, and constitutes a direct incentive to desertion for all cowards and self-seekers.

Again, we must presume that in the given case there were some quite exceptional circumstances, for, let us repeat, a sentence of unheard-of mildness was imposed for proved and repeated desertion. But if that was so, the actual text of the sentence should have stated, with all precision, the reasons that led the tribunal to impose so lenient a sentence.

It is especially important that the tribunal should introduce into its sentences the idea that the punishment for one and the same offence will be heavier the higher the post, and therefore the responsibility, of the guilty person. In cases of desertion, of voluntary abandonment of a position, of non-fulfilment of a military order, and soon, a commander or a commissar must be punished with incomparably greater severity than a Red Army man, a company commander more severely than a platoon commander, and so on. All these differences and distinctions must be made clear, being precisely and comprehensibly emphasised in the actual text of the sentence.

The same principle applies to Communists. Membership of the Communist Party does not, of course, constitute an official appointment: but it does mean a definite political and moral situation which lays high obligations upon the one who assumes it. The citizen who joins the Communist Party thereby declares himself to be a conscious and active fighter for the cause of the working class. Entry into the Communist Party is a purely voluntary act, and, consequently, every Communist consciously and freely takes upon himself double and treble responsibility for his conduct before the working class. It is clear that a communist who is a deserter or a violator of discipline cannot justify himself by any reference to his ignorance, political blindness and so on. All other circumstances being equal, a Communist who commits a crime must suffer a heavier penalty than a non-Communist; and this fact must always be made quite clear in the court's sentence.

True, our tribunals, including the military ones, consist of workers and peasants, who, although, as a general rule, they do their work very well and pass sentences which are fully in accordance with the interests of the revolution, are lacking in formal education and therefore embody their sentences in writing in an extremely imperfect, sometimes absolutely unfortunate way. Yet this aspect of the matter, as we have tried to show, is of great importance. It is therefore necessary that, when a sentence is formulated, those who are composing it should have before their eyes not only the accused but also the broad masses of soldiers, workers and peasants. A sentence must possess an agitational character: it must deter some while enhancing confidence and courage in the hearts of others. Only thus will the work of the military tribunal contribute to the interests of the Red Army and of the workers' revolution generally.

April 23, 1919

Vyatka-Glazovo

(Glazovo is on the line between Vyatka (Kirov) and Perm, about half-way.]

*En Route*, No. 35

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **V. Military Science And Publications**

# PROFOUND VERBIAGE

[An English translation of part of 'Profound verbiage' appeared in Workers' Dreadnought, December 13, 1919.]

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The journal **Voyennoye Dyelo**, which carries many useful articles on special subjects, has not managed to find its spiritual equilibrium. And that should not surprise us. Events have taken place in the world arena, and especially in our own country which were far from having been foreseen by all the staff of **Voyennoye Dyelo**. At first it seemed to many of them that it was impossible to make head or tail of all this, no criteria were applicable, and therefore the best line to take was to renounce all criteria and quietly wait and see what would come out of it all. As time went by, however, it began to become apparent that, amid the great chaos that the staff of **Voyennoye Dyelo** had not foreseen, some features of order were emerging. Man's mind is, generally speaking, somewhat lazy and passive, and finds it easiest to grasp that which it finds familiar and which therefore calls for no extra thinking. That is the case here. Some military specialists who were, in the first place, sure that there would be a demand for their expertise, and who then noticed a number of familiar features in the new organisation, immediately drew the rather hasty conclusion that there is nothing new under the sun and that they could therefore happily continue in the future to be guided by their old criteria.

Furthermore, having concluded that everything in the military sphere would eventually come back to what prevailed earlier, these lovers of old-time ways, taking heart, decided that a restoration was also to be expected in the military milieu. In this connection certain contributors to **Voyennoye Dyelo** have hastened to put forward general opinions of theirs which had long lacked an airing – primarily, on the theme of the place held by war and the army in the history of human development. Evidently they consider themselves 'specialists' in this department as well. A fatal delusion! A good artillery or supply officer by no means always has a vocation for the philosophy of history. We will now demonstrate this by means of two or three examples. In No.15-16 of **Voyennoye Dyelo** we find printed in the place of honour an article by Citizen F. Herschelman entitled: *Is war possible in the future?* [\[41\]](#)

Everything in this article is wrong, starting with the title. What the author does, essentially, is to raise the question: *are future wars inevitable*, and he comes to the conclusion that they are. On this question there exists, as is well-known, a considerable body of writing. In our time the question has moved from the sphere of literature into that of most intense conflict, which is assuming in every country the character of overt civil war. A political party has come to power in Russia whose programme has clearly and precisely characterised the socio-historical nature of past and present wars, and just as clearly and precisely defined the conditions under which wars will become not only unnecessary but also impossible. No-one requires Citizen Herschelman to adopt the Communist standpoint. But if a military specialist ventures to write about war in a semi-official Russian publication – not in 1914 but in 1919! – it would seem that one might require him, at the very least, to show an elementary knowledge of the programme which is our official state doctrine and constitutes the basis of our international and internal policy. But of this there is no trace.

The writer begins, as befits a lover of old-time ways, from the beginning, that is, from the scholastic Leer, who was helpless where historical problems were concerned, and quotes from him, as major premise, the most commonplace banality to the effect that 'conflict is fundamental to everything that lives'. [General G.A. Leer was the head of the General Staff Academy in the 1890s. He wrote numerous works on military theory and compiled Russia's first military encyclopaedia.]

This aphorism, based on a boundlessly wide interpretation of the word 'conflict', simply deletes the whole of human history, or dissolves it in biology without leaving any residue. When we talk of *war*, and are not just playing with words, we mean planned collision between groups of men organised as states, who use the technical means available to them in order to achieve aims set by the rulers of the respective groups. It is quite clear that nothing like this exists outside the history of human society. While *conflict* is the lot of everything that lives, *war* is a purely historical, human phenomenon. Whoever has not noticed this has therefore not yet approached even the threshold of the problem.

There was a time when people ate each other. In some places cannibalism has survived even to this day. To be sure, the Ashanti do not publish military journals, but if they did, their theoreticians would doubtless write: 'Hopes that man may renounce cannibalism are unrealisable, for conflict is fundamental to everything that lives.' On this point one might reply, with Citizen Herschelman's permission, to the anthropophagous savant, that what is being discussed is not conflict in general but that particular form of it which finds expression in men hunting down their own kind for meat.

There can be no question but that cannibalism ceased not as a result of homilies but owing to changes in economic life: when it became more advantageous to turn prisoners into draught oxen, anthropophagy (cannibalism) died out. But didn't 'conflict' remain? Of course. However, we are talking here not about conflict in general, but about cannibalism.

Formerly, male fought with male to get a female. Drevlyan bridegrooms 'carried off girls by capture'. Nowadays, as Citizen Herschelman is aware, this procedure is not followed, even though 'conflict is the lot of every living creature'. [The Drevlyans were a people who lived in Polesia in the early Middle Ages and whose wars with the Princes of Kiev are recorded in the oldest Russian chronicle, from which Trotsky is quoting.] Mutual skull-cracking in wood and cave was later replaced by chivalrous tournaments in the presence of ladies, and also by duels. But tournaments and duels have vanished into the past, or have been transformed, in the majority of cases, into a masquerade that echoes basely the bloody encounters of former times. To understand this process we need to trace the development of the economy, the mutual relations of men and women in the economy, the changes that have occurred, on this basis, in the forms of tribal and family life, the rise and development of social estates, the historical conditions governing chivalrous and, in general, noble views and prejudices, the role of the duel as an element in the ideology of a certain estate of society, the disappearance of their social soil from under the feet of the privileged castes, the transformation of the duel into a meaning less survival, and so on. You won't get far into this problem, or into any others, with the bald aphorism about 'conflict as the lot of every living creature'.

The Slav tribes and clans fought against each other. In the period of the appanages and the town assemblies, ['The period of the appanages and the town assemblies' is the expression used by Russian historians for the period between the 12th and

15th centuries in Russia's history.] the principalities fought against each other. It was the same with the various Germanic tribes and with the feudal principalities of what later became a united France. The bloody internecine struggles of the feudalists, the wars between province and province, and between the towns and the forces of the knights appeared on history's agenda not because 'conflict is the lot of every living creature' but because they were determined by the specific economic relations of a certain epoch, and they passed away with those relations. The reasons that caused the Muscovites to fight the men of Kiev, the Prussians to fight the Saxons, the Normans to fight the Burgundians were, in their own epoch, no less profound and imperative than the reasons that brought about the last war between the Germans and the British. Again, therefore, we are concerned not with a law of nature, as such, but with those specific, particular laws that determine the development of human society. And, even with out going beyond the most general historical considerations, one might ask: if man overcame wars between Burgundy and Normandy, Saxony and Prussia, the principalities of Kiev and Moscow, then why should he not overcome wars between Britain and Germany, or Russia and Japan? 'Conflict,' in the broadest sense of the word, will, of course, remain, but was a particular form of this conflict which appeared only after man began to build society and use tools. This particular form of conflict, war, changed along with changes in human economy, and may, under certain historical conditions, disappear altogether.

In their separate and scattered character, the wars of the feudal order expressed the disjointed nature of the mediaeval economy. Each region looked on its neighbour as a closed world at whose expense it might profit. The knights watched with a predatory eye the developing and prospering towns. The sub sequent development of the economy united provinces and regions into a single whole. Upon this new economic foundation there arose a united France, a united Italy, a united Germany, as the Outcome of fierce struggles, both internal and international. In this way, economic unification, transforming extensive countries into single economic organisms, made impossible further wars waged within the framework of the new, enlarged historical formation – the nation-state.

But the progress of economic relations did not stop there. Industry has long since broken through national barriers and united the whole world in links of mutual dependence. Not only Burgundy or Normandy, not only Saxony or Prussia, not only Moscow or Kiev, but also France, Germany and Russia have long ceased to be self-sufficient worlds, and have become dependent parts of a world-wide economy. We have been made all too well aware of this now, in this period of war blockade, when we are not receiving the products of German and British industry that we need. But the German and British workers, too, are suffering no less from the mechanical disruption of an economic whole, which means that they are not obtaining the grain of the Don region or the butter of Siberia.

The economy has become fundamentally world-wide in character. But the appropriation of profit, that is, the right to skim the cream of this world economy, has remained in the hands of the bourgeois classes of particular nations. Thus, if the roots of our present wars are to be sought in 'nature', this is not biological nature and not even human nature in general, but the social 'nature' of the bourgeoisie, which was formed and developed as an exploiting, appropriating, ruling, profiteering and plundering class that forces the working masses to fight for its bourgeois aims. The world economy, closely bound together into a single productive entity, creates unprecedented sources of enrichment and power. The bourgeoisie of each nation tries to seize these sources for itself, thereby disorganising the world economy, just as, in the period of transition to the new

order, the feudalists disrupted the national economy.

A class that is doomed to disrupt the economy, and to do this to an increasing extent, cannot long remain in power. It is for this reason that the bourgeoisie itself has felt obliged to seek a way out of the problem by establishing a 'League of Nations'. Wilson's idea amounts to this, that the united world economy is to be seen as a joint-stock company of brigands in which the profits should be shared among the capitalists of all countries without any wars between them. The principal shares, of course, Wilson wants to keep for *his own* stock-exchange operators of New York and Chicago, but the bandits of London, Paris, Tokyo and elsewhere do not agree.

It is this clash between bourgeois appetites that makes it hard for the bourgeois governments to decide the question of the 'League of Nations'. Nevertheless, one can say with confidence that, after the experience of the present war, the capitalist classes of the most important countries would have tried to create the conditions for a more or less united and centralised exploitation of the entire globe without wars, just as the bourgeoisie put an end to feudal wars within the confines of the territory of each nation. The bourgeoisie might have dealt with this new task if the working class had not risen up against it, just as in its time the bourgeoisie rose up against the forces of feudalism. The significance of the civil war which has ended in Russia with the victory of the proletariat and is approaching the same conclusion in all other countries amounts to this, that the working class has taken upon itself the accomplishment of the task which now stands before mankind, as a matter of life and death, namely, the transformation of the earth's entire surface, together with what lies beneath it and with everything that man's labour has added to it, into a single world economy, increasingly planned and conducted according to a single conception, in which the distribution of products will be carried out just as on one big co-operative estate.

Citizen Herschelman has, seemingly, not the slightest understanding of all this. He has discovered a book by some Professor Danevsky, entitled **Systems of Political Equilibrium and Legitimism and the Principle of Nationality** [The book referred to, by V.P. Danevsky, was published in St Petersburg in 1882.], and on the basis of a few feeble conclusions drawn by this official jurist he establishes the inevitability of wars until the end of time. In the pages of a journal of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army – in May 1919 – it is gravely explained in an editorial that the principle of legitimism will not save us from wars. Legitimism means recognition of the untouchability of all the estate, caste and monarchical swinishness that has accumulated upon this earth. Proving that recognition of the eternal rights of the Romanov and Hohenzollern rulers, or of the power of the Paris usurpers, does not provide a guarantee against war really does mean indulging in profound verbiage. The same is true of the theory of so-called 'political equilibrium'. No-one has exposed better than has Marxism (communism) the illusoriness and falsity of this theory. The diplomatic chicanery of 'equilibrium' was only a cover for the diabolical rivalry between military machines, on the one hand, and, on the other, for Britain's endeavour to weaken France by means of Germany and Germany by means of France.

Two locomotives being driven towards each other along the same rails – that was what was meant by the theory of armed peace through 'European equilibrium', a theory which the Marxists exposed long before it crashed altogether in blood and mud.

Only petty-bourgeois dreamers or big-bourgeois charlatans can talk of the

national principle as a basis for perpetual peace. Wars were waged under the flag of nationality when the development of industry demanded a transition from the province to a wider, nation-state unity. Present-day wars have nothing to do with the national principle. We do not even speak of civil wars in this connection. Kolchak sells Siberia to America, and Denikin is ready to make three-quarters of the Russian people slaves to Britain and France so as to be able to keep the possibility of plundering the remaining quarter. But in international wars, too, the national principle does not count. Britain and France are sharing Out Germany's colonies and looting Asia. America is thrusting its paws into European affairs. Italy is annexing Slavs. Even half-strangled Serbia is strangling Bulgars. In every case, the national principle serves here only as a pretext. What is involved is world domination, that is, rule over the economy of the whole world. After subjecting legitimism, the theory of political equilibrium and the principle of nationality to superficial criticism, Citizen Herschelman has not even approached the question of the historical destiny of war. And yet this destiny is now being decided in practice. By driving the bourgeoisie from the helm of state and taking power into its own hands, the working class is preparing for the creation of a federal Soviet republic of Europe and of the whole world, on the basis of a unified world economy.

War has been and still is a form either of armed exploitation or of armed struggle against exploitation. The federal rule of the proletariat, as a transition to the world Commune, will signify suppression of the exploitation of man by man and therefore also the ending of armed conflicts between man and man. War will disappear just as cannibalism did. Conflict will remain, but it will be the collective conflict of mankind with the hostile forces of nature.

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## Endnotes

**41.** The main propositions put forward by Herschelman in his article were as follows. The hope that war will cease is unfounded: war will not cease, because it corresponds too closely to human nature. Further, as principal proof that it is impossible to decide fundamental political questions without war, Herschelman refers to the dogmatic historical work by Danevsky, **The Systems of Political Equilibrium and Legitimism, and the Principal of Nationality**. The three systems proposed for getting rid of wars have proved unsatisfactory, and the question of the possibility of preserving peace in a system of states has remained unanswered. Subsequently, Herschelman acquaints the reader in detail with Danevsky's views on these three systems.

July 10, 1919  
Voronezh-Kolodeznaya  
*Voyennoye Dyelo*, Nos.23-24

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **V. Military Science And Publications**

# IT IS NECESSARY TO REARM!

Advice to certain military specialists

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We have said more than once, and we are still ready to repeat, that we need military specialists. They are indispensable for our

work, and we need them not only for the period until 'our own' commanding personnel have matured, as some light-minded persons idly claim. No, the commanders who have joined the Red Army have mostly merged with it, become dissolved in it and in the Soviet Republic. But if we recruit officers of the former Tsarist army, this does not mean in the least that we observe a tolerant attitude towards all their inherited and acquired opinions and prejudices. Still less does it mean that we can watch passively while these opinions and prejudices are disseminated by them among the forces of the revolution. And yet attempts are being made to do just this. We have in mind not malicious counter-revolutionary agitation, against which we fight by means of repressive measures. No, what we are concerned with here are perfectly legal articles and books which are now being published, under the Soviet flag, by certain military specialists who sometimes even do not suspect, in the simplicity of their hearts, that they are engaging in mortal struggle against the basic principles of the Soviet power and the Communist programme.

I have before me **A Collection of Articles on Discipline**, published by the editors of **Voyennoye Dyelo**. It would be hard to conceive a publication more inopportune, misplaced and lacking in internal discipline of thought. The collection is evidently intended for use in the Red Army: at any rate, so it would seem. For, if the collection was intended for the instruction of Denikin's army, the place of publication should have been Rostov or Yekaterinodar. However, it was published in Moscow, in Prechistenka, at the expense of the Soviet state. In the pedantic foreword, which smacks of the erudition of the Ochakov period, [The phrase 'the Ochakov period', used to signify a remote period whose lessons are irrelevant to present-day problems, comes from Griboyedov's play *Woe From Wit* (also translated as *The Misfortune of Being Too Clever*), written in 1823, in which the hero condemns fuddy-duddies whose ideas date from the period of the siege of Ochakov, a Turkish fortress on the Black Sea, in 1788.] we are presented with Spencer as an unattainable model: 'If Russia lacks her own Spencer, then let her read and study England's Spencer.' Spencer was a typical bourgeois individualist, a sworn foe of socialism. His world-outlook was saturated with bourgeois conservatism. In essence he was the senior philosophical clerk of the British bourgeoisie, looking at the world through the window of a bank in the City and imagining that the learned superstitions of senior clerks constitute laws governing the development of mankind. And the army of the revolutionary proletariat is being recommended to go to school under the bourgeois-conservative Spencer!

Later on, a whole banquet of Spencer's thoughts and aphorisms is set before us. In them we find a pharisaical satisfaction that a steady extermination of lower natures and the civilising of those raised up from cannibalism and idolatry has produced philanthropists and peacemakers. Spencer means that the process of torture and imprisonment by means of which the bourgeoisie has exterminated the 'lower natures' of unfortunate vagabonds and homeless proletarians has also, in the end, brought about that flowering of mankind which has been crowned by the

philanthropists of the stock-exchange and their philosophical salesman. The stupid bourgeois does not guess that the bourgeois philanthropists for whom such a high price has been paid are, in their narrow self-interest, conceit and egoism, more repulsive than the most inveterate cannibals.

In the so-called 'philosophical' section of this collection we find, secondly, the definition of discipline laid down by Bismarck: 'Discipline is the offspring of honour and is born to love the fatherland and be loyal to the father of the fatherland.' By the father of the fatherland is meant – Hohenzollern. The Russian Red Army man and his Red commander are genially offered a doctrine of discipline that was conceived by the gut-wisdom of the Prussian Junkers and stylised in the spirit of a nauseating Protestant byzantinism. The sixth point calls for observance of respect for rank (all this is in the 'philosophical' section). In the second part of this philosophy of 'discipline' we find an aphorism uttered by the 'father of the fatherland' himself, Emperor Wilhelm: 'Only through attention and obedience is military prowess created and preserved in every unit, and only with them can we go to war and win victories not inferior to those of our glorious past. Therefore, every soldier must show attention and obedience to all those placed over him, that is, to every officer and NCO of the regiment or the unit in which he serves, and must carry out with precision the orders that they give him.' The profundity of thought is fully worthy of the crowned corporal, the brilliant style recalls the peel from a frozen potato. And this aphorism is put forward as an exhortation to the Red Army! On page 17 quotations are given, from Spencer and Tylor, [The allusions are to Herbert Spencer, whose works (**Principles of Psychology**, **Principles of Sociology**, **Principles of Ethics**, etc.) appeared between the 1860s and the 1870s, and to Sir E.B. Tylor, the pioneer anthropologist, whose **Primitive Culture** appeared in 1871.] to show 'the necessity of princely power', without its being clear whether this applies to the past or to the future – that is, whether the author wishes to explain how cavemen arrived, at a certain stage of development, at princely power, or whether he is leading us to the conclusion that monarchy is a step forward as compared with the Soviet regime.

Incomparably more humane and richer in psychological substance are the ideas of Dragomirov [This is General M.I. Dragomirov, who died in 1906, the author of works on military training that were widely used in the late 19th century. Not to be confused with his son General A.M. Dragomirov, one of the White commanders in the civil war.] – which, of course, need extensive corrections if they are to be applied to the present epoch. Such chapters as *The discipline of consequences* and *Training and mental culture* (taken from the books of the psychologist Bain) [The reference is to Alexander Bain (1903), a philosopher and educationalist, whose **Manual of Mental and Moral Science** appeared in 1868.] have got into this collection only because its compilers obviously lack firmness and discipline in their own thinking.

As the conception of discipline which is called for by the demands of present-day warfare we are given: 'strict fulfilment of the rules of saluting' and, again and again, the requirement of 'perfection in saluting and particular care where military bearing is concerned'.

When a mature soldier, or the young commander of a new formation, picks up this collection, he will open his eyes very wide after reading the first few lines, and will then fling the book away in anger. And he will be right to do so. True, the collection contains a certain number of ideas and directions. But what a lot of ponderous rubbish as well! What is completely lacking in the collection, however, is any guiding idea. And our epoch demands great guiding ideas. Stringing together phrases and aphorisms is an occupation for exegetists of the Old Testament. What

a revolutionary army needs is not a multitude of learned *words* but a clear and distinct scientific *word*, reducing to a system the rich experience of our epoch. Quoting to a Russian Red Army man the myopic bourgeois vulgarian Spencer is ridiculous, and to offer him that theatrical fool with the waxed moustache, Wilhelm, is not merely ridiculous but also impertinent: it smells of some kind of pointless provocation.

What underlies this misunderstanding? A pedantic conception of science as an accumulation of learned quotations, formal definitions and footnotes – the old academic rubbish which is tacked on to practical military knowledge like a detachable tail to a kite. And Citizen Byelyayev, the compiler of the collection, seriously supposed that somebody needs all this! And this moth-eaten wisdom is offered by the editors of **Voyennoye Dyelo**, despite its stifling stench of naphthalene, to the most revolutionary army in the history of man!

Citizen military specialists! You have studied tactics and strategy – some well, others not so well. The working class is now learning them from you, studying diligently and conscientiously, and as time goes on it will study still better. But do not imagine, citizen military specialists, that, because you have studied gunnery, you know everything else. Where social, political and historical questions are concerned, most of you know nothing, or, what is even worse, what you have learnt consists of the old rubbish, long since cast aside by the development of human thought, which was used by the sycophants of Tsardom to stuff people's brains with. We do not need this from you.

And we say plainly: it is sinful and criminal, in this time of universal shortage, to waste paper, ink and labour on printing the ideological cast-offs of long-past historical ages, which are of no use to anyone.

Citizen military specialists! Teach us that which constitutes the subject of your genuine speciality, and, outside those limits, become learners yourselves. There is nothing shameful in admitting one's ignorance, trying to clear one's brain of old rubbish, and taking up those books in which the movement of human thought in the 19th and 20th centuries is expressed.

Who can say, perhaps some even among the wise elders of military science will become convinced that the theory of communism (Marxism) is a very great and complex matter, and that one cannot deal with it in the fashion of those seminarists of former times who were able to smash Darwin to smithereens in five minutes. Citizen military specialists! Sit down to a good book instead of publishing a bad one.

September 1919  
*Voyennoye Dyelo*, No.26 (55)

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **V. Military Science And Publications**

# WHAT SORT OF MILITARY JOURNAL DO WE NEED?

Speech at the conference of editors of and contributors to military publications

\* \* \*

My proposal that the journals **Krasnyi Ofitser** and **Voyennoye Dyelo** be merged into a single publication met with a strong protest from the military writers who contribute to **Voyennoye Dyelo**. [42] Here at this conference we have heard a number of objections, which can all be reduced to one, namely, that a journal of military science ought not to be killed for the sake of a 'popular' publication. But I did not propose anything of the kind. I have sufficient respect for military science, in so far as it deserves the name, that is, in so far as it generalises accumulated military experience. However, it must really be military science, and a journal that claims to be a journal of military science must really perform its task, that is, must check the old conclusions of military science against current experience, in the social setting and historical circumstances of today. There is nothing, or almost nothing, of that to be found in **Voyennoye Dyelo**. The gentlemen who write for it try to speak a timeless language and set forth some sort of timeless truths. To be sure, the editor of **Voyennoye Dyelo**, list of articles in hand, claimed that the editorial board have 'responded' to all problems: they have written about fortresses, about artillery, about company training, about German military doctrine and about much else.

This list is very impressive, but it proves only that **Voyennoye Dyelo** has written about military problems. Nothing more than that. The question is, though: *how* has it written about them? Military science is not geometry. And those few 'geometrical' truths, of rather meagre practical value, that were set forth by old Leer can hardly be supplemented by new 'timeless' truths in the pages of **Voyennoye Dyelo**. What we need today is direct and immediate participation by the journal in the work of forming, materially and ideologically, the Red Army that is now being created. On that process however, the editors have turned their backs, or, at any rate, they have half-turned away from it.

The army of the Great French Revolution was formed by way of an 'amalgam'. That word was common in the military-political usage of those days. The old line regiments, with their old commanding personnel, were brigaded with new revolutionary units. This amalgam signified in practice the combination of old, accumulated experience with the new revolutionary heroic spirit of the popular masses, which found expression in the revolutionary army. A certain amalgam is taking place in our case too. True, our old regiments have not been retained and we have begun to create formations from scratch. But we have not rejected the old experience and the old specialists. On the contrary, we have recruited them. Many of them are working well. And a real amalgam, that is, a sort of chemical combination, is taking place with us, too, at the front, and very successfully. Our military publications ought to reflect this, ought to give expression to this process in the realm of ideas. **Voyennoye Dyelo** does not do this. That is its basic defect.

The proposal was put forward here that, in order to secure closer connection between the work of publication and the Red Army, certain publishing departments should be subject to the heads of the corresponding central administrations. I am resolutely opposed to this suggestion. Such a connection would be purely

mechanical, and I agree completely with Comrade Svechin that it would lead to a thorough bureaucratisation of the work of publishing. To force the heads of administrations to theorise about their own practice, with which they have, up to now, not coped very well, is a quite unrealisable undertaking. Our central administrations are themselves most seriously in need of criticism, stimulation, ideological prompting. And if we allow them to conduct a journal they will use its pages only to ratify their own profiles. Bringing them into participation in the journal is quite another matter. That is, of course, the editors' responsibility. Personally, as a reader, I was pleased to come upon the articles written by the old quartermaster Grudzinsky about problems of supply.

This specialist opposes the amateurish approach which is unwilling to study, and hopes to be able to solve all problems through intuition. The military specialist has good grounds for his discontent and criticism. But, alas, the articles written by the specialist did not justify my expectations in any way. I found in them a collection of quotations along with some passable jokes, which show that even in difficult situations a quartermaster retains his sense of humour. That was pleasing, but I found absolutely no practical, businesslike criticism with a wide application. And yet what a rewarding and responsible theme we have here: the supply officer in conflict with the People's Commissariat of Food and the Supreme Economic Council. These are new and complex formations, in which the multiform process of socialist construction is being expressed, along with mistakes, deviations, a heritage of routine, lack of experience, and a search for new paths. It might seem that there would be no-one better than an experienced quartermaster to make a principled and practical critique of the way the People's Commissariat of Food and the Supreme Economic Council work, from the angle of getting supplies for the army. The army is an organism which is in the highest degree demanding and imperative: its needs brook no delay. Consequently, all the defects that exist in all branches of the economy are felt most sharply in the sphere of the army's supply services. Our specialist quartermasters see the People's Commissariat of Food and the Supreme Economic Council as constituting a fatal misfortune that has fallen upon them and which has to be put up with. Instead of criticism, even if this should be of the most vigorous and cutting sort, we get either muttering, or silence, or jokes. That is what is wrong with **Voyennoye Dyeło**.

The link that is needed with the Red Army is not a mechanical one, not one achieved by handing over some departments of the journal to the heads of administrations. The link needed is an internal, ideological, organic link.

Take the question of the *social composition* of our army. We are building the army on a class basis. Has this question been subjected to investigation from the military standpoint? Not once. [The German bourgeois economist Louis Brentano once made an analysis, based on the experience of the war of 1870-1871, of the comparative qualities of workers and the peasants in the German army, and came to the conclusion that the proletarians were superior from the military standpoint. Have our military specialists touched on this highly important question in their journal? Never. And yet in our epoch the life of the army revolves around this question. An enormous body of experience has been accumulated. Has it been studied? Not at all. – L.T.] Or perhaps it is a matter of indifference from the military standpoint? But just see. In the Ukraine Skoropadsky made an attempt that was different from ours to build an army on the class principle. He, apparently, mobilised peasants who had holdings of not less than 25 *desyatins*. Finally, we had the attempt made by the Constituent Assembly's supporters to build a 'people's' army on a non-class basis. That attempt ended in ruin. Thus, we live in an epoch in which the class principle imposes itself when an army has to be built: What military conclusions are to be drawn from this fact, for the tasks of formation, education

and tactics? What are the practical military consequences? Your journal has never paid any attention to this question. Isn't that monstrous?

Let us go on. An army without a commanding apparatus is not an army at all. We have taken our commanders from two sources – from the reserve provided by the old officer corps, and from among the workers and peasants who have passed through instructors' courses. An attempt to evaluate this commanding apparatus of ours, such as could facilitate our work in recruiting it, and in educating and re-educating it – where will you find that? It would be vain to look for it in the pages of **Voyennoye Dyelo**.

What about problems of technology, tactics and strategy in the *present* war? You have barely touched on them. Of course you write about fortresses and about many other things. But the whole heart of the matter is, *how* to write. Nobody is asking for anything specially, artificially popular. That is not the point at all. You have to write as the subject requires. One must, of course, avoid the bureaucratic language or caste pedantry, but in the last analysis the popular character of one's writing depends on the scale of the subject, the complexity of the concepts and their inter-relations. I repeat, however, that is not the point at issue. One can write about fortresses, about tanks, about the British navy, about the new establishment of the Australian division, *from the standpoint of the internal requirements and tasks of the Red Army*, that is, in an attempt to widen its horizon and enrich its experience. Or one can write as a *detached spectator* who sits down, looks around him, and writes about something or other. That's the trouble – the fact that many articles in **Voyennoye Dyelo** are written in the tone of persons who are merely hanging about waiting for the rain to pass, and making a few notes, just for the record.

One can, of course, look upon the whole revolutionary epoch – as a misunderstanding, or in the way that a pedestrian sees a rainstorm which obliges him to wait around under his umbrella. It is possible to sit down under one's umbrella for an hour or two, calculating that the weather will eventually change and enable one to fold one's umbrella and proceed on one's way. But, alas! One can't produce a journal in that state of mind. The very word 'journal' comes from a word meaning 'day', and 'sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof'. It is still possible, perhaps, to be a chief clerk at a headquarters, or an inspector of infantry, or even the commander of a division (a bad commander, of course), while in one's heart looking forward to the coming of something or somebody. But it is not possible to produce a journal in that mood. A writer, after all, deals entirely in pronouncements. He summons, teaches, generalises, denounces: but whither can he summon people, if he himself is sitting things out under his umbrella? It is that mentality which is the main trouble with **Voyennoye Dyelo**.

Of course you write about fortresses and about many other things. But these articles make me think of the articles on fortresses that appeared in French military journals during the present war, in the period when all our Russian fortresses were falling. A feverish re-evaluation of the importance of fortresses then took place in the military press. Were fortifications of the old type still valid, or would they be ousted by fortified positions of the new entrenched variety? But those French articles were written from the standpoint of the fate of Verdun, of Belfort, and of the French fortresses generally, of their defence – in short, they were written from inside the French army and for the French army. Your articles about fortresses, however, are written like seminarists' writings, 'in general', without relevance to anything in particular. This is a sort of military geometry, a bad sort of geometry, which often resembles idle chat.

One of the contributors to the journal, V. Borisov, declared here quite categorically that, however clever we might be, nothing would get done without a chief of general staff. And when the chief of general staff arrived, he would at once revive **Voyennoye Dyelo**, even if we had closed it down. But what is a chief of general staff? He is, don't you see, a certain individual who has to calculate, check and distribute everything and assign to everyone his place and importance. The author of this saying was supported by one of the journal's editors, Lebedev.

Pardon me, please, but that philosophy of history can lead one into the depths of depression. Where are you to find this providential chief of general staff if you have no ideas about the general staff, or, rather, no fundamental guiding ideas about how to form the army and put it into action? You turn your backs on all the problems of the actual life of our army – of the army which now exists and is growing. Sighings in honour of the chief of general staff who is to come and save you merely express your ideological helplessness. This is the passive Bonapartism of people who are utterly disorientated. I repeat: *anyone who wishes to do so can sit in a hermit's hut under a tree, awaiting the coming of a chief of general staff. But that man sitting under a tree cannot conduct a military journal.*

The same persons pointed reproachfully to the fact that, as they alleged, we have only general-staff clerks, who sit by the telephone and write out urgent orders concerning reinforcements. But I say to you that these clerks at the telephone are incomparably more valuable for army affairs and, if you like, for military science, than are lifeless pedants who turn their backs upon history and look forward to the coming of a Messiah from the general staff. Your pedantic disdain for the military work that history is carrying on now, before your eyes, found most striking expression in one of the notes that you added to my article on the military specialists – a note which, unfortunately, never got into print. I urge you very strongly to print all those notes. You say there that in the present civil or small-scale war, of course, one can permit oneself 'anything one likes', but it has nothing to do with science, for science has, in general, nothing to do with all that. But I say to you, military specialist gentlemen, that this is an utterly ignorant statement – and not from the political standpoint only, but, above all, from the *military* standpoint. It is not true that the civil war has nothing to do with military science and contributes nothing to its enrichment. Quite the contrary. With the mobility and flexibility of its fronts, the civil war offers immense scope for real initiative and real military creativity, and that is where the whole problem lies – achieving maximum results with minimum expenditure of forces. An analogy has often been drawn between the art of war and skill in chess-playing. Allow me to make an excursion into the field of chess. Whoever has read the games of Morphy, the greatest of chess strategists, will know that these games are characterised by their perfection: regardless of whether Morphy was waging a 'big' or a 'small' war, that is, whether he had against him a player of his own standard or a layman, Morphy always displayed the same qualities and achieved his results with the minimum number of moves. [P.C. Morphy, 1837-1884, American chess-player. **Morphy's Games**, edited by J. Lewenthal, was published in New York in 1866.] And that is the fundamental requirement of military science, which is binding equally upon the strategist of civil war. The last great war gave comparatively little scope for creativity, as was very soon revealed on the Western front, in France. After that gigantic front has been established, between the Belgian Coast and Switzerland, the war at once became automatic, with the art of strategy reduced to the minimum, and everything was staked on the card of mutual exhaustion – whereas our war, which is wholly an affair of mobility and manoeuvres, presents opportunities for the greatest talent to be revealed in 'small-

scale' war. Whoever shows contempt for this war reveals utter ignorance and pedantry, and is, naturally, incapable of teaching anything to others because he cannot learn anything himself.

**Voyennoye Dyelo** is not, of course, a popular publication for the masses, aimed at the Red Army men. The Red Army man is, in general, the Soviet citizen who has been armed with a rifle in order to fight for his own interests. The Red Army man's ideological interests are satisfied through the pages of the general press. The commanders, however, are, to a greater or lesser extent, specialists, and have their own range of special military interests for which they need a special publication. There is an acute demand among them for such a publication. In order to satisfy this demand you need to see and sense your reader, to know very clearly for whom you are writing, but many articles in **Voyennoye Dyelo** resemble correspondence exchanged by good friends amongst themselves.

Complaints were made here about the censorship, which hinders people from writing and from criticising. I readily admit that the censorship has committed a multitude of blunders and I consider it most necessary to assign a more modest role to this worthy activity. The censorship must safeguard military secrets – which, be it said by the way, are too little safeguarded in our own military institutions – and beyond that task the censorship has no business to go. I hope that we shall be able, with our combined forces, to overcome this adversary of critical military thought. But it would be quite unjustified to blame the censorship for the meagreness of **Voyennoye Dyelo**.

It has also been said: so that we may get closer to present-day realities, give us access to the archives of the civil war. That is, of course, quite feasible. But in order to discover *the present day* there is no need to seek in the archives: it is walking, live, down the street, and only somebody who shuts his eyes can fail to see it.

On the other hand, someone said here that we ought to write off, in general, the experiment of publishing a journal of military science with the aid of old military writers. I do not go so far as that. Up to now, the experiment has not been a success, although elements of improvement are undoubtedly to be observed. I consider that, at present, the only correct step – forward must be to bring to light all the shortcomings of **Voyennoye Dyelo**: the editors must be made to say clearly and distinctly what it is that they want, how they conceive the building of the army, and why they have nothing to say about the most important questions. Muttering must give way to articulate criticism. We must make the pedantic gentlemen abandon their pseudo-science, and make the devotees of the idea of the chief of general staff measure their ideological swords in open combat with those who are actually building the army of today.

In our military institutions, especially at the fronts, many educated military specialists are now at work who have succeeded in ridding themselves of haughty academic pedantry and who, taking part in the practical work of creating the army, stand incomparably closer to real military science. An open polemic will shake military thinking out of its equilibrium of immobility, infuse a fresh spirit, and arouse those military writers who want to and can talk about the Red Army and for the Red Army without in the least overlooking the demands of science.

Down with complacent routine! It must be replaced by critical military-scientific thinking

## Endnotes

42. *Krasnyi Ofitser* was a journal of military education which began appearing on October 1, 1918, being edited and published by the staff of the Central Directorate of Institutions of Military Education. **Voyennoye Dyelo** was a journal of military science directed by a group of military specialists working in the Commission on Studying and Using the Experience of the World War of 1914-1918. This journal was closed down, by Comrade Trotsky's order, in 1920.

# **Problems of Building the Army**

## **V. Military Science And Publications**

# FIRST READING-BOOK IS IT WORTH READING?

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The general-education section attached to the military department of the Central Executive Committee has issued a **First Reading-Book** for use by the soldiers. I do not know who compiled this book, but I can clearly see that it was someone who, in the first place, did not know the people for whom he was compiling it; who, secondly, had a poor understanding of the matters he was writing about; and who, thirdly, was not well acquainted with the Russian language. And these qualities are not sufficient for the compilation of a **First Reading-Book** for our soldiers.

At the beginning of this little book of 32 pages we find a *Memorandum for the soldier and revolutionary*. This memorandum, in which every word should have been carefully weighed, is written in a monstrous sort of language. 'A handful of generals and ministers trampled on the bones (!!!) of the millions of soldiers who went into battle' ... How can one trample on the bones of persons who are going into battle? 'In the villages there was not a crust of bread or a glass of milk, for everything had been given to the landlords and their dogs' (!!!) 'The evil and greedy manufacturer squandered millions abroad, but if the worker asked for a rise of some (!!!) farthings, they shot him down without mercy.' In conclusion it is said, on behalf of the soldier: 'I will know that, besides strength, I need also another strength – knowledge and literacy.' Evidently, the writer meant to say: 'Besides the strength that weapons give I need another kind of strength as well – literacy and knowledge.' The writer merely forgot that 'the strength of literacy' is needed also by those who compile textbooks.

Among *Our sayings*, included in the second part of the book, we encounter such pearls as: 'He thought and thought, and at last thought something up,' or: 'A soldier without a gun is worse than an old woman,' and so on.

Further on we find the worker's monologue from the bawling bombastic and false play by Andreyev, *King Famine*. Andreyev's conceits will not, of course, be understood by the soldier who needs to learn the ABC of his mother-tongue.

After this comes, unexpectedly, *The Poor Man's Lot*, by Surikov. The next page is devoted to Gogol's *A Russian Saying*. Then we have Krylov's fable *Miron*; and to Krylov's fables, that codex of petty-bourgeois wisdom and opportunism is ascribed, as well as 'profundity of thought', also 'immense educational importance for the Russian people'.

On page 15 we are surprised to come upon Chemnitzer's fable *The Rich Man and the Poor Man*, [I.I. Chemnitzer (Khemnitser), 1745-1784, was a poet whose fables were popular in the 19th century.] in which Chemnitzer complains of this sort of social injustice: 'But the poor man, even though of princely stock, even though of angelic mind', and so on. The fable is adapted to the feelings of a well-born but impoverished nobleman. What Chemnitzer has to offer a Red Army man in a first reading book is beyond anyone's guess!

But best of all are the unsigned little articles: *The Globe, Wealth, Social Differences, Mother Earth*, and the rest. Here we read: 'The world belongs equally to everyone and must be shared out equally.' The author does not explain how the world is to be shared out equally and in how many slices. Further on: 'The work

done by every man is not his property but that of the state, which feeds and clothes him.' The author, it is clear, seriously supposes that he is expounding socialist doctrine: 'The work (!) done by every man is the property (!! of the state (!!!).' Subsequently we are told that wealth is 'the weapon of the robber, by whose (the robber's?) means a small gang of thieves has taken for itself the fruits of the labour of all men'. From this the conclusion is drawn that wealth must be 'wrested from those hands which have held it for too long'. Wrested from those hands (!!!).

# **The Southern Front**

## **I. The Red Army's Offensive towards the Ukraine and the Don (January-May 15, 1919)**

# A SEVERE PURGE IS NECESSARY

\* \* \*

The Ukraine is being liberated. Our Southern armies are advancing with outstanding success towards the Don. [43] More and more regions are being opened up for the Soviet power. Fresh millions of workers and peasants, men and women, are being drawn into the socialist revolution. But at the same time we observe again, in new places, those diseases of youth or infancy that we have already experienced. Tens and hundreds of sinister elements, adventurers of all sorts, are attaching themselves to the revolution. The gigantic upheaval which is now taking place in the Ukraine is opening up many crevices in the old building, and out of these crevices are crawling, like cockroaches, parasites upon society who are trying to exploit the inexperience of the revolutionary masses and make a career for themselves out of the people's blood.

This has always happened, in all revolutions. It happened in the October revolution in Petrograd and Moscow. Sharpers, secret police agents and semi-agents, Ensign Shneurs [Lieutenant Vladimir Shneur, of the 9th Kiev Hussar Regiment, was the leader of the group of envoys sent by the Bolsheviks in November 1917 to open negotiations with the German Army for an armistice. In December he began negotiations on behalf of the Soviet authorities with the General Headquarters of the Russian Army with a view to obtaining a peaceful surrender by the latter to the new regime. A few days later, however, his promising career was cut short by the accusation that he had been an agent of the Tsarist secret police.], suddenly took on Bolshevik colouring, shouted louder than anybody, demanded the bloodiest measures against the bourgeoisie, thrust themselves forward, and frequently obtained fairly responsible Soviet posts. In those posts they naturally showed themselves to be what they had been before, namely, scoundrels. They engaged in blackmail, extortion and looting. Not only petty-bourgeois philistines but also considerable numbers of workers were horrified and angered when they saw what was done by these representatives of the Soviet power. Slanderers and enemies of the working classes gloated and whooped for joy: 'There are your commissars for you!'

Months elapsed before the Soviet power shook off these parasites and spongers who had overgrown it like weeds, protecting themselves with Soviet colouring. Some of them have been shot, others are in prison, a third category have fled and hidden themselves once more in the crevices. These last, however, have not given up hope. The Ukrainian upheaval has brought them fresh courage. There the successful revolts of the working masses are chasing out of their comfortable seats the landlords, the capitalists, the policemen, the journalists and the other servants of the bourgeois state. Executives are needed here, there and everywhere. We have not got a lot of knowledgeable, experienced and businesslike people. Tremendous powers are latent in the working class, but they are still hidden under a bushel – only work that has yet to be done will reveal them and bring them to the surface. In the meantime we often have to make do with whatever is at hand. And from all corners of Russia adventurers are flying towards the flame of the Ukrainian revolution. The minor ones among them become active at *uyezd* level, while the major figures set their caps at 'state-wide' roles.

The Anarchists of Kursk have addressed a solemn appeal to all 'the imprisoned and chained' to 'join in the banquet of life'. Needless to say, the jailbirds are already, even without the courteous appeal from the Anarchist windbags, well-

prepared to warm their thieving hands at the bonfire of the Workers' Revolution.

The so-called Left SRs creep around the back streets and call on the Red Army men to revolt against the Soviet power. Some questionable 'Maximalists' are levying tribute from the population of Valuiki *uyezd*, trying to extract the 'maximum' profit from the revolution. Sakharov, the former commander of the Volchansk regiment, who has kept himself for the time being 'within bounds', has now, when the smell of cooking is wafted from the Ukraine, deserted his post and rushed off in search of higher positions and the benefits associated therewith. And, at the same time, the Kharkov organ of the Left SRs, **Borba**, is appealing, through Kareljin and other collaborators in the July revolt, for 'unity' of all Soviet parties within the bosom of the revolutionary government of the Ukraine. The SR gentlemen have apparently not yet taken a firm decision on whether to support Sakharov against the Soviet power or else graciously to accept portfolios in the name of 'unity of the socialist front'.

*The adventurer has broken out.* This fact cannot in any way be interpreted as an argument against the moral force of the Workers' Revolution. The waters of the spring flood sweep along not only great ships but also the carcasses of dead dogs. Adventurers, big and small, are only the filthy scum on the crest of great events. The scum will disappear, the conquests of the socialist revolution will remain.

From this, however, it does not follow that adventurers, careerists and run-of-the-mill crooks are not harmful to us. On the contrary, they are at present the worst enemies of our cause. This fact can be verified in big things and small. With what joy did the inhabitants of Valuiki *uyezd* welcome their liberation!

And then, a few days later, with what bitter bewilderment did the citizens look around them when bandits rained down upon them a storm of demands for contributions together with sense less, unjust shootings.

Our Communist comrades, who had behind them the experience of Soviet Great Russia, dealt quickly with these invading burglars of the revolution. The heavy hand of revolutionary repression at once struck down the Maximalists, Anarchists, Left SRs and ordinary criminal adventurers. Order was established without delay in Valuiki *uyezd*, and the liberated workers and peasants recognised their Soviet power once more. But Sakharov is still larding it in Volchansk: having been proclaimed an outlaw, he is well aware that he has nothing to lose.

There are quite a few such Sakharovs in the Ukrainian guerrilla detachments, and they are now trying to attach themselves to the Ukrainian Soviet Government. We can have no doubt that the Government of the Workers' and Peasants' Ukraine will act, in a wider arena, just as the Communists of Valuiki acted, and will bring down a heavy fist of repression upon the reckless heads of these adventurers, political speculators and bandits.

We have to judge political groups and individuals on their recent past. After the October Revolution the Anarchists fanned dens of thieves in Moscow, Petrograd and other cities and held whole districts of the revolutionary capitals under siege. After the Soviet power had passed its iron broom over them, hardly any traces were left of this criminal masquerade. The Left SRs revolted in July, tried to raise a revolt on the Eastern front, and incited half-drunk Red Army men to mutiny at Lgov. They are carrying on unbridled Black-Hundred agitation in the back-streets of Moscow and Petrograd while at the same time, in the sickly-sweet voice of Kareljin, they wail

about the need for unity of the Ukrainian Soviet front.

We do not need their pious words. We know them by their foul deeds. The magnificent upsurge of the workers' and peasants' revolt in the Ukraine is the best guarantee that Soviet power will grow stronger there not just daily but hourly. To that end we need no dubious and ephemeral allies, and no long trains composed of adventurers, but a firm and clear position on the part of the Communist Party and a strict regime of revolutionary discipline. Whereas we needed months, after October, to purge the sinister upstarts and intriguers, the Ukrainian Soviet power, rich in our experience, will need only weeks in order to drive importunate allies of the criminal Left-SR brand into crevices from which it would be best for them never to come out again.

January 9, 1919, Valuiki  
*En Route*, No.21

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## Endnotes

**43.** The fighting on the Southern Front at the end of 1918 (see notes 103 and 105 to Volume 1) proceeded uninterruptedly with varying success. The line of the front, which altered very little, ran, broadly speaking, close to the border of the Don region. This situation continued until the beginning of our offensive of April 4, 1919. At that time an agreement existed between Krasnov and General Denikin, made under pressure from the Allies, by which the Don Army formed part of the Armed Forces of South Russia, of which Denikin was commander-in-chief. At the beginning of January, Denikin issued an order for the transfer from the Caucasian-Caspian Front of units of General Wrangel's Caucasian Volunteer Army, which had been made available thanks to their victories over the Eleventh and Twelfth Red Armies. Our forces on the Southern Front at the beginning of January consisted of units of the Eighth, Ninth, Tenth and Thirteenth Armies, which had been formed from Ukrainian revolutionary units (the former group of Comrade Kozhevnikov). The armies of the Southern Front began their successful offensive for liquidating the enemy's Voronezh group on January 8, 1919. By January 21 the Whites' Don Army was retreating rapidly, offering resistance only on the roads leading into the Donbas. On the right flank of the Southern front Ukrainian units were operating; quickly overcoming the insignificant resistance of the Petlyurists, they had by January 20 reached the line Kruty, Poltava-Sinelnikovot (Map 2).

# **The Southern Front**

## **I. The Red Army's Offensive towards the Ukraine and the Don (January-May 15, 1919)**

# IT IS TIME TO FINISH IT!

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The front runs all along the frontiers of the Soviet Republic: in the North, in the East, in the South, and in the West.

Our North was occupied by British, American and French forces, together with small groups of Serbs and Czechoslovaks. In the summer of last year they were hoping to get from there to Vologda and Yaroslavl and then, eastward, to Nizhny Novgorod, Vyatka and Perm, so as to link up with the Czechoslovaks and White Guards in Siberia. But nothing came of this plan. We held Vologda and drove the Czechoslovaks away to the East.

Today, the Northern Front offers our enemies no hopes or prospects at all. The French newspapers talk of the withdrawal – from Archangel and Murmansk of the foreign forces that were landed there. American soldiers are meanwhile fraternising with our soldiers and saying, rightly: 'You are fighting for your Commune, but what are we fighting for?'

On the Eastern front we have recently had one big setback, the loss of Perm, and one big success, the capture of Ufa. In general, the situation on the Eastern front is favourable to us. Until recently we were being opposed there by Right SRs and Mensheviks, allied with open Black Hundreds. Now, Admiral Kolchak has seized power and banished his former assistants, the SRs and Mensheviks. In the enemy's camp there is thus disruption and internecine conflict – which suits us very well. Our forces on the Eastern front are advancing on Orenburg. The capture of that important place will open the road to Turkestan. The Red Army of the Republic of Turkestan is advancing from there to meet us. [\[45\]](#) From Turkestan we shall get the cotton so badly needed by our textile industry.

On the Western front things are going splendidly. There, the impotence of the Russian bourgeois-landlord White Guards has again been revealed. As soon as German militarism collapsed and German Soviets were set up in the occupied parts of Western Russia, the Russian White Guards realised that their days were numbered. They made deals with the German officers and with the governments of Britain and France. From Paris and London, and also from Berlin, from their own Scheidemann, the German officers received orders not to surrender to the Soviet authorities any towns, railways or military equipment. But the German soldiers had already ceased to obey their officers. They refused to fight against the Red regiments, and tried to get back home to Germany as soon as they could. The White-Guard regiments commanded by General Dragomirov suffered a mortal defeat before Pskov. From that moment the Soviet forces have been advancing further and further westward, liberating town after town, province after province.

At the northern end of the Western front the Soviet forces are moving on Revel, and the day when the capital of the Estonian Soviet Republic will be freed is near. Riga has already been taken by our Lettish regiments, and so Red Latvia has secured its capital. Soviet forces have entered Vilna, the centre of Soviet Lithuania. The population are everywhere joyfully welcoming their liberators. It must not be forgotten that Riga was captured by the Germans in Kerensky's time, that is, before Soviet power was established, and they had captured the Lithuanian capital, Vilna,

already under Tsardom, so that the city passed directly from the Tsar's rule to that of the Kaiser and thus never knew freedom.

In all these western provinces we are coming upon a lot of military stores, both our own and those left by the Germans, and this is enabling the Federative Soviet Republic to form fresh, strong divisions there, which will stand on guard for the revolution against foreign invasion.

The situation has also changed in the Ukraine. After the Kaiser had fallen, Skoropadsky fell. True, the Anglo-French brigands tried to take the Hetman into their service. But before their thirty pieces of silver could reach Kiev, the Hetman had been obliged to save his skin. He was replaced by Petlyura and Vinnichenko. These are old acquaintances of ours. A year ago they betrayed the Soviet Republic by making an alliance on the Don with Kaledin and Kornilov, and at Brest-Litovsk with the German Kaiser, against the workers' and peasants' Soviets.

When the Ukrainian Soviets triumphed, Petlyura, Vinnichenko and the other traitors called on the German and Austrian forces to help them. After occupying the Ukraine, the Kaiser got rid of Petlyura and Vinnichenko, so as not to have them under his feet, and installed Skoropadsky. After the fall of Skoropadsky, Petlyura and Vinnichenko have again been trying to come forward as friends and protectors of the Ukrainian people. But their days are numbered. Nobody trusts them. They are now calling on the British and French for help, just as, previously, they called on the Germans. They have no support among the people. The Ukrainian insurgents have already captured a number of centres in the Ukraine, including, above all, such an important centre as Kharkov. There can be no doubt that this movement will spread wider and wider. The Ukraine will soon become Soviet land. From there we shall get grain and sugar, and we shall send them textiles when we obtain cotton from Turkestan.

Further on, to the South-East, stretches the very important front between Voronezh and Tsaritsyn, where we have not yet won decisive victories. This is Krasnov's front. Here, relying on the rich kulak element among the Cossacks, all the sinister, anti-popular elements of Russia, bourgeois, landlords, monarchists, officials, kulaks, have assembled. Here they have formed their camp of oppressors and robbers, to fight against the socialist revolution. Previously, they received help from German imperialism, and boasted of this. Now they are being helped by the Anglo-French imperialists, and the Krasnovites are again treating it as a matter for pride. They do not mind whence they get bullets and shells, provided that these do damage and bring losses, wounds, death and destruction, to workers' and peasants' Russia. The Krasnov-Denikin bands here form a barrier that cuts us off from very rich areas where large reserves of grain, coal, iron-ore, kerosene and petrol await us.

The struggle on the South-Eastern front has been dragging on for a long time, without any decisive change ever occurring. Undoubtedly we are faced here by a dangerous foe: first, because this foe fights with the energy of despair, knowing that if he is beaten here he has no hope left; and, secondly, because the Krasnov-Denikin forces contain many officers who are serving in the ranks, and this fact endows the White-Guard regiments with power of attack. The Krasnovites hoped that they would succeed in holding out on the Don until Anglo-French forces arrived. Even so recently as two months ago it seemed beyond doubt that the British and French would indeed send them an army of a million men, to crush Soviet Russia. But the situation has now changed. There is much discontent among the people in

France and Britain, with unwillingness to continue the war. Among the imperialist governments them selves, in Britain, France and America, disagreements have emerged on the question of whether it would be advantageous or not, dangerous or not, to become committed to war with the Soviet Republic.

The more successfully our operations proceed in the East and the West, the harder does it become for the imperialists to launch an offensive against us. The road to Moscow is getting longer and longer for them, because the frontiers of the Soviet Republic get wider every day. It can be said with confidence that if we crush Krasnov's bands we shall show the whole world that we are invincible, and then the most frenzied imperialists among the Anglo-French brigands will have to give up the idea of sending British and French workers and peasants against us.

The fate of the Soviet Republic is now being decided on the Don front. This decision has been dragged out far too long. It is time to finish it! We have concentrated large forces on the Southern front. Much organisational work has been accomplished. The regiments, divisions and armies are headed by reliable commanders and the best of our commissars. The whole country is looking with the greatest hope to our South Eastern armies. Everyone senses that the days and weeks of the denouement are near: Krasnov's cavalry rush from one sector to another, making thrusts into the Red front. But on this front, too, we shall soon settle with the enemy and crush the bastion of counter-revolution.

### **Soldiers, commanders, commissars of the Southern front! Your hour has struck!**

It is time to finish it, time to clear the South, to open the road to the Caucasus, time to strike a mortal blow at the most inveterate enemy of workers' and peasants' Russia and give our exhausted country security, peace and ease.

January 7, 1919  
Kursk

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### **Endnotes**

[45.](#) This note is missing – *ETOL*.

# **The Southern Front**

## **I. The Red Army's Offensive Towards the Ukraine and the Don (January-May 15, 1919)**

# ORDER No.76

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar of Military and Naval Affairs to the Red Army and the Red Navy, January 11, 1919, No.76 Balashov

\* \* \*

**Left SRs, Anarchists and other counter-revolutionaries!**

I have received the following order issued by the Revolutionary War Council of the group operating in the Kursk direction:

*'Order by the Revolutionary War Council of the group operating in the Kursk direction.* Left SR adventurers, headed by Sablin, Yevdokim, Muravyov and Tsvetkov, have organised in the area of Urazovo, Kupyansk and Valuiki, a plot against the workers' and peasants' government. They have secretly formed a Left SR headquarters consisting of the commander of the 10th Ukrainian Regiment, Ryndin, Kolukhin, Nilov, Ganenko and Tsvetkov. The principal forces at the disposal of this headquarters were companies taken by Sakharov from the Liski front, under Kiryachenko's command. A Revolutionary Committee headed by Sablin and Muravyov was set up at Kupyansk. Under their threats, only persons describing themselves as Left SRs were appointed to the *volost* soviets. Sakharov undertook the organisation of a Left SR centre at Volchansk. On December 26 the Kursk commissars were forced to go underground, and some of them were shot. On December 29, at a closed meeting, the Left SR forces were listed as the 1st Valuiki Rebel Regiment, Sakharov's 2nd Volchansk Regiment, and Cherbiyan's 3rd Regiment. A detachment of 16,000 of Sakharov's men was held in reserve, against the Communists. It was decided to enter into close contact and form liaison with the forces led by Sievers and Kikvidze. At this same meeting the composition of the Left SR Government for the Ukraine was announced: three representatives of the regiments mentioned, one Left SR from the Soviet of Kharkov province, one each from the Ukrainian and Russian Left SR parties, one Maximalist and one Anarchist. Along with this, these adventurers carried on a most vile agitation against the Soviet power, with widespread appeals to the soldiers to mutiny. In one of these appeals they wrote, among other things: "Comrade Red Army men, throw out your appointed commanders, throw out the officers and generals," and so on. As soon as news of these events reached the Soviet forces of the group operating in the Kursk direction, a battalion was at once despatched to Kupyansk. Some of these adventurers fled: the soldiers remained loyal to the Soviet power. The following were arrested: Muravyov, Byelokabylsky, Tsvetkov, Ryndin and Kiryachenko. They were all tried by a field court-martial. Tsvetkov, who had given the order to destroy Kupyansk and to shoot the Communists and disarm their supporters, was shot.

'The whole of the area referred to has now been cleared of the adventurers, and Soviet power restored there. The ringleaders called themselves representatives of the rebel army of the Eastern Ukraine. One battalion of Red Soviet troops was sufficient for this "rebel army" to burst like a soap-bubble. However, in view of the fact that we are now in a state of war, the Revolutionary War Council of the group operating in the Kursk direction orders all commanders and commissars of divisions and of independent units to act with all seriousness and severity towards the adventurers, immediately arresting and court martialling everyone who, in one way or another, took part in the Left SR revolt at Kupyansk and Urazovo.

The Revolutionary War Council of the group operating in the Kursk direction: *I. Kozhevnikov and I. Perchikhin'*

The above order mentions a decision by the Left SR counter revolutionary plotters to establish liaison with the troops commanded by Sievers and Kikvidze. This intention of theirs produced, of course, no practical results. The brigade led by our late Comrade Sievers and the division commanded by Comrade Kikvidze are doing their duty on the Southern front and are not going to get involved in any dishonourable adventures.

I fully approve the vigorous way in which the Revolutionary War Council of the group operating in the Kursk direction have acted. I order the Revolutionary War Councils of all armies, and all commissars to keep a sharp look-out for the counter revolutionary activity of the so-called Left SRs and other enemies of the workers' and peasants' power.

# **The Southern Front**

## **I. The Red Army's Offensive Towards the Ukraine and the Don (January-May 15, 1919)**

# TELEGRAM ON THE OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF COMRADE KIKVIDZE

From the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the  
Headquarters of the 16th Division

\* \* \*

[Comrade Kikvidze, commanding the 16th Division, was mortally wounded by a bullet  
which struck him above the heart on January 10, in the fighting before Zubrilov. –  
*L.T.*]

Your leader, Kikvidze, one of the revolution's best soldiers, has been taken from us. Though recently shell-shocked, he remained at his post. This time, the enemy bullet found its mark. One of the most formidable foes of the Krasnovite counter-revolution has been stricken from our ranks. Hence forth, the 16th Division will be called the Kikvidze Division. From now on, the Kikvidze Division must have but one watchword, one war-cry: 'Merciless revenge for the death of our leader, death to the Krasnovites, and eternal remembrance for the hero Kikvidze.'

# **The Southern Front**

## **I. The Red Army's Offensive Towards the Ukraine and the Don (January-May 15, 1919)**

# ORDER No.80

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and Peoples  
Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Red Army and the Red Navy, March 2,  
1919, No.80, Moscow

\* \* \*

At the beginning of the January of this year, Krasnov concentrated substantial forces against the Tsaritsyn front, forced our troops back into the immediate area of Tsaritsyn, and thereby created an extremely critical situation for all our armies stationed there. At that moment the special cavalry division commanded by Comrade Dumenko was given by the army command the task of making a breakthrough in the Dubovka area and smashing the enemy in that area at any cost. Through successful manoeuvres carried out over a period of a month, from the middle of January to the middle of February, the division brilliantly fulfilled the task entrusted to it by the army command. During this period it travelled a distance of 400 versts and smashed 23 enemy regiments, four infantry regiments being taken prisoner intact. As trophies the division captured from the enemy 48 guns, more than 100 machine-guns, an armoured car and many other such items of war booty. These successes enabled the army to seize the initiative, go over to the offensive, and clear the enemy from an expanse reaching to the river Don and to Zhutovo station on the railway to Vladikavkaz. In numerous combats divisional commander Dumenko, brigade commanders Budyonny and Bulatkin, and regimental commander Maslakov [After the sack of Rostov-on-Don by the Red Army in 1920, Dumenko, then one of Budyonny's corps commanders, shot a commissar who protested and was himself executed in consequence. He was subsequently 'rehabilitated'. Maslakov later went over to the enemy and was killed by his own men.] not only directed the fighting but also, disregarding their wounds, remained in the thick of battle in order to carry out the military tasks assigned to them.

In acknowledgement of these exceptional services to the revolution and the Soviet republic, the division is awarded a banner of honour. Divisional commander Dumenko, brigade commander Budyonny, brigade commander Bulatkin and regimental commander Maslakov are decorated with the Order of the Red Banner. Military gifts ['Military gifts' took such forms as specially-engraved swords, gold-mounted binoculars, gold watches and the like] are being made available to the division for presentation to soldiers who have distinguished themselves. On behalf of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic I convey fraternal thanks to all the revolutionary fighters of the cavalry division.

# **The Southern Front**

## **I. The Red Army's Offensive Towards the Ukraine and the Don (January-May 15, 1919)**

# OUR SOUTHERN FRONT

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The Southern front is a *Cossack* front. The Don is a hotbed of counter-revolution. Under the autocracy *the Cossacks* served as a weapon of tyranny and oppression. Workers' strikes and peasant disturbances were quelled, first and foremost, by *the Cossack whip*. Working-class and peasant mothers used the name 'Cossack' to frighten their children with. In all the languages of the world the word 'Cossack' is pronounced in the same way, and everywhere it stands for oppression and tyranny.

The Tsarist government, and with its backing the Cossack upper circles, artificially kept the Cossack community in isolation, with the Cossacks on one side and all the rest of the Russian people on the other. The chief concern of the Tsarist government was to ensure that the working Cossacks did not become aware of their bond with the workers and peasants. And to a certain extent they succeeded. Even now there are many working Cossacks in the Don region who look on the Cossack nobility as their own people and the Russian workers and peasants as alien to them.

It is this Cossack caste bond between working people and parasites, poor and rich, that constitutes the basis of the counter-revolution on the Don. This is why from the first days of freedom onward, all the aggrieved landlords, manufacturers and officials made their way to the Don country. This is why revolt after revolt has broken out on the Don. And now, when our armies have advanced to the Northern Donets and the Manych, a kulak-Cossack revolt has again broken out in their rear.

[\[46\]](#)

It is not only the fate of the Don region and not only the fate of Cossackdom that are being decided on the Don front. The Cossack General Krasnov has gone, and has been replaced by Denikin, who has nothing in common with the Cossacks.

Denikin is trying to form a close link with Kolchak. What is at stake is not the Don but Soviet Russia as a whole. *The Cossacks are only a blind and stupid tool in the hands of the monarchist landlords.*

This spring and this summer we must finish with the Southern front for good and all. We must eradicate the counter revolution in the Don country. We must destroy the reactionary bond between the working Cossack and the Cossack land lord. We must annihilate the Cossack landlord. We must make the working Cossack feel that he is not a Cossack but a worker and a peasant. We must unite the Don with the Soviet Russia. We must strain every nerve to put an end to the Southern front.

May 11, 1919  
Chertkovo\*  
En Route, No.45

[\* Chertkovo is on the line from Voronezh to Rostov-on-Don, near the point where the Ukraine, the Don Region and Voronezh province meet.]

## Endnotes

[46.](#) For the facts about the kulak revolt on the Don it is necessary to turn back to an earlier period. In the middle of March 1919, in the area of the *stanitsas* situated on

both banks of the Don, in the sector between Kazanskaya and Veshenskaya, a Cossack revolt broke out, having been prepared by the command of the retreating Don Army. The rapidity of our units' advance, their small numbers, and the unsatisfactory work of the Special Section and the Political Department, together with clumsy acts and mistakes by the authorities in the localities, aroused hostile feelings among the kulaks of the Don country. An expeditionary corps detached from the Ninth Army with the task of liquidating this revolt did not succeed in its task. By the middle of April the rebels numbered 30,000 fighting men, with 27 machine-guns and six cannon. This revolt had a big influence on the course of the operations of the Southern Front against Denikin.

# **The Southern Front**

## **I. The Red Army's Offensive Towards the Ukraine and the Don (January-May 15, 1919)**

# REVOLT IN THE REAR

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The revolt of a section of the Don Cossacks has already dragged on for several weeks. This revolt was incited by Denikin's agents, counter-revolutionary officers. It found support among the Cossack kulaks. These kulaks drew behind them a considerable section of the Cossack middle peasants. It is very possible that in some cases the Cossacks had suffered some injustices at the hands of particular military units passing through their territory or of individual representatives of the Soviet power. Denikin's agents were able to exploit these injustices in order to fan the flame of revolt. White-Guard scoundrels masqueraded in this region as supporters of the Soviet power, so as the more easily to worm their way into the confidence of the Cossack middle peasants. In this way, counter-revolutionary trickery, kulak interests and the ignorance of the masses came together for a moment in a senseless and criminal revolt in the rear of our armies on the Southern front.

A revolt in the rear is for a soldier like a boil on a worker's shoulder. In order to fight, to defend the Soviet land, to crush the landlord-Denikinite gangs, it is necessary to have a reliable, tranquil, friendly rear among the workers and peasants and the working Cossacks. Consequently, the most important task of the moment is to clear the Don of revolt and of rebels.

The central Soviet authority has ordered that this task be disposed of in the shortest possible time. Splendid reinforcements have been and are being sent to help the expeditionary forces operating against the ignoble counter-revolutionary revolt. Our best organisers are being sent there to ensure the fulfilment of this urgent task.

We must put an end to the revolt. Our Red Army men must be imbued with clear understanding that the rebels of Beshinskaya or Yelanskaya or Bukanovskaya *stanitsa* are direct helpers of the White-Guard generals Denikin and Kolchak. The longer the revolt drags on, the heavier will be the casualties on both sides. There is only one way to reduce the bloodshed: *to deliver a quick, hard, smashing blow*.

We must put an end to the revolt. We must lance the boil on the shoulder and cauterise it with a red-hot iron. Then the arm of the Southern front will be freed to strike a mortal blow at the enemy.

May 12, 1919  
Kozlov  
*En Route*, No.44

# **The Southern Front**

## **I. The Red Army's Offensive Towards the Ukraine and the Don (January-May 15, 1919)**

# ORDER No.98

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Armies of the Southern Front, May 15, 1919, No.98, Kupyansk

[Kupyanak is where the line from Voronezh and Valuiki joins one of the lines which link Kharkov with the Donbas.]

\* \* \*

To be read to all companies, squadrons, batteries and task-forces.

One of the commanders of the Ukrainian army, the so-called 'Ataman' Grigoriyev, a dishonourable and venal adventurer, bought by the landlords and capitalists, has raised the standard of revolt against the Soviet power. By means of vodka and false promises he has rallied round him the most ignorant section of the soldier masses and is now inciting them to pogroms, throat-cutting and plunder.

Red Ukrainian forces have surrounded Grigoriyev's bands, so as to put an end to this drunken mutiny quickly and decisively. [\[47\]](#)

Ex-Ataman Grigoriyev has been outlawed.

I bring this to the notice of every Red Army man, commander and commissar in the Soviet forces on the Southern front.

*Any dealings or communications of any kind with the traitor Grigorzyev or his agents will be regarded as treason to the Soviet Republic and punished by shooting.*

Death to the traitor Grigoriyev and to all his accomplices, open and concealed!

Long live the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army!

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## Endnotes

[47.](#) Grigoriyev's revolt began on May 7, 1919. Formerly a Petlyurist, in January 1919, at the time of the Red Army's offensive in the Ukraine, Grigoriyev came over to us with all his forces, and operated against Petlyura. At the time of his revolt, his guerrilla units included 15,000 fighting men, with 40 cannon, ten armoured railway trucks, 10,000 shells and six million cartridges (figures taken from the report to Comrade Trotsky by Comrade Antonov-Ovseyenko, commanding the armies of the Ukrainian Front, on May 12, 1919). Grigoriyev had acquired these military stores from the Austrians and Germans and from the Greeks and Romanians he had taken prisoner in Kherson, Nikolayev and Odessa. The proposed transfer of the division to the Donbas did not take place because Grigoriyev's inclination to seek a peaceful settlement of the conflict with the Cossacks became apparent. When Grigoriyev received the order to move his division into Bessarabia, to fight the Romanians, he failed to obey it, and on May 7 rose in revolt against the Soviet power. His revolt met with sympathy among the inhabitants of Kherson province, who helped him. At the moment of Grigoriyev's revolt, the Third Army, whose headquarters were in Odessa, had also been ordered to proceed to the front. Instead, all those troops

had to be used to put down Grigoriyev's mutiny. On May 23 Comrade Voroshiov, who was in command of the forces on the Kharkov sector, reported that Grigoriyev had been completely routed and his mutiny liquidated. Grigoriyev's revolt had an effect on the course of operations against the Romanians and on the Ukraine's aid to the Southern front, because substantial forces had to be diverted to the internal front.

# **The Southern Front**

## **I. The Red Army's Offensive Towards the Ukraine and the Don (January-May 15, 1919)**

# FOR SOVIET COAL!

\* \* \*

**M**oscow province and Petrograd are the most important concentrations of industrial and political life in our country. It is there that consumer goods and means of production are manufactured. There also the people's consciousness is elaborated and perfected – there the thoughts, feelings and hopes of the people are given the form of specific demands, slogans and programmes.

But if life at the centre is not to die, the centre must receive nourishment from the borderlands. Moscow and Petrograd need bread for their workers. They need coal and iron for their production. They need cotton, to be worked up into textiles. Raw material must flow from our country's rich borderlands to the centre, and then, after being processed there and transformed into the products needed for life, must be spread throughout the country.

The landlord and bourgeois counter-revolution has occupied the borderlands, consolidated itself there, and disrupted the country's economic circulation. No coal or grain comes to us from the South or the East. The famine-stricken Centre does not give the South or the East the textiles and machinery they need.

A firm, sound economic life, for the good of all the working people, can be restored by one means alone: by driving away the counter-revolutionary vultures, clearing the borderlands, and linking them closely with the centre through properly-functioning railways.

In the first place, we need *coal*. Our factories, railways, steamships and domestic hearths are in mortal need of coal *our own Soviet coal*. As soon as we restore production of this invaluable material in the Donets Basin, no Anglo-American blockade will hold any terrors for us. With her own Soviet coal and her own Soviet iron-ore, Soviet Russia will build her own Soviet machines, so as, by means of them, to make Soviet cotton into Soviet textiles.

In the Donets Basin is buried a great treasure, on which depends the welfare, prosperity and happiness of the whole country. This treasure has to be won by force of arms.

*Mobilisation of the Donets workers is now taking place.* They have suffered more than anyone else from the disruption of economic life and from the drunken, savage raging of the Krasnovite and Denikinite bands. And they, the Donets workers, will be in the front ranks in the fight for Soviet coal.

This fight will not take long. In his last offensive the enemy expended all that was left of his reserves and of his strength. He has already begun visibly to weaken. On May 15 we captured Lugansk, which we had momentarily lost.

No time must be wasted! We must go forward to the complete extermination of the Denikinite bands!

**Donets proletarians! Forward, into the fight for Soviet coal!**

May 16, 1919

*Shipilovo station*  
En Route, No.46

# **The Southern Front**

## **I. The Red Army's Offensive Towards the Ukraine and the Don (January-May 15, 1919)**

# LESSONS FROM THE UKRAINE

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Grigoriyev's idiotic mutiny must first and foremost be put down. But at the same time some lessons must be learnt from it especially by those for whom earlier lessons have proved insufficient. In the present mutiny in the Ukraine the degeneration of the same old guerrilla-ism has found savage and drunken expression. Liquidating it is now bound to be the more painful because it has lasted so long, that is, because it has been so badly neglected.

Guerrilla detachments have been contrasted with the regular army and this is sometimes done even now without the necessary historical perspective. The problem is presented as though we had before us two self-sufficient 'principles', to be studied and evaluated outside of space and time. Actually, guerrilla-ism has its own fully legitimate 'rights', defined by historical circumstances: beyond its proper limits it just as 'legitimately' degenerates, poisoning the political atmosphere around it.

One cannot ask a class which does not have state power at its disposal, but is only, as yet, fighting for that, to create a regular army. Such a class will naturally direct its efforts toward disintegrating the regular army of the ruling class and detaching isolated units from this enemy army, or else forming such units from scratch, in the underground, and later on in the arena of open civil war. In other words, guerrilla-ism is the weapon of a class (or an oppressed nation) which is weaker organisationally and in the purely military sense, in its struggle against the class to which the centralised state apparatus belongs. In this period, guerrilla-ism is not only a progressive factor, it is, in general, the only possible form of open struggle by the oppressed class for its own emancipation. In these circumstances too, of course, guerrilla-ism is not any sort of *principle*, or even anything particularly advantageous. On the contrary, the revolutionary proletariat tries to introduce as much planning as possible into its military organisation, overcoming, so far as it can, the features of amateurism that this reveals: proletarian military policy is in this way profoundly different, even in the period of the conquest of power, from peasant and petty-bourgeois '*Chetnik*' activity.

In Kerensky's time we had an illegal apparatus by means of which we maintained communication between separate regiments and sections of regiments, batteries, machine-gun crews and so on. Being a party of revolutionary opposition we could not, of course, think at that time of forming our own All-Russia General Staff, Central Supply Administration and so on. But even then we were concerned to overcome, so far as we could the negative aspects of guerrilla-ism, and to ensure unity of action and centralised. [\[48\]](#)

The historically progressive role of guerrilla struggle ceases when the oppressed class has taken state power into its own hands. The Left SR windbags (and, unfortunately, not they alone) were quite unable to understand this. Gentry like Kamkov blamed the Soviet power (not an underground party, but a government) for building a regular army instead of forming guerrilla detachments.

One can only ask: what, in general, is the point of the working class taking state power into its own hands if it is not then supposed to make use of this power to

introduce state centralism into that sphere which, by its very nature, calls for the highest degree of centralisation, namely, the military sphere?

But the heart of the matter is this: the petty-bourgeois, even when he has come to power or has attached himself to the ruling authority, remains divided against himself: power is too much for him, it constrains him, frightens him, upsets him, exasperates him, because it demands of him self-control and inner discipline to which he is not accustomed.

And so, while clinging to power, he tries to jump out of the state harness. As a 'strong' peasant he works in the Soviet and yet at the same time rises in revolt now and again, with the utterly senseless slogans that counter-revolutionary adventurers fabricate for him. As a Left SR intellectual he hesitates: should he enter the Council of People's Commissars, or should he, just in case, throw a bomb at the Kremlin?

Our revolution has led to the most crying absurdities of behaviour on the part of the petty-bourgeois just because its development has brought to the forefront tasks of exceptional difficulty and called for the highest degree of persistence and concentrated effort in order that these tasks may be accomplished. Building a proper army, that is, creating a complex, many-sided apparatus of military administration; registering the population in class categories; mobilising the non-exploiting classes; combating in the right way the evasion of military duty; selecting the appropriate commanding personnel; supervising them; forming, welding and educating military units; bringing these together in formations of a higher level; remaining patient in face of a series of setbacks, correcting mistakes from one's experience what a difficult and, in its details, what a humdrum task ... Could one not cheat history, capture it with a cheer, get round its flanks and into its rear with a small guerrilla detachment? Such is the secret thought of the revolutionary petty-bourgeois. He scoffs at military science, at the demands of technique, at system, at military specialists, at establishments and regulations, and promises to replace all that with revolutionary improvisation and he ends by knocking his forehead against the first rake he steps on.

Overcoming guerrilla-ism, which is a very important task confronting the proletariat when it has come to power, has to be understood not in a formal, or, more correctly, verbal sense, as is often the case, when detachments rename themselves 'brigades' or 'divisions', with corresponding changes in the ranks of their commanders. The task goes deeper than that: it consists in transforming the internal structure of units and establishing a definite regime in them. Guerrilla-ism is, by its very essence, hostile to centralised state authority. Guerrilla-ism defends its independence jealously and by every means. It emphasises and cultivates everything that separates it from everyone else, starting with neighbouring guerrilla detachments and ending with the centre of government, which it sees as alien and semi-hostile. The army of a victorious revolutionary class must be grouped around the state apparatus, as its pivot. If the army tries to preserve the character of guerrilla detachments, it will inevitably find itself in opposition to the state. And opposition on the part of guerrillas means armed rebellion.

The Ukraine was quickly cleared of the White-Guard Anglo-Franco-Greco-Romanian vermin, by guerrilla forces, in the main. From this some dreamers have been trying to draw once more the conclusion that guerrillas are superior to regular troops. The Soviet victory in the Ukraine is indeed the victory of a mass uprising of workers and peasants over the bourgeoisie, but it is certainly not the victory of the guerrilla form of military organisation over the regular form. The pressure of the

working masses was so great, all the old bonds that were only just holding burst so quickly, that the White-Guard forces suffered inevitable disintegration. Not only the Petlyurists but also the British, the French and the Greeks, who, after all, also needed a rear, felt that they were standing on a mountainside with the ground moving beneath them, with the rocks cracking under their feet and rolling downhill. While facilitating victory, the revolution at the same time hindered, for a long time, the establishment of regular formations. Thinking along the line of least resistance, it thereby promoted the cult of the guerrilla. We had been through all that in Great Russia. True, we had grounds for hoping that the Ukraine would learn something from our experience and would not repeat our mistakes. Those hopes proved only partly justified. The cult of the guerrilla, liquidated in Great Russia, has temporarily enjoyed a rank flowering on Ukrainian soil. And not only among the Left SRs ...

Yet we have already been given plenty of opportunities for comparison and verification. It might have seemed sufficient for us to transfer the guerrilla detachments to the other Soviet fronts where we do not find, on the one hand, a stormy upsurge of the working masses, or, on the other, complete panic and disintegration among the ruling classes, but where, on the contrary, the milieu is sufficiently differentiated and where properly organised armies confront one another, each with its own class rear: then, the military insolvency of the guerrilla detachments was exposed forthwith.

True, from this experience some unconscious and half-conscious ideologists of guerrilla-ism drew the conclusion that guerrilla detachments cannot be subordinated to 'theoretical', 'scientific' command, that they need some sort of special leadership, and soon. But all that is extremely superficial, not to say childish. Actually, the fact is simply this, that guerrilla detachments are victorious when they have a triumphant revolutionary spontaneous upsurge behind them. When that spontaneous upsurge has died down, with the victory of the revolutionary class, and further success depends entirely on organisation and operational skill, guerrilla detachments at once reveal their inadequacy.

In the period when civil war is beginning, the guerrilla movement is inspired by the idea of destroying the hated class state. But when power has passed to the working class, guerrilla-ism, with its practice of separate detachments, becomes empty of ideas and reactionary. Developing centrifugal tendencies, that is, distancing itself from the revolutionary government, while at the same time possessing no particular idea of its own, no independent banner, the guerrilla movement groups itself around individuals. We see appearing the detachments and the armies of the Grigoriyevs and of all sorts of other atamans, *bafkos* and *dyadkos*. [Bafko and Dyadko ('Father' and 'Uncle') were the forms of address traditionally used towards the leaders of 'Robin-Hood'-type brigand bands.] This personal cult of unprincipled atamanism serves, in its turn, as a bridge to counter-revolutionary degeneration of the guerrilla movement, to direct betrayal, in the service of the bourgeoisie either one's own or a foreign one. All this we can fully observe in the case of Grigoriyev's mutiny. On the other hand, we shall see in the next few days, from the same example, that the guerrilla movement, which once, when it was the weapon of a rising class in its struggle for power, accomplished miracles, proves to be pitiful and helpless, and ends in a drunken debauch, when it becomes the weapon of an adventurer against an historically progressive class.

While showing extreme unsteadiness and poor fighting capacity in the struggle against the properly-organised armies of Denikin, the guerrilla detachments in the Ukraine itself are turning, as we see, against the class whose revolutionary struggle

brought them into being. This means that the guerrilla movement has at last outlived itself and become a reactionary factor. We must put an end to it at all costs.

The history of the clearing of the Ukraine, of the conquest of Kharkov, Yekaterinoslav, Kiev, Odessa and the Crimea, will enter as a splendid page into the book of the revolutionary struggle. But history never turns the same page twice. Only pedants and dried-up mandarins can sniff contemptuously at the work accomplished in the Ukraine by improvised detachments of proletarians and peasants. Genuine military-scientific thought embraces this work, too. For a science that is worthy of the name looks at armed forces, with their rise, development and internal changes, in connection with changes in historical circumstances. But no less ridiculous are the mandarins of guerrilla-ism who want to perpetuate a yesterday which they have but poorly understood.

Yesterday has passed and will not return. The guerrilla period has gone on for too long in the Ukraine, and for that very reason its liquidation has assumed a painful character. We now have to apply a red-hot iron to it. But this work has to be done. It is necessary to put an end to adventurers, not in words but in deeds, and, what is even more important, it is necessary to put an end to adventurism. We must create a real army, properly organised, with a firm uniform internal regime. We must ruthlessly crush these ignorant rascals who subordinate themselves to nobody and nothing. We must arouse and enhance in the Ukrainian army respect for military thought, military science and military specialists. We must put good and responsible workers in the places where they are needed.

We must ensure that the young army has proper political leadership. We must put an end to Tyapkin-Lyapkinism in all its forms.

This is not just a Ukrainian question, for the Ukraine is part of the Federative Soviet Republic. The Soviet land as a whole is very greatly interested in seeing that the Red Army in the Ukraine does not become a helpless instrument of highway robbers.

May 16, 1919

Svatovo station,

[Svatovo is south-east of Kupyansk, on one of the lines which link Kharkov with the Donbas.]

*En Route*, No.47

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## Endnotes

48. On our Party's 'Military Organisation' see note 2 to Volume I. In spite of the difficult conditions of work, on June 16, 1917 an All-Russia Conference of Military Organisations was held, at which up to 500 separate units were represented, with a total membership of 30,000 Bolsheviks. A Central Bureau of Military Organisations was set up at this conference, to carry on unificatory work among the Party's cells in the army.

# **The Southern Front**

## **I. The Red Army's Offensive Towards the Ukraine and the Don (January-May 15, 1919)**

# ORDER No.99

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the 'N' Army, May 22, 1919, Izyum  
[Izyum is south of Kupyansk, on another of the lines linking Kharkov with the Doabas.]

\* \* \*

To be read to all companies, batteries, squadrons and task-forces

**Comrade soldiers, commanders, commissars!**

Your army occupies one of the most important sectors of the whole Soviet front. Against the bands of Denikin and the White Cossacks, you are defending the approaches to the Soviet Ukraine and to Soviet Russia. And at the same time by your advance you must clear the Donets Basin, unfetter the productive labour of the Donets workers, and give coal to Soviet Russia and the Soviet Ukraine. The whole country follows your struggle with strained attention. You have suffered many casualties. But at the same time you have been able to strike many hard blows. The moment of decision has now arrived. On every front the enemy has assembled all his reserves and thrown them into the final battle. [\[49\]](#) The landlord-bourgeois bands know that if they do not succeed this time in breaking through our front and strangling the Ukraine and Russia, the workers' and peasants' power will triumph forever in our country.

Denikin sends his paid agents into our units, to try and bring discord into our military family. Scoundrels, traitors and self-seekers attempt from time to time to violate discipline and bring about disorder and panicky retreat. Be watchful, comrade soldiers of the 'N' Army! Remember that upon your endurance, firmness and discipline depends the fate of the, working class and the working peasantry of the whole country for many generations to come.

On behalf of the Council of People's Commissars and Revolutionary War Council of the Republic I express to all honourable fighters, as well as gratitude, firm confidence in your decisive victory in the near future.

Long live our valiant 'N' Army!

Long live workers' and Peasants' Russia!

## Endnotes

[49.](#) As a result of three months of effort by the Red Army, between January and April 1919, to inflict a conclusive defeat on the White Guards in the South of Russia, the latter were caught between the Northern Donets, the Don and the Sea of Azov, in the rectangle Taganrog-Bakhmut-Lugansk-Novocherkask (see Map 3). In May 1919 Denikin succeeded in bringing up to the Donets Basin a large part of the Volunteer Army from Caucasia, and got ready to launch a general offensive. Taking account of the advantage given by our position on Denikin's flanks, our command decided to liquidate the enemy in the Donets area. On May 8 our offensive began, and by the middle of that month our Red units had occupied, after stubborn

fighting, a large part of the Donbas, cutting the enemy's communication by rail with Rostov. A cavalry group thrown behind Rostov was on May 6 already only 40 versts from that city. However, success on the flanks, not backed up on the central sector, failed to produce the intended rout of the enemy. On May 16 Denikin's counter-offensive began. Concentrating forces that were larger and fresher than ours, Denikin struck his blows in two directions: on our right flank, at the southern border of the Donets basin, and at Millerovo. Makhno's guerrillas, who were stationed on the Thirteenth Army's right flank, were swept aside without difficulty, and Denikin's cavalry rushed through the gap thus made. On May 23 the line of our front in that sector had been pushed more than 100 versts to the west. On June 1 the Volunteers had already taken Bakhmut. His superior numbers enabled Denikin to strike a simultaneous blow in the direction of Tsaritsyn, in concert with the rebel Cossacks of the Khoper [In the northern part of the Don country: the river Khoper runs south from near Balashov into the Don.] area. On May 24, Denikin's units forced a crossing of the Northern Donets at Kamensk station, and on May 29 enemy units were already at Millerovo station. On June 7, they succeeded in linking up with the rebel Cossacks. In June 1919 our entire Southern front fell back. The state of our forces, worn out by their previous battles, and the complete lack of reserves, made it difficult to withdraw units from the fighting in order to reorganise them. (Map 3)

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# **SOUTHERN FRONT, PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER!**

**More Foresight, precision and self-control!**

\* \* \*

**W**e have learned, in the course of our struggle, not to take fright at partial setbacks. That is a great and important thing to have learnt. In the first period, local Soviet institutions easily gave way to panic, and if some small town fell, a wave of alarm swept over a wide area. We now know, from experience, that if we momentarily lose some locality to the enemies of the working people, we shall eventually recover it and advance further.

Nevertheless, we have suffered too many partial setbacks, that is, setbacks that could have been avoided by vigilance and self-control. We do not always have enough of those qualities. When our affairs are going well and the Red regiments are advancing, throwing back the enemy, the leaders too easily become complacent, and think that henceforth everything is going to go swimmingly, of its own accord.

This is a very great delusion. The cause of the proletarian struggle never advances 'of its own accord'. It calls for the greatest energy, vigilance, staunchness and pressure in all directions.

A regiment is hard to create, but it can sometimes be weakened and made to crumble in a few minutes. The same applies to the divisions and armies of an entire front.

When things take a bad turn at the front, and the enemy starts to press us hard, our side always shows, not depression and breakdown, but elan. Commanders and commissars pull themselves and their units together, and the rear comes to the aid of the front with feverish activity: the armies rally and quickly go over to the offensive.

A phase of victories begins. Then, as often as not, we see a decline in vigilance and pressure. We are too easily satisfied with the partial successes we achieve. Too much is left to chance.

All this is at present applicable to the *Southern front*. A tour of the armies on this front has convinced me, without leaving the slightest doubt, that the chief burden of responsibility for the recent hitch and the partial setbacks on the Southern front lies with the *organisational apparatus of the front itself*.

Too many people are working in a slipshod manner. Instead of calculating and foreseeing where to send supplies so that they become available at the right moment to the units for which they were intended, Messrs bureaucrats of both pre-Soviet and Soviet vintages work mechanically, that is, to no purpose, without taking account of what is happening in neighbouring departments. Delays not only of hours but of whole days and weeks result from bureaucratic lack of foresight. And this is the cause of our setbacks.

After a few successes, commanders and commissars often start to rest on their laurels. Training is not carried out in units that have been pulled back into reserve.

Regulations are not observed. They fail to take even the needful precautionary measures in an area lying 20-30 versts from the front. As soon as a firm military regime slackens and fades in the units, disintegration sets in: the scoundrels desert and the middle peasants lose heart.

The country is now giving us everything it can: not only its possessions but also its best Sons. We must utilise what is given to us, to the very last thread. Not one drop of blood to many, and not one cartridge too many must be expended. Economy in time, economy in materiel, and economy in manpower! And, to ensure this, we must shake up the whole apparatus, kick out the blind bureaucrats, send the tired ones back to the rear, check and check again on the measures taken on the spot!

More foresight, more system, more persistence and self-control, comrade commanders and coninlissars, and, in particular, supply officers and transport officers!

Southern front, pull yourself together!

May 26, 1919  
Liski  
*En Route*, No.49

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# ORDER No.100

**By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council and People's Commissar for  
Military and Naval Affairs to the 'N' Army, May 25, 1919, No.100, Boguchar**

[Boguchar is just south of the River Don, about half-way between Voronezh and Tsaxitsvn (Volgograd).]

\* \* \*

To be read to all companies, squadrons, batteries and task-forces

**An end to the foul rebellion in the Don country! The last hour has struck!**

All the necessary preparations have been made. Sufficient forces have been assembled for hurling against the traitors. The hour has struck for settling accounts with the Gains who for over two months have been stabbing in the back our armies fighting on the Southern front. All workers' and peasants' Russia looks with revulsion upon these Migulinskaya, Veshenskaya, Yelanskaya and Shumlinskayat [Migiilinskaya, etc., were Cossack settlements in the northern part of the Don region.] bands which, under a fraudulent red flag, are helping the Black-Hundred landlords, Denikin and Kolchak!

Soldiers, commanders, commissars of the punitive troops! The preparatory work has been completed. All the necessary forces and means have been assembled. Your ranks are formed. Now, at the signal, forward!

The nest of dishonourable traitors must be destroyed. The Gains [?] must be exterminated. No mercy for any *stanitsas* that offer resistance. Quarter only for those who voluntarily surrender their arms and come over to our side. Against those who help Kolchak and Denikin lead, steel and fire!

Soviet Russia relies on you, comrade soldiers. Within a few days you must cleanse the Don country of the black stain of treason. The last hour has struck!

All, as one forward!

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

## THE NINTH WAVE

[According to sailors' tradition, in a storm at sea the ninth wave is the most dangerous to a vessel: if it survives *that*, the vessel can be considered safe.]

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**W**hat we are now experiencing is the ninth wave of the counter-revolution. It presses upon us on the Western and Southern Fronts. It threatens Petrograd. But at the same time we know well that, now, the counter-revolution has marshalled its last forces and thrown all its reserves into battle. This is its last, its ninth wave.

What an immense difference from the situation in the summer of last year! Then we still had powerful international enemies who could have crushed us with a direct armed onslaught. They were held back for the time being by the bloody international conflict. At that time Count Mirbach sat in Moscow as the representative of powerful German militarism. In the East the Czechoslovak hirelings of bourgeois France rose in revolt. The first Anglo-American expeditionary forces landed in the North. Soviet Russia stood face to face with European militarism, armed to the teeth and its power as yet hardly shaken.

At the same time, the situation inside the country was extremely strained and unstable. The peasants had not yet appreciated the necessity of the war that the capitalists and landlords, of our own country and of others, had forced upon us. We were taking our first steps along the road of compulsory mobilisation. The peasants often resisted these steps. The mood of the peasants was reflected in our first, barely united regiments. A wave of senseless, purposeless, but often extremely bloody mutinies tolled, during the spring of last year, through the units of the Red Army. The confusion and vague discontent among a considerable section of the peasants and soldiers infected even the more backward section of the workers. The petty-bourgeois SR and Menshevik parties called, openly or half-openly, for revolt against the Soviet power.

Behind the cover that they provided, White-Guard elements organised monarchist plots.

What an immense difference between the internal and international situation of the Soviet Republic then and now!

Huge masses of the peasantry have come to understand from experience, both of our military defeats and of our successes, that our war is *their* war, that our army defends the interests of the peasants. Despite the fact that the Soviet power was obliged to conscript a number of peasant age-groups, despite the fact that the burden of war has grown much heavier during this year, we have seen at the same time a very great step forward in the direction of complete identification of the peasantry with the Soviet power. The peasants are, of course, unhappy about the war, but they have realised that it is due not to the Soviet power but to the bourgeois enemies of the working people. After the insignificant outbreaks in March we have seen absolute calm among the peasants and mobilisation has proceeded satisfactorily in almost all provinces. If we except isolated pogrom movements such as the revolt in Gomel, or Grigoriyev's drunken mutiny, in localities which have known Soviet power only in recent months, we see throughout all the rest of the

country a growth in solidarity and discipline in the Red Army's regiments. As for the proletariat, it has shown through its voluntary mobilisations its unbreakable bond with the Soviet order.

The international situation has changed to the same extent. German and Austro-Hungarian militarism has been smashed to pieces. French and British militarism still exists outwardly, but it is rotten within and incapable of fighting. Neither America nor Britain, and still less France, is in a position to send a single army corps to Russia to fight against the Soviet power. They still have at their disposal a huge material apparatus of war, an uncountable number of guns, machine-guns, shells and cartridges, armoured cars and tanks. Compelled by the strength of the French and British workers and peasants to refrain from direct struggle against us, the Anglo-French bandits are supplying deadly weapons to the Russian counter-revolution.

It must be admitted that the latter has greatly strengthened itself during the past year. In May 1918 the Russian capitalists and landlords relied exclusively on the Czechoslovaks and, in general, on foreign bayonets. Since then, they have managed to create armed forces of their own. In this matter the bourgeoisie was helped to the maximum, on the one hand, by the SRs and Mensheviks, who organised for Kolchak his 'people's' army under the banner of the Constituent Assembly, and, on the other, by the Anglo-French imperialists, who provided the White Army with material supplies and with the instructors it needed. A year ago we had grounds for fearing that, after disposing of Krasnov and Dutov, we should come face to face with our main enemy – with German or with Anglo-French militarism. Today we know for sure that by disposing of Kolchak and Denikin we shall achieve complete invulnerability for the Soviet Republic and give a powerful stimulus to the revolution in Europe and throughout the world.

The counter-revolution has not and will not have available any forces greater than those which Denikin, Kolchak, the White Estonians and the White Finns have now moved against us. On the Southern front, in the East and before Petrograd the Russian counter-revolution, and with it the world counter revolution, has staked its entire fate on one card. On our part we need one last effort of all our physical and moral forces in order to hurl back the last desperate onslaught of the dark forces of the old, bourgeois society.

The counter-revolution has cast against us its ninth wave: it will break against the armoured chest of our workers' and peasants' regiments.

Yevstratovka station.

[Yevstratovka is about 100km east of Valuiki, on the line from Voronezh to Rostov-on-Don.]

June 1, 1919

*En Route*, No.50

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# THE MAKHNO MOVEMENT

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There is Soviet Great Russia and there is the Soviet Ukraine.

And besides them there is also another, little-known state, namely, Gulyay-Polye. This is ruled by the headquarters of a certain Makhno. To start with, he had a guerrilla detachment, then a brigade, then, apparently, a division, and now all this has been repainted almost into a special insurgent 'army'. Against whom are Makhno's men rebelling? This question needs to be given a clear answer – an answer in word and in deed.

Makhno and his closest co-thinkers consider themselves Anarchists, and on this basis they 'reject' state power. So then, they are enemies of the Soviet power? Obviously, since *Soviet power is the state power of the workers and working peasants*.

But the Makhnovites cannot bring themselves to say openly that they are against Soviet power. They dissemble and prevariate: *local* Soviet power they say they recognise, but they reject *central* power. But all the local Soviets in the Ukraine recognise the central power which they themselves have elected. Consequently, the Makhnovites actually reject not only the central Ukrainian authority but also the authority of all the local soviets in the Ukraine. What then do they recognise? They recognise the authority of the Gulyay-Polye Makhnovite soviets, that is, the authority of a circle of Anarchists in the place where this has temporarily succeeded in establishing itself. This is actually the entire clue to the political wisdom of the Makhno movement.

However, the Makhnovite 'army' needs cartridges, rifles, machine-guns, artillery, trucks, railway-engines and money. All these things are concentrated in the hands of the Soviet power, being produced and distributed under its direction. Therefore the Makhnovites have to turn to that very power which they do not recognise, in order to ask for money and cartridges. But, since the Makhnovites quite justifiably fear that the Soviet power might deprive them of everything without which they cannot live, they have decided to secure their independence by seizing the great riches of the country, so as then to enter into 'treaty' relations with the rest of the Ukraine.

In Mariupol *uyezd* there is much coal and grain. But since the Makhnovites are sitting on the railway branch-line from Mariupol, they are refusing to allow the coal and grain to leave except in exchange for other supplies. It has come about that, while rejecting the 'state power' created by the workers and peasants of the whole country, the Makhnovite leadership has organised its own little semi-piratical power, which dares to bar the way for the Soviet power of the Ukraine and of all Russia. Instead of the country's economy being properly organised according to a general plan and conception, and instead of a co-operative, socialist and uniform distribution of all the necessary products, the Makhnovites are trying to establish domination by gangs and bands: whoever has grabbed something is its rightful owner, and can then exchange it for whatever he hasn't got. This is not products-exchange but commodity-stealing.

The Makhnovites shout: 'Down with parties, down with the Communists, long live

non-party soviets! But this is actually a miserable lie. Makhno and his companions-in-arms are not non-party people at all. They are all of the Anarchist persuasion, and send out circulars and letters summoning Anarchists to Gulyay-Polye so as to organise their own Anarchist power there. If they hoist the 'non-party' flag, this is only in order to throw dust in the eyes of the most benighted and backward peasants, who understand nothing about parties. Actually, the 'non-party' flag serves as the best possible cover for kulak elements. The kulaks do not dare to admit openly that they belong to the party of the Black Hundreds, for they fear they would be punished for that. Therefore they are most willing to make a show of being non-party. At present the SRs, the worst section of the Mensheviks, the Cadets, and all counter-revolutionaries in general who find it too dangerous to appear in public in their natural guise take cover behind 'non party-ness'.

Communists do not hide their faces or furl their banners.

They present themselves openly to the working people as a party. The workers and peasants have come to know the Communists in action, by experience and in hard struggle. It is precisely for this reason that the party of Communist-Bolsheviks has acquired a decisive influence among the masses, and thereby also in the Soviets.

Counter-revolutionaries of every hue hate the Communist Party. The Makhnovites share this same feeling towards the Communists. Hence the profound sympathy felt by all pogromists and Black-Hundred rascals for the 'non-party' banner of the Makhnovites. The Gulyay-Polye kulaks and the Mariupol speculators echo with enthusiasm the words of the Makhnovites: 'We do not recognise the state power which demands coal and grain. What we have seized we shall keep.'

In this respect as in all others, the Makhnovites are no different from the Grigoriyevites; Grigoriyev also rebelled against the central authority in the name of local non-party soviets, that is, against the organised will of the whole working class, in the name of individual kulak groups and bands. It was not accidental that Grigoriyev, when he raised the banner of savage, pogrom-making mutiny and set out to exterminate the Communist, called on '*baiko*' Makhno to conclude a pogromists' alliance with him. It is true that Makhno declined. But not at all for reasons of principle. At the Anarchist congress at Gulyay-Polye Makhno openly called for revolt against the Soviet power. If he did not revolt together with Grigoriyev, this was only because he was afraid, evidently realising the complete hopelessness of an open revolt.

Makhno's 'army' is guerrilla-ism at its worst, although there are in it quite a few good rank-and-file fighters. No hint of order and discipline is to be found in this 'army'. There is no supply organisation. Food, uniforms and ammunition are seized wherever they happen to come to hand, and they are expended in the same careless way. This 'army' also fights when it feels like it. It obeys no orders. Individual groups advance when they can, that is, when they encounter no serious resistance, but at the first firm push from the enemy they scatter in all directions, surrendering stations, towns and military equipment to an opponent small in numbers. The blame for all this lies wholly with the muddle-headed and dissipated Anarchist commanders.

In this 'army', commanders are elected. The Makhnovites shout raucously: 'Down with appointed commanders!' This they do only so as to delude the ignorant element among their own soldiers. One can speak of 'appointed' persons only under

the bourgeois order, when Tsarist officials or bourgeois ministers appointed at their own discretion commanders who kept the soldier masses subject to the bourgeois classes. Today there is no authority in Russia but that which is elected by the whole working class and working peasantry. It follows that commanders appointed by the central Soviet Government are installed in their positions by the will of the working millions. But the Makhnovite commanders reflect the interests of a minute group of Anarchists who rely on the kulaks and the ignorant.

The anti-popular character of the Makhno movement is most clearly revealed in the fact that the army of Gulyay-Polye is actually called 'Makhno's Army'. *There, armed men are united not around a programme, not around an ideological banner, but around a man.* It was exactly the same with Grigoriyev. In the Soviet Ukraine and in Soviet Russia regiments and divisions are weapons in the hands of the working class as a whole. In the Gulyay-Polye state the armed detachments are weapons in the hands of citizen Makhno. We have seen what this leads to. The private 'army' of Ataman Grigoriyev first went along with the Petlyurists, then caine over to the Soviet power, then, led by Grigoriyev, it rebelled in the name of Grigoriyev himself. Armed masses, ignorant and deceived by the 'non-party' slogan, become a blind tool in the hands of adventurers.

Such is the Gulyay-Polye state and the 'army' of Gulyay Polye. Scratch a Makhnovite and you will discover a Grigoriyevite. But most often there is no need even to scratch him: a frenzied kulak or petty speculator who barks at Communists frankly gives himself away.

Soviet power is the dictatorship of the working class, which has transformed state power into an instrument of socialist reconstruction. At the same time, Soviet power has to protect the socialist country from the rabid onslaughts of the bourgeoisie. Is it thinkable in such a situation to permit on the territory of the Soviet republic the existence of armed bands which form themselves around atamans and *Batkos*, bands which do not recognise the will of the working class, which seize whatever they like and fight with whomsoever they choose? No, it is time to finish with this Anarcho-kulak debauchery, to finish with it firmly, once and for all, so that nobody will ever want to indulge in such conduct again.

June 2, 1919  
Kupyans Kharkov  
En Route, No.5

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# A TALK WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE KHARKOV PRESS

\* \* \*

The Donets front is now undoubtedly the front of greatest importance for all the Soviet republics. In saying this I do not forget the Petrograd front, but I consider, quite deliberately, that the loss of Petrograd (and I am sure we shall *not* lose Petrograd) would not be so serious for us as a prolonged loss of the Donets Basin. In so far as the Soviet Republic is now the stronghold of the world revolution, one can say that the key to this fortress lies in the Donets Basin. This is why all attention is now concentrated on that sector of the very extensive front of the Soviet Republic.

Our setbacks in the Donets Basin form part of our recent setbacks on the Southern front generally. We had been obliged temporarily to slacken the attention and backing we were giving to the Southern front. As everyone knows, this was due to the substantial, or at least seemingly substantial, successes won by Kolchak. Kolchak is now our principal adversary, since all the elements of the counter-revolution have recognised him as their leader and since he is the candidate of Entente imperialism. At the conferences in Versailles and Paris the question of recognising Kolchak has often been brought up, in a quite definite way. It was natural that we had to strike a blow as soon as possible on the Eastern front. Again, it was natural that this should necessitate the concentration of all attention and all forces on the Volga. There, as everyone knows, we have achieved immense success. Kolchak has been forced back from before Samara to Ufa, and is continuing to retreat all along the middle stretch of the Volga. We are drawing near to Sarapul, to the line of the Kama. [\[50\]](#)

We have to fight with armies which we build on the spot. If we put in a special effort to build an army in the East, we inevitably slacken our army-building work in the South. That is what happened. From the standpoint of proper planning one may, of course, deplore this method of construction, but it is inseparable from the nature of a revolutionary epoch, in which factors of improvisation play an immense role, especially if we take account of the fact that the world situation, the international situation, and, along with that, the strategic situation are changing very quickly, and while we can foresee the general trend of events with complete certainty, nevertheless it is not possible to foresee the phases in which these events will occur, the forms they will take, and, in particular, the side from which the greatest danger will come at any given moment. We have to maintain and develop a front along a line that is more than 8,000 versts in extent. This being so, our enemies can always select the weakest part of the front at any particular moment and strike a more serious blow there. This was what happened in the South.

Revolutionary troops are highly-strung, liable to rapid metamorphoses. They can quickly be brought to a sound condition and tempered, but just as quickly they can be brought to collapse. The art of command and administration calls for constant reckoning with this quick susceptibility, inflammability and general revolutionary irritability of forces a considerable proportion of whose personnel have gone through the four-years' slaughter and the epoch of revolution and civil conflicts.

On the Donets sector of the Southern front in recent times there have been

obvious signs of unsteadiness among the troops, which are to be explained, on the one hand, by the fact that here we had units that were freshly put together (the very best of the regiments have in the past experienced one or two cases of panic and senseless retreat), and, on the other, by the extremely harmful proximity and influence of the still surviving Ukrainian guerrilla movement. Marking time on the extreme right flank of the Donets front is the brigade, or the division, or the army – it is hard to say what it is – of a certain Makhno. This ‘fighting’ unit is attracting to itself at the present time all the elements of disintegration, decomposition, rebellion and decay. That is perfectly understandable. The region is rich, one can get food, there is no discipline or order, they advance along the line of least resistance and retreat whenever and whithersoever they choose. The proximity of such an ‘army’ naturally disturbs and alarms the right flank of the adjoining armies, and this feeling of uncertainty has had its effect all along the line of the Donets front. For this reason the improvement in the situation has to begin with the right flank.

What form must this improvement take? It seems to me that this is quite clear: suppression of the independent Anarchist Republic of Gulyay-Polye, establishment of unity of Soviet power, and of unity in the army, its methods of administration and its apparatus of command. At this very moment the Makh. novites are trying to convene a military-Soviet congress covering five *uyezds*. Naturally, the command will permit nothing of the sort to take place, and will show the Anarchist Grigoriyevs of Gulyay-Polye that in our struggle against the Denikinites we shall not tolerate any elements of disorganisation and decomposition in the close rear, and still less in the actual front line.

As soon as this has been done, our Southern front will strike a blow at Denikin’s forces in the direction that the command will indicate.

You ask me to speak about Petrograd? I have not been on the Petrograd front for a long time, and not at all since our retreat on the Western front. I can say only this. All the operations were conceived with a view to rapid decisions. The enemy was very well aware (this I know from a certain very eloquent document) that we had withdrawn considerable reserves from the Petrograd area to the Eastern front: hence his plan to capture Petrograd so quickly that we should not be able to bring in reinforcements from the centre in time. (As you know, the greatest advantage we possess is our central position in relation to our enemies, which enables us to act on internal operational lines, sending reserves to the most threatened sectors of the front.) However, the enemy miscalculated. His offensive has now been checked, and that means that his game is up. We have thrown considerable reinforcements into the front before Petrograd, and we have every reason to count on decisive changes taking place in the situation there in the next few weeks, or even days.

As regards the setbacks on the other sectors of the Western front, they have been due, first, to the same general causes that I mentioned in connection with the Southern front (the temporary concentration of forces and resources on the Eastern front), and, secondly, to a considerable extent, to the particular structure of the Western front, which was divided into national sectors, with national armies. Given the enemy’s unity and the unity of his operational conceptions, this fragmentation of the front on purely national lines proved to be inviable, not to mention the fact that in many of the less conscious units it gave rise to national antagonisms. We have now established complete unity of the front of the Soviet Republics, in the sense that this front is divided between armies on the basis of exclusively strategic, and not national, considerations, and that we are using the separate national units – Ukrainian, Lettish, Polish, Estonian – where they can be used most advantageously,

and not all as a matter of course on their respective so-called national fronts.

This also fully applies to the Ukraine. The task of the Ukrainian front, as such, has been accomplished. The Ukraine has been liberated, so far as a huge tract of its territory is concerned. The Petlyurists have been smashed. That wretched successor of the Petlyurists, Grigoriyev, has been routed. What remain to be attended to are the Donets direction and the Polish-Galician Romanian direction: neither of these, however, is a Ukrainian front but rather a front common to all the Soviet Republics, for Denikin is advancing in the Ukraine and in Great Russia at one and the same time. The gentry of Romania and Poland and the Galician kulaks are ready to act equally against the Ukraine and against Great Russia, wherever the Entente may order them to strike.

Regarding help for Soviet Hungary, I can answer your question only thus: our help is expressed in our Westward pressure, and I have every reason to think that this pressure will increase in the immediate future.

I listened with amazement to your question concerning the danger that is said to be threatening Kharkov. We live, of course, in an epoch when nothing on this earth is stable, but I think that Kharkov stands in no greater danger than Tver, Penza, Moscow or any other city of the Soviet Republic.

Finally, in reply to your last question, about mobilisation, I think that we must mobilise as many age-groups as we can, without allowing any exceptions or deferments, and in the shortest possible time. We have to carry out a definite operation in the Donets Basin. The sooner we do this, the shorter will be the suffering of the Donets coal industry and of all economic life in the Kharkov area.

June 4, 1919  
*En Route*, No. 52

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## Endnotes

50. On Kolchak's retreat, see note 75 later on in this Volume.

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# ORDER No.105

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Armies of the Southern Front, June 5, 1919, No.105, Kharkov

\* \* \*

Our Southern front is at present experiencing a grave crisis. There can be no doubt that this crisis will be overcome and that, as a result, we shall emerge stronger than before, just as we emerged from previous crises. We need only evaluate clearly and distinctly the causes of our setbacks and take measures to eliminate them radically.

One of the most important reasons for our failures is the absolutely impermissible, and in many cases criminal, attitude of the responsible workers in the army, both commanders and commissars, towards the question of operational reports.

Operational reports should give a clear and distinct picture of the military actions of every unit, its strengths and weaknesses in battle, its casualties, its actual defeats and actual victories, its losses and its trophies.

To ensure this, the greatest Conscientiousness and strict checking of all information is required. Inmost cases nothing of the sort obtains. Operational reports are written in accordance with a set pattern, unworthy of a revolutionary army, in order to conceal and cover up one's failures and exaggerate one's successes.

When our units capture some locality, this never happens, if the reports are to be believed, otherwise than after a fierce battle. Yet this 'battle' is, more often than not, an affair of aimless and fruitless shooting, that is, of squandering of car tridges and shells. Such reports never permit us to judge whether the advancing unit kept contact with the retreating enemy, whether it really pursued him, or else, keeping a respectful distance, just took over the locality which had already been abandoned by the enemy. Yet this is extremely important. The weak side of our forces or, more correctly, of their commanders and commissars, is that, when the enemy retreats,

they do not show the necessary energy in pursuing, disrupting and destroying him. Commanders and commissars too often rest satisfied with occupying without a battle a locality that the enemy has abandoned. In their operational reports, this fact is hidden behind splendid phrases about the taking of villages and towns by battle, with never a mention of the number of casual ties suffered on either side,

When our units retreat, this happens, if one is to believe these same reports, only as a result of the onslaught of superior enemy forces and, again, never without a battle. Yet what is often hidden under these phrases is the sad reality of a panicky abandonment of their positions by large units at the sight of isolated mounted patrols, or even just under the influence of panic and provocational rumours about the enemy's approach. 'They carried out a fighting retreat' often means that they retreated shooting in all directions so as to deafen their own panic – that is, that there was a senseless squandering of ammunition.

A phrase often recurs in these reports to the effect that, in the course of clashes with superior enemy forces, regiments lost a half or three-quarters of their personnel. In most cases this means that the regiment ran away. The operational report is silent as to how many were killed, how many wounded, how many taken prisoner, how many missing. This information cannot always, of course, be given with accuracy. But it would be possible to provide at least an approximate picture of the losses suffered: all that is needed to do that is to possess the desire to tell the truth. *That desire is frequently not present.* On the contrary, we have not a few gentlemen who consider it their task to compose a report in such a way as to conceal from higher authority the disgrace of a senseless retreat before a weaker enemy.

Boasting about colossal, innumerable trophies is widely in vogue. When checked on, it often turns out that by trophies captured from the enemy are meant guns from which the breechblocks have been removed, machine-guns that have been made unusable, and broken-down carts which the enemy deliberately left behind when he took his well-timed departure. Detailed information about so-called trophies is hardly ever received,

The situation is even worse where material losses are concerned. Such facts are almost always left unreported, and come to light only later, when the supply officer has to ask for replacements of the equipment that has been lost.

What are the results of this sort of conduct? The results cannot be described otherwise than as disastrous. The commanders and commissars develop a psychology of official well being, that is, of concern that everything should be kept dark. This is the despicable psychology of old-time civil servants, and not that of revolutionary warriors who must boldly face not only the enemy but also the most cruel truth. Commanders and commissars who see the shortcomings and weaknesses of their units and frankly admit them will unfailingly take steps to eliminate these weak sides. Commanders and commissars who conceal cases of desertion or panicky retreat like a secret disease merely drive this disease inward and completely ruin their units.

Furthermore, false reports foster delusions at higher levels. Divisional headquarters does not know what has actually happened in the sector held by a certain regiment. Army headquarters receives false operational reports from divisions. At front headquarters they do not know exactly what the situation is in the armies. Consequently, the command is left in the dark. When the moment of trial comes, the false picture of well-being collapses into dust, and the front experiences a very grave crisis.

The great revolutionary Ferdinand Lassalle once said that every revolutionary activity requires above all that one should 'say what is', that is, should tell the truth. This is also required in every military activity. Complete truthfulness and precision in reports is the duty of every soldier.

*This we must now secure, at any cost.*

I order the Revolutionary War Council of the Southern front and the Revolutionary War Councils of the Armies of the Southern Front immediately to take steps to subject all reports to the strictest checking and to punish severely all counterfeiters who engage in criminal forgery instead of honest reporting. We must teach and compel commanders and commissars to call a battle a battle, a panic a panic, a feat

of arms a feat of arms, and cowardice cowardice. They must report with as much accuracy as possible the actual number of casualties, that is, the number of dead and wounded, the number of men taken prisoner, and the number of those who fled in panic – adding whether or not they came back. If a commander writes untruth fully about 'superior enemy forces', the commissar must not dare to sign the false report. But if he does sign it, then both commander and commissar are to be court-martialled. If an infantry regiment abandons its position at the sight of a Cossack patrol, then write: 'A thousand riflemen fled shamefully before thirty Cossacks.' If there was 'a fierce exchange of shots', then write whether this was really firing at the enemy or just firing into the air. If a unit lost to the enemy some carts, machine-guns or pieces of artillery, then frankly admit this disgraceful fact. If a unit captured military stores from the enemy, then don't boast, don't exaggerate, but say how much was captured, in what state it was, and what the circumstances were.

Bragging, frivolous evasiveness and plain lying must all be ruthlessly eliminated from operational reports. This elimination is to be effected in two ways. On the one hand, explain the importance and necessity of truth in military matters: on the other, denounce and brand the braggarts, boasters and liars. There is no place for them in the ranks of a revolutionary army, and still less in the post of commander or commissar.

This order must be passed down through the Revolutionary War Councils of the Armies for personal signature by commanders and commissars, right down to the level, inclusive, of commanders and commissars of individual units. These last must assemble the commanders subordinate to them, either all together or in groups, depending on circumstances, in order to read and explain this order to them.

Responsibility for the strictest implementation of the principles set forth in this order is placed on the Revolutionary War Councils of the Armies.

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# ORDER No.106

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, June 6, 1919, No.106, Balakleya Station

[[Balakleya is on the line between Kharkov and Izyum [?], about half-way.]

\* \* \*

Taking advantage of the temporary retreat by our units, scoundrels, provocateurs and agents of Denikin have raised their heads and are working at full blast. They are circulating sinister rumours, spreading panic, carrying on agitation against the Soviet power and the commanders appointed by it, and inciting soldiers to disobey orders and desert their battle-stations.

The situation at the front calls for the utmost effort, order, discipline and strict performance of duty.

The interests of the workers' and peasants' Ukraine and of the entire Soviet Federative Republic demand that ruthless measures be taken to deal with traitors who are undermining the strength of the Red Army.

I announce that, for this purpose, an Extraordinary Military Revolutionary Tribunal has been set up, with as chairman a member of the Ukrainian Council of People's Commissars, Comrade Pyatakov.

This tribunal has been given extraordinary powers to punish all enemies of the Soviet land and of the Soviet army, regardless of the positions they hold and the work they are doing.

Chairmen of *uyezd*, *volost* and village executive committees, *uyezd* and *volost* military commissars, and commandants and commissars of railway stations are ordered to observe attentively and carefully all persons who pass through the places for which they are responsible and to arrest immediately anyone detected in dishonourable agitation.

Commanders and commissars of regiments and commanders of military trains must keep careful watch on scoundrels who get in among Red Army men and circulate base rumours about betrayals by commanders, in order thereby to encourage self-seekers and incite cowards to run away.

Honourable Red-Army-men comrades must give the necessary co-operation to the Soviet authorities in this connection.

Kulaks' sons, shouters and screamers, Grigoriyevites and Makhnovites who have wormed their way into the Red Army must be ruthlessly crushed.

I issue this warning, that no mercy will be shown to the enemies of the people and those who connive at their activity. The workers' and peasants' power will cauterise with a red-hot iron the ulcer of provocation, Grigoriyevism and Makhnovism.

Death to the self-seekers and scoundrels!

Long live the honourable warriors of the workers' and peasants' Red Army!



## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# ORDER No.107

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, June 6, No.107, Balakleya station

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A group of persons united around the guerrilla Makhno have taken the path of the traitor Grigoriyev and set about organising a conspiracy against the Soviet power. This gang from Gulyay Polye has dared to announce for June 15 a congress of Anarchist kulak delegates for struggle against the Red Army and the Soviet power.

This congress is banned. I announce that anyone who takes part in it will be regarded as a traitor who is organising a plot in the immediate rear of our Red forces and opening the gates to the enemy.

The Makhnovites are appealing to renegades from other units and armies to join them.

I announce that:

To all the military authorities and to the battle-police units placed at my disposal order has been given to catch all traitors who quit their units without leave and go over to Makhno, and to bring them before the Revolutionary Tribunal as deserters, to be judged according to martial law.

There can only be one penalty for these individuals: shooting.

The All-Russia Central Executive Committee of Russia and the Ukraine has directed me to establish order at the front in the Donets Basin and in the immediate rear. I announce that this order will be introduced with an iron hand. Enemies of the workers' and peasants' Red Army, self-seekers, kulaks, pogromists, Makhnovites and Grigoriyevites will be crushed ruthlessly by staunch, reliable regular units. [\[51\]](#)

Long live revolutionary order, discipline and struggle against the enemies of the people!

Long live the Soviet Ukraine and Soviet Russia!

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## Endnotes

[51.](#) The Makhno movement was an anarchical rebel movement among the Ukrainian peasantry. Already in 1918, under the German occupation, Makhno was carrying on a guerrilla struggle against the Germans and Skoropadsky. During our first advance into the Ukraine Makhno came over to the Red Army, but soon, basing himself on the kulak elements in the Gulyay-Polye area, he raised a revolt against the Soviet power. Makhno at first supported Denikin's offensive, but soon was organising a guerrilla struggle in his rear. Eventually, in 1921, the Makhno movement was liquidated, after the abolition of compulsory grain deliveries and the introduction of the policy of freedom of trade.

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# ORDER No.108

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs wall the forces of the Soviet Ukraine, June 8 1919, No.108, Lozovaya station.

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**To be read to all regiments, companies, squadrons and task-forces**

## An End to Makhnovism!

Who is responsible for our recent defeats on the Southern front, especially in the Donets Basin?

The Makhnovites and Makhnovism.

In words, these fellows fight the whole world and are victorious over all adversaries, but when it actually comes to a battle, the Makhnovite commanders shamelessly abandon the positions assigned to them and stupidly withdraw to a distance of several dozen versts.

Among the soldiers of Makhno's brigade there were quite a few good, honourable fighters. But without a proper organisation of supply and administration and, what is most important, without internal discipline and intelligent commanders, the Makhnovite units have proved to be absolutely incapable of fighting, and the White-Guard cavalry have driven them before them like a flock of sheep.

The Makhnovites treacherously uncovered the right flank of the Donets front, thereby inflicting a serious wound on the adjoining army.

Furthermore, the Makhnovites tried to disrupt the neighbouring units. Agitators were sent from Makhno's headquarters into the regiments next to his, to call for disobedience to the commanders appointed by the Soviet power, and for imitating the Makhnovites, that is, joining the slapdash, uncontrolled Makhnovite guerrillas, who are incapable of waging war.

The bosses of Gulyay-Polye went even further. They announced for June 15 a congress of the military units and the peasants of five *uyezds*, for open struggle against the Soviet power and the order established in the Red Army.

It has become impossible to tolerate any longer such insults from these presumptuous gangsters. If we were to let the Makhnovites carry out their plan we should have a new Gngoriyevite revolt spreading from the nest at Gulyay-Polye.

In view of this, the central military authority has categorically banned the congress and despatched reliable and honourable military units to bring order into the area affected by the Makhno movement.

An end has now been put to this criminal prank. *Makhno has been deprived of his command. The Makhno movement is being liquidated.*

True, a number of self-seekers and thugs are still around in various units, who call

themselves Makhnovites and try to draw closer to Gulyay-Polye: there is no discipline there, no obligation to fight honourably against the enemies of the working people, and so it is a heaven on earth for cowards and idlers.

But after Makhno's removal from military activity, Makhnovism will be suppressed with a firm hand. The order which must exist in the army is being established not by independent bands but by the All-Ukraine and All-Russia Congresses of Workers', Peasants' and Red Army Men's Deputies. The decisions of these congresses are sacred law for us. We are called upon to enforce this law. Regiments, brigades, divisions, serve not themselves but the working class and the working peasantry. The Red warrior has been given a weapon to defend the working people from exploiters, landlords and capitalists, without distinction of language, nation, race or tribe.

Corrupted regiments which do not obey military orders, which move without authority from the locality where they are stationed, which indulge in violence against the peaceful population, which break up institutions created by the Soviet power and seize trucks and locomotives by armed force, coercing the railway workers – all such depraved, corrupt and criminal regiments will be wiped off the face of the earth, and their commanders will be first to suffer punishment.

The working class and the peasantry need a complete, decisive and rapid victory over the White-Guard army of the landlords and capitalists. This victory will be given us by well-organised regular Red regiments, united by an iron internal discipline and ready to fight and die selflessly for the happiness of the working people.

With the backing of all conscious workers and honest working peasants we shall create such an army.

Down with self-seekers and pillagers!

Down with cowards and thugs!

Down with Grigoriyevites and Makhnovites!

Longlive the honourable workers' and peasants' Red Army!

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# ORDER No.111

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's  
Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, June 9, 1919, No.111, Kharkov

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One of the military workers on the Eastern front has submitted a report in which he requests that he be released from his duties on the grounds that a commissar has been attached to him, and in this fact he sees expressed a lack of confidence in him as a member of the Communist Party.

In connection with this unbecoming report I consider it necessary to issue in printed form an explanation which I have given orally on more than one occasion. The appointment of a commissar never signifies lack of confidence in the commander affected. Commissars carry out extensive independent work of an organisational-political and agitational-educational character in the institutions and units to which they are appointed. Commissars are attached to Communist commanders and in general to all commanders in whom the Soviet power has absolute trust, regardless of whether they are or are not members of the Communist Party.

## FOR SHAME!

Transports arrived by rail at Liski station containing wounded men who were in a frightful condition. The trucks were without bedding. Many of the men lay, wounded and sick, without clothes, dressed only in their underwear, which had long remained unchanged: many of them were infectious. There were no medical personnel, no nurses and nobody in charge of the trains. One of the trains containing over 400 wounded and sick Red Army men, stood in the station from early morning until evening, without the men being given anything to eat. It is hard to imagine anything more criminal and shameful!

Of course, we have few doctors. A considerable proportion of them fled to the counter-revolutionary realm of Denikin and Kolchak. Nevertheless, the shortage of doctors does not justify such an outrage as this. Wounded and sick men can be supplied with food even in the absence of medical personnel. To give warning in advance of the arrival of a train carrying wounded, hungry, worn-out soldiers of the Red Army, and to demand that, the local authorities take the measures necessary for supplying food to the sick – that, certainly, is quite feasible. It is clear that the army medical organisation of the Southern front is in a bad state.

But are the local authorities any good? The commandant of Liski station explained that the reason why the sick were left to starve for twelve hours was that the necessary allocations of money had not been made. Foodstuffs were available to the local authority at Liski. But because nobody took the trouble to order meals for the sick and wounded, giving an undertaking to make the appropriate payment, the station commandant and the commander of the evacuation point considered that the only solution to the problem was to let the sick and wounded go hungry for twelve hours. And what about the other Soviet authorities? Didn't they know? But exactly the same thing had happened at that same station the day before. It might have seemed that an exceptional situation called for exceptional measures. Did the

local executive committee, or the railway-workers' organisation, concern themselves with the matter? Nothing of the kind! Nobody was interested. The wounded men, clad only in their bloodstained underwear, writhed on the dirty floorboards of the trucks, tormented by sickness, hunger and thirst. And nobody brought them anything, because nobody had authorised payment, and so feeding these sick men would threaten to cause a momentary breach of the accounting system. Can one conceive any worse example of obtuse heart lessness and shameless bureaucratism, even in the foulest times of foul Tsardom!

The uselessness of the army medical apparatus, the lack of foresight and inefficiency of the commandants and those in charge of evacuation points, the apathy of the local Soviet Institutions, all came together in this case. It is easy to appreciate with what feelings the sick and wounded languished in this place, and the curses they called down on the authorities whose responsibility it was to care for them.

This disgraceful case (which, as I have said, is not unique) must be thoroughly investigated. Criminal unconcern and base apathy must be driven out of the army medical organisation and the organisation of army communications. There is need also for a vigorous shake-up of local Soviet institutions that shut their eyes when, under their very noses, soldiers of the Red Army are suffering and dying, men to whom they owe the security they enjoy.

At any cost we must improve, extend and put to rights the army medical apparatus. And we must show in practice to idlers and saboteurs that an indifferent attitude to wounded and sick Red Army men will be punished by the Soviet Republic in the same way as treason to the socialist fatherland.

June 10, 1919  
Liski  
*En Route*, No.53

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# ABOUT THE SITUATION ON THE SOUTHERN FRONT

Report to the Plenum of the Kharkov Soviet of Workers', Cossacks' and Peasants'  
Deputies, June 14, 1919  
[Given here in abridged form. – L.T.]

\* \* \*

## Kharkov is in Immediate Danger

I am obliged to withdraw the statement I made to representatives of the press a few days ago, when I said that Kharkov was not in danger from the military standpoint.

I must now make a serious correction of that statement. The situation is a great deal more alarming than I supposed, basing myself on the information then available. What I am saying cannot, of course, be interpreted as expressing a mood of panic, or be taken as a basis for panicky feelings or conclusions.

In the military sphere we must maintain a policy of frankness, for our military strength depends, to the extent of three-quarters in every concrete instance, and to the extent of four quarters on the scale of history as a whole, upon the energy, consciousness and activity of the best, advanced elements of the working class.

And in order to bring about the necessary turn on the Southern front – and this we shall do! – we need to say clearly, for everyone to hear, that the situation is bad.

## The Makhno Movement

The army which is operating on the Donets front originated as a guerrilla force. It was subjected to considerable reorganisation, and that produced very valuable and positive results.

This army advanced on the Donets Basin in a planned and systematic way. But during the past week a sharp change took place in it, a relapse, a resurgence of former illness which had been only partly overcome.

Makhno's detachments showed to the full that they were incapable of defending the most important sectors of the Southern front. At the first push from the enemy, they uncovered the right flank of the army which stood directly between Kharkov and Denikin's forces. But the main thing, which had grievous consequences, was Makhnovism.

Imagine two armies side by side. In one of them the soldier is called upon to fight in the name of great ideas, and order is maintained: in the other, nothing is demanded of the soldier – he is told, whatever you take is yours. This second army is Makhno's. The ranks of this army are full of ignorant, backward elements to whom the principles of Makhnovism are dear.

The fame of the land of Gulyay-Polye, where nothing is demanded of the soldier

and there is no discipline, spread far and wide. But now has come the sobering-up: among Makhno's detachments, among the more conscious section of the workers' and peasants', a significant turn has begun.

We have reliable information that in the last few days a cry of protest has been raised among the Makhnovites, against the chaos and outrages which led to sheep-like panic and treacherous abandonment of the front.

They are already demanding to go over to the regime of the regular forces.

We had hardly managed to rout Grigoriyev's gang when Gulyay-Polye announced the convening of a congress of five *uezds*, the task of which was to be the overthrow of the existing power of the workers and peasants. Makhno renounced his command and proceeded to organise an independent rebel army.

These experiments were taking place on the front against Denikin, in a country which had just been shaken by Grigoriyev's mutiny, a country that was an armed camp, and the central command announced that the congress of June 15 would not be allowed.

When this order was reinforced by a concentration of the troops fighting against Denikin, ready to turn their weapons against Makhno, the latter sent a telegram saying that he was a revolutionary and that he would surrender his brigade, or his division, to whomsoever we appointed to take it over.

But Makhnovism has not been liquidated with the liquidation of Makhno: it has its roots in the ignorant masses.

## **The Fight Against Makhnovism**

The more ignorant and corrupt elements saw the opportunity to run amok. This was a mood typical of kulak plunderers.

Turning to the measures taken for eradicating Makhnovism in the ranks of the army and restoring its capacity to fight, it must be mentioned that two paths lead to this result: organised ideological influence, and severe punishment of unwholesome elements.

We must apply ruthless measures not only to our class enemy but also among ourselves, against all those who obstruct the historical path of the working class. The present moment is too crucial for any wavering to be allowed.

*Workers of Kharkov, pull yourselves together!*

Whereas a week ago there could be disputes about mobilisation, that hour has now passed.

If the mobilisation is not going well enough in Kharkov, because part of the working class here is not on the same class, moral and political level as the workers of Moscow and Petrograd, the working class of the whole country can appeal to the Kharkov worker – 'pull yourself together' ...

## **Kharkov – A Fortified Area**

Comrades! We now come to the need to apply in Kharkov the same measures that were taken at the time of Kolchak'sons laught in Samara, Kazan and Simbirsk.

The time has arrived to convert Kharkov into a fortified region which will fight against the advancing White Guards regardless of whether or not the field armies are holding the line of the front.

The situation at the front became unstable as a result of the breakdown of some field units, for the restoration of whose combat-capacity measures have already been taken. Along with this we need to transform Kharkov into a fortress with a strong working-class garrison and a single, centralised military authority.

The mobilisation carried out in Kharkov will be supervised by us, in the sense that we shall check on how really indispensable those Soviet officials are who have been left in their previous posts, and shall see to it that all the rest are put under arms.

At the same time we shall strive very vigorously to restore the field units to their proper state and to replace the tired and disintegrated regiments by ones that are more staunch and reliable.

On the sector of the front formerly held by the Makhnovites we have already succeeded in replacing Makhno's runaway guerrillas by regular troops.

## **Everyone To Arms!**

Where Kharkov is concerned we must take up a firm position.

Kharkov will be transformed into a fortress under siege by the enemy. We shall establish a strict revolutionary regime in Kharkov.

Everyone to arms!

All honourable and conscious elements in the Kharkov proletariat will at once be drawn into active struggle in the trenches of the fortress. Workers, office-workers and all honest opponents of the naked reaction which is advancing upon us will be mobilised, trained and armed for a decisive fight to the death.

We shall deal with self-seekers and deserters with an iron hand, and we shall make the bourgeoisie undertake the work of trench-digging and fortification.

Before the entire organised proletariat of Kharkov we openly and directly proclaim that cruel danger from Denikin's bands threatens Red, Soviet Kharkov, but in the same clear and definite way we firmly proclaim that we shall never surrender Kharkov. This we swear before the whole working class of Kharkov.

From the chests of the best honourable sons of the working class we shall create an unbreakable iron cuirass that Denikin will never be able to penetrate. \*

\* After this report, the following resolution was adopted by the Kharkov Soviet, together with the Soviets of the city's districts and the leaderships of the trade-unions and factory committees:

(1) Kharkov is under immediate threat of attack by the White bands, who would annihilate all the conquests of the working class and also physically exterminate the proletariat.

(2) Kharkov is in danger, but recognition of this fact must not become a source of panic. This estimate of the situation must form the basis of all the work of the Soviet, Party and trade-union organisations of the working class.

(3) Kharkov must not and will not be surrendered to the enemy. Consequently, all forces to the defence of Kharkov! The city and the approaches to it are to be converted into a fortified area. The garrison of the fortified area must be brought up to strength, armed and trained in the shortest possible time.

(4) To this end, mobilisation must be broadened and deepened. Exemptions must be reviewed. Dodgers must be rounded up. Those who try to evade service out of ill-will must be severely punished.

(5) The Kharkov fortified region must be headed by a Revolutionary War Council of the fortified region, consisting of the commandant together with two members to be nominated by the Kharkov Soviet. All power is to be concentrated in the hands of this council until the danger to Kharkov has been warded off.

(6) It is the duty of the Revolutionary War Council of the fortified area to establish in Kharkov a regime appropriate to its position as a fortress under direct threat from the enemy.

All honourable and sound elements – to arms! Bourgeois elements – to trench-digging! Counter-revolutionaries – to concentration camps! Severe suppression of all acts disrupting the unity, staunchness and fighting capacity of the Kharkov fortified area.

(7) Since, at this anxious time, any distraction of the working people's attention from the direct task of organising a rebuff to the Whites means helping the enemy, all groups which, while hiding behind the flag of supporters of the Soviet power, put forward conditions of one sort or another for undertaking defence of the proletarian fortress, and which carry on agitation in this sense, are to be regarded as traitors to the cause of the workers and peasants and dealt with in accordance with martial law.

One of the most effective methods used by the Makhnovites and by the agents of Denikin, who act in concert in this matter, is the casting of groundless, unjustified suspicion upon commanders, both in the active units and in the rear, and, in particular, in Kharkov itself. In view of the fact that an Extraordinary Military Revolutionary Tribunal, presided over by Comrade Pyatakov, is functioning in the area of the army of the Donets Basin, that is, on all the approaches to Kharkov, every accusation made against commanders, commissars and responsible workers generally is to be submitted to this Tribunal. It is quite obvious that the spreading of vague and obscure accusations against commanders is a treacherous stab in the back for the army and must therefore be stopped by the strictest means.

Since the most important factor in the break-up of our army was Makhnovism, which sought to replace military discipline, firm revolutionary order and proper military training by the arbitrary actions of separate bands, independent of each other, it is necessary to put double and treble energy into the fight against rotten and corrupt kulak pillaging, which comes forward under the banner of Anarcho-

Makhnovism. Without concealing the full acuteness of the situation which has been created, and presenting to the workers and peasants the truth as it really is, the representative organ of the Kharkov proletariat, armed with full powers, calls on all the working people to show calm and self-control.

L.T

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# ORDER No.113

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's  
Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, June 18 1919, No.112, Kharkov

\* \* \*

## Severe punishment for all deserters, Makhnovites, disorganisers and traitors to the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.

Denikin's landlord-bourgeois bands are now threatening the workers and peasants of Yekaterinoslav, Kharkov, Poltava, Kursk and Voronezh. Our Southern front has been shaken. Who is responsible? Who was it that opened the gates to the counter-revolutionary bands whose aim is to take the land from the peasants and put a yoke on the workers? The gates were opened by traitors, deserters, Grigoriyevites, Anarchist bandits, Makhnovites, who did not want to recognise any sort of order or discipline in the ranks of the army.

The Extraordinary Military Revolutionary Tribunal presided over by the Ukrainian People's Commissar Comrade Pyatakov, has examined the case of the Makhnovite traitors who first tried to undermine the workers' and peasants' power in the Ukraine and then opened the gates to the sworn enemies of the working people.

The Tribunal has severely punished the traitors. The same punishment awaits all who undermine the solidarity, discipline and fighting capacity of the army. Makhno's headquarters has been destroyed, but the poison of Makhnovism has not yet been eliminated. Individual agents of treason are still inciting Red Army men to unjustified retreats. Here and there on the Southern Front, whole regiments are still abandoning their positions without authority and committing excesses as they go.

The Extraordinary Military Revolutionary Tribunal testifies, by its sentence, that the Soviet power is coping with disintegration and corruption and will wipe the guilty from the face of the earth.

In announcing the sentence\* in the case of the Makhnovite traitors, I order that it be made known and explained in all companies, squadrons, batteries and task-forces of the armies operating on the Donets front.

[\* Sentence dated June 17, 1919, in the case of Mikhalevo-Pavlenko, Burbyga, Oteynik, Korobko, Kostin, Polunin and Dobrolyubov. – L. T.]

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# ORDER No.113

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the 13th Army, June 19 1919, No.113

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The Thirteenth Army is at present in a state of utter collapse. The fighting capacity of its units has fallen to the lowest level. Regiments are retreating before an enemy who is numerically weak but has been made insolent by impunity. Cases of ground less panic are constantly occurring. Self-seeking flourishes. If this shameful break-up of the 13th Army, which had in the past serious military achievements to its credit, were to continue, it would threaten the greatest danger to the Southern front and the entire Soviet Republic.

In order to bring about the necessary change in the mood and behaviour of the Thirteenth Army we must clearly understand the reasons for its collapse.

(I) One of the most important reasons for the shameful events through which the Thirteenth Army is now living is the heritage of *guerrilla-ism*. Many regiments of the Thirteenth Army were formed out of guerrilla detachments. Until then they had no proper organisation. They had hardly any transport. Their supply service was a slapdash affair. Self-supply and, consequently, pillaging, is widely resorted to. Our chief efforts must therefore be focused on the *complete elimination of guerrilla-ism*.

The units of the Thirteenth Army must be given a proper structure, in conformity with establishments. In the first place, they must be given transport, so that the regiments do not cling to the railways but become capable of mobile operations. The regulations need to be applied, especially the internal regulations and the field service regulations. The regulations are the expression of a rational, purposeful order, which ensures that a military unit possesses fighting capacity and gets the best results from its actions. We must see to it that the regulations are understood, respected and applied in practice.

(II) In connection with this, the question of *commanding personnel* acquires very great importance. Those commanders who are thoroughly imbued with the guerrilla spirit or who tolerate it, must be called to order or else replaced. We cannot put up with commanders who do not observe the field service regulations, work 'anyhow' and rely on 'maybe'. In an army which is corroded with disorder and indiscipline, the commanding personnel must be the steel lever for effecting a change.

Every military commander is answerable for the lower commanders subordinate to him. Every commander must be subjected individually to the strictest checking on his conduct. Those who are slovenly and sluggish and who connive at disorder are either conscious traitors or capable of becoming traitors when a suitable moment arrives.

In order to *purge the Thirteenth Army of elements of panic, treachery and decay, we must, in the first place, purge the commanding personnel of idlers, parasites and traitors*. A Red Army commander must be a model of firmness, staunchness and courageous performance of duty towards the working people.

(III) A most decisive role in restoring the army to health must be played by the

commissars. Upon the commissar of a regiment depends more than on anyone else the morale and spirit of the regiment. The regiment is the army's basic unit. The commissar of a division can give general instructions, but only the commissar of a regiment can directly guide the life of the soldier comrades, in training, on the march, in action and in rest.

The commissar does not command. The regimental commander is there to do that. There must be only one commander. But the commissar is the representative of the workers' and peasants' powering the regiment. He is the *political guide, inspirer and leader of the regiment*. He must have a thorough knowledge of all the commanders of his unit, of their strong and weak points. Without himself interfering in the work of the commanders, he must keep an eye on them, to ensure that the commanders are always where they should be. He must check on the commanders' conduct, and when a commander proves to be unworthy, incapable or unreliable, the commissar must take steps to have him replaced as soon as possible.

The commissar must know the make-up of his regiment – who its best soldiers are and who its worst. The commissar must make it possible for the best soldiers of the regiment to rally round him in the most difficult situations, and must be able with their help to rebuff the self-seekers and change the mood of the waverers. The commissar must be tirelessly vigilant towards the slightest manifestations of discontent, opposition, self-seeking or counter-revolutionary agitation, so as to adopt timely measures to remove the causes of legitimate discontent, take the self-seekers in hand, or punish them, and deal ruthlessly with the counter-revolutionaries.

Woe to the commissar who lives by the old axiom: 'Everything is going all right,' and makes himself a concealer of the deficiencies of his regiment. A good commissar is the salvation of a regiment, a bad one is its ruin.

The commissar personnel of the Thirteenth Army must be carefully examined on the basis of the experience of recent weeks. The weak and unstable among them must be removed and replaced.

(IV) Immense help to the commissars and commanders in restoring the shattered army can and must be given by the *Communist comrades, the members of the Party cells*. The Communist soldier is the most conscious, courageous and self-sacrificing soldier. Therefore, he must be a model of discipline and endurance. Communists like this hold together a company, a battalion, a regiment, an army.

But it has to be said that there are Communists and Communists. Since the Communist Party came to power, its ranks have been joined by numerous workers and peasants who lack clear Communist consciousness and the necessary revolutionary tempering. In action, a young, unseasoned Communist of this sort often gets infected by the mood of the unconscious soldiers, he gives way to panic, he himself violates order and thereby offers an example of breakdown to others. Moreover, it often happens that corrupt elements, careerists, worm their way in among the Communists, calculating that the title of Communist will bring them privileges of all kinds. Such *pseudo-Communists are the worst thorn in the army's flesh*. Abscesses form around them. If the army is to be restored to health, the Communist cells will first have to be purged. The purges must be undertaken, jointly with the commissars, by the most conscious and energetic members of the cells themselves. There must be a very strict checking on how all the members of the Party cells, and all the sympathisers, behaved during the recent retreats: did

they help the commissars, did they stop the runaways, did they kill the provocateurs – or did they themselves yield to senseless panic and become a source of disintegration? The Party does not need a Communist who launches into discussions when what is wanted is to fight. *It would be better to have fewer Communists in a cell, provided they were reliable firm comrades who would remain at their posts at a difficult moment.*

V) The Red Army is united by the lofty idea of struggle for the rights and interests of the oppressed. But the idea alone is not enough. *Firm revolutionary military order* is needed. Everyone must answer for his own actions. Not everyone can be a hero, but everyone is obliged to do his duty as a soldier to whom the working people have entrusted a rifle. Whoever evades the performance of his duty must be punished. *There must be no impunity in the army.* A commissar or a commander who connives at a negligent attitude to duties, especially on the part of commanding personnel, is worthless: by such conduct he protects slovenliness and self-seeking. Irresponsibility is the death of an army. A great deal of such irresponsibility still remains in the Thirteenth Army, as a heritage from the guerrilla epoch. Makhnovite agitators did much to introduce licentiousness and hooliganism into the regiments of the Thirteenth Army. We must now deal with those phenomena with redoubled severity. *Not a single offence, and still less any crime, must go unpunished.* The commissar and the commander are armed with disciplinary regulations for punishing minor offences. The army has the Revolutionary Tribunal for punishing crimes. Self seekers, counter-revolutionaries, deserters, Makhnovites must be eradicated – then the better elements will lift their heads and restore the regiments to health.

The Thirteenth Army will not dare to lose any time. Every hour is precious. The work of restoration must be carried through in the next *fortnight*. This will require the greatest concentration of physical and moral forces. I do not doubt that these forces will be found. Other armies, too, have known periods of decline and decomposition, and they have all emerged stronger from the test. It is now the Thirteenth Army's turn.

Commanders, commissars, Communists of the Thirteenth Army! The Soviet Republic orders you: *expel disintegration and decay from the ranks of your army, imbue your regiments with the spirit of self-sacrifice, and within two weeks take your rightful place on the sector of the Soviet front assigned to you.*

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# THE THREAT TO VORONEZH AND TO KURSK

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Last autumn Voronezh was in danger. Today that danger has reappeared. And the immediate military threat may now seem to be, in itself, graver than it was last year. What, then, has happened during these months? What has changed? Who has become stronger? Who has become weaker?

Last year, Krasnov's troops were only the irregular vanguard of other forces that were more powerful and a greater danger to us: Hohenzollern's hordes and the troops of the Entente. We all understood and said at that time: 'Let the Red troops retreat for the time being, when Krasnov's cavalry make a raid, or let them crush them – that's not the point. A few weeks sooner or later, Soviet forces will beat the Whites. But the outcome of the greatest revolution in the world depends on whether the White Guards of Germany, Britain, France and America are going to come to the aid of our Whites.'

That was where the answer to the real question lay. And that is where the greatest change has taken place.

German militarism has disappeared. Despite its pathetic Constituent Assembly, Germany is in the grip of civil war, which will inevitably bring the proletariat to power. Britain, France and America have won, but their military power is already doomed. We have seen that this is so, at Odessa and in the Crimea, from which the Allied vultures fled, and during the last few days the impotence of Anglo-French militarism has again been confirmed by the fate of Petrograd. The British and French Governments spoke categorically about General Yudenich's entry into Petrograd in the near future. Already a report had gone out through all Europe and all over the world, saying that Red Petrograd had fallen. The atmosphere on the French stock-exchange became feverish. But Petrograd stood firm. [52] The British and French bourgeoisies proved incapable of helping their Russian allies. America is again withdrawing her forces from Archangel. Kolchak, whom the imperialists of the Entente were going to recognise, has fallen back to the Urals and beyond. The 'Allies' are unable to give help there, either. Anglo-French militarism is already no more than a huge card board facade. It has been ravaged internally. It has been gnawed through and through by revolution. Very soon it will collapse, before the eyes of the whole world.

Denikin's bands that have thrust up from the South are no longer the vanguard of Anglo-French armies: no, they constitute the whole of the army which the counter-revolution is now able to bring against us. Behind Denikin there is nothing but a rear that is hostile to him.

True, during these months the counter-revolution in the South has succeeded in creating a considerable army. Our Southern armies, having beaten Krasnov's bands, came up, as they advanced, against a second line – the White-Guard forces of Denikin. During the last few months we have been waging a second campaign in the South. The enemy has renewed his strength while our forces have remained the same. Our principal forces and our attention have been temporarily diverted eastward. Together with this there has been the disintegration of the Ukrainian guerrilla movement and the poison of Makhnovism. Our Southern front has wavered

and fallen back towards Tsaritsyn, Balashov and Voronezh.

From all its previous trials the Red Army has emerged stronger than before. The blows now being struck at Kharkov and Yekaterinoslav [The text has 'Yekaterinodar', but this evidently is a misprint for Yekaterinoslav (Dnieproperrovsk).] are forcing the Soviet Ukraine to pull itself together: that country is now passing through the same period that we experienced last summer, when the Czechoslovaks seized the Volga country from us, including Kazan. The Workers' and Peasants' Ukraine is a source of immense forces, material and human. It has now risen as one man to support the Southern front. Reinforcements are arriving in ever-increasing numbers. After a few weeks there will be a decisive turn on the Southern front. In these transitional weeks all forces and resources must be put at the service of the troops on the Southern front.

The rear must be strengthened. The whole zone adjoining the front must be cleared of deserters. Under the direct threat from the bludgeon of the landlords and generals, millions of peasants in the region of Kursk, Voronezh, Tambov and Saratov are rousing themselves, and are themselves driving deserters into the ranks of the Red forces. Not a single dodger must remain in any village!

The same applies to the commanding personnel. Hundreds and thousands of former officers of the old army are sitting in various Soviet offices. They are hiding themselves, or are being hidden, as 'indispensables'. If they are at present 'indispensables' anywhere, it is in the ranks of the Red Army. An end must now be put to this, the worst sort of legalised desertion.

Kursk, Voronezh, Tambov, Saratov are being transformed into fortified areas. The armed Communists constitute the nucleus of these fortified areas. The Denikinite wave will break against this line of fortifications.

The situation on the Southern front is grave. Let us redouble our efforts – treble them and multiply them tenfold! Let us prepare for Denikin the fate of Kolchak!

June 27, 1919, Voronezh  
*En Route*, No.55

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## Endnotes

52. On the May offensive by the North-Western Corps against Petrograd see Note 76 in the chapters ahead.

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# ONCE MORE ON THE LESSONS FROM THE UKRAINE

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Our setbacks on the Donets front have increased. We have not only been driven out of the Donets Basin but also out of the adjacent *uyezds* of Kharkov and Yekaterinoslav provinces, and Kharkov itself, the capital of the Eastern Ukraine has been lost. This is a serious blow. It will reverberate heavily all through the Ukraine and throughout Soviet Russia. Kharkov is a large, rich, industrial working-class city. Even our temporary loss of Kharkov gives great advantage to the enemy and does great damage to the revolution.

Hitherto it has been the case that defeats have produced among us not depression but, on the contrary, an intensification of energy that has resulted in a new advance. There can be no doubt that that will happen this time as well. It is in this way that a young, revolutionary class differs from a decaying old one. For the Tsarist monarchy, military defeats meant ruin: for the revolutionary working class they are stimuli, arousing its energy.

The Ukraine's turn has now come. For the loss of Kharkov is, first and foremost, a blow at the Ukraine, and a lesson for the Ukraine – just as, last year, the loss of Samara, Simbirsk and Kazan was a harsh but salutary lesson for Great Russia. Not only the Ukrainian peasantry but also the Ukrainian working class have failed to appreciate until recently the full extent of the military danger threatening the eastern, that is, the more important, half of the Ukraine. The sentiments that prevailed among the working masses of the Ukrainian South hindered mobilisation and proper formation of armed forces. These sentiments had a cause, which must be understood.

We often hear it said: 'In the Ukraine the kulaks are strong, and that's why there are all these bands ...' There is truth in that, of course. The kulaks play no small role in the Ukraine. But the immediate course of the revolution depends on who is to lead the middle peasants – the working class or the kulaks? Consequently, we have to explain why it is that the kulaks have gained ascendancy over the Ukrainian peasantry. Is this a permanent phenomenon or is it only temporary?

The Ukraine has experienced a large number of regimes during the last two years and more. After the overthrow of the Tsarist monarchy, the Kerensky regime was established, taking in the Ukraine the form of the Kiev Rada. That was overthrown by the Soviet power. Then the Rada came back, with the help of German bayonets. The German occupation regime was masked by petty-bourgeois pseudo-democracy.

Then the Germans got rid of the democratic rubbish and installed their noble steward, Hetman Skoropadsky. Then the German revolution, which had immediate repercussions in the Ukraine, brought down the Skoropadsky regime. For a time the Petlyurists were in power. As was to be expected, the Petlyura regime was backed up by an Anglo-French, Greco-Romanian and Arab-Negro invasion. Then the Soviet power overthrew the Petlyurists. The Ukrainian peasant lived through all that. Passively or actively, he resisted, during these two years, seven successive regimes. It is not surprising if it began to seem to the peasant that he had no need of any regime at all: he was living there in his *uyezd* of Zolotonosha or Mariupol [Zolotonosha is in the middle of the Ukraine, Mariupol (Zhdanov) in the south-east corner.], and there he would go on living. The state power, whatever form it took, demanded

that the peasant provide grain for the towns, and it conscripted his sons. Hence the peasant's opposition to any and every state power, which provided the soil for Anarchist tendencies. It was these sentiments that engendered Grigoriyev and Grigoriyevism, Makhno and Makhnovisni, and a collection of Zelyonys, Struks, Shkilyas and other bandits of Anarcho-Left-SR or purely pogromist colouring. Of course, as soon as the 'anti-statists' of the Anarcho-bandit type had spread their wings somewhat, they at once proceeded to do as much damage to the peasant as had probably been done in its time by Tsardom, which plundered and oppressed him in a more systematic way. In the meantime, though, it seemed that the Makhnovite bands provided some local defence against the landlords' attacks. Actually, this was not the case. All powerful when it was a question of plundering, the Makhnovites proved helpless against regular units. When Shkuro's cavalry occupied the *uyezds* of Taganrog and Mariupol, the Ukrainian *muzhik* began to understand that this matter of state power was not so simple. Of course, the Soviet power requires the peasant to show a certain self-restraint and to make considerable sacrifices. But under any other authority things will be ten times worse for the peasantry than under Soviet power. This is the simple truth that is now being beaten into the consciousness of the Ukrainian villages by the hammer of defeat.

A parallel process is going on in the heads of the Ukrainian workers.

For a number of historical reasons, opportunist, petty-bourgeois socialism enjoyed in the South of our country much greater influence on the upper circles of the working class than was the case in the North. This circumstance restricted from the very outset the scale of the proletarian revolution in the Ukraine. After the Germans crushed the Ukrainian Soviets, the most revolutionary elements of the working class left the Ukraine, and subsequently fought in the Kuban, in the Terek region, in the steppes of Astrakhan, on the Don, and before Tsaritsyn, Novokhopersk and Voronezh. Under the regimes of the Rada, of Skoropadsky and of Petlyura the Mensheviks and Right SRs emerged as the legal 'opposition' in the name of the working class, and did all they could to infect the workers' consciousness with the poison of pettiness and time-serving. They made use of every difficulty experienced by the Soviet power, every military setback – the invasion by the Germans and also the invasion by the Entente – to deprive the working masses of the Ukraine of their hopes and expectations. Given the great backwardness of the Ukrainian proletariat, this work of theirs could not remain without effect. Until lately the Mensheviks and SRs played, in their own way, a considerable role in the labour movement in the Ukraine, especially in the trade unions. In Kharkov trade-union circles it was the Mensheviks and their associates who set the tone. Naturally, the flag of Menshevism often served as a cover for mere ignorance and self-seeking instincts, or obdurate narrow-mindedness, such as that of the Ukrainian peasant described above: 'They've given us all sorts of regimes. Let's get by without any regime at all.'

Or, still more simply: 'There's always somebody giving us orders.' During our defeats in the Donets Basin the Kharkov Mensheviks carried on a pernicious agitation with the aim of breaking the workers' will-power. In words they recognised the need for mobilisation, but made such stipulations that anyone who believed what they said must have said to himself: 'Well, if that's the way things are, I'm not going to shed my blood.' The leaders of the Kharkov trade-union movement engaged, to the accompaniment of Menshevik speeches, in shameful bargaining about when and under what conditions they would agree to contemplate the necessity of undertaking preparation for some sort of mobilisation ...

Denikin's blow served as a harsh lesson in this case too. Denikin is now teaching the backward, semi-petty-bourgeois section of the Ukrainian proletariat that one cannot live without a 'regime': if the Soviet regime disappears, its place will automatically be taken by the White-Guard regime.

The loss of Kharkov is a grave loss. But if it leads to complete liquidation among the Ukrainian proletariat of petty-bourgeois, compromising illusions and self-seeking sentiments, we shall have to say that it has been bought at not too high a price.

A turn has already, to a considerable extent, taken place. The mobilisation of the Ukrainian workers is going ahead with substantial success. In many parts of the Ukraine the peasants themselves have demanded that they be mobilised on the same basis as the workers, to resist the landlords' yoke which is advancing from the East. There can be no doubt that the mobilisation of 19-year-olds which has been proclaimed by the Ukrainian Soviet power will produce the expected results.

Of no less importance is the mental turn that has been made, which must have its effect, and is already having this effect, on the entire Soviet apparatus in the Ukraine. There has been too much chaos in that apparatus, continuously since the initial period of the revolution. A turn towards *Soviet order, assiduity, accounting and discipline*, which has been slowly prepared, is now, under the impact of our severe trials, coming about all at once. The Ukrainian peasants and workers now understand that it is often harder to hold what you have won than to win it in the first place, and they are demanding that their representatives in all Soviet institutions show *strict assiduity within the framework of Soviet centralism*.

The disintegration of the Ukrainian guerrilla movement opened a very dangerous gap in the Southern front. There can be no doubt that, by concentrating its forces, the Ukraine, in the coming weeks, will not only block this gap but, shoulder to shoulder with Soviet Great Russia, will crush the Denikinite White Guards and force them back to the Caucasus range.

June 28, 1919  
*En Route*, No.56

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# ORDER No.119

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's  
Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, June 29, 1919. No.119, Kursk

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Within the bounds of Kursk province there are a very considerable number of citizens who have evaded military service or who have directly deserted from units of the Red Army. Denikin's temporary successes have enabled him to occupy part of Kursk province. Denikin is mobilising peasants and workers, turning them into enemies and hangmen of the working people's country. In these circumstances, every deserter is twice and thrice a traitor to the working class.

I order that measures of exceptional severity be taken to dig out deserters and draft-dodgers from among the inhabitants of Kursk province. Those found carrying arms are to be shot on the spot.

Men who have lost or sold part of their equipment are to be dealt with severely by courts-martial.

Persons who conceal deserters are to be punished ruthlessly: their horses, carts, cattle, etc., are to be confiscated and they themselves brought before the court-martial.

Those deserters who give themselves up voluntarily, even after the expiry of the period laid down by the Defence Council, are to be shown as much leniency as possible.

It is the duty of all *uyezd*, *volost* and village Soviet authorities to make every effort to carry through the struggle against desertion. In these days when the insolent landlords and capitalists are threatening to enslave the workers and peasants of Kursk, not a single deserter must be allowed to remain within the bounds of Kursk province. All measures taken, and the results obtained, are to be reported to me by telegraph every three days.

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# THE CAUSES OF THE DEFEATS ON THE SOUTHERN FRONT

\* \* \*

The defeats we have suffered on the Southern front are very important: the temporary loss of Riga and Vilna is far from having, from the military standpoint, such importance as the loss of Tsaritsyn, Novokhopersk, Kharkov and Yekaterinoslav. In the West we advanced, after the German revolution, almost without fighting. Our forces there were slight. The organisation of the Western front was until recently rudimentary, and there was no reason to be surprised if the first serious thrust by the enemy caused us to fall back. In the West all our work still remains to be done.

It was different on the Southern front. There we had made substantial efforts, and our successes of last winter on the Southern front were very important. Why has a period of victorious offensive been succeeded by one of grave defeats?

There is now much talk about this problem and many articles are being written. It must be said, however, that a considerable proportion of these articles seek the causes of our recent defeats not at all where they should be sought.

Our defeats are due to the most natural, most fundamental and most elementary cause of the majority of defeats in war: at a certain moment we proved to be *significantly weaker than our adversary*. How did this happen?

The armies of the Southern front fought against Krasnov's troops. At first, when guerrilla-ism and amateurism prevailed on the Southern front, we retreated. When the resistance of the guerrillas, both open and concealed, had been overcome and a unified, centralised command had been established, we at once obtained greater superiority and began quickly to advance towards Rostov and Novocherkassk, enclosing the nest of counter-revolution in a half-ring of iron. If the affair had been confined to Krasnov's Cossacks, our armies of the Southern front would long since have finished it off.

But behind Krasnov, to the South, stood Denikin's White-Guard forces. Did we know about them? Of course we did. But behind Denikin's forces, in turn, stood the Soviet armies of North Caucasia. These two armies comprised 150,000 or even 200,000 men. At any rate, they indented for supplies for that number. However, these were not properly organised forces, but guerrilla detachments, behind which tailed numerous refugees and mere parasites and plunderers. There was no trace of any proper organisation of supply, administration or command. Self-appointed commanders were unwilling to take orders from anyone, and fought each other. [R. Lucketi, **The White Generals** (1971) writes (p.191) of Sorokin, the Red commander in the Stavropol area that, in October 1918, he 'began to execute commissars and commanders whom he disliked, notably those of Jewish birth. He also started conspiracies against Shelest and Kozhuk, respectively commanders of the Iron Division and the Taman army group'. Then he arrested and shot five leading members of the Soviet of the North-Caucasian Republic who had tried to oppose his regime of 'high-handed executions' and 'unwillingness to undertake systematic planning'. In the end, men of the Taman army shot *him*.] As always happens with guerrillas, they exaggerated their forces to a frightful degree, treating with disdain all the warnings they received from the centre, and then, after the first serious blow from the Denikinites, they began to crack up. When this happened, a great quantity

of military equipment fell into the hands of the enemy, and innumerable men perished in the course of the retreat. Nowhere, perhaps, has guerrilla-ism cost the workers and peasants so dear as in North Caucasia.

The rapid collapse of the North-Caucasian guerrilla armies of the Soviets at once freed Denikin's hands. Leaving only small garrisons in Novorossiisk, Yekaterinodar, Stavropol, Pyatigorsk and Vladikavkaz, Denikin hurled his main forces, well supplied thanks to British aid, northward on to the front along the Don and the Donets. Our Southern armies, which had marched several hundred versts and suffered heavy casualties in the struggle with Krasnov's Cossacks, came up against Denikin's forces which were fresh and very numerous.

Thus, the fundamental cause of our defeats in the South is not the defects in organisation of our armies of the Southern front, but the role, treacherous in the full sense of the word, that was played by out-dated guerrilla-ism.

While the North Caucasian *atamans*, unwilling to accept any order or discipline, were allowing Denikin to move his forces without any hindrance up to the Don and the Donets, the Ukrainian guerrillas were coming to Denikin's aid on the extreme right flank of the Southern front. However difficult the situation of our weakened and tired Red regiments after their clashes with Denikin's men, they would never have fallen back so far as they did if the Makhnovites had not opened wide gates through which the White-Guard cavalry could attack our armies in the rear.

During the rapid retreat there were, of course, numerous cases of panic, disobedience to orders and actual disintegration of units. But this pestilence, too, had its source entirely in Makhno's corner, and spread in waves, like typhus or cholera, first to the right flank of the adjacent army, then moved on to the centre, and so to the left flank and beyond. A regiment proved to be the worse affected by the pestilence, the closer it was, organisationally, to being a guerrilla detachment.

Having by its impotence and uselessness ensured that our opponent possessed numerical superiority, guerrilla-ism crowned everything by once again stabbing our army in the back when the decisive conflict occurred. From this we can see what miserable chatter it is to talk of the causes of our defeats lying in the methods of organisation of the Red Army. The truth is precisely the contrary: If the weakened Southern front has not collapsed, but has retained its cadres, this is precisely because it had been properly organised. Only thanks to this is it that the Southern front is now able to absorb into its framework tens and hundreds of thousands of fresh fighters, who will deal a mortal blow to the White Guards.

Organisation, like an individual, becomes best known for what it really is when a difficult moment arrives. That is the case now on the Southern front. Precisely in misfortune, in defeat and retreat, has it been fully demonstrated that the strongest regiments of all are those in which our Soviet military system has been best and most completely introduced.

Especially miserable are the attempts that are being made to re-kindle once more the question of the military specialists and to demand that it be 'reviewed'. Naturally, under the influence of defeats, the number of cases of betrayal increases. But no single traitor or renegade, nor all of them put together, did or could do so much harm to Soviet Russia as was done by guerrilla-ism in North Caucasia and by Makhnovism and Grigoriyevism in the Ukraine. For every traitor we have now hundreds of former officers who have bound their fate with the Red Army

and are working honourably and successfully.

Our recruitment of military specialists has been completely justified.

The division of labour between commanders and commissars, together with the close collaboration between them, has stood the test of experience and needs no changes.

This does not mean, of course, that all is well. No, we have many shortcomings – in the matter of supply, in the matter of commanding personnel, and in the matter of commissars and Communist cells. But this does not bring the system into question. The supply apparatus needs to be improved, worthless commanders need to be removed, traitors need to be shot. Weak commissars have to be replaced. Communist cells have to be checked in terms of their practice and purged of unworthy elements. This work must never be slackened, any more than the work of military training and political education of our Red Army units.

Today, when the Southern front is receiving such a substantial number of fresh political workers and commanders, there can be no doubt that the armies of the Southern front will be regenerated within a few weeks, and will show the impudent White-Guard swine that the Soviet military system, which proved its victoriousness in the fight against Kolchak, is perfectly capable of disposing of Denikin as well.

June 8, 1919  
Kozlov

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

## GREEN AND WHITE

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In the zone near the front there have recently appeared what are called 'Green' forces. What are they?

It is usually said that the Green bands consist of runaway soldiers, deserters, who do not want to fight for either side. At first sight, this is indeed how it seems: the *Red* forces are fighting for the freedom and independence of the working people, the *White* forces are fighting to restore the power of the landlords, the capitalists and the Tsar, and the *Greens* want merely to save their own skins, and so they go off and hide in the woods.

But, in fact, the results turn out differently. The latest intelligence tells us that *the Green bands have joined Denikin's army and are fighting on the side of the Whites against the workers and peasants*. How has this come about?

Very simply. The bulk of the Greens are, of course, ignorant self-seekers and cowards. But Denikin's officers are operating everywhere as secret organisers and provocateurs. If a White-Guard provocateur openly proposed to deserters and self-seekers to go over to Denikin, they would, of course, refuse, because they want to fight for the interests of the landlords even less than they want to fight for the interests of the working people. The Denikinites have therefore resorted to a cunning trick in order gradually to get the deserters under their control.

In various places secret White-Guard agents have appeared and started to gather deserters into Green bands, assuring them that in this way they will not have to fight either against the Reds or against the Whites. However, once the bands have been formed, they find themselves between two fires: on the one hand, the Soviet troops, and on the other, pressing them hard, the White Guards. The position of the Green bands, caught between hammer and anvil, becomes hopeless. Then the Denikin agents start to come out into the open: explaining to the deserters whom they have deceived that there is no other solution for them, they lead them into the camp of the Whites, under Denikin's protection. And Denikin begins to drive them before his machine-guns against the workers' and peasants' Red Army. In this way deserters who had hoped to escape from the war by hiding in the woods, find themselves in the front line of fire and are now being shot to death from both sides.

And that is quite as it should be. Between Reds and Whites, between landlords and peasants, a war to the death is being fought. There can be no room for Greens in this war. Better an open White-Guard enemy, whom you know, than a low-down 'Green' traitor who crouches for a time in the woods and then, when the Denikinites approach, sinks his knife in the back of the revolutionary fighters.

The Soviet power shows the greatest leniency to those deserters and draft-dodgers who honestly and of their own free will return to the ranks of the Red Army. But there can be no quarter for the bandits, self-seekers and looters who come together in 'Green' bands. They must be exterminated in good time. The woods and the *voivodas* must be purged of the 'Green' scoundrels.

Our Southern front has been strengthened and is preparing to strike the decisive blow. But before the Red regiments go over to the offensive against the Whites

along the whole front they will crush the 'Green' vermin under their heel, so as to ensure that their rear is secure.

The 'Green' is the worst enemy of the people. Strike your first blow at the 'Green'!

July 11, 1919, Voronezh  
*En Route, No.59*

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# **ORDER No.122**

**By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's  
Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, July 11, 1919, No.122, Voronezh**

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The presidium of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' and Red Army Men's Deputies has entrusted to me, as a gift from the Moscow Soviet, ten banners of honour, to be awarded to units which have distinguished themselves at the front. I have awarded two of these banners to the officer-cadets of Siberia and Samara, who covered themselves with glory in the fighting on the Southern front. The remainder will be awarded to the most distinguished of the regiments. On behalf of the Red Army I express fraternal thanks to the Moscow Soviet.

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# THE EAST AND THE SOUTH

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Our affairs in the East are going splendidly. The Red troops are tirelessly pursuing the beaten, disorganised and frightened bands of Kolchak. Kolchak's best regiments, that is, the ones made up of more conscious workers and peasants, are willingly surrendering to us. The less conscious are taking flight. There are evidently very few worker or peasant enthusiasts left who are ready to sacrifice their heads so that Admiral Kolchak's head may wear a crown. We have taken Zlatoust, are approaching Yekaterinburg and we are moving on Chelyabinsk. The Red garrison of Uralsk, which was for a time surrounded by White-Guard Cossacks, did not surrender, for it expected help from without. The help came: Soviet forces broke through the ring round Uralsk and linked up with its Red garrison.

Our brilliant victories in the East are of immense importance for the whole country. Very rich grain-growing regions have been opened up. The industry of the Urals has been restored to the workers and peasants. The factories of Perm and Zlatoust – and soon this will be true of those of the Yekaterinburg areas as well – are working in the interests of the Red Army. The Izhvesk works, wrested from Kolchak's hands, is already producing the rifles we so badly need. Great is our victory in the East. [\[53\]](#)

In the South victory has yet to come. We have only checked the enemy's offensive. But this is already a great thing. In the first place, it shows that Denikin has spent his forces and is played out. In the second place, this enables us to bring up reinforcements, supply and reorganise units which have fallen into disorder, and re-establish a powerful front. Soviet Russia is now engaged in doing just that.

Leading workers of the Southern front! Commissars, commanders, conscious Red Army men! Do not lose so much as a single hour. By checking the enemy's offensive we have gained a breathing-space. This breathing-space we must utilise to bring up to strength, supply, train and educate our units. Our work must go forward intensely and conscientiously. Tens of thousands of reinforcements have to be educated, disciplined, turned into good soldiers.

The Southern front must equal the Eastern front. We must prepare for Denikin the fate of Kolchak. We have sufficient forces and resources to do this, and they are growing day by day. All that is needed is to bring them to order, and then – forward!

The sun rises in the East, and at noon it stands over the South. So it is with our victory. This began on the Eastern front, and in the next few weeks the sun of victory will stand high over the Southern front, and light up our Red banners in Rostov, Novocherkassk and Yekaterinodar.

July 15, 1919

Bukreyevka-Korennaya Pustyn

[Korennaya Pustyn is about 30km north-east of Kursk, on the line from Orel.]

En Route, No.61

## Endnotes

53. On the course of the events in the East, see note 75 and the Chronology.

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# FINISH IT BEFORE WINTER COMES!

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We must finish with Denikin at all costs before winter comes. A winter campaign, a burdensome campaign, would demand great sacrifices in blood and *materiel*. We must do all that we can to avoid a winter campaign. There is only one way to ensure this: doubling and trebling the vigour we throw into our campaigns in the summer and autumn. We must put three riflemen where now stands only one, and five cavalrymen where now a single trooper sits astride his horse. This is perfectly possible. We are not short of men. The mobilisation of 19-year-olds and a section of the 18 year olds, together with the influx of peasants who previously failed to present themselves for call-up, means that we have a mighty, almost inexhaustible source of reinforcements for our army.

But this, by itself, is not enough.

We need commanders. The men we need are available in large numbers in various civilian posts, and have hitherto been carefully preserved from mobilisation by various Soviet institutions. The decree of the Defence Council directs commanders to the place where they ought to be – the front. From now on, any resistance by local authorities, any attempt to keep back or to conceal any valuable, experienced military worker is the worst sort of sabotage.

Besides officers of the old army we need new commanders. We must extend to the maximum the courses for training commanders. Here we most often come up against the question of accommodation. Local Soviet authorities frequently delay for months the opening or the extension of command courses on the pretext that the appropriate buildings are required for cultural purposes. Sometimes they keep their hands in this way on premises of the former Cadet Corps, which would be most suitable for the command courses. It would be hard to stigmatise strongly enough such short-sighted conduct. All cultural tasks now take second or third place in relation to the need to provide the Red Army with the thousand extra commanders it lacks. The shortage of commanders leads as often as not to our having temporarily to surrender to the enemy entire provinces, with all their cultural institutions and enterprises. No-one must presume to forget that Soviet Russia is an armed camp! Local Soviet institutions are now under orders, in the next few weeks, not only to provide the command courses with the most suitable accommodation, but also, generally, to ensure that these courses enjoy conditions, material and spiritual, such that the cadets may work at full stretch.

Supplies are needed. This is a fundamental question. We have to feed, clothe, shoe, equip and arm fresh hundreds of thousands of soldiers. All sources and means of supply must be mobilised and militarised. The country will, of course, suffer as a result. But it will suffer less than it would suffer from a long-drawn-out war. Mobilising a little, arming a little, fighting a little, proceeding 'by little packets', as the French say, is the most exhausting way of waging war. Gathering all forces, concentrating resources, focusing energy – that is the only proper way. In the last analysis it is *this* way that ensures the maximum economy of forces and resources, for it leads to decisive victory in the shortest possible time.

At the centre we have now achieved the necessary concentration of all organs and

institutions of army supply. It is necessary that the local institutions fully co-operate with the centre in this respect. Boots, underwear, overcoats – to the front! Make as many overcoats, pairs of boots and sets of underwear as possible. More and more! Lorries, light cars, motor-cycles – to the front! Local Soviet institutions have a lot of horses. The army suffers from a tremendous shortage of them. Horses – to the front! All this will naturally have a serious effect on life and work in the localities. But only for a time. Later on, this will be repaid a hundred fold. We have to finish the war as soon as possible, so as to be able to transfer *all*our forces and *all*our resources to economic and cultural work.

War is a harsh and burdensome business. But since we have been forced to wage war, we must do this in the proper way, so as to bring the war to an end as soon as we can. We can't pay on the instalment system for what war demands of us. We have to act at once, to buy it wholesale. Enough of the policy of 'little packets'. We must ensure in time the utmost concentration of forces and resources. During this summer and autumn we must finish with Denikin. The first snow of winter must become the shroud of the counter-revolution on the Don and in North Caucasia.

July 16, 1919

Vozy station – Ponyri

[Ponyri is on the Kursk-Orel line, just inside the Ukraine.]

*En Route*, No.61

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# CRIMINAL DEMAGOGY

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In the town of Sumy, that is, in the zone adjacent to the front, a newspaper called **Krasnaya Zvezda** is published, declaring itself to be the organ of the Kharkov Committee of the Bolshevik-Communists and of the political administration of the Kharkov Military District. There appeared in this paper's issue of July 10 a criminally demagogic article entitled: *Military specialists – or Red commanders?*

'We must consider as one of the main causes of the break-up of the Southern front,' says the article, 'the treachery of the commanding personnel, who went over in whole "packs" from the Red Army to Denikin.'

This entire sentence is a monstrous lie, made up of two statements each of which is itself a lie.

The Southern front has not broken up. The Southern front has suffered big defeats *as a result of the twofold and threefold superiority of numbers on the part of the enemy*. Denikin possessed this superiority because the Soviet forces in North Caucasia, who numbered 150,000 broke up completely in a few weeks – and there were no 'military specialists' among them. Instead, there were numerous bawlers and guerrillas who engaged in demagoggy. After our armies of the Southern front had proved to be incomparably weaker than the enemy, who had drawn large reinforcements from North Caucasia, Kuban, Odessa and the Crimea, some units on the Southern front began to break up. But where did this happen? On the extreme right flank, among Makhno's bands and among the troops of the former Kursk-Ukrainian group – that is where guerrilla-ism, the amateur principle and distrust of our military organisation prevailed most strongly.

The statement that commanding personnel of the Southern front went over 'in packs' to the enemy is false through and through. If we exclude the Kharkov group, which will be considered on its own, we find that throughout the remainder of the gigantic Southern front the cases of betrayal by commanders did not exceed single figures, whereas the cases of heroic death in action by members of the commanding personnel amounted to hundreds.

The writer of this criminally demagogic article does not take the trouble to think out why victories are being won by the forces of our Eastern front, which are wholly constructed on the principle of close, friendly collaboration between political workers and experienced commanders, many thousands of whom are drawn from the officer corps of the old army. The writer does not ask himself why it was that this same Southern front of ours won brilliant victories over Krasnov and got to within 20 versts of Novocherkassk. The writer has no notion of the facts, of the events, of the actual course of operations, of the weakening of our armies of the Southern front through the temporary concentration of all forces against Kolchak. The writer evidently has no notion, either, how North-Caucasian guerrilla-ism helped Denikin transfer large forces to the Don – and, being in ignorance of all that, he slanders both the Southern front in general and its commanders in particular. He asserts that the Southern front has broken up. Whereas in reality the Southern front has only suffered a temporary defeat, owing to the enemy's superiority in numbers. The writer alleges that commanders in all parts of the Southern front went over to Denikin in packs, whereas in fact, commanders went over to Denikin only on these

very small sectors of the Southern front where the entire organisation was worthless, where there was no order among the political workers, but instead confusion and demagogy reigned.

Demagogy is a sort of politics, of agitation, which leads those masses whose level of consciousness is low into delusions, by showing them false reasons for calamities suffered, giving them false information, and directing their thought along a false path of salvation: in short, demagogy is exactly what **Krasnaya Zvezda** is busy with, in the zone adjacent to the front.

Towards the end of this article it is said: 'We must understand the lesson given to us by the catastrophe (and how else can one describe the break-up of the Southern front?) which has befallen us in the struggle against Denikin! We must have the courage to recognise our previous mistakes. Our immediate slogan must be: "Long Live the Red Commander!"'

Here again we see a criminally demagogic distortion of the facts in the interests of a lying argument. From the grave experiences of the Southern front, one lesson emerges: under the blows of superior enemy forces those units broke up which lacked serious, capable commissars and experienced, responsible, serious commanders. Those armies held out best in which the military system established by the Soviet power had been introduced most fully. The worst-organised part of the Southern front, in all respects, was the Ukrainian corner. And the writer of the criminally-demagogic article ought, first and foremost, to study our Eastern front and the other sectors of the Southern front before he presumes to propound 'lessons' drawn from the experience, which has been wretched up to now, of Ukrainian amateurism.

Recently, that is after all the trials experienced on the Southern front, the political workers of two neighbouring armies of the Southern front reaffirmed at their conferences almost unanimously (with a single abstention in one of these armies, and two in the other), the complete and absolute correctness of our military policy. [\[54\]](#) And those are serious, responsible workers who have done a great deal in the last eighteen months to develop the Red Army. They certainly stand in no need of lessons from the windbag of **Krasnaya Zvezda**.

It is true that in the Kharkov sector a considerable number of betrayals occurred. But we have often observed on other fronts as well, during their infancy, how the work of sham-revolutionary demagogues has been complemented by treachery on the part of commanders. The overwhelming majority of the officers of the old army lacked even elementary political education. They easily lost their bearings when the slightest change occurred in the political situation. The prejudices of the petty-bourgeois milieu were strong among them. But at the same time our Party programme, which is opposed by the demagogues of **Krasnaya Zvezda**, speaks clearly and precisely of the methods by which the working class can and must make use of the experience of the military specialists: (1) general leadership of the life of the army and supervision of loyal specialists to be concentrated in the hands of organised representatives of the working masses: (2) relations of comradely collaboration to be established with the military specialists, creating conditions for them in which they can develop their powers.

There are Communists of a poor sort who treat military specialists as though they were accused persons, or simply persons under arrest, imagining that this is how to safeguard the interests of the revolution. Actually, in this way they impel unstable,

wavering members of the commanding personnel to seek safety in Denikin's camp.

Posts of command in parts of the Kharkov sector and other administrative positions were given to military specialists whose families were resident in Kharkov. When Kharkov was captured, these 'specialists' preferred to remain with their families. Many of them probably thought, in their political naiveté that the surrender of Kharkov meant the downfall of Soviet power, for among the former officers there are many politically ignorant simpletons who suppose that Denikin can halt the course of the revolution, just as previously they believed in the power of Hetman Skoropadsky. Of course, these commanders who fling themselves from one camp into the other, or who simply fear being cut off from their families, do not constitute the best of human material. How prudent was it to put them in a situation where the place of residence of their own families would incline them towards going over to the enemy's camp? Whose fault was that? The fault of the local Soviet military organisation.

There is no doubt that among those who remained in Kharkov there were a certain number of direct agents of Denikin, men who were already on his payroll earlier. World counter revolution is fighting its last fight against us, and for the disintegration of our units, in particular, bribery of commanders is one of the important methods it uses. We must and will keep a sharp look-out for the activity of counter-revolutionary scoundrels who have penetrated our ranks. But at the same time we shall not allow unbalanced windbags and demagogues to hinder serious Party workers in their task of building a properly organised army, especially by employing qualified commanders on a wide scale.

On July 9, the Central Committee of our Party addressed an open letter to all organisations, in which the question of the military situation is examined.

The Central Committee notes that now, in this period of extremely acute struggle on the Western and Southern fronts, attempts at bribery and cases of treachery are becoming more frequent, and calls for attention and vigilance on the part of all the army's responsible workers.

'But', the Central Committee goes on, 'it would be an irreparable mistake and unforgivable weakness of will if this were to result in bringing up the question of altering the foundations of our military policy.' Hundreds of military specialists have betrayed us and will betray us, and we shall catch them and shoot them; but thousands and tens of thousands of military specialists are working with us, systematically and conscientiously, and without them we could not have created that Red Army which has grown out of the guerrilla-ism of accursed memory and has shown itself able to win brilliant victories in the East. Experienced persons who are at the head of our War Department point out, rightly, that where the Party's policy concerning military specialists and concerning the eradication of guerrilla-ism has been implemented most strictly, where discipline is firmest, where the political work of commissars is carried out most carefully – there, by and large, we find the fewest cases of military specialists wanting to betray us, and the least possibility for such of them that there may be to realise their intentions: in those places there is no slackness in the army, its bearing and spirit are at the highest level, and most victories are won. Guerrilla-ism, with its traces, vestiges and survivals, has caused both our republic and the Ukrainian republic incomparably more disasters, collapses, catastrophes and losses of war material than all the betrayals by military specialists.

[\[55\]](#)

Our Party programme defined the policy of the Communist Party with complete

precision both regarding the general question of bourgeois specialists and regarding the particular question of one variety thereof, the military specialists. Our Party combats and will 'carry on a merciless struggle against the seemingly radical, but actually ignorant and conceited opinion that the working people can overcome capitalism and the bourgeois order without learning from bourgeois specialists, without utilising them, without undergoing a *long schooling* through work alongside them.' At the same time the Soviet power will, as before, and more effectively than before, deal with traitors and acts of betrayal.

This voice is clear. What to the demagogue of **Krasnaya Zvezda** seems the last word in wisdom, the conclusion to be drawn from all experience, is called by our Central Committee 'pseudo-radical, ignorant conceit'. The Central Committee calls for 'merciless struggle' against this ignorant conceit. It is perfectly clear that the work of educating the Red Army masses cannot be entrusted to ignorant conceit.

The army needs serious, responsible political workers. There is no place among them for demagogues.

July 17, 1919  
Vorozhba Station

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## Endnotes

**54.** The correctness of the military policy of the Central Committee of the RCP(B) and the People's Commissar for Military Affairs was confirmed at the conference of political workers of the Eighth Army held at Vorenezh on July 11, 1919 and at the conference of responsible Party workers on the Thirteenth Army and the Livny organization of the RCP(B) on July 13, 1919

**55.** The process of transforming guerrilla armies into regular armies took place with particular slowness in the Ukraine. The Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukraine noted in its resolution of August 4: 'There is still an almost complete lack of a proper network of political commissars, of discipline, of trained commanders, of organised supply, and of a properly organised administration ... The principal reason for this is that the creation of a regular army in the Ukraine is having to proceed amid the most intense civil war, in the confusion of still-surviving guerrilla-ism.'

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# ORDER No.126

**By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the forces on the Southern front, July 18, 1919, No. 126, Smorodino station.**

[Order No. 126 was published in an English translation in **Soviet Russia** for February 14, 1920, and that translation was reproduced in **Leon Trotsky speaks** (Pathfinder 1972) p.133.]

\* \* \*

**During our retreat, Denikin's counter-revolutionary bands committed indescribable crimes against the workers and peasants in the provinces temporarily seized by them.**

The Red Army, along with the working population, is filled with hatred for the White-Guard oppressors and thugs.

Now, when the armies of the Southern front are taking the offensive there is ground for fear that the just indignation of the Red soldiers may in some cases lead to the killing of White-Guard officers taken prisoner.

In view of this possibility, I deem it my duty to address to all fighters on the Southern front these words of warning: Comrade Red-Army-men, commanders, commissars! Let your just anger be directed only against the enemy with arms in his hands. Spare the prisoners, even those who are known scoundrels. Among the prisoners and those who come over to us will be found a considerable number of such who had joined Denikin's army either through ignorance or under compulsion. Denikin's generals spread among the soldiers and junior officers whom they have conscripted lying rumours to the effect that the Red forces kill their prisoners. By this means the Denikinites seek, on the one hand, to confuse their soldiers and officers, so as to prevent them from going over to our side, and, on the other, to embitter their men and cause them to engage in bestial pogroms against the workers and peasants.

This makes it all the more important for us to show Denikin's soldiers and officers that we kill only enemies. Whoever admits his guilt, whoever comes over to our side with an honest intention, or whoever falls into our hands as a prisoner will be spared.

I issue this order:

Prisoners are no case to be killed, but are to be sent to the rear, under the orders of the nearest command. Commanders and commissars are to check most strictly on the fulfilment of this order.

All cases of violation of it are to be reported through the proper channels, so that the Revolutionary Military Tribunal may immediately go to the place where the crime was committed.

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# THE HARVEST AND THE WAR

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The crops in the fields of the Ukraine are very rich. The cornfields are coming luxuriantly into ear. They threatened us that, in the absence of the landlords, the gendarmes and the Tsar, the land would cease to bear fruit. But nature does not commit sabotage. The rain moistens the land, the sun warms it, the shoots become stalks, the stalks bring forth ears – and all this goes on without landlords, gendarmes or a Tsar. There is only one difference: previously, the lion's share of the crop went into the capitalist's bin, whereas now it all belongs to the peasants and the workers.

It is the same with the factories. Coal is just as capable of burning in the blast furnaces, a steam hammer is just as capable of beating out iron, and a steam-driven saw cuts planks just as it did before, without the help of any manufacturer, any capitalist. The landlord and the manufacturer are thus not needed by the economy. They are like boils on the body: they contribute nothing to the organism but merely suck out its substance. With this plentiful harvest the country would be set to rights in a few months, and it would be restored to full life if the coal and iron of the Donets were in the hands of the workers.

How quickly would our economy, the people's wealth, expand if we could bring back the workers and peasants from all our fronts to the factories and fields! The war has dragged on for too long. The workers and peasants of the Ukraine and of all Russia are too slow in cleansing their land, their towns and villages, of the accursed enemies who are disrupting the people's wealth and the people's well-being.

We must finish it as quickly as possible. We must cleanse the Donets Basin and North Caucasia. We must recover Baku. Then coal, iron, cast iron and oil will bring to life the economy of the whole country. The Urals have already been freed. Very soon the cotton of Turkestan will reach us. We must finish the final blow at the accursed enemies of the working class, and cleanse the Ukrainian land of the Tsarist generals and the minor bandits – the Grigoriyevs, Zelyonys, Angels, Makhnos and the rest – and then the Soviet Ukraine will step out, hand in hand with Soviet Great Russia, on the broad road of economic prosperity and spiritual development.

One final exertion, one final effort is needed. We must carry through faultlessly the mobilisation of men, horses and all the necessary forces and resources.

The heavy ears of wheat in the fields of the Ukraine show the economic might that all the workers and peasants of Russia will be able to develop if they pursue their cause to the end. Let us press still harder, workers and peasants! The last pass to be crossed lies ahead. Beyond it are freedom, prosperity and happiness.

July 19, 1919  
Lokhvitsa-Romodan  
[Lokhvitsa is north of Romodan, on the line from Konotop.]  
En Route, No.66

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# REALITY AND 'CRITICAL' CHATTER

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In the **Izvestiya V.Ts.I.K.** of July 10 we read this in an article by Tarasov-Rodionov: 'Denikin's sudden attack teaches us that we must now pay attention principally not so much to the quantity as to the quality of our forces.' [\[56\]](#) If these words mean anything at all, they must be understood to signify that we had a great superiority in terms of quantity on the Southern front, whereas Denikin enjoyed superiority in terms of quality. And so the perspicacious author of the article in **Izvestiya** wants to explain to us that we need to replace large quantity by good quality. Whence comes this 'lesson'? What is the source of this information? It is a concoction, pure and simple. Actually, Denikin's success was wholly and entirely due to the superiority of larger over smaller numbers. It is not possible at the present time to elucidate in the press all the problems connected with this circumstance. But it is necessary to get certain facts and certain 'criticisms' in perspective, so as to stop the row which idle-minded persons like Tarasov-Rodionov, with the connivance of certain editorial boards, are kicking up around the most acute problems affecting our armed forces at the fronts.

If Denikin's 'sudden attack' teaches serious people anything it is, precisely, that even if one has troops of the highest quality, such as were the majority of those on the Southern front (with the exception of the right flank), one cannot allow the quantity of these troops to fall below a certain level.

Many comrades, even those whose approach to all problems, including military ones, is incomparably more conscientious than Tarasov-Rodionov's, are inclined to forget that our forces on the Southern front are waging in one and the same region, their second campaign in the course of the last six months. After smashing Krasnov's army, the Red forces encountered the very substantial forces of Denikin. These forces had been brought up from the Kuban and North Caucasia, and, in part, from the Crimea and Odessa.

The central Soviet government was aware, of course, that behind Krasnov's, several hundred versts away, Denikin's forces were present, and it did not close its eyes to this danger. But at the same time we knew that there were in the Kuban and North Caucasia, fighting against Denikin, Soviet forces numbering between 150,000 and 200,000 men. This army, which was so huge in quantity, also, in the persons of its own local Tarasov-Rodionovs, evaluated its quality very highly, boasting especially that it was not constructed in accordance with the 'bureaucratic' system generally in force in Soviet Russia, that it did not want to know anything about old-fashioned regulations and statutes, or military specialists, but was, at the same time, on the highest level as a fighting force. At the centre, of course, we took with a pinch of salt this self-estimation by guerrillas who, as usual, did not call themselves guerrillas but always swore devotion to the idea of a properly organised army. Nevertheless, we at the centre never expected this shameful collapse on the part of helpless, amateur detachments with ignorant commanders – a collapse which, at one blow, freed Denikin's forces and enabled him to advance to the line of the Don and the Northern Donets. In addition to this, as is well known the guerrillas on the right flank of the Southern front themselves broke up and decomposed entirely.

The leading workers of the Southern front had frequently warned the centre of possible complications. Thus, Comrade Sokolnikov wired Moscow on April 21: 'The slowing-down in operations on the Southern front is due to the break-up of the "N" Army, which is now in need of reconstruction from top to bottom, together with the complete incapacity for fighting shown by Makhno's units. The enemy has been given a respite of which he has made excellent use, to transfer what are undoubtedly substantial forces from the Kuban and Caucasia. Instead of the beaten Don Army we are now faced by a new army which has forces that are fresher than ours. Up to now, the enemy has not succeeded in wresting the initiative from us, but he is carrying out a thorough regrouping of his units, while at the same time reorganising them into larger fighting formations, and we can regard it as definite that the probable direction of this blow will be the centre of the half-ring that envelops him, the Lugansk-Kanienskaya sector. By this plan, of course, Denikin aims to link up with the rebels on the middle Don, dividing us deeply into two parts, and once more raising the Don Region against us. Our position cannot yet be considered shaky, but over the last two months the relation of forces has altered in the enemy's favour and it is continuing to alter in that direction.

Later, Comrade Sokolnikov refers to the revolt in the rear, which has in turn diverted forces from a front which was already weakened, and comes to this conclusion: 'Our practical task is to prevent a White-Guard come-back on the Southern front like the come-back on the Eastern front - a come-back which is imminent owing to the stationary state of our forces while the enemy is growing stronger. Forces need to be brought here from the fronts of secondary importance ... We must establish the principle that *the front in the Donets Basin is the most important front in the Ukraine* ... Without disturbing the concentrated attention and energy being focused by wide circles on the Eastern front, we need now to see a number of organisational measures taken to safeguard us against defeats in the South' ... That was Comrade Sokolnikov's eloquent telegram.

At that period, however, the centre, even though recognising the seriousness of the warning given, was obliged for the time being to sacrifice the interests of the Southern front for the sake of the Eastern front. The Ukraine, to which care of the Donets Basin was entrusted, proved to be still in no position to furnish units that were at all reliable. As a result, the armies of the Southern front, worn out by months of ceaseless struggle, in which they had advanced several hundred versts through snow and spring mud, and weakened in numbers, faltered when they came up against fresh enemy forces, splendidly armed and equipped, which on many sectors of the front were twice or three times as numerous as our men.

Thanks to the protracted, self-sacrificing and persistent work of the best Communists and the best military specialists, the Southern front acquired during last autumn and winter a stable organisation and firm, reliable cadres, and included in its ranks a number of heroic regiments and divisions. If this front gave way, that happened only because it had not received adequate reinforcements, so that the expenditure of human material exceeded the inflow. The inevitable consequence was that the cadres became worn out. This simple cause of our defeats, incontrovertible because based on facts and figures, cannot, one would have supposed, provide any grounds for chatter about the workers in the War Department favouring quantity at the expense of quality. Our Party, which, starting last autumn, has sent thousands upon thousands of the best proletarian Communists to the Southern front, has no need of Tarasov-Rodionov's explanation of the military importance of quality.

It is true that phenomena of demoralisation and breakdown were observed on the Southern front. But these occurred almost exclusively on the extreme right flank, that is, where, in the words of Comrade Sokolnikov's telegram, it was still necessary to 'reconstruct the forces from top to bottom', subordinating them to the regime generally obtaining in the Soviet forces. In so far as isolated manifestations of breakdown were observed also in other units on the Southern front, they resulted from the heavy blows received, the retreats imposed and the losses suffered – that is, they were inevitable as psychological consequences of the physical superiority of Denikin's forces. And the only conclusion that emerges from the facts is that it was solely thanks to the exceptionally high quality of the armies of the Southern front that they not only preserved their cadres under the ferocious blows of the enemy's superior forces, but also showed that they were fully capable of absorbing large reinforcements in a short time, and endowing them with the necessary steadiness. Now, when the entire task of the rear consists in providing the man-power needed to bring the cadres of the Southern Army up to strength, Tarasov-Rodionov's critical exercises on the theme that what matters is not quantity but quality strongly recall the wishes expressed by that sage who at funerals used to say: 'So many corpses – you'll never carry them all!' and at weddings: 'Vigil and incense.'

July 19, 1919

Bakhmach

[Bakhmach is on the line from Konotop to Kiev.]

*En Route*, No. 65

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## Endnotes

**56.** The **Izvestsyia V.Ts.I.K.** of July 10, 1919 carried an article by Comrade Tarasov-Rodionov entitled *A company of Communists*, in which, on the basis of experience of the way Communists were being used in one division on the Southern front, he drew conclusions regarding the lack of organisation and direction in the way that these precious forces were being utilised in the army.

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# ORDER No.129

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Red Army, July 21, 1919, No. 129,  
Kremenchug

\* \* \*

The Council of People's Commissars has undertaken to supply the families of Red Army men with the most necessary articles of consumption, and therefore, instead of increasing pay in terms of money, which under present economic conditions would by no means always produce the desired result, it has arranged for the Red Army men's families to be provided for in kind. However, the decree by which Red Army men's families are to be supplied with rations, together with the decree obliging local Soviets to help Red Army men's families with their farm work, are far from everywhere being complied with. [\[57\]](#) In those places where kulaks are at the head of the village and *volost* soviets, Red Army men's families are left without help. It also happens that in town soviets, too, proper care is not taken of Red Army men's families. This situation must be ended. *The families of Red Army men must be looked after.* This can be achieved by persistent checking in the localities on the way the decrees are being observed, and calling to account those soviet institutions which are not showing proper concern for the families of Red Army men. I hereby order:

- The Revolutionary War Councils of the armies, through orders issued to their respective armies, to call on all Red Army men who have had news from home that their families are dissatisfied to hand over such letters, or authenticated copies thereof, to the commissar of their unit, for passing up to the Revolutionary War Council of the given army.
- The Revolutionary War Councils immediately to make known to the military commissar of the *uyezd* concerned, whose responsibility this is, to investigate the complaint, strictly, on the spot, and to ensure that those at fault fulfil their duty to satisfy the legitimate demands of the Red Army men's families.

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## Endnotes

[57.](#) Both of the decrees mentioned were of great importance in helping the families of men called up into the Red Army. The first decree by the Council of People's Commissars, *On ploughing and sowing on the holdings of Red Army conscripts*, was issued on March 20, 1919, and ordered all Land Departments and rural Soviets to take all measures necessary to ensure the ploughing of the fields in question, giving extensive aid and conscripting labour. Subsequently, the People's Commissar for Military Affairs was asked to agree to giving Red Army men leave during those periods when they were needed for work in the fields. The decision of the Defence Council on ensuring that Red Army men's families were adequately fed was taken on August 20, 1919. By this decision, the families of Red Army men were to receive an additional ration on production of their 'Red Star' food-cards

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# THERE MUST BE ORDER

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At the moment, what the Soviet Ukraine needs more than anything else is firm order. The struggle against the Germans, against Skoropadsky, against Petlyura, and against the French and British has shaken the country up and unsettled many people, and consequently, has made it hard to establish order. But order is necessary, firm workers'-and-peasants' Soviet order. All forces and all resources must be accounted for and properly distributed. So long as we are at war, the bulk of forces and resources must go to the army.

First and foremost, an end must be put to banditry. It is impossible to tolerate for one day longer a situation in which depraved scoundrels calling themselves atamans and *batkos* assemble equally depraved bands, and plunder the peaceful population, smash railway installations, organise the derailing of trains, and destroy hundreds and thousands of human lives. We must completely exterminate all the Grigoriyevs, Zelyonys and Makhnos and all their kulak helpers and accomplices.

Firm order must be established in the Red Army. Experience has shown that the bravest Ukrainian detachments sometimes retreat without justification before Denikinite units, merely because the Ukrainian detachments still lack proper organisation and fail to observe with the necessary care the rules of guard-mounting, reconnaissance and liaison.

A review of the garrison of Poltava which had been ordered for nine o'clock on July 21 did not begin until ten, simply because certain units of the garrison were an hour and more late in turning up. This is unacceptable, and testifies to absolute slovenliness on the part of the commanders and commissars. What will happen on the battlefield to a unit which, under peaceful garrison conditions, turns up an hour late for a parade which had been announced the previous day? A rule must be firmly laid down in the Ukrainian army: the commander and the commissar are answerable for every hour. The Ukrainian military commissars put up with disorders and connive not only at faults but also at real crimes. This practice must cease. Commissars – the military commissars of units in particular – must act as bearers of the idea of revolutionary Soviet order and firm discipline.

Many Ukrainian commanders allow themselves to commit unheard-of violations of the rules and regulations. Commanders of units grab workers and peasants who have been mobilised in a certain locality for service in that locality, and arbitrarily embody them in their own units.

Work in the units is carried on in a slack way. Negligence is apparent in everything. Weapons are badly looked after.

Many commanders think to win the love of their units by making no demands on the comrade Red Army men. But when it comes to fighting, the unit will see how helpless it is, and will curse the commander and the commissar who took up a slovenly attitude to the training and education of their soldiers. Many soldiers who have suffered the hardships and trials of war find themselves left without boots or uniforms. It is painful and disgusting to see honourable fighters having to walk barefoot, and wearing filthy, lice-ridden shirts. And, on the other hand, there are not a few self-seekers and scoundrels who get into units as volunteers, obtain

uniforms, and then at once set off for home. Others roam from one unit to another. This low-down behaviour must be stopped, with an iron hand. Deliberate plunderers of army property must be punished ruthlessly.

The Ukraine can quickly become a rich and happy land. The Ukrainian army can quickly become an invincible army. But, for this, there must be order.

Down with slovens, loafers, gasbags and sluggards!

Death to bandits, impenitent self-seekers and looters!

Long live firm revolutionary order, everywhere and in everything!

July 21, 1919

Poltava

*En Route*, No.66

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# ORDER No.130

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the troops stationed or in action on the territory of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic, July 22, 1919, No.130, Kremenchug

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The numerous military goods-trains which move along the railways of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic very frequently fail to arrive at their destinations. The most usual reason for this is that certain military units intercept these goods-trains *en route*, regardless of their destinations, and take them for their own use. Such conduct is the worst sort of banditry, and is often equivalent to treason, since there have been many cases when active units have found themselves without arms or ammunition at a critical moment, merely because the supplies intended for them had been intercepted by somebody on the way.

*I order* that arbitrary seizure of army property is henceforth to be punished as the gravest crime against the state. Commanders and commissars of units guilty of arbitrary seizure will be subjected to severest punishment, on the same footing as bandits, regardless of all their previous services.

This order is to be presented for their signature, to all commanders and commissars of individual Units, and likewise to station commandants, for them to pass on to commanders of military trains.

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# ORDER No.131

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's  
Commissar of Military and Naval Affairs to the Fourteenth Army, July 22, 1919, No.131,  
Kremenchug

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Certain units of the 14th Army are, as before, engaging in self-reinforcement, that is, they are accepting volunteers from the neighbouring villages and *volosts*, and sometimes also seizing persons mobilised by the *uyezd* commissariats. I inform all commanders and commissars of the 14th Army that this mode of self-reinforcement is *absolutely forbidden* by the central military authority. The volunteers brought into a regiment usually lack the necessary training, easily give way to panic, and render the unit in which they serve incapable of fighting. Furthermore, self-seekers often join a unit in the guise of volunteers, with the aim of obtaining a rifle and boots and then going off home.

Volunteers are immediately to be sent to the rear, so as to be enrolled in holding units, from which drafts can be sent to the appropriate regiments. Any other way of bringing units up to strength is absolutely impermissible. Commanders and commissars whose units engage in self-reinforcement will hence forth be brought before the Revolutionary Military Tribunal, just as for disobeying a military order.

This order is to be made known to all commanders and commissars of the 14th Army and personally signed by them.

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# ORDER No.132

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's  
Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Twelfth and Fourteenth Armies July 26,  
1919, No.132, Korenyevo station

[Korenyevo is on the line linking Kursk with Konotop, between Legov and Vorozhba.]

1. The state farms of the Ukrainian SSR the zone adjoining the front are placed, by agreement with the Defence Council, under the protection of the active armies. Thanks to the very bountiful harvest, the state farms will enable us to overcome, during the year that lies ahead, the shortage of food in the towns of the Ukraine and Great Russia. They will at the same time provide for the feeding of the army. It is now necessary that the armies guard the state farms from damage and devastation, both intentional and unintentional.

All consequent measures will be taken by the Revolutionary War Council of the army, through the proper channels. The purpose of these measures will be to create conditions under which there can be no misappropriation of livestock or equipment, or of stocks of fodder or foodstuffs belonging to state farms, whether sugar-producing or grain-producing, and no arson or other destructive acts can be committed against them. The Revolutionary War Council of the relevant army will make contact with the local *uyezd* land departments, obtain from them all the information needed concerning the location of the state farms and the dangers to which they are subject, and will take appropriate steps, assigning the implementation of measures for the protection of the state farms in each sector to the relevant divisional commissars. Where necessary, the Revolutionary War Councils will appoint assistants to the divisional commissars for the purpose mentioned. In case of need, the divisional commissars will mount patrols, and will draw the local executive committees into the work of guarding the state farms. In places where this action is called for, they will take hostages, by agreement with the local authority: in short, they will take all measures that may serve to give real protection to the state farms.

In those cases where kulak elements try to damage the state farms in one way or another, the Revolutionary War Councils are required to act ruthlessly in order to safeguard the people's property and the food supplies of the working masses.

2. At the same time, the special food committees of the 12th and 14th Armies are ordered to take, with full co-operation from the Revolutionary War Councils of the armies mentioned, all the measures within their power to assist the Land Departments in reaping and collecting the crops of the state farms.

For this purpose, the armies' special food committees, together with the larger Land Departments, will set up a temporary commission for bringing in the harvest, which commission will have full power to take emergency measures, such as conscription of workers and means of transport, on the basis of labour-service. The Revolutionary War Councils of the armies are obliged to furnish all the armed forces needed for this to be done.

In all cases, the armies' special food committees are to act jointly with the *uyezd* land departments: only where the latter do not exist are they to act independently. Strict care is to be taken to ensure that all measures are in conformity with existing

decrees.

It is to be widely made known to the Red Army men that protection and timely harvesting of the state farm crops means looking after the interests of the Red Army, for the food-stocks of the 12th and 14th Armies will, in accordance with the decision of the Defence Council, be replenished, first and foremost, from the crops of the state farms. The Defence Council of the Ukrainian SSR is to be informed of all measures taken, not less frequently than twice a week.

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# ORDER No.134

By the chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the commanders and commissars of the Ninth Army of the Southern Front, July 29, 1919, No.134, Penza

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The Ninth Army of the Southern Front has many military achievements to its credit. Having been formed to a considerable extent out of guerrilla detachments, it was brought into line last autumn and acquired a regular organisation. There were cases of insubordination and misbehaviour on the part of individual commanders. The tribunal punished the disorganisers severely. The discipline of the commanding personnel became a model for the Red Army men. If the *discipline of the commanders* has weakened in any way during the retreat, it must be restored and raised to the proper level.

The Ninth Army has suffered more than others. It fell back under heavy blows from a very powerful enemy. The break-up of the Soviet guerrilla armies of North Caucasia had freed Denikin's forces in North Caucasia and made it possible for them to be transferred to the Don and the Northern Donets. That was the reason for the defeat of the Southern front and of the Ninth Army in particular.

Denikin has now used up all his reserves. He no longer enjoys numerical superiority. Our armies of the Southern front have been brought up to strength with fresh replacements and have received substantial reinforcements. The supply service has been brought up to scratch. The Southern front has been provided with all it needs. The task now is only to allocate the supplies that have been made available, as required, among the units. It is the duty of commanders and commissars to watch most attentively over the rapid and energetic movement of supplies and their precise distribution among the units and the Red Army men. During the next few days it must be ensured that every soldier is fed, clothed, shod and armed.

The entire country is now concerned about the Southern front. Commanders, commissars, and after them, Red Army men, must realise we are now *already considerably stronger than Denikin on the Southern front*. Our forces are growing with exceptional speed. Military echelons and through goods-trains are moving southward in an unbroken stream. We now have to organise all this and to become inspired with the idea of a *decisive offensive*.

*The Ninth Army has, with others, been retreating for a long time. This fact has to a certain extent told on the morale not only of the rank-and-file but also of the commanders and commissars. There have been isolated instances of treachery and desertion to the enemy by responsible commanders. Individual traitors and fools were found who imagined that Denikin was capable of halting the great world-wide process of the workers' and peasants' revolution, just as, earlier, the more retarded section of the former officers believed in the omnipotence of Skoropadsky. The treachery of short-sighted careerists cannot, of course, induce the Soviet power to change its policy regarding the former officers, the immense majority of whom are honourably and courageously serving the working class and the working peasantry in the ranks of the Red Army.*

*The task of the commanders and commissars of the Ninth Army is now to prepare the army for a decisive offensive during the next few weeks. In every unit the commanders and political workers must be checked on. They must be imbued with redoubled energy and conscientiousness in their work. It must be explained to all the Red Army men that we are now both stronger numerically and also better armed than our enemy. In the units held in reserve, in the holding battalions, training must be carried on at the highest intensity, and in this training extensive use must be made of the experience of recent clashes with Denikin's forces, especially his cavalry.*

The armies of the Southern front are ordered to go over to the attack and smash our last large-scale enemy. The Soviet Republic expects that the Ninth Army will do its duty along with the rest. Commanders, commissars, and all responsible workers generally in the Ninth Army must henceforth make their watchword: 'Another two or three weeks of continuous, intensive preparations for the offensive, and then a swift, irresistible charge southward, until Denikin's forces have been completely annihilated!'

With this watchword I greet the glorious Ninth Army!

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# **ORDER No.135**

**By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Red Army on the Southern Front, August 1, 1919,  
No.135, Voronezh**

\* \* \*

According to information received, certain army units are not always showing sufficient regard for the local population. A complete change needs to be made in this respect. The peasants of the zone adjoining the front already understand very well that the Red forces of the Southern front are their only defence against the unbridled Denikinite bands, who destroy crops, burn down villages, kill peasants and rape peasant women. The overwhelming majority of the local peasants willingly do what they can to help the Red Army. Commissars and commanders must see to it that, when army units need something, they apply through the village and *volost* authorities, for it is senseless and criminal to take by force when the peasants are willing to give.

In fraternal unity between the Red Army and the peasants and workers lies the salvation of the Soviet Republic!

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# ORDER No.136

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army and the Red Navy, August 2, 1919, No.136, Vorozhba

\* \* \*

On August 5, 1918, beneath the walls of Kazan, which had been captured by the Whites, a small group of Red forces came into being. On August 10 this group was given, by order, the title of the Fifth Army. [\[58\]](#) The best workers of Moscow, Petrograd and the whole country helped this small detachment to become a strong, unified, victorious army. In the fight against the Czechoslovaks and in the fight against Kolchak the Fifth Army occupied and is occupying one of the foremost places.

In greeting the Fifth Army on the anniversary of its birth, I consider it my duty to hand over to the army the banner of honour I have received from the Moscow Soviet for awarding to a valiant unit. To this banner is pinned the Order of the Red Banner, which distinction will henceforth be borne by the Fifth Army as a whole.

When the Fifth Army is discharged, after our final victory over the enemy, its banner of honour will find a place in the Museum of the Red Army, as a sacred revolutionary relic.

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## Endnotes

[58.](#) On the creation of the Fifth Army, see note 28.

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# HAND IN YOUR RIFLE!

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The Red Army is growing not just daily but hourly. Hundreds of thousands of peasants who hitherto had evaded conscription are now presenting themselves voluntarily and asking to be enrolled in the army so as to wage ruthless struggle against the landlords' army of Denikin. Many thousands of Great-Russian peasants have come to the Ukraine. Many thousands of Ukrainian workers and peasants are fighting on the Great-Russian sectors of the Southern front. The army is growing rapidly. But the production of arms is not keeping pace with the growth of the army.

*We need rifles.* We could immediately put twice and three times as many soldiers in the field if the country were not short of weapons.

Every rifle hidden among the civil population means a crime committed against the Red Army.

*There are a lot of rifles in the hands of the civil population in the Ukraine.* Considerable numbers of peasants have not surrendered their rifles because they think that, if the need should arise, they will look after their own defence against Denikin. A false and fatal calculation! Isolated peasant bands, hastily armed, are incapable of opposing Denikin's forces. We need regular, well-organised units, united by a firm command. The peasants of Kharkov and Yekaterinoslav provinces, who concealed their rifles, thereby helped Denikin to conquer these provinces and to set the landlord and the gendarmes once more on the backs of the working peasants.

The Red Army needs weapons. Given a sufficient number of rifles, we shall wipe Denikin's landlord bands off the face of the earth within a few weeks. The Ukrainian peasants possess that sufficient number of rifles. Whoever does not hand in his rifle is helping Denikin and is a traitor to the working people.

*Ukrainian peasant! If you have a rifle, hand it in at once to the nearest military commissariat or to the headquarters of the nearest unit.* With this rifle we shall arm your son, your brother, or, perhaps, you yourself, if you are of call-up age. This rifle is a weapon of struggle for the freedom and independence of the peasants.

The Red Army demands this of you, Ukrainian peasant:

'Hand in your rifle.'

August 2, 1919  
Bakhmach  
En Route, No.73

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# WHO BETRAYED POLTAVA?

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Poltava was ingloriously surrendered. While we can say about Kharkov and Yekaterinoslav that the enemy took us unawares, that argument will not do where Poltava is concerned. After the surrender of Kharkov and Yekaterinoslav we had time to prepare. Furthermore, not long before Poltava was lost we had taken Konstantinograd. Things seemed to be going well. Then, suddenly ... Poltava fell.

'They betrayed us,' says one Red Army man. 'For sure, the commanders at headquarters betrayed us,' 'They betrayed us,' a second repeats. 'It's obvious, they were bought,' adds a third, and even some Communists (presumably not very serious ones) have said at meetings: 'Poltava was surrendered owing to treachery by the commanders.'

I don't know about that, comrade Red Army men, I don't know at all! It may well be that there were some traitors, agents of Denikin, among the commanders in our Poltava army – and also, perhaps, among the Red Army men. But they could not have surrendered Poltava. There are traitors in our armies on the Eastern Front, too, yet we are advancing very well on that front, and giving Kolchak an excellent beating.

Traitors cannot do much harm in an army that is well organised and unified, a fighting, disciplined, firmly-welded army. Traitors are dangerous in an army which is not yet firmly set on its feet, an army which staggers, reels and stumbles. And such an army as that the Ukrainian army still is.

You want to know, comrade Red Army men, who it was that betrayed Poltava? I will tell you honestly: Poltava was betrayed by *disorder in the Red Army itself*. Two of our regiments, from the brigade of the bandit Bagunsky, took off when they felt like it and disappeared into the blue. That's who betrayed Poltava. When an unsatisfactory commander is replaced, the self-seekers and idlers start a protracted discussion: shall we or shall we not accept the new commander appointed by the Soviet power? Where military orders are concerned the same thing happens: talk, gossip, discussion ... Section and platoon commanders, and lower-level commanders generally, often take their line not from the orders they receive but from the self-seekers in their sections and platoons. That's how Poltava was betrayed!

Do they observe strictly the rules for mounting guards? No, they do not. Our Ukrainian units often let themselves be taken by surprise. Do they carry out serious reconnaissance? No, reconnaissance is carried out in 'anyhow' fashion. Do they maintain proper liaison? Do they send reports when they should? No and no. They do whatever chances to come into their heads, or just act 'as things happen'. There is no order, no discipline, no strict responsibility. Everyone, blames someone else: the Red Army man blames his commanders and wrongly accuses headquarters of treachery, while weak, inexperienced commanders put the blame on the Red Army men.

Denikin exploits this situation. His agents roam around all over the place, spreading rumours: 'Poltava was sold, Denikin bribed the headquarters staff.' Credulous people listen to this and fools repeat it. Uncertainty, wavering, distrust

sets in among the Red Army men, and this suits Denikin very well. In this way he can beat the Ukrainian army with his bare hands!

No, comrades, this empty gossip must stop. It was not traitors who surrendered Poltava, but your own disorderliness. We must now begin to drive this disorderliness out of every corner where it exists, and where necessary take a red-hot iron to it. No trace of impunity for misconduct must be allowed to remain. Every Red Army soldier will answer to the Soviet Republic for every step he takes. A soldier is a soldier, an order is an order! War is a serious business. It does not tolerate thoughtlessness, idle chatter and slovenly behaviour. Commanders and commissars will answer for their regiments with their own heads. Communists must be in the forefront of battle.

To the honourable and courageous, praise and reward: to the cowardly and self-seeking, ruthless punishment!

The Ukrainian revolutionary soldier is a splendid warrior. All he needs is order. Firm, steadfast, iron order. With our combined efforts we shall establish this order. Then we shall get Poltava back. And not only Poltava but also Kharkov, Yekaterinoslav, the Donets Basin and North Caucasia. Then we shall rout Denikin as we have routed Kolchak.

August 3, 1919

Mirgorod.

[Mirgorod is east of Romodan, on the line to Poltava.]

*En Route, No.74*

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# MAKHNO AND OTHERS

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According to report, Makhno shot the so-called 'ataman' Grigoriyev when they met. The reason was that Grigoriyev was acting in collusion with counter-revolutionaries – not only the Petlyurists but the Denikinists as well. This report has still to be confirmed: the most fantastic rumours are spread by the rebel groups and bands, and what they say needs to be checked ten times before being believed.

However, let us assume that this report is confirmed. What does it mean?

Makhno became convinced that Grigoriyev was nothing but a dirty, hired counter-revolutionary bandit, and so Makhno decided to put an end to Grigoriyev. Not one honest person will want to argue or express regret on that score: after the killing of Grigoriyev there is one scoundrel fewer in the world, and that's all there is to it. Well, but what about Makhno himself, many people will ask? Does he intend to do anything further?

For a time, Grigoriyev was caught up in the workers' and peasants' revolution and swam with the current. Then he came out against the revolution, because he was unwilling to submit to the discipline of the Workers' and Peasants' Ukraine. Grigoriyev led his band against the Red Army. But then his complete impotence was exposed. Grigoriyev was beaten in battle and his band broke up, part of it surrendering and part taking refuge in the woods. When he saw how helpless he was, Grigoriyev started to look for someone to lean on, someone to unite with, so as to become stronger. In the Ukraine, as in all Russia, there are now only two forces: the revolutionary organisation of the workers and peasants, united by the Soviet power, on the one hand, and, on the other, the landlord-bourgeois organisation headed by Kolchak and Denikin. Whoever hesitates between these two camps is insignificant and powerless.

Having broken with the Soviet camp, Grigoriyev inevitably began to seek links with Denikin's camp.

This frightened Makhno. He does not want to unite with the counter-revolutionaries but, like Grigoriyev, Makhno has also broken with the camp of the revolution. He broke out of the ranks of the Red Army, violated its discipline, caused it immeasurable harm, and is now engaged in building some sort of force of his own.

This merely shows that Makhno cannot put two and two together. If he understood the banefulness of Grigoriyevism, he should also understand the fatal nature of Makhnovism. For these are only different rungs in one and the same ladder, which leads down into the abyss.

Among the rebel atamans and *batkos* there are two categories of people: there are bandits, rogues, venal careerists, but there are also honest men who are unable to put two and two together.

Grigoriyev harmed the Red Army out of careerism, greed and venality. It is quite possible that Makhno is innocent of all those sins, but he too has done frightful harm to the Red Army, for he acted in accordance with the false Anarchist-rebel

programme. And Makhnovism is still today a poison which has infected backward units of the Ukrainian army. By killing Grigoriyev Makhno has, perhaps, appeased his conscience, but he has not atoned thereby for his crimes against the Workers' and Peasants Ukraine. If Makhno and other guerrillas really want to leave the road of Grigoriyevism, to become regenerated and take up the defence of the revolution, there is only one way – to declare openly that they renounce, once and for all, disorganisation, atamanism and wilfulness, and place their forces, as disciplined soldiers, wholly and absolutely at the disposal of the workers' and peasants' power in the Ukraine.

Leon Trotsky

August 4, 1919

Lubny station\*

*En Route, No.75*

[\* Lubny is west of Romodan, on the line to Kiev.]

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# ORDER No.142

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Fourteenth Army, August 8, 1919,  
No.142, Konotop

\* \* \*

Communists serving in the army must be models of self-control, discipline and assiduity. However, I have soon become convinced that certain responsible workers in the Fourteenth Army permit themselves to go absent, 'in order to make reports', from the area in which the army is operating, without having been given any leave to do this: Such examples have a harmful effect and undermine that firm discipline without which no army can exist and victory is impossible.

I give notice that every Communist whom the Party has delegated to serve in the army, and who has thus become a Red Army man, has exactly the same rights and duties as any other soldier of the Red Army.

Those who arbitrarily absent themselves will be treated as deserters and, regardless of the positions they hold, will be brought before the revolutionary tribunal, to be judged in accordance with the laws of war.

Communists found guilty of offences and crimes against revolutionary military duty will be punished twice as severely as non-Communists, because what may be forgiven to an ignorant, unconscious person cannot be excused in the case of a member of the Party that stands at the head of the working class of the whole world.

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# A WORD TO THE UKRAINIAN SOLDIERS MISLED BY BANDITS

\* \* \*

There are many bands operating in the Ukraine at present. All of them are led by atamans – Petlyura, Zelyony, Sokolovsky, and so on and so forth ... Almost every day some more petty atamans make their appearance. They seize weapons and recruit to their bands either deserters, or ignorant Red Army soldiers, or kulaks from the villages, or ordinary highway robbers.

These bands are making life impossible in the Ukraine. They plunder the peasants, commit pogroms in the towns, destroy railway lines, derail trains, and slaughter hundreds of thousands of absolutely innocent people – old men, women and children.

What do the leaders of these bands want? That is clear, without much thought being needed: each one of them calls himself ataman, and therefore strives for authority, for power and wealth. They all think that the Ukraine is now just a huge prey that has been thrown to the vultures for them to tear apart, and each one hastens to grab for himself as big a piece of it as he can.

Among them there are a number who have been directly bought by Denikin. Besides thugs, thieves and brigands, there also sometimes fell into the clutches of these atamans some soldiers and peasants who are honest but ignorant, lacking in consciousness. Life in the Ukraine is hard now, for the many years of war, the German occupation, the reign of Skoropadsky, the plundering carried out by the French and British, the crimes of the Petlyurists, all these experiences have shattered, exhausted and debilitated the country. In order to save the Ukraine, to revive it so as to ensure a better income for the worker and the peasants, to make their lives easier and happier, what is needed is intense, combined work by millions of peasants and proletarians, for the common good of the working people.

But there are many ignorant peasants who see only the difficulties of life and know of no way out. These are approached by tempters – agents of Denikin and Petlyura, bandits of the Zelyony and Sokolovsky type, who call on them to join their ranks, promising them freedom and an easy life. Each province, and almost each *uyezd*, has formed its own band. As a result of the violence and brigandage of these bands, the Ukraine is being still further exhausted and impoverished. A few more months of this outrageous, disgraceful, bloody anarchy, and the Ukrainian people will be reduced to a corpse.

This is why the Soviet power has made it its principal task of the present moment to cleanse the Ukrainian land of all rebel atamans and bandits. Power in the Ukraine must belong only to the united Ukrainian peasantry and working class. Their will is expressed through the All-Ukraine Congress of Soviets and the All Ukraine Central Executive Committee. There can be only one armed force in the Ukraine – the Red Army, created by the will of the working masses of the Ukraine. There is no room for any bands, any guerrilla detachments, any atamans, *batkos*, bandits and thugs.

*The Revolutionary War Council of the Russian Socialist Federation Soviet Republic, together with the Council of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic has taken all*

*measures necessary to ensure that within a very short time Ukrainian banditry shall be eradicated and the Ukraine's bandits ruthlessly crushed.*

Now, when Comrade Voroshilov, as special plenipotentiary of the Defence Council, is setting about this task, I consider it my duty to address a final word of warning to all those soldiers and peasants who have been drawn into dishonourable bandit gangs but who are still capable of changing their minds and renouncing their work of Cain before it is too late.

In the first period of Soviet power, a lot of bands flourished in Great Russia. They were all annihilated long ago: their guiltiest members were shot, and the rest are expiating their crimes in places of detention. The same fate awaits the bandits of the Ukraine. Firm, reliable units have been sent to all parts of the Ukraine, with the task of finding and collecting arms, catching deserters and exterminating bands. The purge will be carried through to the end.

Misled soldiers, misled peasants, all of you who bear the shameful name of Grigoriyevites, Petlyurists, Zelyony's men, Sokolovsky's men, and so on – listen to this warning from the Revolutionary Soviet power! For your own good, for the good of your children and for the good of the whole Soviet Ukraine, give up banditry. Hand over your bloodthirsty, predatory *ata mans*, surrender voluntarily to the Soviet power: you will meet not with harshness but with leniency at its hands, as repentant prodigal Sons who have returned to the family of labour.

The Ukraine must be cleansed of vultures and kites! Then the Red Army will deal with Denikin in short order. Then the Ukraine will begin to live a peaceful, free and happy life.

Death to the black crows of banditry and atamanism!

Long live the power of the workers and peasants in a free and happy Ukraine!

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# INSTRUCTIONS TO THE RESPONSIBLE WORKERS OF THE FOURTEENTH ARMY

\* \* \*

Our recent serious defeats show that the military and political workers of the 14th Army have not as yet succeeded in coping with the task that confronts them, namely, converting a shattered army into one that is disciplined and capable of fighting. Additional forces both of political workers and commanders are now being brought into the 14th Army. It is necessary to utilise these forces in a planned way and, on the basis of the grievous lessons we have been taught, to overcome at any cost the shortcomings and defects of the 14th Army.

1. First and foremost there must be the strictest *registration of all commanding personnel and all Communists* in the army. This work must be begun at once and completed in a week, that is, not later than August 17.

2. The commissar of a division and its political department must carefully check on *the commissars of regiments*, leaving in post only those who showed firmness and courage during the defeats. Together with the commissars who survive this checking they must *check on the Communist cells*, eliminating the chance elements from them and bringing into these cells the firm, reliable workers who have been sent into the army. If there are even so few as four or five firm Communists in each company, serving as Red Army men and participating in the company cell, then, given a good commissar, a regiment can quickly be made quite sound.

The cells must always maintain internal liaison and support the commissar in his fight against scoundrelly, counter revolutionary kulak and self-seeking elements. Cell-members must be model Red Army men both on parade and in battle.

3. In the Ukrainian units there are a large number of *corrupt kulak elements* including many former soldiers of the Tsarist army, who carry on disruptive agitation, have an attitude of kulak hatred towards communism, oppose our work of agitation and organisation, and incite the Red Army men to engage in pogroms and banditry. The Communists serving in army units must keep a very careful eye on harmful elements of this sort and point them out to the commissar, so that the regiment may be quickly cleansed of them and the most guilty of them subjected to ruthless punishment.

If a few dozen self-seekers and kulaks are ejected from a regiment and replaced by a few dozen Communists, the regiment in question can be re-educated within a week or two.

The Special Sections must help the commissars and political departments in their task of cleansing regiments of scoundrels and traitors.

4. We must immediately undertake the *formation of battle-police units* – at both army and divisional level. Battle-police units must be formed from the best, most reliable Red soldiers, with a substantial quota of Communists. It is especially important to choose for these units commanders who are absolutely reliable – Communists wherever possible. It will be most expedient to organise battle-police units in accordance with the establishments laid down in Order No.220, forming

regular sections and platoons, so that, when necessary, the battle-police units may be brought together in battalions and larger formations. [\[59\]](#) The task of the battle-police units is to maintain order in the immediate rear, arrest deserters, exterminate bandits and thugs on the scene of their crimes, prevent panicky retreats, and, when the need arises, show to disordered units an example of firmness and courage.

*Until the divisions of the 14th Army have their own reliable battle-police units it will continue to be impossible to establish firm order and discipline in them.*

5. At the same time a purge needs to be undertaken, *a purge of the commanding personnel*. In the Ukrainian units there are still too many Petlyurist, guerrilla and ataman elements such as Bogunsky, Lopatkin and soon. Even the best of these guerrilla commanders still do not understand what an order means and consider disobedience to an order quite a natural thing. Those responsible commissars who, directly or indirectly, connive at wilful conduct on the part of guerrilla commanders, their non-fulfilment of military orders, commit the gravest of crimes against the cause of the working class. Not a single offence committed by commanders against discipline must be left unpunished. Only severe treatment, ruthless penalties for treacherous wilfulness, can teach the Ukrainian commanders that they must give strict obedience to military orders.

6. Every commissar must know precisely *the family situation of the commanders* in the unit entrusted to him. This is necessary for two reasons: first, so as to help a commander's family in the event that he is killed in action, and, second, so that members of the family may at once be arrested if the commander should act treacherously.

All information about the family situation of commanders and political workers is to be concentrated in the political department of the army's Revolutionary War Council.

7. The experience of all armies has shown that it is quite impermissible for servicemen's families to be living in an area where active units and headquarters are stationed. One cannot allow the attention of commanders, commissars and political workers to be distracted for a single moment by family circumstances. During a retreat, more than at any other time, the army's responsible workers must think about the unit or the Institution in their charge, and not about evacuating their own families. It is therefore most strictly ordered that *within one week* the families of all servicemen be removed from the 14th Army area to a distance of not less than fifty versts in the rear. The Revolutionary War Council will, of course, take all measures necessary to ensure that the resettlement of these families is carried out without suffering and will render all aid required for this purpose.

8. *The Special Section* of the army must recruit for its work only tried and absolutely honest workers, predominantly Party members. The special section is an organ of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and must operate in close co-operation with the Political Department and the Tribunal.

9. All the army's leading institutions – the Revolutionary War Council, the Political Department, the Special Section, the Revolutionary Tribunal – must firmly lay down and apply the rule that not a single crime committed in the army is to be left unpunished. Penalties must, of course, be strictly related to the actual character of the crime or offence committed. The sentences passed must be such that every Red

Army man, reading about them in his newspaper, may clearly appreciate their justice and necessity in order that the fighting capacity of the army may be maintained.

Punishment must follow as quickly as possible upon the crime. The Tribunal must therefore hold a sufficient number of assizes and must have at its disposal the number of investigators it needs.

10. Problems of supply are among the most urgent. *The soldiers of the 14th Army must be clothed and shod* as soon as possible. The necessary quantity of kit has already been provided, and will henceforth continue to be provided. It must be distributed quickly and precisely, records of the kit issued to individuals must be compiled, and strict attention must be paid to ensure that army property is not squandered, sold, lost, or expended in vain. The commissar of a division, together with the supply officer, the supply-service commissar, the chief of staff where possible, the divisional commander (in so far as this does not take him away from urgent operational work) must work out with the utmost care a plan for the most speedy distribution of uniforms, equipment and arms. The divisional commissar must prompt the commissars of regiments to see to it that the officer in charge of the quartermaster's stores does not hold up the issue of these supplies one day longer than necessary. The Red Army men must see and feel that they are being looked after. At the same time, every case of selling or bartering army property by a Red Army man must be strictly punished.

11. *The authority of commanders* must be enhanced. The Ukrainian soldiers have seen in the past a number of muddle-headed atamans who led them into the enemy's line of fire, and a number of traitors who went over to the enemy. And still today, given the slackness and absence of discipline in the units, most power is, more often than not, held by utterly worthless commanders who indulge the worst elements in their units. With the establishment of a firmer regime and more serious supervision, cases of treachery will at once become less frequent, and honourable commanders will be able to lift their heads.

Commissars must support firm and vigorous commanders in every way, not competing with them but proceeding shoulder to shoulder with them in all their work.

12. The army newspaper *Ruzhye! (To Arms!)* must become *really the army's newspaper*, that is, a mirror of the merits and the shortcomings of the army, of its successes and failures. At present it is not yet that. From the agitational standpoint it is well run, but that is not all that is needed for an army news paper. There must be a direct link with every unit. Commissars' reports must be extensively used. Special correspondents must be sent out and persons despatched on official missions made use of: members of the newspaper's staff must be sent to travel in the hospital trains and interview the wounded. All manner of disorders must be exposed; merited praise must be rendered to heroes; idlers, cowards and traitors must be branded and denounced. This applies also to the newspapers of particular groups in the army (**Krasnaya Zvezda**).

13. *Distribution of the newspaper and of publications* generally must be ensured throughout the whole army. It is not feasible to create an independent apparatus for properly distributing publications. But it is quite possible to make use of all opportunities and occasions for their distribution. Matters must be so organised that not a single person sets out to the front from headquarters, or from the supply

administration, or from the political department, without a parcel of publications, to be handed over, against signature, to the commissar of a division, a brigade or a regiment, or to some other responsible individual. The political department of a division, the commissar of a brigade, the commissar of a regiment must all act in just the same way, so that, as a result, our publications find their way continuously by the widest variety of channels, to the Red Army men in the front line. This task can and must be performed.

14. Of very great importance in the life of our army are the *holding units*. They are the sources from which the army is reinforced, re-educated and restored to health. For this purpose, holding units must be provided with good conditions in respect of billeting, food and clothing allowances. Men in training must be supplied with bast sandals, so that their boots do not get worn out prematurely. Exercises must be carried out with the strictest precision. Political education in a holding battalion is of first-class importance. A sufficient number of Communists must be introduced among the Red Army men, both the permanent staff and the changing element; these Communists must in no way differ in their living conditions or their work from the rest of the soldiers. An adequate place must be found for physical training, sport and games, so as to counter the harmful influence of barrack conditions.

The principal fault of the responsible workers of the 14th Army is that they have not managed to bring the holding units up to the proper level. This omission must now be made up for. The inclusion in military units of so-called 'volunteers' (who are often predatory self-seekers) or of untrained conscripts must be punished as a very serious crime. Regiments must be reinforced only by drafts from holding battalions, into which both conscripts and volunteers are to be sent. In proportion as a regiment receives fresh drafts, its untrained, undisciplined and worn-out elements are to be withdrawn and sent back to the holding battalions for training.

A strong army cannot be created all of a sudden. Plugging the holes and cobbling the rents in the front will not help matters. Transferring particular Communists and Communist detachments to the most threatened places can improve the situation only temporarily. There is only one path to salvation: *transform, reorganise and educate the army through persistent, steady work, starting with the basic cell, with the company, and moving up through the battalion, the regiment and the division: arranging proper supply, proper distribution of Communist forces, proper relations between commanders and commissars, and ensuring strict asszduity and absolute conscientiousness in reports*. The responsible workers of the 14th Army must immediately set out along this path.

August 9, 1919  
From the archives

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## Endnotes

59. By Order No.220, November 13, 1918, the three-brigade (nine-regiment) establishment for an infantry division was introduced in the Red Army. This establishment was modelled on the Siberian units. A division corresponded to previous infantry corps. These establishments remained in force until the end of the civil war.

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# THE FOURTEENTH ARMY AND ITS COMMANDER

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At the head of the Fourteenth Army stands the Revolutionary War Council. Among the members of this council is the Army Commander, who bears full responsibility for the operational leadership of the active forces. Every Red Army man has the right to interest himself in the personality of his commander, upon whose actions depend, to a considerable degree, the success or failure of the struggle. There must be especially great interest in the commander's personality in the case of the Fourteenth Army, because in the Ukraine they are all too often accustomed to explain setbacks by reference to the mistakes, and even the acts of treachery, of those at headquarters.

Who is the commander of the 14th Army?

Comrade Yegorov is a former officer of the old army. But he was born into a working family and always remained devoted to the cause of the working people. The son of a peasant of Samara province, Comrade Yegorov was for a time a blacksmith, then a stevedore: by stubborn effort he acquired an education, sat for the examination for five years of study at the secondary modern school, and passed out from the Junker training school in Kazan in 1905. Already at the training school he was regarded as politically unreliable and under suspicion, as his regimental commander was subsequently informed. There were grounds for his suspicion: while at the Junker school Comrade Yegorov became a member of a secret socialist group. After graduating from the Junker school he served for three years in the army. When the war began he was called up, and he served throughout the war. He commanded a company, then a battalion, then a regiment. He attained the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. During the imperialist war he was wounded five times. After the February Revolution Comrade Yegorov organised regimental and divisional committees, and himself became a committee member in a regiment, a division and an army. From his army committee he was elected to the second Central Executive Committee and was assigned to the post of elected commander-in-chief of the Northern front, after October. In the first phase of the revolution, Comrade Yegorov adhered to the Left wing of the Socialist Revolutionaries. This was the period when the Left SRs marched together with the Communist-Bolsheviks in the fight against Kerensky's treacherous policy, against the imperialist slaughter. But later, as soon as the Left SRs, yielding to kulak and philistine sentiments, began to struggle against the workers' and peasants' power, Comrade Yegorov did not hesitate for one moment, but broke with that party of unbalanced intellectuals and joined the Communist Party of the working class.

For his opposition to the imperialist slaughter Comrade Yegorov was, during the period of Kerensky's Government, condemned by a court composed of the officers of his regiment and removed from his post.

After the demobilisation of the old army, Comrade Yegorov worked continuously at the task of building the new, Red Army. He occupied a number of responsible positions: he was commissar for the formation and training of the Red Army; chairman of the Supreme Credentials Commission, which evaluated candidates for posts of command; and commissar of the All-Russia General Staff. After the middle of August last year, Comrade Yegorov commanded the Ninth Army of the Southern

Front, and in December he was appointed commander of the Tenth Army.

Thanks to his energy and his knowledge of military matters, Comrade Yegorov succeeded in raising the fighting capacity of the Tenth Army to the highest level. Soldiers and commanders looked to him with complete trust: under his leadership the Tenth Army won a series of brilliant victories and, after a fighting advance of 400 versts, it forced a crossing of the river Manych. At that time Denikin, who had brought his forces up from North Caucasia, launched his offensive. After the Tenth Army had withdrawn to the river Sal, Denikin's forces broke through the front and tried to cut off some units of the army. Comrade Yegorov then took direct command of two cavalry divisions, and during an attack received a through bullet wound.

Before this sixth wound of his had healed, Comrade Yegorov was summoned by the Soviet power to take up another responsible post. He was appointed deputy to the commander of the Southern front and a member of the Revolutionary War Council of that front: and, in view of the special importance of the work of organising and training the 14th Army in the Ukraine, that task was entrusted to Comrade Yegorov.

This is not the first time Comrade Yegorov has been in the Ukraine. After the October Revolution, Comrade Yegorov was in December 1917 sent into the Ukraine by the military department of the Central Executive Committee in order to elucidate certain questions, and he was arrested here by the government of Vinnichenko and Petlyura in January 1918, on a charge of participating in preparations for an attempt to blow up the Rada from within. Comrade Yegorov was released from prison by Red Army forces after their capture of Kiev.

In the person of its commander the 14th Army thus has a fine fighting soldier and a Communist devoted to the cause of the working class.

May the Red Army men and commanders be worthy of their commander, the first soldier of the 14th Army. [\[60\]](#)

August 9, 1919  
Konotop

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## Endnotes

[60.](#) The Fourteenth Army kept its cadres and, after receiving the necessary reinforcements, again became one of the best armies of the Southern front. It was on this army's sector that Denikin concentrated his best Volunteer divisions, and it was this Army which formed the shock-group that inflicted a heavy defeat on Denikin in mid-October 1919, before Orel.

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# AUGUST IN THE UKRAINE

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The Soviet Ukraine is going through a hard time at present.

The forces of the landlords and of the Polish gentry are pressing the country from all sides. The Ukrainian army is retreating.

The enemy gloats. Some fainthearted friends are giving up.

Let us take a look back. A year ago Soviet Russia was going through times no less difficult than these. August 1918 was the blackest month in the history of the Soviet Republic. The Western zone, the Ukrainian South and Finland were all occupied by the German militarists. The robber forces of the British and French were consolidating their positions in Archangel and Murmansk. Krasnov was in revolt on the Don. On the Volga the banner of revolt had been raised by the Czechoslovak hirelings of France. Together with the White Guards they had seized Samara, Simbirsk and Kazan, and were threatening Saratov, to the South, and Nizhny-Novgorod to the North. They had cut Russia off from the Urals and all Siberia.

What was frightening was not so much these temporary enemy successes as, and a great deal more, the helplessness of the Red Army. Young, inexperienced, barely put together from chance detachments, the Eastern army was retreating all along the line. At the beginning of August Kazan fell, and it seemed that the road to Moscow was open to the Czechoslovaks and White Guards.

But these extreme calamities evoked a more extreme intensification of effort by the workers and the revolutionary peasants. All honest people in our country realised that what was at stake was the fate of the working people for many years to come. The workers and peasants thrust into the background their own demands, their individual and group interests, their discontent – they all understood that their first duty was to crush the enemy.

Along with this, the army was ensured a sound rear. In August of last year the Russian kulaks, and especially those of the Volga country, felt for the first time the stern hand of Soviet power. An extensive and orderly mobilisation was carried out. Kulaks who fraternised with the White Guards and Czechoslovaks were ruthlessly shot, and their property confiscated for the benefit of the poor peasants and the needs of the Red Army.

Firmer and more courageous workers and peasants were introduced into our weak, unseasoned military units. Unwavering discipline was established. The commanding personnel were ruthlessly purged of traitors and undisciplined 'atamans' who knew neither how to command nor how to obey. The month of August was spent in intense, feverish work. The whole country looked to the East with a sinking heart: would we hold the enemy on the Volga, would we throw him back eastward, or would we have to retreat and open broad gates leading to Moscow?

August of last year was thus not only a bad month of disasters and alarms, it was also a time of the greatest intensification of effort, feverish work directed to forming and supplying the Red Soviet regiments.

This work was not done in vain. September reaped what August had sown. On September 10, the forces of the Fifth Army, assisted by units of the Second Army, wrested Kazan from the enemy. Two days later, the neighbouring First Army recovered Simbirsk. These events signified a major turning-point, and have entered forever into the history of the Russian revolution. The Red Army felt strong after these first victories, while the enemy's morale declined. Since then we have known both defeats and victories. But, on the whole, the Red Army has, during this twelvemonth, greatly extended the boundaries of the Soviet Republic and, what is most important, the workers and peasants of Russia now know well that they are not defenceless.

Last year's black August has now been repeated for the Ukraine. The country is under enemy pressure from West, East and South. Our Red Ukrainian army is still young and lacks the necessary organisation and tempering in battle. It is still retreating. The enemy is gloating. Friends are asking themselves, anxiously: will the workers' and peasants' Ukraine survive?

But for the Ukraine, too, this difficult month is not merely a time of defeat, it is also a time of intense constructive work. Hundreds and thousands of the best, most conscious workers and peasants are entering the Ukraine units. Thousands and tens of thousands of reinforcements are passing through the holding battalions and are there being turned into disciplined drafts. Supplies are beginning to arrive regularly and to be distributed as they should be. And a serious purge has started in the rear. The Soviet power in the Ukraine has taken up a broom of barbed wire with which to sweep the towns and villages clear of White Guards and kulak parasites.

Thus, the Soviet Ukraine is being purged and strengthened from both ends. We are still retreating. But we are gathering strength – the Ukrainian army is consolidating and growing. The Ukraine's 'black' August will be followed by a September of Ukrainian victories.

Do not slacken your efforts and do not lose heart, comrade workers and peasants! The Ukraine shall not fall to the landlord and the Tsar! The Ukraine shall remain forever a proletarian and *muzhik* land of honest labour.

*En Route*  
August 12, 1919, No.80

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# The Tenth Army

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Like some of our other armies, the Tenth was formed mainly out of guerrilla detachments. These detachments included many heroic workers and peasants who strove to defend at any cost the freedom that had been won by the working people. But, as always happens, the guerrilla flag attracted many scoundrelly and rotten elements, idlers who settled upon army rations like flies upon sugar. And it frequently happened that the heroism of the best fighters was brought to naught by the shameful cowardice of the self-seekers. But not by this only. More than any other army, the Tenth was lacking in proper military organisation, by which every regiment forms part of a regularly constructed division, while a division is an organ of an army that is directed according to a common conception and plan. So long as the Tenth Army was a guerrilla army, self-will on the part of certain commanders, who refused to obey orders, was in vogue. There was no proper supply service, and its place was often taken by arbitrary seizures carried out by individual units. In the case of bad units these seizures became plundering pure and simple, and gave rise to justified indignation on the part of the local population. The best elements in the army combated all this, as it was necessary to do. The most conscious workers and peasants among the Red Army men supported this struggle.

The Tenth Army pulled itself together. Numerous unworthy commanders were removed, while other guerrilla commanders, the best and most honourable among them, understood that a step forward had to be taken – namely, the establishment of regular organisation and of real military order.

The reconstruction and re-education of this army was accomplished during the autumn and winter of last year, with great success. The army went over to the offensive, dealt Krasnov many hard blows, reached the Manych and crossed to its southern bank, at the end of a fighting advance of about 400 versts.

But Denikin's reserves proved stronger. Our armies of the Southern front, weary and betrayed by Makhno's activity in the Ukraine were unable to withstand the onslaught of Denikin's forces. The Tenth Army started to fall back. In the course of the retreat the army's apparatus inevitably suffered some derangement. Furthermore, the firmly established order was frequently violated, and the disorganisers and self-seekers started to lift their heads again. However, thanks to its battle-hardened cadres, the Tenth Army survived this severe test. It stopped retreating, and halted the enemy. Today it has itself taken the offensive and is already pressing the enemy with considerable success.

If this success is to be developed and transformed into a shattering blow at Denikin's right flank, the establishment of order in the organisation of the Tenth Army and the elimination of the last vestiges of guerrilla-ism must be carried to conclusion.

An army is an army. This army is an organisation of armed warriors of the working class and the working peasantry. There must be no families with the army: their place is in the rear. The soldier must think only of crushing the enemy. A family that is being dragged along behind it in a cart is a burden for an army. The Soviet power must take care of the soldier's family, in the rear. Families increase

the army's baggage-train, making the units less mobile and less vigorous. The first task to be performed is the removal from the army of the soldiers' families, who must be transferred to the rear, where they will receive from the Soviet power the help that they need.

An army is an army. Its carts are meant to carry supplies for the fighting units. They must not be burdened with one unnecessary pood. If captured trophies are not assigned by the regulations to a particular unit, that is, if it does not need them for its fighting tasks, they must be immediately removed by the army administration and transferred to the proper quarters. Woe to the unit that has too long a baggage-train!

An army is an army. It is an aggregate of soldiers bound together by unity of command and unity of iron discipline. Where discipline is violated, where orders are not obeyed, where the regulations are not observed, where the necessary measures are not taken for carrying out reconnaissance, mounting guard, maintaining liaison, sending reports, there can be no long-term, lasting, serious victories. An army then ceases to be an army. It is the sacred duty of the commanders and commissars of the Tenth Army to implement our Red regulations in the life of their army.

The Tenth Army has been reinforced numerically and is growing bigger day by day. *Materiel* that had been expended or lost is being replaced, and more than replaced. The Soviet land is straining every nerve to ensure that everything needed is made available to this army, which had in the past no few achievements to its credit and which is now operating in one of the most important directions.

Comrade Red Army men, commanders and commissars of the Tenth Army! In greeting you at this turning-point for the Southern front, I call upon you at the same time to make an heroic and unanimous effort to purge your army of everything that weakens and disorganises it, to establish in it unity of will and deed, to transform it into a mighty hammer of steel which will strike from the banks of the Volga a mortal blow at the skull of the counter-revolution on the Don and in Caucasia!

August 18, 1919  
Saratov  
*En Route*, No.83

## **The Southern Front**

### **II. Denikin's Offensive (May 15-August 1919)**

# ORDER No.143

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the armies of the Southern front, August 13, 1919, No.143, Vonezh

\* \* \*

Comrade Red Army men!

Using exceptionally dirty methods, Denikin and the Denikinites are circulating numerous false orders over my signature. The purpose of these 'orders' is to befog the brains of the soldiers who have been forced to serve in the White army and to deceive you, soldiers of the Red Army, bringing confusion and division among us.

I do not doubt that an intelligent soldier will be able without difficulty to distinguish between a Denikinite forgery and a genuine order by the Soviet power. For the benefit of the hesitant and doubtful I offer this reliable guide: if an order is dictated by the interests of workers and peasants, in the struggle against the landlords, then it is a genuine order: if, however, an order is directed to supporting landlords' greed and bourgeois profits, then it comes from Denikin and his accomplices.

The Denikinites have recently been fabricating, in particular, false orders about leave for Red Army men, and they are trying by every means to incite Red soldiers to apply for leave. Their purpose is plain: quickly to thin out the ranks of our fighters, to weaken us, and to strangle us.

Comrade soldiers!

We all need leave. More than that, we need our discharge to the reserve – we need to hang our rifle on the wall, to settle down with our families and to work under peaceful conditions for the good of the whole people.

This leave we shall win for ourselves through victory over Denikin's landlord horde. When we have crushed the snake we shall return to peaceful labour.

It is in Rostov-on-Don, whither Denikin has transferred his headquarters, that we shall get our leave, comrade fighters!

## **The Southern Front**

### **III. The Red Army's Second Offensive in the Ukraine (August-December 1919)**

# ROUND THEM UP!

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The White-Guard cavalry have broken through into our forces' rear and are bringing disruption, alarm and devastation into Tambov province. The task of the White-Guard cavalry is to frighten our Southern forces which are pressing Denikin and to make them retreat. But this is a vain hope. The Red regiments on the Southern front have maintained unshakeable firmness, and on the most important sectors they are successfully advancing. The zone adjoining the front tells the Red warriors, confidently: 'Carry on with your work: the rear will deal with this raid by Denikin's bandits.'

And this is now the sacred duty of the rear, above all in Tambov province.

The task is a clear and simple one: to surround Denikin's cavalry with a firm ring, cutting them off from their base, and then, with a sure hand, to pull the noose tight.

That this may be done, the workers and peasant masses, led by their soviets and the Communist organisations, must rise up as one man against the White raiders. The landlords' mercenaries must be made to feel that they are in the land of the workers and peasants, that is, a land that is hostile to them. Danger must lie in ambush for the White bandits at every corner, behind every hillock, in every gully.

At their approach *the peasants must in good time remove their horses, cattle and carts and carry away all grain and other food stuffs*. What cannot be removed must be destroyed. The Soviet power will pay compensation for all losses incurred. Woe to the peasant who voluntarily helps the landlords' troops in any way at all!

Communists, to the forward positions! In all the villages, *volosts*, *uyzeds* and towns of Tambov province and the neighbouring *uyezds* of other provinces the Communist organisations must ask themselves: how can we, immediately and directly, injure the raiders and facilitate the task of our regular units?

*Intelligence must be flawlessly organised.* Information must be collected about every enemy patrol, which must be tracked down, taken by surprise, and either annihilated or made prisoner. Wherever the Whites think of spending the night, – they must be awakened by fires. Their horses must run against barbed wire where, the day before, there was an open, unencumbered road.

Woe to the executive committee that withdraws without extreme necessity and without having done the Denikinites all the damage it is capable of!

A Denikinite pack of ravening wolves has broken into Tam boy province, and they are cutting down not only the *muzhiks'* cattle but also the working people themselves. Round them up, workers and peasants! With weapons and with cudgels! Allow these beasts of prey no rest, not a single moment, drive them from every place! Tally-ho, at the Whites! Death to the brigands!

## **The Southern Front**

### **III. The Red Army's Second Offensive in the Ukraine (August-December 1919)**

# THE COURAGE OF DESPAIR

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Denikin's cavalry has broken through our front at Novokhopersk and penetrated deeply into Tambov province. It is a bold raid. But, at the same time, every person of common sense must ask himself: what do the leaders of this operation hope to achieve? Several White cavalry regiments have separated themselves by almost 200 versts from their bases: they have carried out raids on railway stations, on the telegraph line, on villages and hamlets, they have seized horses and grain. The White cavalry are operating in localities where the majority of the inhabitants are hostile to them, because they know that the Whites are carrying out the will of the landlords, trying to restore to them the land they have lost. The cavalry who have broken through may, of course, do considerable damage here and there: in certain places they may blow up bridges, cut communications, pillage the peasants, burn down some villages. But what is the *military* purpose of this adventure? Do Denikin's generals really hope to take Moscow by means of a cavalry raid? No, they are not so stupid as to believe that. They also know that their cavalry, cut off from their base, in the rear of our forces, cannot hold out for long. Around them, sooner or later, a steel ring will close – it is already closing now – and then the dashing horsemen will become wretched bandits, surrounded and caught by beaters on foot. Why did Denikin decide to make such a move? Because nothing else was left for him to do. This move was dictated by the hopelessness of his position. It is the courage of despair.

Having struck his first hard blow at our armies, shaking their steadiness and their communications, Denikin then used to the utmost the principal advantage he possessed, namely, his abundance of cavalry. His task amounted to this: not to allow the Red forces time to stabilise themselves, consolidate and take in reinforcements. The White cavalry pursued our troops for several weeks. This mode of action was imposed on Denikin by the simplest rules of the art of war, but at the same time this procedure presupposed the presence of substantial reserves, commensurate with the task undertaken. These reserves Denikin did not possess, especially for such an immense front as he had created through the rapid thrust of his cavalry.

The shortage of reserves soon made itself felt. The force of his pursuit began to slacken. Our reserves came up. Our retreating forces acquired increasing steadiness and eventually consolidated their positions all along the front, apart from the extreme right, Ukrainian flank, farthest from Denikin's base (Rostov-Yekaterinodar). The moment when Denikin's troops found themselves obliged to halt along almost the whole length of the front was really the moment when the Southern counter revolution suffered defeat, for the lack of reserves was now bound to make itself felt quite obviously. A small body that flies fast can strike a hard blow: in this case the small size of the force was made up for by its high speed. The rapidity of the cavalry thrust replaced, for the moment, the large reserves that were not available. But as soon as Denikin's offensive was brought to a standstill, his own forces felt all too clearly that they were insufficient. The Red front proved to be incomparably denser. The Red troops had recovered their self-possession and, in a spirit of calm confidence, they grouped their forces and their material resources in order to strike a final ruthless, crushing blow at the accursed enemy.

Denikin and his Mamontovs saw and felt this growing strength and confidence in the camp of their enemy. There were no reserves. Denikin pleaded in vain with Britain and France: they were in no position to help him with military units. The leader of the Southern counter-revolution was then left with no alternative but to try to break the terrible wall of the Red front by means of a risky, venturesome blow.

It was then that the desperate raid by General Mamontov's cavalry was conceived. The first part of the plan was accomplished successfully: with a crash the White cavalry opened a gate for themselves and charged into our deep rear. Only then, however, was the real question posed. – what effect would this cavalry raid have upon the steadiness and strength of the Red forces of the Southern front?

Naturally it is disagreeable and worrying to have the enemy's cavalry operating behind one. When a man is about to strike a blow, he can be prevented by the bite of a wasp that sinks its sting into his shoulder. Frightened by the unexpectedness of what has happened, the fighter may turn round and let go of his weapon. That is what Denikin counts on. His cavalry are the stinging wasp behind the Red infantryman whose face is turned toward Novacherkassk and Rostov. To frighten our Southern forces by the unexpectedness of the breakthrough, the impetuosity of the raid, the uncertain extent of the danger to the rear, to cause panic among the population, disorganisation in the ranks, breakdown of communications, collapse of the administrative apparatus, disarray and alarm in the units, resulting in their disorderly withdrawal on both flanks of the breakthrough and, at last, complete break-up of the Red Southern front – that was Denikin's plan.

Everything in it was based upon surprise, suddenness, the creation of fear. But Denikin miscalculated. The breakthrough was made in spirited style, but our Southern front stood firm, barely faltering in the place where the cavalry thrust in their sting. And that means that Denikin's plan has suffered complete ruin and will within a few days come crashing down on its organisers' heads. The Red Army forces stand firm as before, in a heavy, compact mass, having stopped the hole that the White cavalry had punched in their wall. Our left flank, at Kamyshin, is successfully advancing, as also is our heavy centre. The Red infantry are going forward in dense ranks as though quite unconcerned by the fact that a poisonous insect is buzzing about behind their backs. And they are right. The Southern front has sufficient reserves with which to cope with the daring raid. The ring is being drawn tighter and tighter around the raiders. The gate that they broke open for themselves has closed behind them. They wanted and hoped to spread despair and fear, but, in face of the firmness of the Red Army, they themselves are filled with fear and despair. Mamontov's cavalry detachment is doomed. It will be surrounded, either as a whole or in sections, it will be disarmed, and it will be smashed: part of it will scatter. But it is not only the detachment that will perish. Along with it will perish the last hope of salvation for the Whites. The last marked card of Denikin's strategy will have been covered, and Denikin's forces will see, hopelessly, that their numbers are too few.

The cavalry adventure has brought the moment of complete and conclusive change on the Southern front. Our offensive will become general, confident, irresistible. History will record that Denikin's horsemen broke through into Tambov only so as, by their desperate raid, to announce to Soviet Russia that the moment was near when the counter-revolution on the Don and the Kuban was about to fall.

August 19, 1919, No.81

## **The Southern Front**

### **III. The Red Army's Second Offensive in the Ukraine (August-December 1919)**

# TO THE TROOPERS OF MAMONTOV'S CORPS

\* \* \*

**Troopers! Cossacks deceived by Mamontov!**

I address to you a brief word of explanation and warning.

Led by White-Guard generals, you broke through in the Novokhopersk direction, you temporarily captured Tambov, then you were driven out of it by our infantry, and now you are riding along the line between Kozlov and Bogoyavlensk.

You were assured that by this raid you would save Denikin's army. But they deceived you. There is no way of saving Denikin. His forces have been exhausted. After routing Kolchak we have concentrated numerous forces on the Southern front which will strike a mortal blow at Denikin in the coming weeks.

In their first thrust they have captured Kamyshin and the important junction of Valuiki, in the Kharkov direction. All along the front the Red forces have gone over to a victorious offensive. Borisoglebsk and the railway junction of Povorino have been taken. [\[61\]](#)

The gate through which your horsemen broke has been closed by great masses of infantry. The Red Southern Front stands as a solid wall from the Volga to the Dnieper. You have no way of escape. Led by your generals you may manage to destroy this bridge or that, knock down some telegraph poles, burn a few storehouses, slaughter some unarmed workers and peasants whom you have captured. But there is no salvation for you. You are caught in a ring.

Your generals' calculations have not been justified: the Southern front has not wavered in the least as a result of your breakthrough – on the contrary, it has become still more firmly welded, and has gone forward. Communication between your cavalry and the retreating armies of Denikin has been permanently severed. The reserves, both light and heavy, of the Southern front have been set to surround you, and, if you continue to commit outrages, to destroy, set on fire, plunder and violate – to crush you.

**Deceived troopers!**

There is only one path of salvation for you: renounce this shameful brigand raid against the workers and peasants, your selves arrest your criminal commanders, and stretch out the hand of reconciliation to the workers, peasants and Red Army men of the whole country.

If you do this, then, in the name of the workers' and peasants' government, I undertake to provide you with the possibility of a peaceful existence in Soviet Russia or, if you prefer, with unhindered return, when you wish, to your homeland.

The Soviet power does not wage war against workers, peasants and working Cossacks. The Russia of the working people wages ruthless struggle only against the landlords and those former Tsarist generals who want to restore the privileges of the nobles, the tyranny of the officials and the autocracy of Tsar dom. This war of extermination against the oppressors we shall wage to the end.

We have crushed Kolchak. The Red forces are approaching Kolchak's capital, Omsk. The same fate is in store for Denikin.

Are you, working Cossacks, working men, going to give your lives for the people's oppressors?

Now when you have learnt the truth, act as your conscience commands and as your own interest demands.

You are inside a ring of steel. An inglorious death awaits you. But, at the last minute, the workers' and peasants' government reaches out to you the hand of reconciliation.

August 24, 1919

Moscow

**Izv.V.Ts.I.K.**, No. 188

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## Endnotes

61. On our counter-blow in August 1919, see *infra*, note 66. The success of this offensive was partly paralysed by the breaching of our front by a large mass of Don Cavalry (7,000 sabres) led by General Mamontov. On August 10, having broken through the front at Novokhopersk, this cavalry force penetrated into our rear as far as Tambov, Kozlov, Yelets and Voronezh. Mamontov moved along from one railway junction to the next, destroying communications and depots and plundering the local inhabitants. This raid seriously disrupted the work of the rear, and some of our forces had to be diverted to oppose the raiding party. After the end of his raid, Mamontov succeeded in rejoining the forces of his front at Voronezh. (Map 3).

## **The Southern Front**

### **III. The Red Army's Second Offensive in the Ukraine (August-December 1919)**

# ORDER No.146

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's  
Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, September 4, 1919, No.146, Tula

\* \* \*

## Into battle against Mamontov's brigand gang

Bands of mounted brigands under the command of General Mamontov, a former landlord, have broken through to Tam boy and from there to Kozlov and Yelets.

These bandits on horseback have destroyed railways and telegraph lines, they are plundering, violating, burning, killing workers and peasants.

Mamontov's task is to terrify the working population and help Denikin to strangle the workers and peasants and restore the power of the nobles and the capitalists.

In view of the above, be it known that:

1. Any assistance given to Mamontov's brigands, whether direct or indirect, constitutes treason to the people and will be punished by shooting.
2. Village and *volost* executive committees in the threatened localities are required to organise their own reconnaissance units, mounted and on foot, and to give warning of danger to neighbouring railway stations and army authorities. The chairman of every executive committee is to be held personally responsible for the implementation of this measure.
3. When danger approaches, village and *volost* executive committees are to remove horses and cattle, and also foodstuffs, so as not to leave any supplies for Mamontov's bandits. If this order is not obeyed the members of the executive committees concerned will be punished by the tribunal in accordance with martial law.
4. Railway workers, Red Army men engaged in defence of the railway lines, and employees of the post and telegraph services in the zone under threat are required to show the greatest vigilance and to take in good time all measures against the danger of a cavalry raid. Anyone found guilty of negligence and carelessness will be punished by the tribunal as an accomplice of the enemy, in accordance with martial law.
5. There are a number of agents of Mamontov among the bourgeois elements of the local population, including the Soviet employees. Surveillance must be redoubled. Every honest citizen must report any information he receives, or any suspicion he forms, to the nearest Cheka, to the Special Section, or to the commissar of the nearest military unit. Anyone who knows about Mamontov's agents but keeps silent is to be punished as a traitor, in accordance with the stern laws of war.
6. The Communist cells in the villages and *volosts*, on the railways, in the telegraph service and in army institutions in the rear have the duty of maintaining careful surveillance of all suspicious and untrustworthy elements. They must, in conjunction with the Chekas and the Special Sections, crush all the agents of Mamontov and Denikin.
7. Any citizen in the endangered zone into whose hands this order comes must call for a meeting of his village or *volost* executive committee to

discuss practical measures for struggle against Mamontov's brigands. Among such measures are: organisation of intelligence, establishment of close liaison with neighbouring military units, railway authorities and railway guards, sabotage of the routes which the enemy's transports or artillery have to follow, organisation of ambushes, extermination of enemy patrols and isolated bandits. Henceforth, such meetings must be held daily, and all their decisions minuted. The provincial Cheka and the Special Section in the threatened area are to check these minutes and immediately call to account chairmen of executive committees who have not taken the necessary measures.

8. 8. When Mamontov's bandits pass through, the local counter revolutionary snakes lift their heads. They perform services to the raiders, pointing out the local Communists and the families of Red Army men, and thereby bringing tens and hundreds of people to the gallows. I issue this warning: Mamontov's cavalry will pass, but the Soviet power will remain. The workers and peasants, both men and women, who have been killed, will be avenged. The counter-revolutionary snakes will be crushed.

Their property will be confiscated and given to the poor peasants. Every poor peasant killed will be answered for by the kulaks, traitors and counter-revolutionaries.

This order is to be posted in railway stations, barracks, transit and victualling points, post and telegraph offices, rail way carriages both civil and military, and the premises of village and *volost* executive committees. The appropriate commissars and chairmen of Soviet institutions are personally responsible for reading this order at village assemblies, gatherings of rail way and post-and-telegraph employees, local army units, and so on.

All the local Soviet press in the endangered zone is to publish this order prominently and to assist in every way to make it widely known and put into practice.

## **The Southern Front**

### **III. The Red Army's Second Offensive in the Ukraine (August-December 1919)**

# ORDER No.147

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and the People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, September 4, 1919, No.147, Orel

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Mamontov's cavalry have been carrying on their brigandage up to now almost with impunity because we have organised our intelligence and communications so badly. The local authorities have often relied on obscure rumours instead of precise facts. Uncertainty is the mother of panic. And yet our *uyezd* and *volost* revolutionary committees have remained in a state of uncertainty. Even now the local organs often pass on rumours and malicious fabrications instead of providing intelligence reports. All this must stop.

1. Mamontov's commanders circulate through various channels the rumours that suit their book – about the direction their cavalry are going to take, or about innumerable Denikinite forces that are supposed to be following at their heels. The task of the revolutionary committees and of the local Soviet authorities in general, and especially of the military institutions, is to organise *precise intelligence, constantly and strictly checking every rumour and report*. It is especially important to check on our own reconnaissance patrols, on horseback and on foot, because, as the facts testify, they often avoid contact with the enemy and rely in their reports on hearsay cock-and-bull stories.

I issue this warning: *the circulation of unverified statements as though they had been confirmed will be punished in the same way as malicious panic-mongering. Whisperers, chatterboxes and gossips are to be ruthlessly prosecuted!*

2. Some units assigned to local defence have shown a complete lack of staunchness and have abandoned their positions when they encountered the enemy. This has resulted in Mamontov's bands invading villages and towns, and slaughtering helpless and unarmed working men and women.

I issue this warning: *cowardice, self-seeking, desertion on the internal front will be punished in the same way as on the external front – by shooting.*

3. Task-forces and detachments assigned to the task of preventing access to certain points (railway junctions, bridges, towns . . .) must be strictly checked. So far as possible, experienced commanders must be chosen for them. These task-forces must include a group, even if only a small one, of firm Communists. Severe punishment must be applied to self-seekers.

4. Where a force is fairly large (several hundred men and upwards) a small *battle-police unit composed of firm fighters* must be attached to it, capable both of fighting and of dealing with deserters and self-seekers.

5. In the struggle against Mamontov's cavalry it must be firmly kept in mind that it is better to have 50 resolute and self-sacrificing fighters than 500 wavering and unsteady ones. Mamontov's Cossacks are self-seekers and cowards. They don't want to fight. They show boldness only in relation to unarmed men, women and children. When they meet a rebuff they take refuge in flight. Therefore, *every detachment must have attached to it a few selflessly resolute daredevils.*

6. Since Mamontov's Cossacks are mere thugs and bandits, they must be exterminated by all means available. No-one has the right to avoid participation in the rounding-up of Mamon toy's bandits and thugs, by groups or as individuals. A revolutionary committee that allows the bandits to pass it by is a traitor to its neighbours. Such treachery is punished severely in wartime. *In the name of the Revolution* I call on each and everyone to show not only firmness and endurance but also selfless heroism!

## **The Southern Front**

### **III. The Red Army's Second Offensive in the Ukraine (August-December 1919)**

# WORKERS AND PEASANTS, GET OUT AND ROUND THEM UP!

\* \* \*

Mamontov's cavalry have not yet been crushed. They are continuing to commit atrocities and brutal deeds. These bandits on horseback are destroying, burning, plundering everything that comes their way. Their operation has no serious military significance. But they are committing atrocities and crimes with out number. By wrecking railway lines they obstruct the movement of food supplies. They pillage grain and other food stuffs, they seize the peasants' cattle and carts as they come upon them, they get drunk and rape women and kill old men.

In Tambov, Kozlov and Lebedyan their path is marked by revolting crimes and disgusting debauchery.

Mamontov's cavalry, cut off from their own forces, avoiding battle and engaging in arson, plunder and rape, cannot, of course, be regarded as a military unit. It is a gang of brigands, arsonists, rapists and thugs. There can be no talk of war where they are concerned – what is needed is a round-up, as with a beast of prey.

This round-up must be carried through with all energy and completed within a few weeks. We cannot allow these bandits to commit any more atrocities. Every day that is allowed to slip by means fresh hundreds of human victims – workers and peasants, men and women. The workers' and peasants' government has offered pardon to any members of Mamontov's force who voluntarily surrender to the Soviet power. But no quarter can be given to those of Mamontov's men who are found armed: *they are not prisoners but brigands caught on the scene of their crimes. They must be exterminated without mercy.*

This is now the duty of the workers and peasants in the zone in which Mamontov's troops are carrying out their incursions. Village, *volost*, *uyezd* and province executive committees and Party organisations in the area between 50 and 100 versts around the Mamontov 'blot' must make every effort to contribute to the fight against the mounted robbers and murderers.

The local Communists must be in the forefront of this struggle.

A clear task is posed. Mamontov's men must not be allowed to break through to the North, Tula and Moscow. They must not be allowed to move southward, into the rear of our Red forces on the Voronezh and Kursk sectors of the front. Their routes to west and east must be cut. They are to be exterminated on the spot, to be annihilated like mad dogs.

Close the ring, workers and peasants! Bring the people out to take part in the round-up, comrade communists! Daredevils, to the forefront!

September 4, 1919  
Moscow-Tula  
*En Route*, No.86

## **The Southern Front**

### **III. The Red Army's Second Offensive in the Ukraine (August-December 1919)**

# DO WE NEED GUERRILLAS?

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For the fight against Mamontov's cavalry we have put out a call to daredevil guerrilla fighters. There may be some who will say to themselves in bewilderment: 'How is this? The Soviet military authorities have always condemned guerrillas and opposed the use of guerrilla methods, and yet now they themselves are encouraging guerrillas again!'

This way of seeing the problem would signify a complete misunderstanding, due to the circumstance that quite different things are meant by one and the same word 'guerrilla-ism'. The Ukrainian guerrillas, who proved incapable of defending the Soviet Ukraine, consisted of hastily assembled detachments made up of untrained and poorly-armed worker and peasant rebels. A properly constructed, regular army had not yet been formed in the Ukraine.

Our Red Army grew entirely out of volunteers, rebels, primitive, inexperienced guerrillas. Through protracted struggle we overcame this amorphous, clumsy guerrilla-ism and built proper, trained, disciplined regiments and divisions. But just now, when we have a stronger regular army, we can and must *supplement* it with well-organised guerrilla detachments. An army acts as a solid mass, sweeping away the enemy who has occupied an extensive territory. Guerrilla detachments, while subject to the same command, separate themselves, when necessary, from the main army, in order to carry out particular tasks, causing damage to the enemy and making their way deeply into his rear. [\[62\]](#)

The guerrillas we need, of course, are not those of the Mahkno type. We did not need helpless, timid bands of scarcely armed men, but very well organised, trained, seasoned, bold light detachments, equipped with all that they need, and carrying out tasks assigned to them by the overall command.

Depending on their tasks, guerrilla detachments may be of various sizes, ranging from a group of ten or twenty daredevils to a cavalry force comprising several thousand sabres, with light artillery and armoured cars.

Mamontov's raid has now created an acute need for guerrilla detachments. Mamontov is himself undoubtedly a guerrilla.

He has separated himself by hundreds of versts from Denikin's forces, and is roaming about in the rear of our armies, destroying railway lines. We cannot deny that Mamontov's detachment possesses adroitness and mobility. True, it is doing brigands' work, killing unarmed workers and peasants, raping and so on. But that is the fate of a counter-revolutionary guerrilla movement, which serves the dirty aims of the landlords and capitalists. We have to make our guerrillas serve the lofty tasks of the working people.

Slow-moving infantry will not keep pace with Mamontov's cavalry. Here we need light detachments mounted on horse back, in carts, in motor-cars and boats, but also on foot as well, acting unexpectedly from ambush, or stealing up by night and taking the enemy unawares. For detachments like these we need the best fighters, the most self-sacrificing and most disciplined, for, unlike the unruly Makhnovites, real guerrillas require an iron discipline that is stricter even than in the regular

regiments.

Mamontov's raid forces us to take a step forward in the building of our army. If we were able to go over from insurgency and amorphous detachments to a regular, centralised army, we shall be able in just the same way to supplement and strengthen this centralised army with splendid guerrilla detachments, moulded from steel, which will thrust them selves like sharp thorns into the enemy's body.

To the question about whether we need guerrillas we must answer: yes, we do need guerrillas, they are necessary for our purpose – but only *real* guerrillas, really brave men, warriors without fear and without reproach, for whom nothing is impossible. In the last period of the civil war, detachments of such daredevils can, if backed by the weighty masses of the Red Army, play a very great role, paving the way for the army, speeding up its attack, covering its flanks, threatening the enemy's rear, raising revolts in that rear, appearing here, there and everywhere as the embodiment of the spirit of the revolution.

*This kind of guerrilla movement we must now create.*

September 6, 1919

Orel

*En Route*, No.88

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## Endnotes

62. Guerrilla war means independent operations by forces detached from the army, cut off, if only for a time, from communication with it, and engaged in inflicting damage on the enemy, mostly in his rear. Vulnerability of the enemy's rear creates the most favourable conditions for the development of guerrilla operations (compare the operation by guerrilla detachments in Napoleon's rear in 1812). The purpose of the operations of such detachments is in the main to sever or obstruct the enemy army's communications with its sources of food and of reinforcements, and also to destroy these sources. Another very important task of guerrilla detachments is to organise forces in the enemy's rear, carry on propaganda, and create cells for providing intelligence.

## **The Southern Front**

### **III. The Red Army's Second Offensive in the Ukraine (August-December 1919)**

# NO ENTRY FOR ADVENTURERS, CAREERISTS AND ROGUES!

\* \* \*

The defeat suffered by the Ukrainian armies is a big and serious lesson for us. The Ukrainian revolution triumphed through the mighty pressure of the masses. But the Ukrainian army was formed too slowly. In its construction the principles of regular organisation and firm discipline were not applied – *why* this was so is another matter.

Now, after the harsh lesson of our rout in the Ukraine, the work has to be begun again almost from scratch. Measures must therefore be taken to ensure that the former mistakes do not recur. Our first task must be to clear the ground of worthless elements.

After the October revolution a lot of rogues (Lieutenant Shneurs, Cornet Pokrovskys [Cornet N.I. Pokrovsky was appointed commandant of the Winter Palace and the Hermitage Museum following the Bolshevik revolution, but was dismissed soon afterward, for misusing his position.] and suchlike) tried to snuggle up to the new order. They were especially numerous in the provinces that were short of men. After the first Soviet regime a vigorous purge began. Rogues, careerists and adventurers were ousted from the centres, and so they crawled away into the provinces, first into the major provincial cities and then from there into the *uyezds* or, still further, into the zone near the front. As soon as the bounds of the Soviet Republic were extended, all the adventurers or plain criminals who had been ousted by the Soviet power and were being sought for by the appropriate authorities hurled themselves upon the freshly occupied territory with a view to finding prosperity for them selves there, with opportunities to domineer and swagger – until the primitive chaos was overcome and firmer Soviet order established in the new region.

An especially large number of adventurers and political scoundrels were concentrated in the Ukraine, where political regimes changed with extraordinary rapidity, and every one of these regimes left behind it a handful of adventurers. As soon as the Ukraine had been purged of the Skoropadsky regime, the Petlyura regime and the Anglo-French occupation, the crevices of the Soviet apparatus began to be penetrated by thousands of sinister and semi-sinister characters who could not be trusted with a brass farthing, let alone with the building of a state. When Denikin's successes began to develop, these characters were the first to desert their posts, to evacuate themselves, along with their property, into the deep rear, and to sniff around for new possibilities for a quick and dazzling career.

It was about then that our forces on the Eastern front cleared the Urals and a considerable area of Western Siberia. This time, however, precautionary measures were taken: the Soviet power established a strict cordon protecting the Ural area. A barrier was set up on the roads leading thither and on it was inscribed:

'No access for, crooked adventurers.'

Among this fraternity there were quite a few who lyingly called themselves

Communists and had even equipped them selves with Party cards. The Chekas must, of course, ruthlessly fish out those blackmailers who in the Ukraine temporarily succeeded in disguising themselves as Communists, and in their case the reckoning must be doubly severe.

There is a danger that when these crooks who wanted to get into the Urals and Siberia find the gates of Siberia closed to them, they will try to return to the Ukraine and take part in the work of restoring the army of the Ukrainian front. Very vigorous and resolute measures must be adopted to prevent this. The workers sent from the centre must, together with the best, most responsible workers in the Ukraine start a most ruthless purge of all the military trains, and of all the evacuated institutions and units. In the rear immediately adjacent to the Ukraine there are concentrated, along with serious, responsible workers in search of opportunities to apply their powers, also a large number of professional idlers and parasites who are trying once again to attach themselves like leeches to Soviet, and especially army, work in the Ukraine. The Military Tribunals, jointly with the Special Sections, must purge the immediate rear. In order that this may be done, of course, there must be a purge of the Special Sections themselves, which will leave among their members only persons who have been thoroughly tested and who are selflessly devoted to the cause of the revolution.

We shall return to the Ukraine which we have temporarily lost. This time, we shall return with organised military power and we shall establish the authority of the workers and peasants unshakably. But when we set about driving out the Denikinite bandits and thugs we must at once take measures to ensure that plunderers and petty crooks do not enter the Ukraine in the wake of the victorious armies. At the entrance of the Ukraine, which we must liberate, we shall set up a clear and distinct inscription: '*No entry for adventurists, careerists and rogues!*'

September 8, 1919  
Bryansk  
*En Route*, No.90

## **The Southern Front**

### **III. The Red Army's Second Offensive in the Ukraine (August-December 1919)**

# PROLETARIANS, TO HORSE!

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The Red Army's principal misfortune is its shortage of cavalry. Our war is a war of manoeuvre and calls for the maximum mobility. This assigns a big role to the cavalry. We sensed our weakness in this respect earlier: Kaledin, Krasnov and Dutov always enjoyed superiority in cavalry. Now, Mamontov's destructive raid has sharply posed the question of creating large units of Red cavalry.

Our shortage of cavalry is not accidental. The homeland of Russia's old cavalry was the steppes, and the Cossack communities settled there. The revolution of the proletariat came to birth in the great industrial centres. We have no shortage of machine-gunners and gunners, but we are experiencing a great lack of horsemen. The steppes, remote from the centres, were the hotbeds of counter-revolution. From the Don and the Urals came the Kaledins, Krasnovs and Dutovs. Denikin found his most important support on the Don and the Kuban. As for the non-Cossack cavalry units, these were, from time immemorial, the appendage of the privileged and titled officers. An ultra-reactionary spirit always prevailed in the cavalry. The old cavalry regiments were the last to come over to the side of the October revolution. And we notice today that acts of treachery are committed most often by former regular officers from the cavalry.

From the purely military standpoint, cavalry is regarded as basically the most backward arm. Its structure and method of fighting have changed little over the centuries: the Cossack charge is still what it was in the 16th and 17th centuries.

In the last imperialist war, although the cavalry may have rendered considerable services in particular cases, in general its role remained one of third-class importance. Now, in the conditions of our civil war, we see the cavalry becoming ever more important. It has become a powerful weapon of mobile warfare, making breakthroughs and deep turning movements and cutting into the enemy's deep rear.

This renaissance of the cavalry in our civil war is not accidental. Mamontov's raid would have been impossible if he had not found in our rear points of support, accomplices, agents, sympathisers, informants and so on. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that our cavalry would find behind Denikin's front incomparably more friends than Mamontov's cavalry have found behind the backs of our Southern armies.

In addition to direct sympathy and help received, the deep raid is facilitated by the fact that it is taking place in the raiders' own country, where the people and their ways are familiar to them and where they speak the same language. In short, these are the conditions not of international but of civil war. The most conservative and largely moribund army has suddenly, as it were, revived and become a most important means of defence and offence in the hands of the most conservative and moribund classes. *We must wrest this arm from them and make it ours.* The workers' revolution must create a powerful Red cavalry.

Can this be done? It must be done, and so it can be done.

Creating the Red Army as a whole was an incomparably harder task, yet the

working class has accomplished it. All the less reason has it, then, to be blocked by the difficulties in the way of creating its own cavalry.

The easiest part of the task is the provision of arms and equipment for horsemen and horses. Zlatoust will supply us with the number of sabres we need. We are fully capable of making an adequate number of saddles. All that is required is that these be quickly produced, in the places where the appropriate conditions exist, without waiting for an initiative from the centre.

The problem is harder where horses are concerned. But this problem, too, can be solved quite successfully. In the East our armies are entering steppe regions where horses are plentiful. Every advance that we make on the Southern front will again present us with extensive opportunities to purchase horses.

Finally, the sources in Great Russia itself are far from exhausted.

All that is needed is that the creation of a cavalry force should become a task for the working masses. It is necessary that the proletariat grasp the importance for the cause of the revolution of this new step forward. The Communist must become a cavalryman. The executive committees of provinces, *uyezds*, districts and *volosts* must compete with each other in forming cavalry units, however small these may be, from their local forces and resources. These units can later be merged to create bigger formations. [\[63\]](#)

The Soviet Republic needs cavalry. Red cavalrymen, forward! To horse, proletarians!

September 1, 1919

Tula-Ryazhsk

[Ryazhsk is east of Tula, at the junction of the Tula-Penza and Moscow-Voronezh lines]

*En Route*, No.93

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## Endnotes

[63.](#) This note is missing. – TIA

## **The Southern Front**

### **III. The Red Army's Second Offensive in the Ukraine (August-December 1919)**

# THE LOCAL SOVIET HOMEGUARD

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The deep breakthrough effected by Mamontov's cavalry made it necessary to raise up local forces out of the land. It can be said that our Soviet apparatus has in this matter again shown sufficient flexibility and capacity for concentrated work at an urgent task: in many localities – railway junctions, *uyezd* towns, and to an even greater degree in provincial centres – groups and detachments, not only of infantry but also of cavalry, have been created literally 'out of nothing'. Whereas in the first few days MaMontov's raiders proceeded quite without hindrance, after their capture of Tambov they began to encounter resistance at every step.

It must be said, however, that this resistance does not yet display the required staunchness. The local Soviet homeguard, which arose in order to rebuff the raiders, is still far from fully up to Its task.

*The detachments of the revolutionary committees are too much infected with 'local' spirit.*

'Local' limitedness is expressed above all in the fact that the commanders of these detachments do not try sufficiently hard to establish communications to their left and right and behind them, and have an extremely negligent attitude regarding their duty to report. This makes it extremely difficult to unify the forces and their leaderships. The commander of every detachment specially formed to combat Mamontov's cavalry must look on his detachment not from the standpoint of defending his junction or his settlement but from that of the common task of surrounding and annihilating Mamontov's cavalry. Each detachment is merely a link in a common chain. Therefore, first and foremost – *liaison and proper, precise reporting.*

Attachment to the locality also finds expression in lack of the required initiative. A *uyezd* detachment waits patiently for the White cavalry to descend upon its *uyezd*, so as to repulse it on the spot. This will not do at all. Local Soviet detachments must make it their business to prevent the enemy cavalry from passing through, to pursue it, take it unawares, and do it all kinds of harm. If the Soviet detachment is small it cannot, of course, engage in conflict with large enemy columns, but it is always capable of exterminating patrols; of attacking the enemy's rear, his transports and stragglers; of taking prisoners; of driving off, capturing or killing, depending on circumstances, the enemy's horses when they are resting, and so on and so forth. Where such separate enterprises are concerned, the Soviet detachments must, without waiting for orders from the centre, *themselves display the initiative required.*

A waiting attitude is inadmissible also because it lowers morale instead of hardening it. A freshly formed detachment that passively awaits an enemy raid at the borders of its own *uyezd* or in the approaches to its own town, will in most cases show itself to be of poor fighting capacity when it does actually meet the enemy cavalry. Prolonged inactive waiting for the enemy demoralises people, it engenders sluggishness and even an inclination to panic. *As soon as a detachment is formed it must be given a task to perform.* Until the detachment has been properly subordinated to the nearest sectoral command, this task must be assigned

independently by the detachment commander. The first task should be in the sphere of reconnaissance: making contact with the enemy, taking a few prisoners, and soon. After its first successful raid the detachment will be transformed: it will at once feel an uprush of self-confidence, if only because it will have seen how frightened Mamontov's troopers are, feeling as they do that they are completely surrounded by enemies.

We must overcome at all costs the immobility and sluggishness of the detachments of the Soviet homeguard. For this purpose the best, most militant of the local workers must join them. The best horses, the best motor-cars and means of transport generally must go to the Soviet detachments!

More self-confidence, less passive waiting and circumspection, more initiative, more examples of courage, resourcefulness and daring! Then the local Soviet homeguard will soon acquire the warlike character that it needs, and every detachment will become an inspired link in one common chain. With this chain we shall strangle Mamontov.

September 11, 1919

Tula

*En Route*, No.93

## **The Southern Front**

### **III. The Red Army's Second Offensive in the Ukraine (August-December 1919)**

# **ORDER No.149**

**By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Red forces advancing in the Gryazi-Voronezh direction, September 12, 1919. No.149, Tambov**

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**Mamontov's principal successes have been due, up to now, to the extreme slowness of our armies' advance. The result has been: seizure of towns- shooting of workers, destruction of stations and so on. Every hour that we gain saves the lives of thousands of workers and public property worth millions.**

I call upon the Commanders, commissars and Red Army men to redouble their efforts Wherever you are, on wheels, on horseback or on foot – forward, without stopping! The Soviet Republic will judge the merit of different units, and of their commanders and commissars, by the speed of their advance. Everyone will be rewarded according to his deserts. Do not allow Mamontov's thugs to rest, hit them on the back of the head, cut off their baggage-trains, destroy their rear bases!

To the rescue of Voronezh! Forward!

## **The Southern Front**

### **III. The Red Army's Second Offensive in the Ukraine (August-December 1919)**

# ORDER No.150

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the 'N' Army, September 12, 1919, No.150,  
Rtishchevo

To be read in all companies, squadrons, task-forces and batteries

The former Cossack colonel Mironov[For the background of the Mironov affair and Mironov's subsequent Career, see *Mironov's Last Letter*, in **Samizat Register 1**, edited by Roy Medvedev (Merlin Press, 1977).] fought at one time in the Red forces against Krasnov. Mironov was motivated by personal ambition, aiming to become Ataman of the Don. When it became clear to the Cossack colonel Mironov that the Red Army was not fighting for the benefit of Mironov the careerist, but for the interests of the peasants and Cossack poor, Mironov raised the banner of revolt. Having made contact with Mamontov and Denikin, Mironov succeeded in confusing a few hundred Cossacks, and is trying to force his way with them into the ranks of the 'N' division, so as to introduce confusion and betray the workers' and peasants' regiments to the counter revolutionary enemy.

As a traitor, *Mironov is declared an outlaw*. Every honourable citizen who encounters Mironov has the duty to shoot him down like a mad dog.

Death to the traitor!

Long live the alliance of the workers, peasants and working Cossacks!

Long live the honourable fighters of the 'N' division! [\[64\]](#)

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## Endnotes

[64.](#) The factual side of Mironov's revolt is here described on the basis of the materials published by Comrade Smilga (**Voyennoye Ocherki [Military Sketches]**, published by *Ekvator*), as follows. Mironov, a former Cossack colonel, formed after the October revolution a division of volunteers named after himself. There were no Communist cells in this division, and commissars were treated with suspicion. Mironov enjoyed much sympathy among the population of his native *stanits* of Ust-Medveditskaya and its neighbourhood. During the offensive in January-February 1919 he commanded group of two divisions which advanced ahead of the Ninth Army to the Northern Donets. Already at this time it became apparent that he was trying by means of demagogic procedures and agitation against local Party workers to win fame as the defender of Cossack interests against the Communist threat. Mistakes in our policy in the Don country provided him with rich soil for such demagogery. This obliged the high command to transfer Mironov to the Western front. When Denikin's successes began, the Revolutionary War Council of the Southern Front applied for Mironov to be appointed to command the Don Corps that was being formed at Saransk. From that moment Mironov began to behave very suspiciously, sent telegrams in the form of ultimatums to the Soviet Government, and made speeches at meetings in which he sharply protested against the policy of Comrades Lenin and Trotsky. In the middle of August, when the Southern front began its unsuccessful offensive towards Kharkov, and when Mamontov's cavalry broke through at the junction between the Eighth and Ninth Armies and captured Kozlov and Yelets, Mironov decided, without authority from the command of the Southern front, to move up to the front, alleging that the Government was sabotaging the formation of his corps. Comrade Smilga tried to argue with Mironov, and summoned him to Penza, but nothing came of this, and on August 23 Mironov, having announced his decision to fight on two fronts (against Denikin and against the Bolsheviks), began to move his units towards the 23rd Infantry Division, which he had commanded and on whose support he counted.

His forces consisted of about 4,000 men (of whom only 2,000 were armed), a thousand cavalrymen, two guns and ten machine-guns. Mironov's calculation that the Cossack masses would join him proved unfounded. He was proclaimed a mutineer. To liquidate the revolt a combined force was formed, consisting of units from the First and Fourth Reserve Armies and the Samara Fortified Region, under the overall command of Comrade Goldberg. The first clashes took place on August 26. Mironov successfully evaded pursuit until he came up against Comrade Budyonny's cavalry corps, which had been transferred from the Southern group of the Eastern front to help the Southern front. Within a few hours it was all over with the mutineers. Mironov and all the active participants in the revolt were sentenced to be shot, but the majority of them, including Mironov, were pardoned by a decision of the Presidium of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee. In the fight against Wrangel Mironov commanded the Second Mounted Army. In the winter of 1921 he was again arrested, in connection with the organisation of a revolt on the Don, and shot.

## **The Southern Front**

### **III. The Red Army's Second Offensive in the Ukraine (August-December 1919)**

# COLONEL MIRONOV

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The career of ex-Colonel Mironov has come to a shameful and miserable end. He considered himself, and many others considered him, a great 'revolutionary'. Mironov fought against Krasnov and attached himself, with his first guerrilla units, to the Red Soviet forces. What was the reason for Mironov's temporary adhesion to the revolution?

This is now perfectly clear: personal ambition, careerism, an endeavour to climb on the backs of the working masses.

It is the revolution's task to establish complete and lasting rule by the working people. The representative and leader of the exploiters on the Don was General Krasnov, just as Denikin is now. Consequently, the struggle of the Soviet forces was directed against Krasnov. The aim of this struggle was to raise up the Cossack poor, the most downtrodden, to organise and unify them, with their help to crush the Cossack nobles and kulaks and to make possible a new, more just and happier life on the Don.

Mironov had no understanding of this or any sympathy with it. He thought that if Krasnov was defeated and replaced as Ataman of the Don by his former Colonel Mironov, that would solve all problems. He conceived the people's revolution as a change of individuals at the top, that is, he saw in the revolt and struggle of the working people merely a means for advancing his own personal career. When he began to notice that the victory of the Soviet forces was leading to rule not by him but by the local poor, he grew angry and bitter. He began to agitate more and more against the Soviet power. And how could he do otherwise? After all, this was the power of the working people's Soviets, and not that of the Cossack Colonel Mironov!

When the Red forces advanced to the Don, unjust and even harsh actions were undoubtedly committed in various places by particular Soviet representatives and bad Red Army units against the local Cossack population. These mistakes were due to the fact that the Cossacks had supported for too long the accursed White-Guard movement. A thoughtful and honest person must understand the reasons for this mutual bitterness and exert every effort to mitigate the antagonism between the Red troops and the local Cossacks, to eliminate it altogether, and to replace it with mutual understanding and co-operation. Particular mistakes and false steps by representatives of the Soviet power will be corrected by that power itself, and the central government will punish sternly all those local representatives who do not understand what their tasks are in relation to the working people.

Mironov acted quite differently. He decided to make political capital out of the blunders and mistakes of particular local officials, winning popularity, fame and glory for himself. In his incoherent appeals and speeches, he began to depict himself as the defender and protector of the Cossack masses, stirring them up against the authentic Soviet power. He began to put around, in concert with Denikin, the false rumour that the Soviet power wants to destroy Cossackdom. Mironov began to falsely present the fight against the Cossack generals and kulaks, on behalf of the Cossack poor and middle peasants, as a struggle against the

working Cossacks. [\[65\]](#)

It was obvious to serious old revolutionaries who had fought against the oppressors for decades, that Mironov was heading for downfall.

During the revolution not a few such unlooked-for zealots on behalf of the working people, revolutionaries for a day were brought to the surface. Some responsible comrades tried to make Mironov understand, to hold him back from the brink of the abyss: 'If representatives of the Soviet power on the Don have made mistakes,' they told him, 'we shall correct these mistakes by our joint efforts, and shall as quickly as possible draw representatives of the Cossack lower orders into the Soviet administration ... The working people's revolution is a hard and heavy task, it cannot avoid making big mistakes, but, in the end, only the Soviet power will lead the people, including the working Cossacks, on to the broad highway.'

However, these speeches were not to Mironov's liking. All his objections came down to this one: 'Make me Ataman of the Don and all will be well.' But the Soviet power could not, of course, agree to take such a step: in the first place, because the working Cossacks of the Don had no need of an Ataman, what they needed was their own Cossacks', peasants' and workers' Soviet power: and, in the second place, it was impossible to grant any power at all to the unbalanced, incoherent bawler and babbler Mironov.

Having finally become convinced that he was not going to be made Ataman, Mironov resolved upon a desperate step. Like the Ukrainian Ataman Grigoriyev, who resembled him like his own brother, Mironov raised the banner of revolt against the Soviet power. How Grigoriyev ended is well-known. After the first clashes, the troops he had deceived were scattered and broken: they fled or fell into the hands of the Red armies.

Grigoriyev himself was killed. It is quite obvious that a similar wretched and shameful end awaits Mironov, only it will come even more quickly. Grigoriyev did manage for a time to draw behind him several thousands of deceived, ignorant peasants, led by kulaks. But Mironov succeeded only in attracting a few miserable hundreds of supporters at the very outset. Like all bankrupt adventurers, Mironov spreads stories about his strength, saying that he has behind him 7,000 sabres, and soon, whereas in fact he has not even 700.

Within a week of rebelling against the Soviet power the Ukrainian ataman Grigoriyev made contact with Denikin, seeking his protection and support. Mironov, as is known, swears that Denikin is not his friend but his enemy. But what fool will believe the oath of the traitor Mironov? Denikin says to him self: 'Mironov has rebelled against the Soviet power, and so Mironov is my helper.' Mironov says to himself: 'Denikin fights against the Soviet power, which I hate, and so Denikin is my defender and support.' One hand washes the other:

Denikin does not hinder Mironov, Mironov helps Denikin. There can be no doubt that secret links are already being established between them, sinister intermediaries passing from Denikin's camp to Mironov's and back again, behind the backs of the Cossacks deceived by Mironov.

What will happen next? It is not hard to prophesy. Mironov will push himself now into this place, now into that, trying to bring confusion into the 23rd Division, which he formerly commanded. Nobody will follow him. The kulaks will not, because they have their leader, a stronger and more reliable one - Denikin. The working

Cossacks will not, because they have no need of Ataman Mironov but only of the power of the working Cossacks' deputies.

Mironov's adventure will burst like a soap-bubble, but not without having done considerable harm to the cause of the working masses. History will plant an aspen stake on Mironov's grave, as the fitting monument to a despicable adventurer and wretched traitor.

September 13, 1919

Balashoi,

*En Route*, No.94

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## Endnotes

65. In order that Mironov's programme may be more clearly understood, here are excerpts from the *Order-Appeal* issued by Mironov, as commander of the Don Corps, on August 22:

Honourable citizens of the Russian Republic! The town of Kozlov where the Southern front has its headquarters, is being evacuated. Before the onslaught of Denikin's hordes, the Red Army, being without moral foundations, is retreating, just as it is retreating on the Western front before the onslaught of the Polish legions.

The ring around the Russian revolution, after the frightful human sacrifices made upon its altar, is drawing tighter. Land and liberty are threatened with mortal danger, which the Hungarian revolution has not removed.

'The causes of this disaster must be sought in the constant evil deeds of the ruling party, the Communist Party, which has aroused universal discontent and indignation against itself among the working masses.

The appeal ended with the following call:

'What is left for the Cossack to do, when he knows that his house has been given to someone else, his holding seized by others, and his cattle driven off to a pen in the steppe? Only to set fire to his *stanitsas* and farmhouses. Thus we see in the Cossacks as a whole those who are taking harsh vengeance on the Communists for their desecration of truth and justice, which, together with the universal discontent prevailing among the working peasants of Russia, caused by the Communists, threatens to bring final ruin to the conquests of the revolution and a new, severe enslavement of the people. To save the conquests of the revolution only one way is left to us, namely, to overthrow the Communist Party.

## **The Southern Front**

### **III. The Red Army's Second Offensive in the Ukraine (August-December 1919)**

# THE LESSON OF THE MIRONOV AFFAIR

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Mironov's criminal and stupid adventure has ended. The chief culprit has been captured, with all his assistants and his deceived followers. The capture was effected without a single shot being fired; nobody was killed or wounded on either side. This fact is alone the best proof of how shaky and uncertain the Mutineers felt. Whereas Mironov had launched the struggle with the aim of becoming Ataman, the majority of his collaborators clearly did not know where they were going or why. Consequently, at the critical moment they could not find the strength even to resist. They all surrendered at their first encounter with the Red Soviet cavalry. Dismounted and disarmed, they were sent off to be dealt with by the revolutionary military tribunal.

The following fact is noteworthy, though: as soon as Mironov's men had been captured, they at once asked the commander of our cavalry corps to take them into his service. These men had raised a revolt against the Soviet power, had marched against the Red Army, had had some clashes with it and disarmed some groups of Red Army men – but then, as though nothing had happened, they started to ask to serve in the Red Army, for all the world as if they had been indulging in some prank but now wanted to get back to work.

What does this mean?

It means that *among the Cossacks the fissure between the Reds and the Whites has not yet gone deep enough*. Whereas the Cossack capitalists and kulaks understand very well where their class interest lies, and give their backing to every bourgeois authority (Krasnov, the German Kaiser, Skoropadsky, Denikin, the Anglo-French imperialists) the working Cossacks still have too weak an appreciation of their own interests and too easily let themselves be misled by various adventurers and rogues who raise 'all-Cossack' slogans.

There are no such slogans, apart from lies and deception.

The Cossacks are divided into antagonistic classes. There are the Cossack poor, the proletarian and semi-proletarian section of the Cossacks, who are now on our side with all their hearts. There is the Cossack upper stratum, which is irreconcilably hostile to the proletariat and to Soviet power. And there is the broad intermediate stratum of Cossack middle peasants, who are politically very backward.

It is these peasants that robbers like Krasnov and Denikin and adventurers like Mironov deceive. The Cossack of middling status watches the fierce struggle between the Whites and the Reds and does not know which side to join. As a rule, he joins whichever side seems to him to be the stronger at the given moment. When the Reds arrive, he is with them, but when the Whites temporarily drive out the Reds, the middle peasant does not resist the Whites, either.

Mironov reflects the muddle and vacillation of the backward Cossack middle peasant. So long as our forces were victoriously advancing southward, Mironov led his division as part of the army as a whole. When our front was shaken, and yielded, and Denikin threw us hundreds of versts back, Mironov went into opposition, and along that path reached the stage of open mutiny.

But Mironov does not merely *reflect* the instability of the middle peasant, he consciously and maliciously *exploits* the middle peasant's ignorance, trying to make a career for himself thereby. When the Red forces cleared the Don country, Mironov hoped that with their aid he would gain power over the Cossacks. When Denikin temporarily got the upper hand, Mironov began to adapt himself to Denikin, and was obviously ready to betray the working Cossacks to him in return for the position of Ataman. In doing this, Mironov invariably played upon 'all-Cossack' slogans and sentiments.

In his proclamations and speeches Mironov alleged that the Soviet power was preparing 'the destruction of Cossackdom'. Here Mironov simply lumped together the Cossack landlords and kulaks with the Cossack middle and poor peasants. The Soviet power is bringing *destruction* to the Don bourgeoisie and the Cossack kulaks. But to the Cossack poor and middle peasants who march with the Soviet power it is bringing freedom and deliverance.

In his attempt to deceive the Cossacks with 'all-Cossack' slogans and phrases, Mironov got himself cruelly burnt: he was caught and disarmed by the Red Cossacks. The Cossack regiments of the 23rd Division, which he formerly commanded, turned their backs in indignation and scorn upon the adventurer and traitor.

Nevertheless, as has been mentioned, Mironov's henchmen expressed readiness to go over from the White forces to the Red, just as previously they had gone ever from the Red to the White. Naturally, their request was bluntly refused and they were all handed over to the tribunal. The latter's task is to show to all the vacillating Cossacks that the fight between the Reds and the Whites, the workers and the exploiters, the working people and the oppressors, is a fight to the death. In this fight the Soviet power will allow nobody to play tricks and launch adventures.

At the same time, as they advance more deeply into the Don region, the Red Army and the Soviet power will at once take all necessary measures in order to make the Cossacks realise that they must *once and for all choose between the Reds and the Whites*.

It is a lie that the Soviet power is going to drive the Cossacks by force into the realm of the Commune. Communism will be inculcated only by persuasion and example. But what the Soviet power will not permit the working Cossacks to do is to move from one camp to the other, and at a difficult moment stab the Red Army treacherously in the back. While waging a campaign of annihilation against the Don counter-revolution we shall by word and deed bind the poor and middle peasants to the Red Army and the workers' and peasants' power, for in this alone lies salvation for the working people of the Don.

September 16, 1919  
Povorzno-Balashov  
En Route, No. 95

## **The Southern Front**

### **III. The Red Army's Second Offensive in the Ukraine (August-December 1919)**

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF OUR IMMEDIATE POLICY ON THE DON

(Notes from the archives)

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1. We shall explain to the Cossacks in words, and prove in deeds, that our policy is not one of vengeance for the past. We shall forget nothing, but we shall not take revenge for past actions. Future relations will be determined by the conduct of the different groups among the Cossacks themselves.

2. The criterion in our relations with the different strata and groups of the Don Cossacks will be, in the period immediately ahead, not so much a class evaluation of the different strata (kulaks, middle peasants, poor peasants) as the attitude of the different groups of the Cossacks themselves towards the advancing Red Army. We shall take under our resolute protection and armed defence those elements among the Cossacks who meet us half-way. We shall allow those strata and groups of the Cossacks who maintain a waiting attitude to look, around them and find their bearings, while not ceasing to keep them under observation. We shall ruthlessly destroy all those elements who give support, whether direct or indirect, to the enemy, or make difficulties for the Red Army. These criteria are purely practical, very clear and very simple, and their good sense and fairness will be understood by every Red army man, including the Cossacks in the Red Army, and also by the local population, both Cossack and non-Cossack.

3. We shall take strict care that the advancing Red Army does not commit robberies, rapes and so on. We must keep it firmly in mind that, in the circumstances of the Don region, every outrage committed by the Red forces becomes a major political fact and creates very serious embarrassments. At the same time we shall demand that the inhabitants provide the Red Army with everything it needs: we shall collect in an organised way, through the special food committees, and take care that payment is made fully and in good time.

4. The social groupings among the Cossacks are very amorphous. Nevertheless it is possible broadly to foresee that the groups characterised by their attitude to the Red Army will coincide, very roughly, with the Cossack poor peasants, middle peasants and kulaks. Although the Don middle peasant (and, even more so, the Kuban middle peasant) is richer than the kulak of Tver or Novgorod, all the same, class antagonisms are developing their effects on the Don, too, even though the proportions in terms of property possessed are different. We must at once give a demonstrative political character to our support to the poor and a section of the middle peasants, helping those who have suffered at the hands of the Whites.

5. A similarly demonstrative character must be given to our punishment of those elements which have entered the Don region during its liberation and committed abuses of one kind or another against the Cossacks.

6. We must clearly and persistently put forward, in agitation and in practice, the idea that we are not going to force anyone into communes.

7. When forming provisional organs of local authority we must take all measures to

ensure that those we draw into them are representatives of the inhabitants who have stayed put, and who are therefore not hostile to us. At the same time it is absolutely necessary that there should be in each executive committee at least one non-Cossack (*inorogodny*) [The *inorogodnie* ('outlanders') were the non-Cossack peasant settlers in the Don region, who made up a large proportion of the inhabitants and were often in conflict with the Cossacks.] Communist, who will show far more vigilance towards counter revolutionary sentiments and conduct in the locality.

#### 8. Thorough organisation of Soviet communications and intelligence.

September 16, 1919

## **The Southern Front**

### **III. The Red Army's Second Offensive in the Ukraine (August-December 1919)**

# PLAN FOR OPERATIONS ON THE SOUTHERN FRONT

(Notes from the secret archives)

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The plan drawn up in advance for operations on the Southern front has proved to be absolutely incorrect. Our defeats on the Southern front are due primarily to the errors in the basic plan.

1. Fundamental to the plan was the identification of the threat from Denikin's White Guards with the Don and Kuban Cossack communities. This identification was more or less sensible so long as Denikin's centre was at Yekaterinodar and the limit of his successes was the eastern border of the Donets Basin.

As time passed, this identification became less and less sound. Denikin's tasks are offensive, whereas those of the Don and Kuban Cossacks are confined to the defence of their own regions. When Denikin advanced into the Donets area and the Ukraine, elementary considerations urged the need to separate his westward moving forces from their original base, the Cossacks. A blow struck from Kharkov towards Taganrog or towards Berdyansk represented the shortest trajectory across a territory inhabited not by Cossacks but by workers and peasants, and gave promise of maximum success with minimum expenditure of forces.

2. A considerable section of the Cossacks would have remained hostile to us, and liquidation of the specifically Cossack counter-revolution on the Don and the Kuban would have remained a distinct task. Whatever its difficulty, this is a task of a local character and we would have been able and would have had every possibility to deal with it as the second item on our agenda.

As a base, the Don is now exhausted. A large number of Cossacks have perished in the endless fighting. As regards the Kuban, it is opposed to Denikin. By our direct offensive against the Kuban we are bringing about a rapprochement between the Kuban Cossacks and the Denikinites. A blow struck from Kharkov towards Taganrog, which would have separated Denikin's forces in the Ukraine from the Kuban, would have given temporary support to the advocates of independence for the Kuban and caused the Kuban to stop fighting for a time [A movement for autonomy was strong among the Kuban Cossacks, and this led to conflict between them and General Denikin, who was rigidly for 'Russia one and indivisible'.], while waiting to see the outcome of our struggle against the Denikinites on the Donets and in the Ukraine.

3. A direct offensive along the line of most resistance proved, as had been forecast, wholly to Denikin's advantage. The Cossacks of Veshenskaya, Migulinskaya and Kazanskaya *stanitsas* mobilised to a man, swearing never to surrender. In this way, by our very offensive we provided Denikin with a substantial number of soldiers.

4. In order to form a judgement of the operational plan it would not be out of place to take a look at its results. The Southern front was given forces such as none of our fronts had received before: at the moment of the offensive there were on the Southern front no fewer than 180,000 bayonets and sabres, with the corresponding number of guns and machine-guns. As the result of a month and a half of fighting we are miserably marking time on the eastern half of the Southern front, while on the western half there has been a serious retreat, with destruction of units and

break-up of organisation. *In other words, our situation on the Southern front is worse today than it was when the command proceeded to implement its 'a priori' plan.* It would be childish to close our eyes to this. [\[66\]](#)

5. Attempts to put the blame on the state of the armies of the Southern front, the organisation of the apparatus, and so on, are utterly groundless. The armies of the Southern front are in no way any worse than those of the Eastern front. The Eighth Army is fully as good as the Fifth. The weaker Thirteenth Army is in any case inferior to the Fourth. The Ninth Army is approximately on the same level as the Third. To a considerable extent these armies were built by the same group of workers, and, to anyone who has observed these armies during their periods of success and of failure, talk of some differences in organisation or combat-capacity between our armies of the Southern and Eastern fronts sounds utterly false.

6. What is true here is this alone, that Denikin is an incomparably more serious enemy than Kolchak. The divisions that were transferred from the Eastern to the Southern fronts proved to be in no way better than the Southern front divisions. This fully applies to the commanding personnel. On the contrary, indeed, in the initial period the divisions from the Eastern front showed themselves to be generally weaker, until they found their feet in the new conditions, facing a new enemy.

7. But if the enemy in the South was stronger, we too were incomparably stronger than we had ever been before, on any of our fronts. We must therefore seek the reasons for our failure entirely in the operational plan. We advanced along the line of most resistance, that is to say, units of average steadiness were sent into localities inhabited entirely by Cossacks, who were not attacking but defending their *stanitsas* and their homes. The atmosphere of a 'Don people's war' had a debilitating effect on our units. Under these conditions, Denikin's tanks, his skilful manoeuvring, and so on, gave him a tremendous advantage.

8. In the region where smaller forces on our side could have achieved incomparably greater results, on the Donets and in the Ukraine, we left Denikin complete freedom of action, and thereby enabled him to obtain a huge reservoir for new formations.

9. All talk about Denikin not raising new forces in the Ukraine is rubbish. While there are in the Ukraine few politically-educated proletarians, a circumstance which hindered our attempts to raise new forces, the Ukraine has very many officers, sons of landlords and bourgeois, and brutal kulaks. Consequently, while we were pressing against the Don country, strengthening the Cossack barrier against us, Denikin was managing, almost unhindered, to raise new formations, especially of cavalry, throughout the whole territory he occupied.

10. The erroneousness of the plan is now so obvious that the question arises: how could this plan have been formed in the first place?

There is an historical explanation for its appearance. When Kolchak was threatening the Volga, the main danger was that Denikin and Kolchak might link up. In a letter to Kolchak Denikin spoke of keeping a rendezvous with him in Saratov. [General Denikin wrote in **The White Army** (1930) that 'one of my letters to Admiral Kolchak on the question of an all-Russian Government contained the following words: "Please God, we shall meet in Saratov and decide that question for the good of the Motherland." This letter fell into Soviet hands,(as mentioned in Trotsky's article, *supra*, *Steel and Gold*). Denikin notes: 'According to Trotsky's testimony my sentence about meeting Kolchak in Saratov served as a foundation for the Bolshevik plan of military operations on the Southern front in spring 1919, and led to the concentration of the main Bolshevik forces in the direction of Saratov.]

Hence the task proposed by the former command, to form a powerful striking force on the Tsaritsyn-Saratov stretch of the Volga.

The Eastern front considered it impossible at that time to transfer any of its units. The then Commander-in-Chief accused the Eastern front of causing delay. The Eastern front stressed that the delay would not be too protracted or dangerous, as units would be brought up directly to the left flank (resting on the Volga) of the Southern front.

The echo of these old plans, plus secondary considerations about saving time in the transference of units from the Eastern front led to the creation of Shorn's special group. All the other considerations (about striking a decisive blow at the Don and Kuban bases, and so on) were thought up after the event, when the absurdity of the a-priori plan began to be revealed more and more harshly.

11. Now, in order to gloss over the actual results, a fresh hypothesis has been advanced: if the principal forces had not been concentrated in the Tsaritsyn-Novocherkassk direction, Denikin would be in Saratov, and the Syzran bridge would have been blown up. [The special importance of the railway bridge over the Volga at Syzran was that this was the only rail link between Central Russia, on the one hand, and Siberia and Turkestan, on the other.] All these imagined terrors are meant to serve as our compensation for the real danger that threatens Orel and Tula, after our loss of Kursk. And the point is overlooked that it would have been as difficult for the Don Cossacks to get to Saratov as it is now for our forces to get to Novocherkassk.

September 1919

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## Endnotes

66. It has not been possible to establish the precise dating of these notes. They were written after the August counter-move by the Southern front against General Denikin. On August 1, 1919 our retreating units of the Southern front stood on the line: Nikolayev, Yelizavetgrad, Bobrinskaya station, Romny, Oboyan, Korotoyak, Liski station, Povorino, Kamyshin, and from there down the Volga to its mouths (see Map 3). At that moment our command decided to strike a counter-blow at the enemy in two main directions: (a) from the Balashov-Kamyshin front towards the lower Don, and (b) from the Kursk-Voronezh sector towards Kharkov. The first of these directions was considered the decisive one. The offensive by our forces began in the middle of August. The enemy was driven back in both directions, and in twelve days we had captured, in the West, Volchansk, Kupyansk and Valuiki, and had got to within 60 versts of Kharkov. In the east we had reached the line of the middle Don. These partial successes did not bring about a general turn. The reasons for these failures are given in these notes. (The course of events can be followed from the chronology and from Map 3.)

## **The Southern Front**

### **III. The Red Army's Second Offensive in the Ukraine (August-December 1919)**

# TULA STEEL

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The great struggle is nearing its denouement. The enemy's army is making its supreme effort. Having strained its muscles and sinews, it is, in its death agony, stretching out its hand towards one of the jewels of the Soviet Republic – Tula.

That is where steel for weapons is being forged for the workers' and peasants' army. Tula is the great arms workshop of the revolution. It is from these that we get rifles, bayonets, machine-guns, cartridges and sabres.

Unable to cope with the heavy masses of the Red Army which are pressing ever more powerfully upon the Don, Denikin has set himself the aim of breaking deeply into the rear of our forces, descending upon Tula and there destroying the factories, annihilating the Red Army's great smithy.

True, Tula is not now our only source of arms. The Urals have been liberated. The mighty factories of Izhvesk, Votkinsk, Perm, Yekaterinburg and Zlatoust are indefatigably hammering out weapons for our soldiers. These works are expanding and are growing. But Tula still holds first place, the Soviet power can therefore not let Tula be lost, even for a time.

The whole area between Moscow and the Southern front has been transformed into a fortified zone. Every town, every railway junction in this area is a front of the revolution. Every worker, every conscious peasant is a defender and fighter in this fortified area. From one village to another, from *volost* to *uyezd*, and from *uyezd* to province stretches a network of unbroken military communications, and at the centre of this network stands Tula, like a rock of the revolution cast from steel.

The young garrison of Tula has been assigned a lofty task – to defend the approaches to the great workshop where thousands of Red smiths are beating out white-hot steel for the Red fronts. The title of Red soldier of the Tula garrison is doubly honourable today!

Denikin has received from the arsenals of British and French capital rifles and cartridges with which to shed the blood of Russia's workers and peasants. The gold and arms they get from foreign imperialism are helping Russia's landlords and capitalists to torture, ravage and ruin our country. But they will not see victory! In this last battle we are as firm and steadfast as on the first day of our struggle. The day is near when the aggressor's weapon will be smashed to smithereens against Tula steel!

October 6, 1919  
Moscow-Tula  
*En Route*, No.96

## **The Southern Front**

### **III. The Red Army's Second Offensive in the Ukraine (August-December 1919)**

# **GREETINGS**

**To the Revolutionary War Council of the Southern Front the occasion of the rout of the  
Whites' cavalry corps before Voronezh**

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The news of the brilliant victory over Mamontov and Shkuro has evoked mighty, joyful echoes on all fronts. Before Petrograd, where the Seventh Army has begun to beat Yudenich, your victories have inspired a fresh access of energy. To the capture of Voronezh the Seventh Army will reply with the capture of Krasnoye Selo, Gatchina, Yamburg and Gdov. On its second anniversary the Soviet Republic displays invincibility for all the world to see. I embrace Budyonny and the heroes of his invincible corps. I greet the commander and the members of the Revolutionary War Council of the Southern Front. [\[67\]](#)

*En Route*  
October 26, 1919, No.102

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## **Endnotes**

[67.](#) Comrade Budyonny's victory before Voronezh formed part of the general plan for defeating Denikin. After Mamontov's raid the enemy renewed his offensive, but his victories were bought now at a high price. On September 21 our forces abandoned Kursk, and on October 14 Orel. By mid-October preparations had been completed for a decisive counter-blow by our forces. Two groups were formed for this purpose: one, drawn from the Commander-in-Chief's reserves (the Lettish Division, Pavlov's brigade, the Red Cossack cavalry brigade, and units of the Fourteenth Army) to the north-west of Orel, for action towards the Kursk-Orel railway line: the other, east of Voronezh, formed from Budyonny's cavalry corps, which, together with units of the Eighth Army was to smash the enemy before Voronezh and strike at the rear of the enemy's Orel group, in the direction of Kastomaya.

## **The Southern Front**

### **III. The Red Army's Second Offensive in the Ukraine (August-December 1919)**

# A GREAT VICTORY

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**Budyonny has beaten Mamontov and Shkuro.**

Who is Budyonny? He is a true warrior of Workers' and Peasants' Russia, a former cavalry NCO who now commands the Red cavalry corps on the Southern front. Budyonny's corps was formed gradually, in the course of ceaseless battles: first against Krasnov, then against Denikin. The corps includes many Red Cossacks from the Don and the Kuban. There are also many peasants and workers in it. Budyonny's corps was the first large cavalry formation in the Red Army. The first but not the last. Another corps on the same Southern front is commanded by the hero Dumenko, under whom Budyonny served as deputy commander for several months.

The commanders of the divisions, brigades and regiments that make up Budyonny's corps are mostly distinguished heroes. Many of them, like Budyonny himself, have been awarded the Order of the Red Banner. 'Order me to march against Mamontov,' Budyonny asked, when Mamontov raided Tambov and Kozlov. Infantry units failed to catch Mamontov on the wing. Budyonny was sent in pursuit of him. Eventually he overtook Mamontov and stayed close to him and, along with him, the notorious Shkuro. For several days Budyonny stood waiting like a lion about to spring, between the two generals' corps. Then he sprang – a fatal spring for Shkuro and Mamontov!

The whole strength of the Denikinite counter-revolution lies in its cavalry. The basis of the White-Guard cavalry consists of two corps – Mamontov's and Shkuro's. If we suffered defeats in the South, sometimes very serious ones, it was because we were unable to counterpose to the enemy's cavalry a Red cavalry force of equal strength. It is hardest of all to form cavalry, and that was why it was formed only slowly. But now, before Voronezh, the Red Army has passed its cavalry examination, and passed brilliantly. The Red cavalry corps of Budyonny has beaten the White corps of Mamontov and Shkuro.

The struggle in the South is far from over. But the enemy has been dealt a blow from which he will never recover.

There are still nearly two weeks to go before the second anniversary of the birthday of the Soviet Republic. During that time events in the South will follow their course: the victories before Orel and Voronezh will be followed by many others. There can be no doubt that on the North-Western (Petrograd) front the next fortnight will bring a conclusive denouement. The Seventh Army will not lag behind our victorious forces in the South, and will finish off Yudenich's bands in time for the second Soviet anniversary.[\[68\]](#)

October 25, 1919  
Petrograd  
*En Route*, No.102

[68.](#) The battle fought before Voronezh by Budyonny's cavalry corps had very great importance for the development of operations on the decisive sector of our counter-blow. On October 24 Budyonny's cavalry, having smashed the units of General Mamontov and Shkuro, took Voronezh and advanced to Kastornaya station. At the same time our shock-groups before Orel and Voronezh forced the enemy to retreat all along the central sector of the front. On the situation at the front of the Seventh Army, see the section [\*The Fight for Petrograd\*](#) and [notes 78, 79](#) and [80](#).

# The Fight for Petrograd

## THE BLOW STRUCK AT PETROGRAD

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A pack of bourgeois swine are rending the flesh of Soviet Russia from every direction. In the South, Denikin is striving with all his strength towards Tula and Moscow. This has involved weakening his position in the Ukraine itself, with the result that Kiev has been boldly seized by Red forces.

In the West the Polish gentry are gnashing their teeth. The German General Von Der Goltz has turned himself into Hetman Goltsev and, egged on by the stock-exchange scum of all countries, is conquering the Baltic region with the aid of monarchist bands, so as to strike at Moscow from there.

On the North-Western sector of the front a bloody, drunken trio – Yudenich, Balakhovich and Rodzyanko [This is A.P. Rodzyanko, not to be confused with his brother P.P. Rodzyanko (author of **Tattered Banners**), who fought in Siberia, or with the Octobrist politician M.V. Rodzyanko.] – are advancing on Petrograd [\[78\]](#)

The blow struck by the White-Guard bands was preceded by the peace negotiations of the Estonian White-Guards, who acted as though on General Yudenich's behalf. It is still difficult to make out whether the Estonian White-Guards are direct agents of Yudenich or his miserable dupes. But it is a fact that the Estonian peace negotiations served as a means of putting the Red forces in Petrograd off their guard, lulling their vigilance and lowering the level of their fighting capacity.

The army defending the approaches to Petrograd did not sustain the initial onslaught and began to fall back. A terrible danger again hung over Petrograd. The British and French wireless reported with devilish gloating the defeats we suffered on the Yamburg road. The stock-exchange press of the whole world, in transports of delight, forecast Petrograd's fall in the near future.

They miscalculated again this time. Petrograd will not fall.

Petrograd stands firm. We shall not surrender Petrograd.

Forces adequate to defend the first city of the proletarian revolution will be found in the land of the workers and peasants.

Yudenich's success is the success of a cavalry raid. Young infantry regiments which had never faced cavalry before drew back. But a limit will be set to the advance of Yudenich's cavalry. Army units from other fronts are going to Petrograd's aid, and, above all, the working class of Petrograd have risen to defend their city.

Despite the howling of the bourgeois jackals of the whole world, Petrograd will not fall. It will stand firm. The working class will defend it this time too. But this time must be the last time. It is not enough to defend Petrograd. We must smash the skulls of the Yudenichite bands of Anglo-French imperialism.

## Endnotes

78. In the first half of October the North-Western Army made a second attempt to march on Petrograd. On September 28 enemy units brought pressure to bear on us in the Luga and Pskov direction and inflicted a partial defeat on the 19th and 10th divisions of the Seventh Army. Bad work on the part of the intelligence organs of our headquarters prevented our command from appreciating the significance of the enemy's regrouping: the Whites succeeded in concentrating superior forces in the Yamburg direction, which was the most important for them. The strung-out disposition of the Seventh Army, which had been weakened both numerically and qualitatively, together with the absence of reserves and mobile groups, made it easy for Yudenich to break through our front and, on October 11, to take Yamburg. Yudenich's main forces (the First Corps) operated along the railway between Yamburg and Gatchina, while a subsidiary blow, which was intended to facilitate the capture of Petrograd, was struck in the direction of Luga and along the southern shore of the Gulf of Finland. On October 17 the Whites occupied both Gatchina and Strugi-Byclyc [?] without fighting. Thus, a serious threat to Red Petrograd was created.

# The Fight for Petrograd

## The Fight for Petrograd

**Speech in the Petrograd Soviet of Workers', Peasants' and Red Army Men's Deputies, at the Session of October 19, 1919**

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First of all I must refer, if only in brief and general terms, to the situation on all of our fronts, so that Petrograd's position in the general setting of military events may be made clear.

The Northern front was the quietest, and it is still so today. Some events have, however, taken place there, which are wholly to our advantage: the British have evacuated their forces which threatened us from that direction for so long. On the Northern front the British commander-in-chief has been replaced by a Russian, a White Guard, who, in an order to his troops and to the people of the region issued in the last days of last month, calls on them not to give way to panic, on the one hand, while, on the other, he frankly admits that, after the British evacuation of the White Sea coast, the Whites will probably have to leave Archangel and shift their base to the Murman coast. Consequently, we cannot look for any unexpected unpleasantnesses to occur on that sector of the front, although it is certain that the difficulties we have recently experienced on the Petrograd front will make the White Guards on the Northern front more insolent. Comrade Zinoviev mentioned here that we suffered a hitch recently on the Eastern front, which in the last few months had been the most victorious of our fronts. On the front where, during more than two months, our troops advanced about a thousand versts from west to east, a hitch has undoubtedly occurred. It was not the result of any disintegration or breakdown of our units, but, to a considerable extent, the result of a mechanical weakening of the forces, a reduction in their numbers. It is no secret to anyone that we have taken more than one division from the Eastern front to help other fronts, and in particular the Southern front.

In addition, you know that Kolchak suffered a decisive defeat before Perm and before Chelyabinsk, withdrew what remained of his troops into the deep rear, and there re-formed and reorganised them. For a certain period our troops on the Eastern front advanced almost without meeting any resistance, and then, after they had by sheer inertia traversed a thousand versts, they came up against a barrier constituted by the rein forced and strengthened remnants of Kolchak's forces. Just as an individual who takes a run-up and goes on running from inertia, until, at a certain moment, at a certain point, he encounters a barrier, and then recoils from it, so the army which had been automatically advancing in recent weeks without meeting any resistance from Kolchak, at a certain stage recoiled to a distance of several dozen versts, and concentrated on the west bank of the Tobol. But, recently, it has brought up its reserves and gone over to the offensive along the whole line of the front. The events which have taken place there in the last few days possess the same decisive significance for the remnants of Kolchak's army as the great battles before Perm, Yekaterinburg and Chelyabinsk had, in their time, for the main body of that army. We have had reports in the last two or three days of the utter routing of Kolchak's principal divisions, of our capture from him of

dozens of guns, hundreds of machine-guns, and other war booty: we have learnt that the enemy has been smashed and scattered and is retreating in panic, while our forces are advancing triumphantly along the whole line of the front. This means that we have overcome the momentary hitch. In this connection it must be mentioned, to the credit of the Eastern front, that it has got out of this fresh temporary difficulty entirely by means of its own forces, without any support from the other fronts.

On the Southern front the picture is indeed very far from being so favourable as on the Eastern front. Here the fight is much harder, here the enemy is incomparably more numerous, here it is a matter not of tens but of hundreds of thousands of soldiers on both sides. On the Southern front, as you know, Denikin's greatest weapon is his plentiful cavalry, drawn from the Don and Kuban. We were unable to counterpose anything of equivalent strength to him, because cavalry has always been, as I have emphasised more than once, the most conservative and reactionary type of arm: the Don, the Kuban, the steppes, the provinces of Astrakhan and Orenburg, the Turgai region, the Ural River region, that is, the most backward parts of the country, are the territory where our own Russian cavalry arose and was trained. The Russian proletarians got on horseback, settled themselves in the saddle, and learnt the art of mounted warfare only after it had become clear to us that in the civil war, in this war which is predominantly one of mobility and man oeuvre, we need to create our own revolutionary cavalry.

We shall create it, and in this matter we shall catch up with and surpass our enemy. But the period during which we were accustoming ourselves to the peculiarities of the Southern front, when we were learning, forming our cavalry, our arms for beating off cavalry attacks – that period was a profoundly painful and difficult one for us. On the Southern front we lost a number of important strong points and extensive territory which provided Denikin with a reservoir from which he could mobilise large masses. However, I entirely concur with Comrade Zinoviev's conclusion that there, too, a turn has, fundamentally, been accomplished, and not just in the directly military sense. It has been accomplished above all because, despite our previous military defeats on the Southern fronts, our political strength has shown itself there in its full magnitude. During the last six or eight weeks have had on the Southern front two political experiences of gigantic importance: first, the treachery of the Cossack Colonel Mironov, and, second, the cavalry raid by General Mamontov, who broke through at Novokhopersk into Tambov province and overran the provinces of Ryazan, Tula, Voronezh and Kursk. Mamontov had at his disposal about seven thousand sabres, and good commanders. He chose to advance through the richest, most counter-revolutionary parts of the Southern provinces. First of all, he burst into Tambov province – a province with a kulak, counter revolutionary bourgeois element in its villages – and there he raised the banner of revolt (reinforcing his argument with Cossack sabres and lances), the banner of revolt by the kulaks against the Soviet power. In the spring of this year a wave of kulak, and even middle-peasant, revolts rolled over the whole extent of Soviet Russia. It seemed that if ever we had to expect a revolt of the rich kulak peasants of Russia's southern provinces, it must be now, when a whole cavalry corps, a very serious force, had come to the aid of the kulaks. This cavalry corps was seen by Mamontov and his master Denikin as a crystal to be dropped into the saturated solution of Soviet Russia, a crystal around which the bourgeoisie of town and country would gather, so that counter-revolution would develop in the form of an open revolt of the bourgeoisie and of the urban and rural masses.

And what, in fact, did we see? We saw how Mamontov's corps, like a comet with a

filthy tail of robbery and rape, passed through a series of provinces. Absolutely nowhere did Mamon toy succeed in raising a revolt, even if only a revolt of kulaks opposed to the Soviet power. What is the explanation? It is that the peasants – not only the middle peasants but even the kulaks as well – were confronted with the necessity of openly choosing, in the military sense, between the Soviet power and the power of counter-revolutionary monarchist rule: and both the kulak, passively, and the middle peasant, actively, voted in practice for the Soviet power, withheld support from Mamon toy, and returned without resistance to the fold of the Soviet regime.

Comrades, we have largely passed by this fact without looking at it, without appreciating it sufficiently, and yet this is a fact which points to the colossally enhanced political strength which the Soviet regime has acquired in the countryside by the time of its second anniversary. This was shown by the attitude of the most reactionary stratum of the country's population, namely, the Cossack middle-peasantry of the Don, to

Mironov's revolt. Mironov raised the slogans which had been raised, in their time, by the Right SRs, and then by the Left SRs, slogans of democracy and the Constituent Assembly, under the name of so-called people's soviets: 'Down with the rule of the Communist Party, down with the Cheka, long live the working masses!' – slogans that would appeal to the aver age philistine, to the petty-bourgeois in the town and to the middle-peasant, including the Cossack middle peasant. And Mironov enjoyed immense popularity on the Don. The whole struggle, all the revolts of the lower orders against the upper stratum of the Cossacks had taken place there in the form of a duel between the people's hero Mironov and General Krasnov. This Mironov, to whom we had given the means of forming, arming and supplying troops, raised a revolt with these slogans that were popular with the backward rural masses. He hoped to become master of the situation on the Don within a few weeks, perhaps even days. But what happened? He was rejected by the Don, in the persons of our cavalry corps, of our 23rd Division, which he formerly commanded, and which to a considerable extent, indeed mostly, consists of cavalry. He found no support among the Cossacks, and a few hundred of them, led by a Cossack, surrounded his detachment and captured it and Mironov himself without firing a shot. It cannot be denied that Mironov is sincere. He is a typical representative of the petty-bourgeoisie, of the middle-peasant, petty-bourgeois strata of the Cossacks. Adventurism, open careerism, connected with the interests of the middle strata of the peasantry, are not alien to him, but neither, I repeat, is sincerity. He at once declared that he must bear the responsibility for what had happened, because he had involved the others, whereas his associates abandoned and repudiated him. This Mironov, having learnt from the experience of this rebuff given him by the awakened Cossack community, declared – and his declaration was not the cowardly babbling of a child, but that of a revolutionary who had seen the light, after shedding a number of illusions – that his actions had been profoundly criminal from the political standpoint, that he was now convinced that for the Communist Party to fall would be the greatest of calamities for the cause of the revolution, and he begged only to be allowed, by death in battle, to expiate the crime he had committed. As you know, the Central Executive Committee has granted him his life, and the Soviet power will give him the opportunity in one way or another to expiate his crime and to go down in the history of the struggle on the Don as an honourable fighter. But what is the significance of the fate suffered by his revolt, his prank? It means that, while the Tsarist General Mamonov is unable to raise a revolt of the most counter revolutionary elements in the countryside under the slogans of *Russia one and indivisible* (how can that be one and indivisible which they are dividing up

and selling off?), the slogans of Autocracy, Orthodoxy and Nationality [Autocracy, Orthodoxy, Nationality' were the official principles of Tsardom just as 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity' are the official principles of the French Republic.] – while he cannot do that, on the Don we observe an even greater wonder: a petty-bourgeois democrat has proved unable to raise a revolt of the middle-peasant elements among the Cossacks against the rule of the proletariat and the rural poor.

This means that we have become invincible politically, that while the concentrated, armed and organised force of the imperialist generals may fight against us, driving *muzhiks* and workers with stick and whip into their army, there is among these imperialist generals no party, no group, no flag, around which they could unite, in an ideological, political way, any extensive strata even of the backward middle element in the countryside. Thus, we now stand politically, despite the hunger and ruin, despite the two years of civil war, in a stronger position than ever before, and this not only in the towns, where ever fresh thousands of proletarians are joining our Party, the Communist Party (the Party Week in Moscow, for instance, has brought in over 30,000 new members), not only in the towns but also in the villages, not only among the rural poor but among the middle peasants, and not only in the provinces close to the industrial centre but also in the slow-moving, backward provinces of the South, and even on the Don, where the antagonism between the Don and Kuban people, on the one hand, and Denikin, on the other, gets more and more intense. That apparently huge mountain of Denikin's might is being increasingly undermined, on the one hand by our blows and, on the other, by internal antagonism – social, political and national. All reports, and the press of the Don and the Kuban, testify that the antagonism between these regions and Denikin has become extremely acute. In the persons of their Cossack kulaks, at the head of a band of middle peasants, the Don and the Kuban defected from the Soviet power, but they had, of course, no thought of marching on Central Russia, no intention of conducting a campaign against Moscow. They were passing through the period which the peasantry of all Russia passed through, when they became disappointed with certain features of the Soviet power and tried to revolt against it ... until the time came when Kolchak and Denikin taught them to see reason.

The turn of the Don and the Kuban has now arrived. There Denikin has, during this year, with all the energy which it cannot be denied he possesses, destroyed all the prejudices of even the backward strata of the Cossacks. We can see that it is inevitable that three-quarters, if not nine-tenths of the Don and Kuban Cossacks will be obliged to turn their front openly against Denikin, and to reach out their hands to us. They will encounter a sympathetic and helpful hand extended from our side. Our policy towards the peasantry in the recent period has been to a considerable degree directed towards getting agreement with the middle-peasants. Even on the Don and the Kuban, which for a certain period served as an unshakeable reservoir of counter-revolution, our policy must be directed in the immediate future towards reaching agreement with the Cossack middle peasants, those who exalted Mironov as a hero, a leader, and who miscarried with that hero. They will have to understand and recognise that salvation for the working Cossacks lies only through agreement with the workers' and peasants' power. All this, comrades, is something that will not happen in twenty-four hours. The work of the Red Army is important, of course, upon it the outcome of the struggle directly depends – but the work of the Red Army itself depends on the relation between class forces, the political relations of groupings; and, in that sense, the way forces are grouping themselves on the Don and the Kuban could not suit us better.

Comrade Zinoviev mentioned the events in Caucasia. In this connection I cannot

refrain from reading to you a fresh piece of news which I received by telegraph, the evening before last, from one of the outstanding workers of Transcaucasia, who has now made his way into Soviet Russia. He is a very well-informed comrade, a native of Caucasia, who, on the basis of his personal observations during the period of more than a year when he was cut off from us, presents a picture of what is happening at present in Caucasia:

'Public opinion throughout Caucasia is focused on the revolt of the mountain peoples of Caucasia – the Daghestanis, Ingushes, Chechens and Kabardians – which began at the end of August. The inspirers and leaders of the revolt are the spiritual leaders [The 'spiritual leaders' referred to here were the Moslem mullahs.] of the hillmen, who have always marched with the people and for the people. Apart from a handful of traitors from among the officers, who have sold themselves to Denikin, all sections of the mountain peoples, without help from any quarter but driven to desperation by Denikin's atrocities, have resolutely refused to pay the contribution imposed on them, or to provide the regiments demanded of them, to fight against the Soviet power. With no arms except rifles and daggers, that is, without machine-guns or artillery, they have hurled themselves into bloody battle against the Cossack officer bands, being resolved either to conquer or to die. Universal enthusiasm, attaining the level of fanaticism, has seized hold even of the women, children and old men, who have taken on all the complex work of bringing supplies to the front and the rebel units, since all the men are under arms. In bullock-carts and on horses, the feeblest of the inhabitants are conveying to the front, for the warriors, everything that they possess in the mountain villages. Victory after victory is inspiring the rebels, who have displayed marvels of heroism, and the immense amount of war booty captured is strengthening their units, providing them with arms, of which the hillmen have very few. In a series of battles the Daghestanis alone have captured more than three million cartridges, sixteen pieces of artillery and several dozen machine-guns. They have annihilated the entire garrison of a mountain stronghold in Daghestan, killing more than 3,000 Cossacks. According to reports received by the White-Guard newspaper **Azerbaidzhan**, a large-scale battle took place on September 28, before Grozny, between the rebel hillmen and four regiments of Shkuro's corps which had been specially transferred there from the Soviet front in order to put down the hillmen's revolt. Very many trophies were taken: 28 guns, 31 machine-guns, 48,000 rifles, a large quantity of ammunition and carts: 800 men were taken prisoner and cut to pieces, and the remnant of the Volunteers retreated to Kizlyar. By October 7, the rebels had cleared Denikin's men out of their fortified strongpoints and captured the towns of Grozny, Temir-Khan-Shura [Temir-Khan-Shura, in Daghestan, is now called Buinaksk] and Derbent.'

There, comrades, is a picture of the events that are now in progress in Caucasia. A mighty rebellion has broken out in Denikin's immediate rear. And we read here that he has taken a part of Shkuro's corps, his best fighting units, from the Soviet front and shifted them down there. Furthermore, Mamontov's representative has declared in *Azerbaidzhan* [*Azerbaidzhan* was ruled at this time by a Moslem nationalist party which, while anti-Bolshevik, was also opposed to Denikin, with his slogan of 'Russia one and indivisible', and gave 'fraternal assistance' to the hillmen of the Caucasus who were fighting against him.] that if they do not act immediately against the revolt of the hillmen, Denikin will detach another corps from the Soviet front in order to crush all *Azerbaidzhan*. Thus, our Southern front has had added to it several new Red divisions, which we did not form, or arm, or transfer from other fronts. These are the hillmen, the freedom-loving poor peasants of the mountains who have risen against the insults, oppression and torture inflicted on them by Denikin's bands, and we say to them: 'Welcome, comrade hillmen, our new allies, take an honoured place in our Soviet family.'

As regards the Ukraine, I can only support what Comrade Zinoviev said about the

enormous political importance of the split and the armed conflict which is now happening between Denikin and Petlyura. Petlyura himself, of course, represents no serious armed force nor is he a serious political figure, but behind him now stand, to a considerable degree, bourgeois Poland and bourgeois Romania, who are arming and supplying Petlyura and backing him against Denikin. Why? Because they fear a victory by Denikin, which would, of course, bring death and destruction to the independent existence of all the small peoples. Denikin has already declared that he does not recognise the independence of Poland but only its autonomy. He has also announced, for example, that he does not recognise the *Khokhol* [*Khokhol* is the contemptuous word used by chauvinistic Great-Russians for a Ukrainian. In pre-revolutionary Russia the Ukrainian language did not exist officially: it was merely 'the Little-Russian dialect'.] language and that the state language in the Ukraine must be Great-Russian. He has already subjected the population not only to material but also to national humiliations, and raised against him the Ukrainian petty-bourgeoisie and the Ukrainian bourgeoisie. In this way he has shaken the social foundation in the Ukraine from which he might have drawn strength both military and socio-political. All this cannot but have its effect on the Western front. Only three or four months ago we might have feared, and the bourgeoisie of the Entente might have hoped, that Denikin was going to link up with the Poles, that is, that the Southern and Western fronts would merge, and they would march together upon Moscow. We can now say, with every justification, that if Denikin does link up with the Poles it will be, mainly, so that they can seize each other by the throat, because they know that they are each other's mortal enemies.

This has very greatly strengthened our political position on the Western Front. We looked on the Western Front as secondary, while we considered the Southern to be, as before, of first importance. When I spoke of the Western Front as being of secondary importance I had in mind the fact that second-rate military forces were opposing us there. We mentally excluded Petrograd, of course, in that connection, for the sector of the front which includes Petrograd, whether as a fighter or as a city in danger, cannot, in any case, be of secondary importance. We went through a period in which it seemed that Petrograd was protected and safeguarded against all dangers, and some comrades even said, half in jest and half in earnest, that the time had perhaps come to think of moving the Soviet capital back to Petrograd, back to the banks of the Neva. [In March 1918 the seat of government had been moved from Petrograd to Moscow when it was feared that the Germans might occupy Petrograd.] The Finnish bourgeoisie saw themselves compelled to renounce an attack on Petrograd. The Estonian bourgeoisie, fighting against us, found themselves obliged, by the whole course of events, internal and external, to give up the idea of supporting the imperialist drive against Moscow and Petrograd. The Seventh Army, which is fighting here and defending our Red capital, the revolutionary Seventh Army, came up against the frontiers of Finland and Estonia, and it seemed that there was no further task for it to perform. It was marking time, and it became subject to a sort of feeling that its existence was purposeless. Having reached the frontiers of Finland and Estonia, its task seemed to have been accomplished, and (we must not remain silent about this) we took from the Seventh Army's fronts its best units, its best commanders and its most experienced military-political workers. That, of course, could not but weaken the Seventh Army. But, I say again, what weakened its consciousness most of all was the sense that there were no more important, decisive tasks for it to carry out. This caused the army's internal regime to slacken.

Comrades, an army is not a natural organism, it is not an organism which is created by production, by economic, industrial labour. The bonds of union that are formed in the village, in the factory – not to speak of the relations formed in the

family – are very much more lasting, more natural and organic. The bonds, the relationships, that exist in the army are to a considerable extent felt by every participant, and do in fact- take shape, as artificial relations. None of us tries to get out of working, we know that we shall always work, but we all try to get out of the army, to be finished as soon as possible with war and go over to economic and cultural constructive work. That is why, whenever the pressure of external circumstances ceases or slackens, the internal military regime of the army also slackens: this has been observed also here, in the Seventh Army, which has in recent weeks been considered an army of secondary importance – not because Petrograd is a secondary magnitude (clearly, that is not the case), but because it has seemed that the danger threatening Petrograd has ceased to exist.

To this I would add the negotiations with the Estonians and the Letts. What role was played by these petty-bourgeois envoys from Estonia, whether they were conscious deceivers, provocateurs, agents of Yudenich, or whether they were supporting Yudenich passively, and to a certain extent actively, under pressure from the Entente, while at the same time trying to find some support on the left, from Soviet Russia – that makes no difference so far as we are concerned. We are not obliged to expatiate on the psychology of the Estonian and Lettish Mensheviks and Cadets; but it is a fact that the role they played was that of the white flag which the more treacherous and perfidious units sometimes hoist in order to deceive the enemy, allow him to come closer, and then drive a knife into his chest, his side or his back. These peace negotiations have hitherto been, so far as Estonia and Latvia are concerned, in the nature of opium, they have been intended to lull the consciousness of a considerable part of the Red Army, to engender in it confidence that the war is drawing to a close on this front, so that then it may be possible to unleash against us the Entente's guard-dog, Yudenich, and let him tear a lump of flesh from the body of Soviet Russia. At all events, in future, however the negotiations may go, we shall have to be, from the military standpoint, a great deal more cautious, vigilant, careful and mistrustful in our dealings with those petty-bourgeois compromisers who are willing or unwilling agents of the Entente. We must, at the same time, remind ourselves that the time is coming when Estonia and Latvia will have to make up their minds whether they are going to conclude peace with us or to fight against us, for we cannot – just as, where Finland is concerned, we could not tolerate Mannerheim's policy – we cannot tolerate for long the situation in which these countries, while not fighting against us, do at the same time support Yudenich, Balakhovich, Rodzyanko and Lieven, and from time to time unleash them against us. We want to make peace: it does not matter what our feelings may be towards the bourgeoisie of these countries, we want to make peace in the sober calculation that a bad peace is better than a good quarrel. But we cannot take upon ourselves all the negative aspects of both peace and war. We are obliging our army to mark time before the frontiers of Finland, Estonia and Latvia, we are obliging it to refrain from engaging in open struggle, and at the same time we are allowing the bourgeoisies of these countries to assemble forces behind their frontiers and to hurl them upon us whenever this suits the Entente. This is why our present struggle on the Petrograd Front is not only a matter of repulsing a raid on Red Petrograd, why its task is not merely to exterminate the bands of Yudenich, Rodzyanko and Lieven. No, this struggle must, as it develops in the near future, put the question point-blank to Estonia and Latvia.

I think that, in the course of the period immediately ahead, we shall concentrate here a force sufficiently strong to confront these countries not only with the arguments of reason and of political logic but also with those of *real* power, to show that on this front we possess adequate strength, that peace with us would not be

advantageous to the countries which are now threatened by the notorious Ataman Goltsev. I shall not dwell on this: it is in any case instructive that history has induced Von der Goltz, the former Pasha of Constantinople, to turn himself into a Russian ataman. [Trotsky here confuses Rudiger von der Goltz, the commander of the German forces in the Baltic countries, with Colman von der Goltz, another German general, who helped to modernise the Turkish army and commanded Turkish forces against the Russians and the British during the World War. 'Goltz Pasha' died in 1916.] Goltsev was given the task of fighting for Russia one and indivisible: one cannot imagine a bigger mockery than that. We were, in our time, accused of making an alliance with the Kaiser, with showing contempt for Russia's interests, and there was talk of a sacred national hatred of the Germans, as the age-old enemy of the Russian people. Now, history, I repeat, has brought forward a most despicable reactionary, an adventurer who became a convert to Islam, and he is presented as the one who expresses the highest ideology of the Russian bourgeoisie, whether Milyukovite, Denikinite, Kolchakite or any other brand. Von Der Goltz Pasha – there is a proper leader for them: *that* we can say before the whole people. This again simplifies greatly our political position. The task of the petty-bourgeois democracies in the Western borderlands has become more difficult. Von Der Goltz is not so much a German agent as an agent of the French bourgeois republic. Between the hammer of the Entente, in whose hands Von der Goltz is merely a tool, and the anvil of the Russian and world revolution – that is where the petty-bourgeois democracy of the Western borderlands is placed. The Western front is not a danger to us, but the sector of the Western front, its North Western sector, where Petrograd, wounded but still strong, lives and breathes, *that* sector of the front is now in danger. Comrades, if I may employ a vulgar comparison, in the game we are playing, in the political, world-wide, historical pack of cards we are dealing, there are a few cards which we cannot allow to be covered. The game may turn out this way or that, but there is a card called Petrograd, a card called Moscow, a card called Tula, where the arms industry is concentrated, and however the great historical game may go that we are playing with the counter-revolution, these three cards cannot and must not be covered.

That is why, comrades, it might be agreed in private conversation that the Soviet power is now so strong that if Petrograd were to be taken, the Soviet power would, of course, still stand, and, later, Petrograd would be recaptured. From the stand point of historical development that is, of course, quite true. But when, instead of being a matter of assumptions, hypotheses and logical conclusions, the fall of Petrograd began to seem a real possibility, when the threat to Petrograd was revealed in the last few days as something really practical, an electric shock ran through the whole country, and above all through the heart of Moscow, through its central institutions, and everyone said:

No! We are fighting in the North, in the East we are chasing Kolchak again, we have opened the gate to Turkestan, we are raising the flag of Soviet power in Asia – an ambassador has come to Moscow from rebellious Afghanistan [The Amir of Afghanistan, encouraged by Soviet Russia, waged the 'Third Afghan War' against the British in India in 1919, and secured the ending of British tutelage over his country.], to greet Comrade Lenin in the name of an Asian people oppressed by imperialism: this is a great struggle between two worlds: there may be retreats and advances in this struggle, victories and temporary defeats; but there is one retreat, comrades, which we will never permit ourselves, and that is a retreat eastwards from Petrograd – that retreat shall never happen!

Comrades, what we took from you – and we took too much from you, thereby weakening the north-western front which is close to you – we are now trying, with

feverish intensity, to give back, to give back to you both good units and good personnel – commanders and political workers. We are now, after all, firmly enough planted on our feet to be able to do this without serious damage to other fronts. When we from the centre asked you, your representatives and Comrade Zinov'ev, what you need now and in the immediate future, in order to defend Petrograd, and received your requests, we gave you twice and three times as much as you had asked for. Comrades, reinforcements are on their way along nearly all the lines that now link Petrograd with the rest of the country. These reinforcements will be sufficient to accomplish the task of which I spoke. But, comrades, we are at present going through a very critical period on the Petrograd front. The new reinforcements have not yet been concentrated and deployed, they have not yet taken up their positions. This period involved is measured in days and weeks. Comrade Zinov'ev referred here to the imperfect working of the railways. This is imperfect, of course, to some extent through general causes, but also, of course, as everywhere, partly through the ill-will and slovenliness of certain elements in the country. But days are going by while all the necessary forces and resources are being concentrated, days are going by while the weakened units of the Seventh Army are being pulled together, while the administrative apparatus is achieving the required level and strength of tension, firmness and skill. This has happened more than once with our executives on other fronts, and it will happen now on the Petrograd front. But days and hours are passing, and every day and hour now has colossal importance for you, because the front is too close to Petrograd.

On other fronts we were able to say that we would withdraw weakened divisions 15 or 20 versts to the rear and there re-form them, bringing in fresh, strong, sound elements, eliminating useless elements and re-educating them. Here, on the Petrograd front, we cannot allow ourselves this luxury of withdrawing weakened divisions a distance of 15-20 versts into the rear. If they give way, then the White bands – and here we have to do with small but skilful and adroit gangs – may drive a spike into the body of Petrograd. We realise, of course, that they will not take Petrograd; it is, after all, a city of a million people and cannot be carried off in the clutches of a gang of a few thousand men – but they can do harm, inflict damage, cause cruel loss of blood. We had an example not long since: Mamontov did not succeed in capturing either Tambov or Kozlov. He tried to, and he had more forces than these gentlemen have, but he did not capture those places and did not succeed in raising a revolt: he threatened these towns, and killed a large number of workers, men and women, wives of Red Army men, he left devastation, terror and despair in the families of the working people ... They could do that here, too, in this concentration, this reservoir of people which is called Petrograd. That is the danger. You know that we, Communists and representatives of the Soviet power, by virtue of our fundamental policy, do not hide from the broad masses of the people the dangers, the blunders and menaces that lie in wait for us. In that lies our only strength. Always, on any day and at any hour, anyone must be able to go to any tribune, to any public place, and tell the people the truth. This is the essence of Soviet politics, and we must now say from this tribune – you must all say to your electors in the factories, at the workers' meetings, everywhere that you carry on the struggle for the triumph of the revolution – that Petrograd has never yet faced such danger as today. In other words, although the hand dealt to us in our great revolutionary struggle is generally favourable, our Petrograd card, which is infinitely dear and important to us, is in danger of being covered. For this reason we must insure ourselves doubly: on the one hand, at the front, on the other, in Petrograd itself – that is, we must defend ourselves not only along the nearby line of Dyetskoye Syelo, but also in the organisation which will be created here in the very

heart of Petrograd, because, comrades, those who are, perhaps, preparing to descend on Petrograd in a night raid, so as to cut the throats of sleeping workers and their wives and children, must know, and they do already know this, that, with all the shortcomings of which Comrade Zinoviev rightly spoke, Petrograd has worked feverishly and will work in the same way tonight, tomorrow and tomorrow night, and in all the most critical hours facing the city, in order to set to rights and strengthen the city's internal organisation, so as to make of its districts and sections a series of impregnable forts, which, taken together, will constitute a mighty *organisation for the internal defence of Petrograd.* [79]

I wrote and I repeat: I am profoundly convinced that, even with the weakening of Petrograd, we are strong enough to crush, to grind into dust, any White-Guard raiders, even if they were to number not three, four or five thousand but even 10,000. This is a huge labyrinth of a city, which covers about a hundred square versts, a city with a million inhabitants, in whose hands, that is in those of its working population, there are mighty means of defence, engineering and artillery resources, and which, finally, possesses Soviet trade-union and Party apparatuses. This city can be made a sheer trap for the White-Guard raiders. Petrograd is not Tambov, Petrograd is not Kozlov: Petrograd is Petrograd. Comrades, in these days, these hours, you must mobilise here, for internal defence, everyone who is not capable of, or cannot be taken away for, participation in the city's external defence. While the privations and hardships of campaigns and battlefields are too heavy for women to bear, nevertheless, here, in the workers' districts, in buildings transformed into workers' fortresses, working women, wives and mothers will be able to wield rifles, revolvers and hand-grenades no less well than men, to defend in the streets, squares and buildings of Petrograd the future of the working class of Russia and of the world. Everything is now being done to give the troops in the field the necessary skill, to make them appreciate that we are not faced with a solid front, that our foe does not consist of serious, weighty units against which one would have to move in a planned way, systematically and methodically – that before us are a few gangs which are inflicting jabs and stabs, and that they must be crushed and destroyed.

The only tactics, the only strategy which is dictated by this war, with its exceptional peculiarities on this front, is to attack and crush. In those cases when a regiment of ours, moved forward by a good commander or commissar, a confident, resolute man, starts to advance, the Whites do not accept battle.

Why not? Because there are too few of them. They are well armed, they have automatic weapons, machine-guns, but there are not enough of them: they are two, four and five times less numerous than we are. When they open up a fusillade by night or at a distance, our men cannot make out how many Whites there are and how many there are of us. But when the moment comes when our men see the Whites and the Whites see our men, then they both realise that the Reds are many, but the Whites are a tiny handful. And that happens every time there is a clash. This is why the Whites systematically avoid direct encounters, hand-to-hand skirmishes, bayonet fights, and try to operate from the flank, from the rear, opening fire from unexpected places, sustaining the impression that they are numerous and powerful. What conclusion are we to draw from this? That our Red Army, our soldiers, must see the Whites and realise how few they are: the Whites must see the Reds and realise how numerous we are. How are we to achieve this? Very simply – by bringing the Whites and the Reds together. How is this to be managed? By leading the Reds forward, by urging, and, if need be, driving them forward. Who can do that? The workers of Petrograd, a strong commissar. For this

no grand strategy is needed, it is not necessary to have graduated from the academy, or to dream about forming a solid front – this is not positional warfare, there is no need for an unbroken chain of troops: what is needed is a tough striking force, a firm commissar who will march towards the danger, towards the noise made by the enemy, for wherever we go we shall always be strong and numerous. This simple truth must be taught to our commanders and commissars. The only strategy for today on the Petrograd front is to go forward, to advance. The Whites will retreat, and we shall crush them. We shall pursue this strategy for a few days, and then, the next day or the day after, the psychological turn will take place, the pre-condition for a turn in the military and all other circumstances on this front.

Last night we proved that when the alarm has been sounded, even if only with a certain delay, the proletariat of Petrograd is able to respond, in the persons of its best militant elements. It rose to its feet last night, and if circumstances require this, it will remain at the ready tonight and tomorrow night, in double and even treble strength. There can be no doubt about this, and it is certainly the only guarantee that the White bands will think ten times before they poke their criminal heads in here.

Thus, we clearly appreciate that Petrograd is now in immediate danger. This you must say, of course, while at the same time combating any senseless, panicky rumours. Checking on such rumours through your districts or through the Internal Defence Council, checking on them and punishing ruthlessly those who spread them, at the same time you must, as sharply as possible, make the workers of Petrograd aware that, today and tomorrow, Petrograd is under immediate threat. Within a few days we shall be invincible on this front, thanks to the turn that will take place, and thanks to the troops that are coming up, but today there are still many undefended places in the body of Petrograd. We shall be defended by the strengthening of the front and by organisation inside the city. The Council of People's Commissars has sent troops here so as to help, on the spot, your central organ and military authorities in their work to strengthen Petrograd.

I shall not hide from you that I came here with a heart full of anxiety ... We have said many times, of course, that Petrograd is an inexhaustible reservoir of workers for our cause and of revolutionary energy, but this inexhaustibility must not be understood in the absolute sense. There is no city in the world, perhaps, that has gone through experiences like Petrograd's. In the end, sensitivity becomes blunted, nerves get overstrained and give way, like a string that loses its tautness, and people cease to react to danger. If this were to happen to Petrograd now, it would constitute a deadly menace, it would be a great menace not only to Petrograd itself but also to the whole country, for Petrograd is not only a part of the country, it is a barometer, the revolutionary barometer of the Red Soviet Republic. But this is not going to be the case, comrades. Of course Comrade Zinoviev, as is required of a leader of the Petrograd working class and of the working class of the whole country, has mentioned here, quite rightly, the shortcomings, the defects, the faults, the slovenliness and carelessness that exists in various aspects of our organisational preparation. But let me say this: despite the slovenliness and carelessness which are to be observed here and there, nevertheless Petrograd in these gloomy, cold, hungry, anxious October days of bad autumn weather is showing us once again a majestic picture of elan, self-confidence, enthusiasm and heroism. The city which has suffered so much, which has burned internally, which has so often been subjected to dangers, which has never spared itself, which has stripped itself so bare – this Red Petrograd is still what it was, the torchbearer of the revolution, the rock of steel on which we shall build the church of the future. And, backed by the

combined forces of the whole country, we shall surrender this Petrograd to no-one.

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## Endnotes

79. By October 19, when this speech was made in the Petrograd Soviet, the situation at the front had improved considerably. Already by the evening of October 17 the left flank of the Seventh Army was 15 versts from the Nikolai Railway [The Nikolai Railway is the line linking Petrograd with Moscow – named after Tsar Nicholas I, in whose reign it was built.]: the cutting of that line would inevitably make it possible for Yudenich to break through into Petrograd. On October 18 General Rodzyanko gave the First Corps the task of taking the city. Our units acquired greater resilience and staunchness through the shortening of the front and the proximity of their supply centre: instead of continually retreating, the units stood their ground in any convenient position they could find. At the same time, groups of the best Communists were sent to the front, some of the commanders were replaced, the most badly-battered units were withdrawn to the rear and fresh reinforcements brought up, agitation was intensified, and, finally, by Comrade Trotsky's order, the food-ration was doubled. Comrade Nadezhny was appointed to command the army, while the former commander, Kharlamov, applied himself to forming the Kolpino shock-group.

Despite this preparation, however, the Fifth (Lieven) Division, operating on the left flank of the enemy's First Corps, continued on October 18-19 to press our units, and took the suburb of Ligovo. The high command and the Petrograd Soviet realised that the Whites might break through into the city itself. Now began energetic preparation for defence from within. The whole city was divided into districts, each headed by special headquarters. The most important points were surrounded with barbed-wire entanglements. A series of positions were selected for guns which were to fire on fixed lines. The canals, public gardens, walls, fences and buildings were fortified, and the entire southern sector of the city was transformed into a solid fortress. Barricades were erected in many streets and squares.

# The Fight for Petrograd

## THE TURNING POINT

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Today was the critical day. Our troops had retreated to the Pulkovo Heights – that is, to the last line before Petrograd itself. Retreat from there would have meant that the battle would have been carried inside the walls of the city, that is, it would have become a defence of the city from within.

Statements by soldiers who come over to us, and also other sources, confirm that the enemy issued an order during the night of 20-21 October for the capture of the Pulkovo Heights. However, the White Army has not carried out that order. [\[801\]](#) Not only have we not abandoned this very important line but, on the contrary, we have launched a fighting offensive all along the front. We have taken prisoners and captured machine-guns and other trophies. Even the weakest of our units have shown resilience and power of resistance. The first tanks produced in Petrograd have taken part in the fighting, with undoubted success. The Red troops greeted with delight the appearance of the first armoured caterpillar.

The outcome of today's battle can be considered as entirely favourable to us. Thanks to the fresh reserves, on the one hand, and, on the other, the refreshed composition of the commanding personnel and the body of commissars, the Seventh Army underwent an unquestionable inner turn: the units have recovered their self-possession and are striving to push ahead. The supply service has worked more than satisfactorily. Morale is absolutely assured. The cadets are especially keen to make up for the series of defeats that they suffered.

Nevertheless, by virtue of the very circumstances, the situation remains tense: the enemy is within a day's march of Petrograd. Consequently, in order to ensure ourselves against accidents, we must untiringly persist with the work of fortifying Petrograd, organising its internal defence. A Petrograd safeguarded from within will be, at the same time, a splendid rear for the reconstructed front.

The turn has taken place. In the next few days this will have to be admitted by the lying Anglo-French wireless.

October 21, 1919  
Petrograd  
*En Route*, No.99

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### Endnotes

[80.](#) By the evening of October 20 the units of the Seventh Army had fallen back to the line of the Pulkovo Heights. The decisive battle was fought on this line. After taking Dyetskoye Syelo, during the night of October 20-21 the enemy attacked the Pulkovo Heights with the aim of breaking through into Petrograd. By that time, thanks to our retention of the Nikolai Railway line, we had been able to concentrate Comrade Kharlamov's reserve group in the area of Kolpino and Tosno. At 2300

hours on October 20 the Seventh Army was ordered to advance. The enemy did not take the Pulkovo Heights, and he suffered his first defeat in the bloody battles of October 21-22.

## **The Southern Front**

### **III. The Red Army's Second Offensive in the Ukraine (August-December 1919)**

# ORDER No.174

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Red forces entering the Ukraine,  
November 30. 1919, No.174, Moscow

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## To be read to all companies, squadrons, batteries and task-forces

Comrade soldiers, commanders, commissars!

You are entering the Ukraine. [\[69\]](#) By defeating Denikin's bands you are freeing a fraternal country from its oppressors.

*The Ukraine is the land of the Ukrainian workers and working peasants.* They alone have the right to rule in the Ukraine, to govern it and to build a new life in it.

While striking merciless blows at the Denikinites you must at the same time show fraternal care and love for the working masses of the Ukraine.

Woe to anyone who uses armed force to coerce the working people of the Ukraine's towns or villages! The workers and peasants of the Ukraine must feel secure under the defence of your bayonets!

Keep this firmly in mind: *your task is not to conquer the Ukraine but to liberate it.* When Denikin's bands have *finally* been smashed, the working people of the liberated Ukraine will themselves decide on what terms they are to live with Soviet Russia. We are all sure, and we know, that the working people of the Ukraine will declare for the closest fraternal union with us.

Do your duty, Red soldiers, commanders, commissars.

Death to the aggressors and oppressors – the Denikinites, the landlords, the capitalists and kulaks!

Long live the Red Army!

Long live the free and independent Soviet Ukraine!

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## Endnotes

[69.](#) As the result of stubborn, month-long battles, Denikin had to begin retreating on the whole front. Only by December 1 1919 was his resistance broken and his attempts to frustrate our operation smashed. These battles brought our armies once more into the Ukraine. (The course of events can be followed from the chronology and Map 4.)

## **The Southern Front**

### **III. The Red Army's Second Offensive in the Ukraine (August-December 1919)**

# ORDER No.180

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs on measures for overcoming guerrilla-ism,  
December 11, 1919, No.180, Moscow

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The armies of the Southern front are moving deeper and deeper into the area where the Ukrainian guerrillas are active. It is of immense importance to have a practical policy towards guerrilla-ism and volunteerism: on this depends not only our victory over Denikin but also the entire fate of the Soviet regime in the Ukraine. A number of measures must at once be taken to exclude the possibility of any repetition of the events which brought about the fall of the Soviet Ukraine last time.

(1) Above all, the Red regiments advancing into the Ukraine must be protected against infection by guerrilla-ism and Makhnovism. To this end:

1. An extensive agitation, both written and spoken, must be conducted to explain the advantages of a regular army over rebel detachments, using examples from the past to show the treacherous role played by the Makhnovites and Makhnovism;
2. The units entering the Ukraine must be purged of commanders, commissars and members of Communist cells who are lacking in discipline and inclined towards guerrilla-ism;
3. All necessary measures must be taken to ensure that Red Army men of Ukrainian origin get no opportunity to quit their units and return to their villages, and especially not to take their weapons with them.
4. In general, the level of discipline must be raised in the units, and a stern struggle waged against all manifestations of banditry and arbitrary conduct.

(2) Commanders and commissars of active units are to be categorically forbidden to accept volunteers into such units directly, whether as individuals or in groups. All volunteers are to be sent to the rear and enrolled in the holding battalions of the army or of the Front. Any commissars or commanders who violate this order are to be called strictly to account.

(3) The Special Section, jointly with the Political Department, is to send ahead, into the area where the insurgents are active, a considerable number of agents, chosen from among its reliable, devoted and tactful workers. These comrades are to join the guerrilla detachments so as to get to know, from inside, every aspect of the character of each detachment and the relations between different groups and individuals within it.

These agents are to carry on in the guerrilla detachment, with all necessary prudence, agitation explaining the advantages of regular units over such detachments.

(4) It is to be made a firm rule that a guerrilla detachment ceases to be a military unit after it has appeared on our side of the line of the enemy front and has made direct contact with our units. From that moment it becomes merely material for processing, and for that purpose is to be sent to our rear and handed over to the

Formation Administration (worthless elements to be expelled, the commanding personnel renewed, the necessary number of Communists brought in, and training carried on with the required vigour).

Certain more combat-ready units may be allowed to go back into the enemy's rear.

In no case are guerrilla detachments, as such, to be allowed to fight in the ranks of the Red Army.

(5) The attitude of our commanders and commissars towards the guerrilla detachments must combine unbending firmness with maximum tact.

1. In order to secure complete subordination of the detachments, they must make use of the agents previously sent into these detachments (point 3) and of the best elements that these agents will have gathered round them.
2. From the moment that we make contact with a detachment, agitation for its complete subordination to the regular system must at once be undertaken on a wide scale.
3. No supplies must be given to a guerrilla detachment until it has become fully subordinate to our command.
4. The most meritorious and disciplined guerrillas may and should be awarded military gifts and also the Order of the Red Banner.
5. Worthless elements must be expelled from the units, transferred to penal companies or to the rear levies, or handed over to the military tribunals.

(6) In the event that a guerrilla detachment that has made contact with us refuses to submit to order, displays unruliness and self-will, plunders the local population, or attempts to stir up trouble in the regular units, this detachment must be subjected to ruthless punishment. The commander responsible on our side must in such cases strictly and precisely calculate the blow to be struck. The reasons for the punishment must be clear to and understood by every peasant, worker and Red Army man. The corresponding order, of an explanatory character, must be printed in good time in advance, in the appropriate number of copies.

Absolutely reliable units must be chosen to execute the punishment. Disarmament, investigation and punishment of the detachment concerned must be carried out as quickly as can be: if possible in a period not exceeding 24 hours. The commanders and the kulak leading circles of the detachment are to be punished most severely.

(7) In view of the fact that, in the Ukraine, guerrilla detachments appear and disappear with ease, dissolving themselves in the mass of the armed peasant population, a fundamental condition for success in the fight against guerrilla-ism is *unconditional disarmament of the rural population, without exception*. This task, which is of very great importance, must be carried out in a strictly planned way. Each army has the duty of disarming the population in the area in which it is operating, using all means at its disposal (agitation, intelligence from agents, payment in money or in kind for weapons surrendered, general searches, imposition of fines in money or in kind, enforcement of collective responsibility, taking of hostages, shooting of offenders, etc.)

The demarcation lines between divisions, brigades and so on are also to serve to demarcate the areas subject to disarmament. Under the Revolutionary War Councils

of the armies and the headquarters of divisions, brigades and regiments, special commissions are to be formed, or individual plenipotentiaries appointed, to conduct all the measures directed towards achieving the disarmament of the local population. These authorities are to have placed at their disposal particularly reliable task-forces (drawn from town-commandants' forces, battle-police detachments, special assignment units and so on), the size of which is to be commensurate with the general situation.

The Revolutionary War Councils of the Front and of the armies are required to pay particular attention to the tasks set out in the present order.

Commanders and commissars of certain units, motivated by concern to fill gaps in their ranks as quickly as possible, are often inclined to disobey prohibitions such as this. At the same time, impelled by legitimate military ambition, they all too often fail to take the measures necessary to safeguard their rear. Supervision of the actual and unvarying implementation of the measures set out here is therefore made entirely the responsibility of the higher organs of the front and army administration. Guided by the relevant instructions from the Government, the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic orders that territory be occupied only in those cases and within those limits for which adequate force is available for purging this territory of all manifestations of anarchy and banditry, and ensuring therein firm Soviet authority and proper military organisation.

All the commanders and commissars of the Front must thoroughly realise that only by the fulfilment of this order can the higher interests of the Soviet Republic be safeguarded, and that therefore any violation of the directives here set out will be punished in accordance with martial law, as being equivalent to a very grave crime against the state.

This order, which relates primarily to the armies advancing in the Ukraine, is to be extended also to other fronts where there has been extensive development of guerrilla activity in the rear of the retreating enemy (the South-Eastern front, the Turkestan front, the Eastern front).

## **The Eastern Front**

### **Kolchak's Offensive (March-April 1919)**

# TO THE COMMUNISTS ON THE EASTERN FRONT

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The setbacks we have suffered on the Eastern front have nothing catastrophic about them. There can be no doubt that the Eastern front will soon revive, pull itself together and resume its victorious advance. Nevertheless, losses such as we have suffered there cannot be called insignificant. It is enough to mention the surrender of Perm and Ufa. [70] The enemy's forces are substantial, but they are not so large as to account for our defeats and our armies' retreat on a considerable part of the front. There are undoubtedly internal reasons for our setbacks. And just as the principal causes of our successes have lain in the energy, cohesion, discipline and self-sacrifice of the Communists, so, in this case too, we must seek in the work of the Communists one of the reasons for the setbacks that have befallen us.

In certain institutions of the Eastern front there were concentrations of Communists who saw it as one of their most important tasks to criticise and condemn our military system, passing resolutions to this effect, resolving that decorations are unnecessary, protesting against the internal service regulations, and soon and so forth. This led in its turn to conflicts with those Communists who conscientiously carried out the Party's policy. These conflicts then resulted in weakening internal relations and discipline, and had most pernicious repercussions in all spheres of work, and consequently in the army's combat capacity.

It is necessary now to remind all Party members working at the front, without exception and with all definiteness, that they have been sent here not to criticise the military system but to implement it unanimously under war conditions. The member of the Revolutionary War Council of the Front or of an army, the commissar of a division, a brigade, or a regiment, the worker in a Political Department or the member of a company Communist cell – all these have been delegated by the Party to carry out a definite policy and to see that it is carried out by everybody else. Anyone who does not agree with this policy has no right to act in the name of the Party, abusing its name and authority, for it is in the last analysis a matter of indifference to the Party and to the Soviet Republic *who* is disrupting the army's internal relations, its unity and moral authority – a Left SR, or an undisciplined Communist who is misusing his responsible position for a purpose directly opposed to that for which he was sent to the front.

All the organs and institutions of the War Department and all the Party cells of the front constitute not clubs for discussion but military organs, created to serve practical ends and obliged for this purpose to follow paths decided by the Party. He who cannot subordinate his personal disagreement to the need for unanimity, he who indulges in argument, criticism and complaining is thereby violating both military discipline and Party discipline.

The Political Department of an army is an organ of that army's Revolutionary War Council entrusted with tasks of supervision and education. It can have no independent tasks, no independent methods, other than those laid down and assigned to it by the Revolutionary War Council. The Political Department is unconditionally subordinate to the Revolutionary War Council. An army publication is the press organ of the Revolutionary War Council of that army. Such publications can in no way be turned into a free forum for criticism and condemnation of the

established method of building the army. Every soldier of the Red Army must find in his army's publication a firm guideline that will strengthen his confidence that the Soviet power is doing everything it can to utilise the Red units in the best way in the interests of the working class. Still less permissible is it to denigrate in the military press those institutions and individuals to whom the Soviet power has entrusted this or that responsible task.

It is necessary to begin at the bottom and strictly to check, in all units, the composition of the Communist cells and the regimental commissars. On them depends the combat-capacity of the units, and a unit will retain its combat-capacity only if the Party group in it does not degenerate into a little political club to which everyone brings its grumbles and discontents, but remains the united fighting vanguard of the unit, setting an example of the strictest unconditional discipline to all the other soldiers.

The comrade commissars must be reminded that they are directly answerable, along with the commanders, for the combat-capacity of their units. There have been a number of cases recently on the Eastern front of unprecedented and even shameful retreats by particular regiments. What measures were taken, in all these cases, by the commissars concerned, and where was the Communist cell, what was it doing? After every such retreat a thorough check must be made by the divisional commissar or by the army's political department on the individuals making up the cell, to ascertain how each of them in particular behaved at the critical moment.

The number of Communists at headquarters and in the political departments must be reduced to the minimum and the most energetic experienced and self-sacrificing workers must be sent directly into the active units. The title of regimental commissar must be exalted higher by appointing the best Communist workers to these positions.

Instead of engaging in gossip and chatter about the medals of the Order of the Red Banner, a feeling must be created such that every Communist soldier will regard it as a matter of revolutionary honour to deserve by his conduct in battle the award of the Order of the Red Banner, as an expression of his revolutionary services to the working class.

An immense amount of time is spent in discussing all kinds of orders and measures. Yet, in war, economy of time is an essential condition for success. It is necessary to suppress completely all pointless, irritating, demoralising discussions. Communists must demonstrate by their own example that an order is an order, and has to be obeyed unconditionally and at once.

Not one single breach of duty and discipline, especially if it be committed by a Communist, must remain unpunished. It is necessary to revive at the front that high moral intensity which characterised all the Communist workers on the Eastern front in the period when the Whites were being swept from the Volga. If, since that time, elements suffering from fatigue have accumulated among the Communists, these must be eliminated and removed. Let anyone occupying a responsible post who feels that he is incapable of acting with all the firmness required by the situation of the Soviet Republic say so openly, instead of giving his fatigue and sluggishness expression in sterile, demoralising criticism.

At its congress the Party checked over the objections expressed in this criticism. By its resolution it reaffirmed the methods which it had laid down as the basis for

building the Red Army. These methods have gained us great victories in the past. They will ensure complete victory over Kolchak's bands if each one of us Communists tolerates no waverings or deviations at his post.

Addressing this letter to Communist comrades, I ask them to render unanimous and heroic support to the Revolutionary War Council of the Eastern Front in its work of restoring the combat-capacity of the Eastern front.

March 24, 1919  
*En Route*, No.27

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## Endnotes

70. At the end of March the situation on the Eastern front was as follows. After eight months of active struggle against the Czechoslovaks and the People's Army of the Constituent Assembly, our Red Army had achieved substantial successes on the whole Southern sector of the Eastern Front. The front had advanced from the Volga to the Urals, and at its southern extremity the Soviet Republic had linked up with Turkestan. Only on the Northern sector had the enemy enjoyed success - he had taken Perm after stubborn fighting and was thereby threatening the flank of our Ufa group (the Fifth Army). The situation of our forces had also considerably improved during the winter. What had been unorganised Red Units, operating separately, without any liaison between them, had been transformed into regular armies which successfully overcame difficult geographical conditions and the enemy's stubborn resistance. By March 1919 big changes had also taken place in the enemy's camp. The collapse of the Army of the Constituent Assembly before Samara compelled the SR Government established at Samara to take part in a conference at Ufa in which all the counter-revolutionary forces were unified, on a platform of struggle against the Bolsheviks. A Directory was formed, consisting of General Boldyrev, the Cadet Astrov, the Popular-Socialist Chaykovsky, the Siberian nationalist Vologodsky and the SR Avksentiyev. What was left of the Army of the Constituent Assembly was handed over to General Boldyrev. The Directory began to follow an increasingly reactionary policy, and its cabinet was joined by A.V. Kolchak, in the capacity of War Minister. On November 18 1918 the All-Russia Provisional Government broke up. What was left of the Constituent Assembly group, which had moved from Samara to Yekaterinburg, was arrested and taken to Chelyabinsk, and from there to Ufa. Kolchak was unanimously chosen to be 'Supreme Ruler' of Russia. From that moment, alongside the crushing of all labour organisations, and endless arrests and executions, energetic work towards the formation of an army went ahead with very close help from the Allies. At the beginning of March, Kolchak, taking advantage of the diversion of our forces to other fronts, and without waiting until his own forces had been fully concentrated, began a vigorous offensive towards the Volga with the ultimate aim of taking Moscow. The operational drive of the Whites was split between two directions: towards Vyatka, in order to link up with the Archangel group of the Allies, and towards Samara, in order to link up with Denikin. After concentrating substantial forces against the left flank of the Fifth Army, north of Ufa, Kolchak launched an attack and on March 13 captured that town. Our forces then began to fall back all along the Eastern front. By mid-April, under the enemy's pressure; our forces were 80 versts from Kazan, 60 versts from Samara and 40 versts from Orenburg. (See Map 5.)

## **The Eastern Front**

### **Kolchak's Offensive (March-April 1919)**

# ORDER No.87

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Second Army, March 26, 1919, No.87,

Sarapul

[Sarapul is on the River Kama, about half-way between Kazan and Perm.]

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## **Soldiers, commanders, commissars!**

The White Guard regiments of the new autocrat, Kolchak, have set themselves the task of destroying your army and opening a road for themselves to Kazan.

Thereby, a great and honourable task has been entrusted to your army: to give a ruthless rebuff to the enemy of working people's Russia, the hireling of the American capitalists. Your army has already rendered great services to the Soviet Republic. I do not doubt that, this time too, each one of you and all of you together will prove worthy of your task. All Workers' and Peasants' Russia looks to you with hope and confidence.

Second Army, close your ranks!

Death and destruction to the bourgeois and landlord bands!

Death and destruction to the Kolchakite autocracy.

Death and destruction to the foreign imperialists!

Long live the Red Second Army!

Long live Workers' and Peasants' Russia!

## **The Eastern Front**

### **Kolchak's Offensive (March-April 1919)**

# THE EASTERN FRONT

Speech at the Joint Session of the Samara Province Executive Committee, Committee of the Russian Communist Party and Representatives of the Trade Unions, April 6, 1919

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Comrades, our international and internal situation has again reached a critical moment. There have indeed been a good many critical moments, difficulties, dangers and surprises in the development of our revolution. This revolution does not develop along a straight ascending line, or in a uniform curve, but in zigzags, in a wavy line – though one that rises higher and higher. In general this is the only way that a revolution can develop, being a clash between antagonistic forces. In the struggle between these forces, if they are strong, there will inevitably be bends to this side or that, ups and downs, advances and retreats. But only one of these forces is progressive, leading mankind forward, and that is the force of the working class, as must be revealed with ever-increasing clearness and certainty through all the retreats and advances, general upward movements and general progress. We see this in the development of our workers' and peasants' revolution and of the international revolution.

Comrades, we began in October with a stormy rise, and swept away the rule of the landlords and bourgeoisie almost without resistance, but already in that period it was clear to the more experienced representatives of the working class that the October victory was not the final victory, that the bourgeoisie and the possessing classes generally would not give up their inherited positions, privileges and profits without a fight, that they would set everything in motion, heaven and hell, their international connections, their skill in lying and persecuting, armed force (in so far as they possessed it), the power to seduce and to bribe – in short, all the means which the possessing classes have evolved in the course of the centuries and millennia of their rule. And that expectation was confirmed.

Already in January and February our position became critical. We found ourselves between the hammer of German imperialism and the anvil of Anglo-French and American imperialism. At that time the hammer seemed the greater menace, and we had to enter into a forced agreement with Austro-German imperialism by signing the peace of Brest-Litovsk, a treaty of a harshness unprecedented in history up to then: subsequently the peace of Brest-Litovsk was surpassed by the conditions which Britain and France, those great democracies and liberators of nations, imposed upon exhausted and weakened Germany. Many of you, comrades, will probably remember our country's objective situation and the feelings which then prevailed among the working class in those accursed months after the signing of the Brest-Litovsk peace and before our victories began on the Eastern Front.

From the West we were caught in the iron clutches of German imperialism. Those iron clutches were supported from within by the Russian bourgeoisie and all its servants, while at the same time, these servants and lackeys exploited the fact of the German grip on us to say: 'There you are, you see, the Soviet power has surrendered Russia to German imperialism.' And at that same time, at the call and invitation of the Russian bourgeoisie and the parties serving it, a new threat arose in the north-east – the Czechoslovaks. The Volga country was in immediate danger, and, after the seizure of Archangel, the whole northern coastline as well.

Comrades, I doubt whether any great people ever found itself in such a terrible situation as we were in during March, April, May, June, July and August of last year. It seemed that our last accounts with history had been closed and signed, by German imperialism on the one side and by Anglo-French and Japano-American imperialism on the other. To our triumphant enemies it seemed that revolutionary Russia was a political corpse that would become manure for the fields of another culture, another civilisation, that there would be no independent future for the revolutionary people of Russia. The bourgeoisie and those parties which supported it – and we must never forget this, and must always remind them of it – simply invited the foreign Varangians [The Varangians were Swedish Vikings. According to legend, the dynasty which ruled in Russia from the 9th century till the 17th, the Rurikiches, were descendants of a Varangian named Rurik whom the men of Novgorod invited to be their prince: 'Our land is great and fertile, but there is no order in it: come and reign and rule over us.'] to come in and rule over us. They applied to various addresses – to Germany, to Britain, to Japan, to America – depending on which addressee happened to be the nearest. The Ukrainian bourgeoisie and those outraged Russian bourgeois who fled to the Ukraine appealed to the Germans and Austrians. The bourgeoisie and kulaks in our North sought protection from Britain, and in the East they fraternised with the Czechoslovaks who, as we know, were merely the fighting detachment of the French stock-exchange.

And although the Russian bourgeoisie split up at this critical, crucial moment into several sections – that is, it sold the Russian people to different states – it kept its inner unity. At that time it demonstrated to the working masses of the Russian people that patriotism and the interests of the fatherland are nothing but a mask concealing the advantages of profit and privilege, and that every Kolchak, Milyukov, Denikin and Skoropadsky is ready to sell and re-sell Russia three times over (why do I say *three times*? ten times, a hundred times) just to keep one-tenth of his former privileges and profits.

That was a great school for the working masses of Russia, a great school. And a second such school was our experience with Kolchak here in the East. In so far as the October Revolution was unexpected and unprepared-for ideologically among Russia's peasantry, especially in the Eastern zone, where the peasants were better-off, less hungry, and therefore less susceptible to Communist propaganda – in so far as the October revolution was unprepared-for ideologically among the peasantry of the Eastern zone, to that extent the slogan and the idea of the so-called Constituent Assembly met with some response among them for a long time. In the mass, the peasantry is helpless: that is its misfortune. It is scattered, it does not live like the workers, who are concentrated in factories and towns, and so are nearer to universities, schools, education, newspapers and the theatre. However deprived the workers might have been under the capitalist order, they were nevertheless brought into closer contact with the sources of culture, civilisation and enlightenment. The peasantry were scattered in half-a-million villages and hamlets, spread out over the huge expanse of old Tsarist Russia. In each village there were hundreds, or at most, thousands of inhabitants, who were without links with each other and were ideologically helpless. This peasant mass finds it hard to give expression to its strivings, its demands, it staggers from side to side and fails to find a clear programme for itself. This is not the peasantry's fault, it is a misfortune due to its grievous fate in past times. The peasants were deceived by the monarchy, by the priests of all religions, the bureaucrats of all lands: they were deceived by the bourgeoisie with liberalism and the ideas of democracy. And the peasants were affected from time to time by shocks from within, producing terrible revolutionary outbursts, in which they burnt down the land lord's property, but then grew tired

and submitted again with resignation to the rule of the possessing classes. The history of mankind knows these fearful outbreaks of peasant wrath and, at the same time, of peasant helplessness. The possessing classes, being better educated, always succeeded in the end in bridling the peasants who had reared up against them.

There was a danger that that would happen in our revolution too. If it did not happen, this was only because, for the first time in the history of the world, the peasantry which had risen in revolt was led not by the propertied classes of the towns but by the propertyless class of proletarians. The working class took its place at the head of the peasantry in order to lead it out of its poverty, and to transform its language of anger and suffering into the language of revolutionary ideas, revolutionary slogans – not to deceive the peasantry but to arouse it for the first time in history and emancipate it from hunger and from the old deceptions. But, comrades, this historical turn, this ideological turn was too catastrophic for the mass of the peasants, and it is not surprising if, after escaping from Tsarist barbarism and the oppression of the nobles, from the priests' prison, after coming out suddenly upon the road of the proletarian socialist revolution, they proved unable always to distinguish friends from enemies. And what a grievous, costly process this is in itself, comrades, especially when it happens in an exhausted country, a country that had experienced a four years' war and was now suffering the onslaught of world imperialism. Revolution is the birthpangs of a new social order. In coming to birth the infant causes grievous pain to the mother's organism: but here a new order is being born out of the old, and, naturally, the country's entire organism is shaken by frightful birthpangs, which are felt by the peasantry and the working class all over the country. But the working class realises that this is a period of transition, that this period of transition will be followed by the absolutely normal development of a new society, which will compensate for all the hardships, burdens and sufferings of this period of transition. It is incomparably more difficult for the peasant to grasp this fact: he feels much more strongly the hardships and calamities of the transition period, when new wounds are superimposed on old wounds, old sores, making them hurt still more, just as, when you take off the fetters which have eaten into a convict's hands and feet, he feels more pain than when he was peacefully lying down, chained to the wall. At that moment the peasant's old wounds and sores seemed especially unbearable, and just then the Right SRs and Mensheviks came to him, to say that there was a special way of painlessly solving all problems through a Constituent Assembly, through peaceful universal suffrage. They would be gathered together in one building, called a parliament, there would be a chairman, called Chernov, there would be parties, there would be voting, there would be urns into which ballot papers would be dropped, and according to the way the voting went, so matters would be settled: the land would either be given or not given to the peasant, either the worker would be master in the country or the capitalist would. Everything would be done by voting, in the proper way, without any bloodshed.

The worker knows that such radical questions are not to be settled by voting, by the raising and lowering of the hands and other parliamentary gymnastics, that the possessing classes will not give up their positions without a fight, that these positions can be taken only by force, chest against chest, steel against steel, blood against blood. The worker knows this, but the peasant is confused.

But here in Samara, in the whole Volga country, history carried out a gigantic experiment in clarifying the consciousness of the most backward masses. Here the Government of the Constituent Assembly established its seat – that is, Kolchak, the

Dutovites, and that intermediate group of intellectuals who wander about between the landlords and the peasants, the peasants and the workers. And it is this intermediate, good-for-nothing, mediocre group of SRs and Mensheviks that is the bearer of the idea of the Constituent Assembly. Kolchak knows that what counts is material power. Denikin knows that, too, and so do we. They, however, imagine that what counts is the magic of Chernov, Avksentiyev and the other great men of parliamentary democracy. History now performed its experiment. They left us, their Constituent Assembly departed from the working class and the poor peasantry, to join the baggage-train of Kolchak's and Dutov's armies, as a non-combatant team which served there as intermediaries between the Black Hundreds and White Guards – black and white are the same over there – on the one hand, and the working masses, on the other. With the slogans of the Constituent Assembly, the ideas of democracy, they helped Kolchak raise an army. Kolchak is an adventurer, a former Tsarist admiral, who tried to get help from the Germans, went over into the service of the Americans, visited New York, obtained his pieces of silver and came back here. He is a pure and simple adventurer without a past and (let us have no doubt about this!) without a future. This adventurer would never have enjoyed any success unless he had gathered around himself the window-dressing of the Constituent Assembly. And when this window-dressing had helped him to form an army, he said to Chernov and Avksentiyev: 'The slave has done his work, now be off.' [Trotsky's phrase is a variation of a well-known sentence in Schiller's play *Fiesco*: 'The Moor has done his work: the Moor can go.'] That was really what happened.

The 'Constituent-Assembly-ite' slaves who had done their work ran off in various directions. Avksentiyev went to France and Britain to solicit the aid of European imperialism against us. Chernov, with his co-thinkers, with the entire presidium of the most holy Constituent Assembly knocked at the door of our Soviet house and asked to be let in, for he could not endure to remain any longer in the atmosphere that the Constituent Assembly had created. [\[71\]](#)

And this was a great lesson, comrades, for the most backward and ignorant masses. One could not wish or ask for a better, more graphic lesson, even though it was paid for at a high price. Go now and call on any Russian peasant who has some of his wits about him and ask: 'Well, what about the Constituent Assembly, are you going to rally to its flag?' What must be the answer given by a peasant who has followed events in our country even a little? He can only answer: 'I saw that flag in Samara, I saw it in Yekaterinburg and in Ufa, I saw how Kolchak used that flag for footcloths.'

And so the most authoritative bearers of this flag, the SR gentlemen, sought refuge – where? Why, where the revolution had stood firm, because the working class had not let itself be seduced by the formal, superficial ideas of democracy, but had said that the defence of the revolution is the organised and armed working class which holds power, which mounts its armed guard at every door and says: 'No entry here for oppressors and scoundrels.'

Thus, comrades, as regards our internal development, we have had ups and downs, advances and retreats, but, by and large, history has worked splendidly for us, destroying all the old superstitions. And we saw the result of this work precisely during the recent peasant revolts that were stirred up by direct agents of Kolchak and supported by the kulaks, but which in some places drew into their whirlpool considerable groups of the middle peasantry – because the peasants feel that life is hard, but cannot always discern the right way out of their difficulties.

During these revolts, what was the slogan put forward by those who took part in them? Whereas at the beginning of the first, the February revolution, they still raised the slogan 'For the Tsar!', subsequently that slogan was dropped. They realised that it was not possible to reach any large group with that slogan, and borrowed from the SRs the slogan of the Constituent Assembly. At that time Krasnov, Denikin, all who were only dreaming of restoring the power of the landlords' autocracy, were for the Constituent Assembly. When they appeared before the people they put on the mask of the Constituent Assembly. Kolchak has exhausted that particular masquerade. Not a trace of it remains. And so, during the recent revolts, here in the rear of the Eastern front, the slogan raised by the counter-revolutionary agitators was not: 'Long live the Constituent Assembly!', it was 'Long live Soviet power!' – but accompanied by: 'Down with the Communist Party!', 'Down with the foreigners!', and so on. They did not dare raise the slogan: 'Down with Soviet power!' and – I have quite a number of appeals, printed and handwritten, that were circulated by the White Guards in Simbirsk and Kazan provinces – they everywhere counterfeited our slogans and our organisations. They setup their headquarters with a military commissar and a military leader, all proper, just as laid down in the decrees of the Soviet power. The idea of Soviet power must have penetrated deep into the consciousness, the nerves and the skin of the peasant masses if the only way to deceive the peasants and raise them in revolt is to come forward under the banner of Soviet power.

We must draw this lesson from the recent revolts. I reported on this matter the other day to the Moscow Soviet, and there I recalled how, fifty years ago or thereabouts, when our Russian revolutionaries were only an insignificant and feeble handful, and the peasantry was saturated in religious and monarchist superstitions, the Chigirin affair occurred, with as its leading figure our late comrade Stefanovich [Ya.V. Stefanovich died in 1915.], then an inexperienced youngster, who took a very risky step. This group of revolutionaries appealed to the peasants using a forged letter in the name of the Tsar – it was called the 'golden' letter, and bore a large gold seal. [72] What did this procedure signify? It signified the extreme weakness of the revolutionaries and the great power of monarchist superstitions among the peasant masses. This step was condemned by all the revolutionaries because, however weak revolutionaries may be, they never have the right to try and ingratiate themselves with the masses by imitating their wrong ideas. Where does the strength of a revolutionary party lie? In the fact that we enlighten and educate the consciousness of the working masses. A revolutionary party never has the right, either in time of success or in time of defeat, either when it is strong or when it is weak, to lie to and deceive the working masses.

That was why the revolutionary party, as I said, condemned this adventure by a group of weak revolutionaries. But, comrades, whereas what we had 50 years ago was a false step taken by a young and weak revolutionary party, today we see before us the last gamble of the winded counter-revolution. It can find no ideological ground under its feet. It is forced to take its stand on our ground.

This is why the Left SRs, who consider themselves to be not a Constituent-Assembly-ite party but a Soviet party, are now serving as cover for the counter-revolution. Just as in the previous period the Right SRs lent, or hired out, the flag of the Constituent Assembly to Kolchak, so now the Left SRs are lending to the same Kolchakite agitators and to all the counter revolutionaries generally a flag that is a sham, a forgery – a counterfeit flag of Soviet power.

In these revolts, then, we recognised our own very great ideological and

organisational strength. But at the same time, of course, these revolts were also a sign of our weakness. For they drew into their whirlpool, as I mentioned, not only kulaks but also – we must not deceive ourselves on this point – a certain section of the middle peasantry. This is explicable by the general causes which I have described – by the backwardness of the peasants themselves. But we must not put all the blame on this backwardness, for Marx once said that the peasant has not only prejudices but also good sense,\* and one can appeal from the peasant's prejudices to his good sense, lead him on the basis of experience into the new order of things, so that the peasants really feel that in the working class, its Party, its Soviet apparatus, they have a leader and defender: so that the peasant understands the reason for our requisitions, accepts them as something inevitable which we apply to the rebel peasants, acting so that a double and treble burden is placed on the kulak: that we enter into the internal life of the village and carry out investigations, to ascertain who is better off and who is worse off, so as to make an internal differentiation, a stratification, and try to form the closest friendly ties with the middle peasants. This we need to do for two reasons.

In the first place, in our struggle against enemies, external and internal, until the working class has come to power in Western Europe, until we are unable to rest our left flank on a proletarian dictatorship in Germany, France and other countries, the working class of Russia needs to rest its right flank upon the middle peasant inside Russia. But not only in this period: no, even after the ultimate, inevitable and historically- determined victory of the working class throughout Europe, we shall face in our country the important and immense task of socialising our agriculture, transforming it from the fragmented, backward, muzhsk form of economy into a new, collective, cooperative communist form. How can this greatest This alludes to Marx's comment on Bonapartism in **The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte**: 'It represents not the enlightenment but the superstition of the peasant; not his judgement but his prejudice transition in world history be accomplished against the will of the peasantry.' It cannot be done. In this sphere we need not measures of constraint, of coercion, but educational measures, the exercising of influence, backed by good examples, by incentives – these are the methods by which the organised and enlightened working class will talk with the peasants, with the middle peasants.

And on the Don, comrades, when our regiments came into contact with Cossacks, with Cossacks of the lower strata, as liberators from Krasnov's rule, these Cossacks asked our Communist commissars: 'But what will happen next? Are you going to throw everything now into common stock? Are you going to take everything from us and hand it over to the commune?' Those commissars who had the best understanding of the sense of Communist policy answered them: 'No, we shall use force only against capitalists, exploiters, landlords and village kulaks, those who exploit the labour of others for profit and speculation in grain. Where the middle peasant is concerned, including the Cossack middle peasant, we shall use methods of ideological influence, that is, we shall encourage the formation of Communist farms. The state will help these farms with agronomical information, scientific, financial and technical aid, and the individual farms will be allowed to try and do better than these Communist farms.' Then the Cossacks, the doubting Cossacks, saturated with the sentiments of the Small property-owner, said, scratching their heads: 'Well, that's not too bad. We'll see if your commune works well, and, if it does, then we'll go over to that way of doing things.'

This is the only correct method for the proletariat in power to employ: to see the peasant as an ally and to keep its policy in the countryside entirely to that line. The

revolts that happened here in the Volga country gave us a warning, and a warning that is doubly terrible because the proletariat has not yet come to power in the West. Mistakes are always bad, but when we have been strengthened by the victory of the proletariat in the West any mistakes we make will be less dangerous: today they are dangerous indeed, and all the more so because these are not just mistakes but, more often than not, actual crimes. The Soviet power is a ruling power. Power creates opportunities for individuals to obtain all sorts of privileges, to acquire illegal profits and riches, to exercise violence, and in various places some deeply corrupt elements have inevitably attached themselves to the Soviet power. There are, of course, many officials who lived in a certain milieu under the old order, and believed in it, but who saw the new order and came over to our side as honest men who had understood the truth. But there are also very many who under the old order were double-dyed scoundrels, who upheld the old point of view because it was to their advantage to do so, and who are ready under any regime to re-paint themselves in any colour required, to pray to any god – just as in one of the old plays it was said that the old courtier Osterman prayed first to the Russian god, then to the Turkish god, then to the German god, then to all three and – cheated them all.

So, then, comrades, both at the top and at the bottom of the Soviet power elements have attached themselves that are, spiritually speaking, profoundly alien to Communist politics, spiritually and morally alien to the working masses – and, just look for yourselves, here and there in the *uyezds* and *volosts* they are behaving towards the peasants in the same way as in the old days the gendarmes and land-captains behaved. [In 1889, as part of a general move to get rid of some of the democratic features of the reforms introduced in the 1860s, the Tsarist Government appointed 'land-captains' for the rural areas: usually ex-officers from the landed gentry, these were a kind of official squires whose task was to exercise a general control over all rural institutions.] In some places the peasants, literally in a frenzy, in impotent protest, seized cudgels and pitchforks and in their ideological helplessness tore up railway-lines and destroyed bridges, being incited to do this by counter-revolutionary agitators. Thus, in Kazan province I was shown documents relating to Sengileyevsk *uyezd*, where the peasants had been subjected to incredible rough treatment by some petty Soviet officials – I say officials, not Soviet executives, who serve the needs of the peasants and explain things, using open violence against the direct enemy, of course, but acting as friends to the peasants whose level of consciousness is low. What we had here was the old Tsarist methods, the old oppression and coercion. And when I had read these documents I asked: 'What have you done with those men?' I said: 'If I were a member of your tribunal I should have assembled the peasants of Sengileyevsk *uyezd* and summoned, on the one hand, those base agents of Kolchak who had incited them to destroy railway lines, and, on the other, those so-called Soviet scoundrels who, using the name of the Soviet power, had oppressed the peasants, and one and the same firing squad of Red Army men would have shot both lots together.'

Comrades, let us take clear heed of this warning. Let us examine and check our Soviet ranks, let us purge them of all alien elements and make the peasants understand that there is only one way forward for them, namely, to cross, along with the working class, over that difficult pass at the foot of which we are now standing. For while our internal situation is difficult in the hungry months of spring, and will get still more difficult in the summer, and this difficulty will be exploited by all our foes, our international situation is getting better and better, and opens up before us ever brighter and more cheerful prospects.

Comrades, I began by describing the Brest-Litovsk peace as the gravest and darkest page in the history of Soviet power. You probably all remember how all the so-called patriots whooped at our expense, with talk of bribery and treason. Those were frightful weeks and months, when the Soviet power revealed its powerlessness. We had no army – the old army had dispersed, choking our communications and ruining the economy, and there was no new army – and we had to pay the reckoning for the war in which the Tsarist army had suffered a terrible defeat. We had to meet the old promissory notes of the Tsar and of Milyukov. All that came crashing down upon us.

And when we said at that time: 'Just wait, our day will come. Revolution will break out in Germany, the Kaiser won't last for ever,' how they mocked us, those sages who said: 'you are feeding the Russian people on fables. The snail is coming, it will arrive some time,' and 'Before the sun rises, the dew will eat your eyes away.' They actually said that. Worse still, the German Mensheviks and SRs, the Scheidemanns and Eberts wrote in their papers only ten days before the German revolution began: 'The Bolsheviks are deliberately deceiving the Russian people with their talk of a revolution in Germany: there will be no revolution here.' They wrote those lines ten days before the revolution in Germany. Our Russian Mensheviks quoted them and commented on them, referring to their opinion when they wrote about this matter.

Comrades, here too, as with the matter of the Constituent Assembly, history worked splendidly and anticipated all the agreements and all the forecasts both of the charlatans and of scientific socialism. At Brest-Litovsk we were crushed: sitting opposite us were Baron Kühlmann and Count Czernin, representing the Hohenzollerns and the Habsburgs, and, comrades, if only you had seen them as close to as I saw them. However, I should not wish you to undergo for so much as half an hour what we had to suffer when we faced those certificated Excellencies, the diplomatic blockheads of Hohenzollern and Habsburg.

And they, comrades, gazed at us like some noble lady examining an exotic plant.

'Look,' they said, 'just see what has turned up now ... Soviet power. Well, we must hurry up and examine it, for the forecast is that it will be dead by next Thursday week.'

Both Baron Kühlmann and Count Czernin were, of course, highly polished persons: in official talks they merely hinted, but in private conversation they said straight out: 'You will sign the peace-treaty, but others will carry it out – those who will "take over" from you' – meaning persons better than you, solid bourgeois rulers: perhaps even the monarchy, those same Romanovs come back again. They were sure of that, and had not doubts about it. And when that insolent Count Mirbach (but let us not speak ill of the dead) came to see me at the War Commissariat – without being invited, of course (this happened in May of last year, when the Czechoslovaks had risen in revolt in the East and the Germans were advancing in the South, the whole of the Ukraine was in their hands, Skoropadsky was still in the saddle and thought himself firmly seated), in that accursed time Count Mirbach asked me, from the height of his grandeur: 'Well, now, when are you going to say goodbye to Russia?'

Out of my obligation to be polite, I tried to avoid giving a direct answer and replied something like this: 'Ah well, you know, Count, in our changeable and anxious times there are no stable governments anywhere.' To which he replied, with all the insolence of a Prussian Junker: 'No, I'm talking about your government.' Then, forgetting any obligation to be polite, I threw this back at him: 'Be sure of this, Count, our government is more robust than are some hereditary

governments.'

And, comrades, you ought to have seen Count Mirbach's face. This took place on that very day when, in hungry Moscow, the counter-revolution was trying to provoke clashes in the streets during the Procession of the Cross: the religious processions were moving past the Kremlin, and Count Mirbach, looking out of the window (our conversation took place on the third floor), repeated: 'Everywhere, everywhere, they are tottering.'

So, when I told him that our government was more robust than some hereditary governments, he looked on me as a mad man who had forgotten all laws, human and divine.

Much time has passed since that day – not yet a year, to be sure, but what is one year in the history of nations? – and where is Count Mirbach, now? True, *he* was killed; but where now is the German Kaiser? He is sitting in Holland, locked away somewhere, not daring to show his face in his own country. And Baron Kühlmann and Count Czernin, with whom we sat down there at Brest-Litovsk? And the German monarchy? No trace of it remains. The German army? It has ceased to be, it has fallen to pieces. And the German working class? It is fighting for power.

The Austro-Hungarian monarchy has been smashed, broken up. Where is the Austro-Hungarian Emperor Karl? He is hiding somewhere. Count Czernin? He is hidden away somewhere. But Soviet power exists in Moscow, in Petrograd and in Samara, and everywhere it is a hundred times more stable than it was a year ago.

We were threatened by the clutches of Anglo-French imperialism, and there was a moment when it seemed that those clutches were going to squeeze us to death. After their victory over Germany there were no limits to the omnipotence of the British and the French. Furthermore, the German bourgeoisie itself, along with Hindenburg, eagerly entered the service of France and Britain in order to crush the Bolsheviks. I have here some recent German newspapers, in which they say plainly in editorial articles: 'In the West, that is, on the frontier between Germany and France, rise walls of concrete and cast iron, in the shape of fortresses: there stand the walls of the old national hatred between France and Germany. But all that is as nothing when compared with the gulf that separates us from the East. With France we must come to an agreement somehow or other, but with the Bolsheviks, with the Soviet power, never. That is a different world-order, those people reject' – this too is said in so many words – 'they reject all the foundations of economic life and private property': and, let us add for ourselves, 'they' reject that order which is based on sacred profit. The struggle against Britain and France, the old fortresses of Belfort and Verdun, all that is as nothing compared with the hatred that we inspire in united European capital. This is acknowledged by the German bourgeoisie, crushed, humiliated and plundered, which, even now, writhing beneath the heel of the French and British bourgeoisies, says: 'And yet you are nearer to me, you are closer akin to me, than that dreadful Soviet Communist republic.' That is how they feel about us in Germany, in France, in Britain, everywhere.

True, you may say that, when Britain and France proposed that we take a trip to the Princes' Islands, the Soviet power agreed, and agreed at once, just as at Brest-Litovsk, because we are ready to make use of any opportunity to shorten our front, to win an armistice, a breathing-space, to lighten the burden borne by our Red Army and by all the working people. If we had gone to the Princes' Islands, it would, of course, have been as we went to Brest-Litovsk, not out of sympathy,

respect and trust in relation to Clemenceau, Lloyd-George and that old trans-Atlantic hypocrite Wilson – no, comrades, where that is concerned, Clemenceau, Lloyd-George and Wilson, like the Hohenzollerns and the Habsburgs earlier, do not deceive them selves for one moment, they know that we feel towards them just as they feel towards us. We are bound to them by inner hatred, inner mortal enmity, and any agreement with them is dictated only by cold calculation and is essentially just a temporary truce, after which the struggle will inevitably break out with new force.

Earlier, it seemed that they were out to strangle us, then they invited us to come to the Princes' Islands, but then they stopped talking about that. Why? Because Kolchak, Denikin, Krasnov and Mannerheim in Finland said to the imperialist stock-exchange: 'Give us time, give us just the two or three months of spring, and the Soviet power will be crushed, and you won't have to negotiate with it on the Princes' Islands.' To which Lloyd George replied: 'You promised us that long ago.' Milyukov was the first to promise it, then there was Kerensky, and Skoropadsky in the Ukraine, and Krasnov: now Krasnov has fled from Rostov and been replaced by Bogayevsky. You all made that promise. Kolchak gave that promise long ago to America. We cannot help you any more with soldiers, our situation in both the North and the South is getting steadily worse. Then Kolchak, Denikin and the others answered: 'We ask, we beg you to give us just a little time in order to finish off the Soviet power. Don't start negotiating with it, don't strengthen its position. We are preparing a great offensive in the spring.'

And this spring offensive has come, we are now experiencing it. Throughout the winter the Allies were supplying money and shells. They did not supply manpower, for they were afraid to get involved too deeply in our affairs, to get bogged down in our Soviet plain, because they realised from Germany's experience that, while the soldiers of the imperialists enter Russia beneath the tricolour flag of imperialism and tyranny, they leave Soviet Russia beneath the flag of Communism.

They agreed to give guns, money, rifles, pieces of silver, but they are withdrawing their soldiers.

In France the leading newspaper **Temps**, and in Britain the newspaper with the same name, **The Times**, say frankly that the French troops are being withdrawn from Odessa because, after the fall of Nikolayev and Kherson, the position of the expeditionary force in Odessa has become too dangerous. That is how they write about it in the European press. I have a telegram here, received today or yesterday, dealing with the situation of the Allied troops in North Russia: I don't know whether it has been published in the press. 'America. Wireless message from Paris for Canada. The involuntary alarm which has seized hold of British circles regarding the serious danger of annihilation that threatens the Archangel expedition has merely confirmed the opinion of the American military leaders, expressed many months ago. Fresh striking facts have been added since then, in particular the mutiny of the Finnish troops in Archangel.'

The Americans and the British mobilised, or, rather, recruited Finnish regiments when the Germans occupied Finland, and the British presented themselves as liberators of Finland from German imperialism. Now an American wireless message from Paris speaks openly of a mutiny by Finnish soldiers forming part of the Anglo-American army on our Northern coast: 'The mutiny of the Finnish soldiers threatens to Cut off our troops' only line of communication, and the Bolsheviks' concentration of naval vessels on the Dvina and the Vaga shows that they are ready to attack.

Men from Canada form the bulk of the forces in this area. Official sources state that there is not the slightest hope of reinforcing them before the Bolshevik attack begins.'

The London **Daily Mail** says in a leading article: 'Responsibility for the danger lies with the Allies. They sent this Allied army and they refused to withdraw it. This they did quite deliberately, and they completely disregarded the danger threatening the army, despite the warnings from military and naval men. The eyes of the whole world will be turned to them if they fall into the enemy's hands, for their fate will be a frightful one,' and so on and so forth. That is an impudent lie, of course. If they fall into our hands we shall treat them as we treated the hundreds, and now probably even thousands, of French, British and Americans whom we have taken prisoner in the Ukraine and in the North. We shall sit them down on a school bench and give them teachers, French and British Communists, and they will make splendid progress.

In the British Parliament a bourgeois deputy recently asked the Minister in the Navy if it was true that a certain Englishman named Price [Morgan Phillips Price worked as a translator for the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs. He left Russia for Germany in December 1918 and worked as the **Daily Herald** correspondent in Berlin. The parliamentary question mentioned by Trotsky was asked on February 20, 1919: the Government spokesman's reply was that Price had been editing a paper, **The Call**, which was circulated among British troops in the Murman territory, inciting them to mutiny. Price's book **My Reminiscences of the Russian Revolution** was published in 1921. When Price was adopted as Labour candidate for Gloucester City in 1922, the chairman of the local Labour Party stated: 'He is not a Bolshevik and has subscribed to the National Labour Constitution. He was no traitor: he never was within a thousand miles of a British soldier in Russia ... Lots of people believed he would be arrested, but Scotland Yard has no warrant against him ...'] was carrying on criminal Bolshevik agitation on the Murman coast, and if it was true that a British battalion there had mutinied and had to be withdrawn. And the British Navy Minister was obliged to confirm that, yes, this Price, who had previously been a correspondent of the **Manchester Guardian**, a British democratic newspaper, had, in our Soviet school, become a Communist and had been sent from Moscow to the North, where he conducted a highly successful agitation: also that more than one battalion had mutinied there, and that these troops were going to be brought home. In Odessa two French comrades were shot by the French general for carrying on agitation among the troops. Not for nothing has this French general referred to the excessive harshness of the climate and hastened to take his troops back home.

I might quote from the same German newspaper as before, which says: 'The Red Army is strong, but it is strong not so much in weapons as in oral propaganda. The Bolsheviks,' says the paper, 'are not just the political party which at present rules the Russian state – no, they are world revolutionaries who are putting into practice the principle of state internationalism and who reject in practice the rules of economic life and the concept of private property.'

It goes on: 'We cannot resist the imposing masses of the Red Army with our Hindenburg Volunteer detachments, and defend our frontier, because the Red Army has at its disposal a colossal power of propaganda, for it mobilises all the discontented everywhere in the world under the banner of Soviet power.'

That is the admission made by this bourgeois paper, the **Berliner Tageblatt**. It notes the fearful dismay of the ruling classes of the whole world and ends by addressing genuine compliments to the Soviet Government: 'The clarity and intelligence of the policy of Lenin and Trotsky is equalled by the senselessness and contradictoriness of the policy of the Entente countries. By their policy they are

merely pushing Germany into the arms of the Bolsheviks,' and so on.

There you have the awareness that now prevails in the minds of the possessing classes, the bourgeoisie, ministers, governments, generals of all countries. They see that some sort of mighty elemental force has penetrated the consciousness of the working classes. Everywhere they are engaged in erecting a kind of sanitary cordon which is intended to surround Soviet Russia and to prevent the bacilli of Bolshevism, the microbes of Soviet power, from making their way westward – while at the same time they send expeditions against us, thereby taking the quickest road to infection. The leading press organs record the existence of confusion, helplessness, complete ideological and political prostration. I have quoted **The Times** and **Le Temps**, a French paper, and also one published in Berlin: they all complain about the confusion and stupidity of their ruling classes. It was said long ago that when Jupiter wants to destroy someone he first makes him mad. That is understandable – when a class's position becomes hopeless, it often loses its head.

I am not going to go into those considerations. That is not the point. Wherever history is working for us, for the working class, it urges the working class upward. Wherever history is exposing the whole foundation of rule by the old classes, we shall inevitably succeed. They have been condemned by history. I pointed to this when I said that our international position is getting better with every month, every week and every day that passes. We are getting stronger, they are getting weaker. That is why we are not afraid of a truce. Time is on our side. When the truce expires, we shall be stronger, they will be weaker. Whether there will or will not be a truce I don't know, but they are withdrawing their forces, and in the North we are successfully advancing. These howls of theirs are not accidental. After the capture of Shenkursk we concentrated fresh forces there, and only yesterday a telegram reported a new leap forward of 18 versts towards Archangel. I have no doubt that this is only the beginning of a new offensive which will bring into our Communist school several thousands of good British and American Communists.

All this testifies to the fact that our international situation is favourable. History has left to our internal enemies their last few weeks, their last month or two months. And they know that if now, in April and May, June or in July, they do not manage to make us lose our footing and fall down on the very threshold of socialism in Europe, they will never manage it. It can happen that a healthy and strong man can slip on a piece of orange-peel and break his neck. That is what they hope for – that the workers' and peasants' power, in these difficult circumstances when the revolution in Europe is developing but has not yet won complete victory, when we are being harassed on all sides, when it will, perhaps, be enough for Kolchak and Denikin to break through the front at one point, to frighten, terrorise, demoralise the Red Army, to deceive the middle peasants, raising them in revolt against Soviet power under the slogan of Soviet power, to create confusion and bloodshed – that in these difficult circumstances Soviet power will perish in Russia on the eve of its complete triumph throughout the world.

This is the meaning of Kolchak's offensive. On all the other fronts the offensive has miscarried. The German Hindenburg battalions have had some success in Latvia and in the West generally, along with the Poles and with the Lettish, Estonian and Lithuanian-Byelorussian White Guards, but the newspapers themselves – I have two of them with me, an East-Prussian one and a Berlin one – say frankly: 'These are fortuitous and partial successes, we cannot exploit them. If we possess any staunch units at all, we need them now in Berlin, against the Spartacists, not against the Russian Bolsheviks.'

The position on the Western front is being restored. Petlyura's bands are crawling away and breaking up. They do not frighten us. The Soviet revolution has moved from the Ukraine into Galicia, and Galicia was Petlyura's rear. This rear is now a conflagration aflame at his back.

There were not many regular Red Army units in the Ukraine. But even before this mighty workers' and peasants' revolt broke out, a demoralised enemy retreat had begun which involved not only Grishin-Almazov's Russian White Guards but also the Anglo-French regular units against which we fought before Berezovka, where we captured a great deal of military booty, including three formidable tanks.

On the Don and in the Donets Basin no offensive was launched against us. There we are continuing our victorious advance into the Don country, which will be continued into Caucasia. Krasnov has been smashed. Denikin will be smashed. In the Donets Basin, where they are concentrating everything they possess, and where we shall seize them in an iron grip, from Mariupol to Taganrog, from Voronezh and Velikoknyazheskaya through Torgovaya to Bataisk and Ros toy, we are grasping them more and more firmly and strongly. The month of the spring thaw will pass, and then our offensive will go forward, following its natural path. We are the stronger there. I do not hide from you the fact that our splendid flotilla lies at the entrance to the Caspian Sea, and it is incomparably more powerful than the enemy's flotilla.

There remains the East, only the East – the Urals, Siberia, where Kolchak is advancing and we are retreating, where our enemy is enjoying success while we have recently suffered setbacks. Here Kolchak set himself the task of cutting the Volga at any cost before the coming of spring, so as to deprive us of this very important artery. Not so long ago we cleared the White Guards off the Volga and made an honest Soviet river of it. Now the White Guards want once more to dishonour and pollute the Volga and take it away from the workers and peasants, who need it for transport. If there is a danger threatening the Soviet power, the power of the workers and peasants, it comes from Kolchak's bands, which were put together through the support given by the SRs and Mensheviks to the idea of the Constituent Assembly.

Kolchak has a substantial rear. There is a rich kulak peasantry in Siberia, and Kolchak relies on them. The worst counter revolutionary elements from the old officer corps have hastened from all parts of the country to join Kolchak. With their aid and that of the kulaks Kolchak is carrying out a quite extensive mobilisation of the peasant masses. He has received the necessary supplies from America, he holds at present a large area of the Urals, he has again taken from us Ufa, which was won with the blood of the workers and peasants, and he is threatening the approaches to Kazan and Samara. Here, comrades, we are faced with the task of the greatest importance for the workers and peasants of the whole country at the present moment: we must at all costs concentrate our best forces on the Eastern front. Kolchak's success is due to a considerable extent to the fact that we were obliged last autumn and in the early part of the winter, after we had achieved big successes in the East, to remove some strong units from the Eastern front, together with our best workers, and transfer them to the South, against Krasnov, who was threatening, through Voronezh, the heart of Soviet Russia, Moscow.

The job has been three-quarters done in the South. The last quarter will be completed with the forces that are there already. Now, all our reserves, all the forces we have in the form of military units, and all organising and ideological

forces, must be directed to the Eastern front. The watchword for Soviet Russia at the present time is: *the Urals*. We must concentrate all our strength in that direction, we must create shock-regiments through an effort on the part of the workers and peasants, and advance them from the Volga eastward towards the Urals.

The Urals must be ours, just as the Volga country is already ours and also, to a considerable extent, the Don country. The Urals must be ours. We must recover Zlatoust, Yekaterinburg, Perm, we must cut a road for ourselves through Chelyabinsk into Siberia, where the workers and poor peasants await us as their deliverers.

While this is the principal task of the whole Soviet land, here in the East it is doubly and trebly your principal task, Samara comrades. Here you formerly had a powerful nest of White Guards, but now it is a centre of our Red Army. Here are interwoven the routes of three armies of the Eastern front. All attention, all effort must therefore be concentrated on fulfilling the tasks and meeting the needs of the Eastern front. You are the immediate rear, the zone adjoining the front. You must contract your civil Soviet institutions and expand the military ones. Everyone who can be useful at the front must go to the front – as commissars, into the supply organs, into the cells, the regiments, the headquarters. You must give your best workers to the front. The fate of Soviet Russia is now being decided on the Eastern front, and with it the fate of the world revolution as a whole. The world revolution will, of course, not perish, it will continue to advance, but it can be thrown back by a year, or two years, or ten years. We want to enter into that world revolution, basing ourselves on Soviet Russia, as it exists today – on what we prepared through decades of stubborn revolutionary work and struggle, what we conquered in the October days and have defended against all enemies. This Soviet Russia, renewed by the blood of the working people, by their ordeals, we do not want to give up for anything. With our breasts we shall form a shield around it, and no force will break the shield.

Comrades, I hope that I shall have the right to tell them at the front that in the Fifth, Fourth and First Armies and in the Southern group, in Samara, they possess a firm, tempered rear.

Samara comrades, when you were in trouble, when Durov was making speeches here, perhaps in this very hall, we in Moscow and Petrograd sounded the alarm. We told the workers of Petrograd and Moscow that a knot had been pulled tight on the Volga which it was necessary to cut.., and the hungry, exhausted workers of Petrograd, not complaining about their poor rations, drew in their belts still tighter, took up rifles, and set off to liberate the Volga and your Samara.

Today, comrades, Samara is free, and in Samara there is a strong garrison, a powerful organisation of Soviets, trade unions and factory committees, the flower of Samara's working class, united by a common idea and steeled by hard trials and all the previous struggle. And now you do not ask the Moscow and Petrograd workers to liberate you, for you are not going to surrender and so you will not need liberating.

At this gathering, united by a single idea and a single will, we declare that all Kolchak's attempts to cut the Volga are so many efforts of passionate impotence. The Samara Soviet, the Samara garrison, the Samara proletariat, together with our front and with our deep rear, promise and swear that Samara will not be

surrendered, and that the Volga will stay an honest Soviet river. [Having successfully sunk several German submarines, Kolchak was in 1917 sent by Russia's Provisional Government to the USA, to advise the Americans on anti-submarine warfare. On his way back, he learnt of the October Revolution and, realising that Russia would now leave the war, he offered his services to the British Embassy in Tokyo. He was accepted, and set out for Mesopotamia, where an expedition to the Caspian Sea, against the Turks, was being prepared. However, when Kolchak reached Singapore, he was summoned by the anti-Bolshevik Russian Ambassador in Peking to go to Manchuria (where he had served in the Russo-Japanese war) in order to 'look after Russian interests' there.]

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## Endnotes

71. The policy of the Constituent Assembly in Samara, and later in Yekaterinburg, led to the coup d'état of November 18, which put Kolchak in power. The Constituent Assembly-ites adopted a number of stern resolutions, discussion of which was halted by a small detachment of the 25th Yekaterinburg Mountain Infantry Regiment. On November 19 that detachment arrested all the members of the Assembly, headed by Chernov, and on November 20 this congress, placed in heated goods vans, was despatched first to Chelyabinsk, the seat of the Czechoslovak high command, and from thereto Ufa. The SRs who had been ministers under the Directory (Avksentiyev, Zenzinov, Argunov and Rogovsky) were sent under special guard to Harbin and from there to America, after which they were allowed to go wherever they chose. So ended the existence of the Constituent Assembly on Russian territory. Some of the members of the Constituent Assembly came over from Ufa to join us in Soviet Russia.

72. In 1875 Comrade Stefanovich, together with Comrades Bokhanovsky and L. Deutsch (Deich), taking advantage of agrarian disturbances in Chigirin *uyezd*, Kiev province, decided to try and organise a peasant revolt with the aid of Tsarist manifestos. Stefanovich prepared a false letter, allegedly written by Alexander II and printed on a large sheet of Bristol-board, with a gold seal. Besides this letter Stefanovich circulated, also in the Tsar's name, the rules of a peasant association called 'The Secret Band'. An underground organisation was formed on this basis and set to work. For further details see Stefanovich's own notes, which are included in Thun's\* **History of Revolutionary Movements in Russia**.

\* This book, by Alphons Thun, a German scholar, was published in 1883. A Russian translation appeared in Geneva in 1903.

## **The Eastern Front**

### **Kolchak's Offensive (March-April 1919)**

# TO THE URALS!

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The long-prepared spring offensive by the enemies of the Soviet Republic has begun. On the *Western front* the enemy was halted after his initial successes. The German press has been forced to admit that the German battalions which played a very important part in the offensive on the Western front are quite insignificant numerically and extremely unreliable. That is not surprising! To the German bourgeoisie and its compromise lackeys strong units are much more badly needed in Berlin than in Kovno. Despite all the Allies' promises, the Polish troops are without boots or clothing, and are starving. Communism is making ever greater progress in Poland. The Western front constitutes no serious danger.

*In the Ukraine* things are going splendidly. The Petlyurists' attempt at a counter-offensive met with miserable failure. They have already surrendered Korosten. Their reliance on the regiments from Galicia proved delusive. After the victorious Soviet revolution in Hungary, a mighty revolutionary wave is rolling over all Galicia. The former head of the government of the Ukrainian Rada, Golubovich, who at Brest-Litovsk betrayed Russia and the Ukraine to German imperialism, has been arrested by the rebel workers of Galicia and is under lock and key.

After giving up Kherson and Nikolayev, the Anglo-French have lost hope of holding out in Odessa. They are hastily evacuating their forces. The White-Guard General Grishin Almazov is still tyrannising over the capital of the South, still hanging Odessa workers from lamp-posts, but the days of the bourgeoisie's rule are numbered not only in Odessa but also in the Crimea.

*On the Don* operations are held up for the time being by the spring flooding of the rivers. We undoubtedly enjoy superiority of forces in this theatre. After taking Velikoknyazheskaya and forcing a crossing of the Manych, the Tsaritsyn army is stretching out its armed hand towards the railway junction of Torgovaya, and so creating a further threat, to Bataisk and Rostov. At the same time the Ukrainian forces which captured Mariupol are advancing on Taganrog. *In the Donets Basin* our forces are concentrating: liquidation of the counter-revolution on the Donets and the Don is a matter of the next few weeks.

On the Archangel front the enemy's position is hopeless, as the British and American press admits. After concentrating sufficient forces there, we have taken the offensive and are successfully advancing. Liquidation of the Archangel-Murmansk adventure is in full swing.

The revolts that were raised inside the country to give support to the attacks from outside have been, or are being successfully liquidated almost everywhere. The middle peasants who were led astray in certain places are acknowledging their mistake and returning penitently to the family of the workers, Red Army men and peasants.

Thus, the general offensive of the counter-revolution on the external and internal fronts has miscarried. Only *on the Eastern front* has the enemy enjoyed success.

For several months Kolchak formed his forces behind the screen of the so-called Constituent Assembly. Krasnov, Denikin, Grishin-Almazov acted openly as Black-

Hundred bandits. Kolchak came forward under the flag of the Constituent Assembly. Chernov, Avksentiiev, Lebedev, Fortunatov, Volsky and other SR luminaries of the Constituent Assembly gathered round Kolchak, carried on an agitation, deceived the peasants, helped to mobilise them, and in this way created an army for this usurper from the ranks of the Tsar's admirals. The abundance of rich kulak elements among the Siberian peasantry, together with a large influx of White-Guard officers, made Kolchak's task easier.

On the other side, after our successes on the Volga, the central Soviet government concentrated all attention on the Southern front, to which strong units were sent from the Eastern front, while experienced, energetic leaders were also transferred thither. The result was that our front in the East was weakened. We lost Ufa, and Kolchak set himself the aim of launching an offensive simultaneously towards Kazan and towards Samara. The Eastern front is now of first importance. True, all our information says that things are not going well in Kolchak's armies. The conscripted peasants advance only under the lash, mutinies frequently occur and are put down, and on the quieter sectors of the front Kolchak's men are coming over to us in tens and hundreds. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the most substantial forces of the Russian counter-revolution are now on the Eastern front. Consequently, it is there that the main blow must be struck from our side.

Again as in August of last year, we raise the cry: *to the Eastern front!* We shall not only provide new, fresh units, we shall summon our best, experienced workers to that front – and not only from Moscow and Petrograd, as happened last year, but from the entire liberated Volga country, from Samara, Simbirsk, Kazan and Syzran. All the conscious peasants of the Volga country will support the Red Army, as one man, and help it to strike a mortal blow at Kolchak.

Kolchak's army is the counter-revolution's last card. That card must be covered. The Urals must again be placed at the disposal of Soviet Russia. Ufa, Zlatoust, Yekaterinburg, Perm must return to the family of workers' and peasants' Russia. Through Chelyabinsk we must open a gate for ourselves into Siberia.

April 7, 1919  
Samara  
*Pravda*, No.83

## **The Eastern Front**

### **Kolchak's Offensive (March-April 1919)**

# A SPRING THAT WILL DECIDE

\* \* \*

Decisive weeks in the history of mankind have arrived. The wave of joy amused by the establishment of the Soviet republic in Hungary had not yet died down when the proletariat of Bavaria seized power and stretched out the hand of fraternal alliance to the Russian and Hungarian Soviet republics. [73] The workers of German Austria [The republic set up in Vienna in November 1918 called itself 'German Austria' and proclaimed that it formed part of the German Reich. However, by the peace treaty signed at St Germain the republic was obliged to remove the adjective 'German' from its name and to abjure union with Germany.] are hastening in their hundreds and thousands to Budapest, where they are volunteering to join the Red Army. The movement of the German proletariat, which had subsided for a moment, is flaring up again with increased force. Miners, metal-workers, weavers are sending fraternal greetings to the victorious Hungarian revolution and calling on the German soviets to make a complete change of front, to break with imperialism – their own, Anglo-French and American – and to ally themselves closely with Russia and Hungary. There can be no doubt that this movement will be given still greater sweep by the victory of the proletariat in Bavaria, whose Soviet Government has severed all ties with the murderers in Berlin and Weimau with Ebert and Scheidemann, the servants of German imperialism and assassins of Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg.

In Warsaw, which the Allied imperialists are trying to make the centre of the offensive against Soviet Russia, the Polish proletariat is rising to its full height and, in the person of the Warsaw Soviet of Workers' Deputies, is sending its greetings to the Hungarian Soviet Republic.

The French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pichon, a sworn enemy of the Russian revolution, reports to his parliament on the sad state of affairs: 'Odessa is being evacuated' – this was even before Odessa was taken by the Soviet troops – 'the Bolsheviks are penetrating the Crimean peninsula, and the situation in the North is unfavourable.' Bad luck! The Greek soldiers who were landed on the shores of the Crimea were mourned, according to the reports of the Allied diplomats and newspapers, on Crimean donkeys, but these donkeys did not get to the Isthmus of Perekop in time. Bad luck! Evidently the donkeys, too, have started to kick over the imperialist traces ...

The foreign consuls do not want to leave the Ukraine and are urging their governments to recognise the Ukrainian republic. Wilson has sent to Budapest, instead of occupation troops to smash the Soviet republic, the honey-tongued General Smuts, to negotiate with the Hungarian Council of People's Commissars.

Wilson has finally changed direction and has apparently forced France to give up all hope of an armed campaign against Soviet Russia. The war with Soviet Russia which the French commander-in-chief, General Foch, was demanding would have had to go on for ten years, in the opinion of American politicians.

Not six months have passed since the decisive victory of the Allies over the Central Empires, when it seemed that the might of Anglo-French and American imperialism knew no limits. At that time none of Russia's counter-revolutionaries had any doubt that the days of the Soviet Republic were numbered. But events are stubbornly going the Soviet way. The worker masses of the whole world are rallying

to the banner of Soviet power, while the world bandits of imperialism are being let down even by Crimean donkeys. We can now expect, from one day to the next, news of the victory of the Soviet republic in Austria and Germany. Perhaps it is not out of the question that the proletariat of Italy, Poland or France will disturb this order of proceeding and outstrip the working class of the other countries. These spring months are going to be decisive in the history of Europe. At the same time, this spring will finally decide the fate, too, of bourgeois-kulak, anti-Soviet Russia.

In the East Kolchak has mobilised all his forces, bringing all his reserves into action, because he knows well that if he does not win now he will never win. *A spring has come that will decide.* Kolchak's partial successes are, of course, trivial in comparison with the overall conquests achieved by Soviet power in Russia and throughout the world. What does our momentary loss of Ufa signify beside our capture of Odessa, our entry into the Crimea and, especially, the establishment of the Bavian Soviet Republic? What does our withdrawal from Belebey, due to military considerations, signify in comparison with the mighty growth of the proletarian revolution in Poland and in Italy? Nevertheless, it would be criminally light-minded for us to despise the danger represented, in the East, by the White-Guard bands of Kolchak. Stubbornness, staunchness, vigilance and courage in armed struggle have alone secured, up to now, the international successes achieved by the Russian Soviet Republic. *The victorious struggle of the Red Army on all fronts has raised the morale of the European working class and made it possible for first the Hungarian and then the Bavarian republic to arise and be consolidated.* Our work is still not over. Denikin's bands have not yet been finally smashed. Kolchak's bands are still advancing towards the Volga.

A spring has come that will decide. Our strength is multiplied tenfold by the knowledge that the wireless telegraph stations of Moscow, Kiev, Budapest and Munich are exchanging not only fraternal greetings but also the terms of practical agreements for joint defensive struggle. But we must direct the main point of our increased strength here, on our own territory, against the most dangerous foe, against Kolchak's bands. The comrades in the Volga country know this very well. In Samara province all the Soviet organisations have been put on a war footing: the best forces have been placed at the service of the army, for forming reinforcements and for carrying on work of agitation and enlightenment among the Red troops. The party, soviet and trade-union organisations in Syzran have responded unanimously to the call of the central government to support the Eastern front. From the best of its workers and peasants Syzran, which itself groaned not so long ago beneath the heel of the White Guards, is mobilising a special shock regiment. The country beyond the Volga has become the focus of attention for all Soviet Russia. To fulfil our international duty, we must first of all smash the bands of Kolchak. To support the victorious workers of Hungary and Bavaria, to help the revolt of the workers in Poland, in Germany and throughout Europe, we must establish Soviet power definitively and irrefutably over the whole extent of Russia.

*To the Urals!* This is the slogan of the Red Army and of the entire Soviet land!

*The Urals* will be the last pass to be crossed in our intense struggle. Victory in the Urals will not only give bread to our hungry country and cotton to our textile industry but will enable our heroic Red Army to take, at last, the rest it has deserved.

April 9, 1919  
Penza

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## Endnotes

73. The Hungarian Soviet Republic was formed on March 21, 1919. Under pressure from the revolutionary masses, the petty-bourgeois government of Count Károlyi was obliged to resign and hand over power to the Social-Democratic Party. The latter, lacking any authority among the masses, had to share power with the leaders of the Hungarian Communist Party. A Council of People's Commissars was formed, comprising both Communists (Bela Kun, Tibor Szamuely, Varga and others) and Social-Democrats. The Entente replied to this revolution with blockade and war, hurling at Red Hungary the White troops of Romania and Czechoslovakia. After a four months' struggle the Romanian army took Budapest and proclaimed the dictatorship of Admiral Horthy. The organiser of the Red Army, Tibor Szamuely, shot himself [Szamuely was killed while trying to cross the border fromn Hungary into Austria.], tens of thousands of Communists and proletarians were shot, and some emigrated to Austria, where they were set free thanks to intervention by Soviet Russia.

## **The Eastern Front**

### **Kolchak's Offensive (March-April 1919)**

# WHAT DOES KOLCHAK WANT?

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**W**hat is Kolchak fighting for? What does he want? For the sake what is he mobilising the Siberian peasants? For what is he forcing them to shed their blood?

At first, Kolchak said that he did not want to let Russia be execrated by the Germans. He called for the Soviet power to be overthrown so that the war against Germany might be continued. But what do we see now? At the same time as Kolchak is attacking Soviet Russia from the East, Hindenburg, in the West, having assembled the White-Guard remnants of the former German army, is trying to advance on Vilna and Riga. What Kolchak said about a struggle against the Germans was therefore a lie. In his war against Soviet Russia Kolchak is now acting in concert with the most devoted general of the former German Kaiser.

Kolchak explained that his task was to unite Russia. But what do we actually see? Russia, beaten in the imperialist war and torn in pieces by vultures, is now being united to an ever greater extent by the Soviet power. Today Russia is one from Petrograd to Odessa, and from Orenburg to Riga. Great Russia, the Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania and Byelorussia have voluntarily united under the banner of Soviet power. Kolchak rules only over a part of the Urals and Siberia. In order to unite Russia in accordance with his plan, Kolchak would now have to conquer the Volga, Petrograd, Moscow, Kiev and Kharkov, Lithuania and Riga – in other words, the whole of Russia. Kolchak wants to unite Great Russia, the Ukraine, Latvia, Byelorussia and Lithuania with the Urals and Siberia. But it would be very much simpler to unite Siberia with all Russia: and, to do that, all that is needed is to get rid of Kolchak himself.

Kolchak says, further, that he wants to free Russia from the Jews, whom he calls the Yids. But that is not true. Kolchak is closely allied with the American bourgeoisie. It would be more correct to say that Kolchak is the hireling of the American bourgeoisie. Before starting his campaign, Kolchak went to New York and Washington. There he received promises of support: from there he was sent money and war materials. But the American bourgeoisie is the most racially-diverse bourgeoisie in the world. Among the American capitalists there are Anglo-Americans, Germans and Jews. Nowhere are there such rich Jewish capitalists, bankers and usurers as in America. Over there they shamelessly exploit and oppress the American workers – Anglo-American, German and Jewish alike. On the American stock exchange, in the American banking world, in American war industry, in the American press, Jews, in the capacity of capitalists, bankers, lawyers and bourgeois journalists, play an immense role. There can be no doubt that of every 100 roubles that Kolchak gets from America, not less than 25 are Jewish, that is, they have been plundered by the Jewish bourgeoisie from the American workers and handed over to Kolchak for his fight against the Russian workers and peasants.

When, last autumn, the Red regiments entered Kazan, Simbirsk, Syzran and Saniara, the bourgeoisie left their homes, but the workers and the poor stayed put. Where did the bourgeoisie flee to? They fled to Kolchak's kingdom. Russian merchants and nobles, Jewish merchants, rich Tatars, all as one ran off to seek Kolchak's protection. All the workers, without distinction of nationality received the Red soldiers as liberators. That is how matters really stand ...

Thus, Kolchak lied when he said he was fighting against the Soviet power so as to begin war with Germany: in fact, Kolchak is at one with the German bourgeoisie.

Kolchak lied when he said that he wants to unite Russia: Russia has already been united against Kolchak, and Kolchak is trying to divide her. Finally, Kolchak lied and is lying when he says that he wants to free Russia from the Jews: Kolchak is shooting down Russian workers and peasants along with Jewish workers, in order to establish in Russia the power of the international bourgeoisie, including the Jewish bourgeoisie.

But Kolchak cannot admit frankly that this is his aim. He is forced to lie and to deceive. He keeps putting forward ever new reasons for his war, throwing dust in the eyes of the ignorant workers and peasants of Siberia, deluding them and selling them to the American, German, British, French and Jewish bourgeoisie.

For a long time Kolchak declared that he was fighting for the rights of the Constituent Assembly. The capitalists and land lords cunningly connived with him in this, although they knew well what he was really up to. Blockheads (Mensheviks and SRs) believed him and supported him. When the SRs had helped Kolchak to form an army, he chased them away, so that they would not get under his feet, and no trace remained of the Constituent Assembly! Kolchak now talks openly of bringing back the Tsar's throne, though he does not say which dynasty is to reign over us – the Romanovs or the Kolchaks.

The bourgeoisie would be overjoyed to see the crown on Kolchak's head. The Orthodox priest, the Catholic priest, the Tatar mullah, the Jewish rabbi would all equally bless Kolchak as Tsar, just as previously they blessed the Romanovs. Kolchak's victory would mean restoration of the rule of a tiny minority over the immense majority of the working people. The Tsarist generals and landlords would recover their ranks, titles and privileges. The nobles would again gather in a greedy throng around the imperial court. The capitalists would coin golden profits from the workers' blood. The land-captains, the gendarmes, the policemen would protect the sacred property of the landlord, and the priests, supporting the police, would again be enabled to delude the people. And at the whim of the ruling gang the Russian workers and peasants would again be drawn into another imperialist war.

That is what Kolchak wants. That is the reason why he is waging a war against the Soviet power, conscripting the workers and peasants of the Urals and Siberia and shedding their blood.

Kolchak is now the leader of all the oppressors, exploiters and vultures, of all who hate the working class. On Kolchak's banner is inscribed – death to the working masses of Russia. If Kolchak were to win, he would drown in blood hundreds of the best workers and peasants, taking vengeance on them for the 'humiliations' they inflicted on the rich classes.

Kolchak has gathered everything that is sinister and dishonest around himself. On one side of the Urals stands Kolchak, on the other stands Workers' and Peasants' Russia. The bourgeois hireling Kolchak has thrown down a challenge to all Russia. Workers' and Peasants' Russia has taken up that challenge. It knows that its salvation lies in destroying Kolchak. *The Urals range has now become the principal barricade of Workers' and Peasants' Russia.* We must capture this barricade, at any cost.

Soldiers of the Red Army! To the Urals barricades! Forward!

April 10, 1919  
Simbirsk-Nizhny Novgorod  
*En Route*, No.30

## **The Eastern Front**

### **Kolchak's Offensive (March-April 1919)**

# THE FIGHT FOR THE VOLGA

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In the South and in the West things are going splendidly and getting better every day. The capture of Odessa is a tremendous victory. We were threatened with the very great danger from that place. The imperialists brought thither soldiers from every part of the world and of every skin-colour. In the end they ran away – the best of proofs that European imperialism has lost confidence in itself. It has become weak and confused, and through confusion, greed and cowardice it has become stupid. Our advance into the Crimea is proceeding magnificently. Simferopol, Yalta, Bakhchisarai, Yevpatoria are in our hands. We can expect to learn in the very near future that the whole of the Crimean peninsula has been cleared of the enemy. And then, from Kerch, we shall directly threaten Novorossiisk and Yekaterinodar.

The Romanians are retreating without a fight from the border areas of Bessarabia. All Bessarabia is rocking, and Romania as well. The bourgeois politicians of France and Britain do not doubt that the robber-boyar bourgeoisie of Romania, together with that country's monarchy, will be unable to survive between Soviet Hungary and the Soviet Ukraine. A Soviet revolution is hourly expected in Austria. The German Kerensky, Scheidemann, has finally lost his head, and the waves of the Soviet revolution are rising higher and higher in Germany. In the French parliament the social-patriot Moutet [[Marius Moutet \(1876-1968\)](#)]; that is, a sworn enemy of the dictatorship of the proletariat, has been obliged to admit openly that the French soldier will not lift his bayonet against Soviet Russia.

Wherever one looks, the victorious Allies are seizing each other by the throat. The French vultures, with bloodshot eyes, would like to grab the whole of Germany, annex its lands and mines, make its workers and peasants their slaves, and at the same time force it to pay milliards in tribute. Wilson realises that this sort of peace programme is senseless, and threatens the French imperialists that he will break off his alliance with them.

'If you don't moderate your appetites,' he tells the Paris stock brokers, 'I shall end my alliance with you and proceed to trade independently with the Germans and the Russians.' The French bourgeoisie does not know what to decide: in its dizzy head blind greed is combined with fear of the advancing infection of Communism.

The revolution is striding across Europe, stepping over the old frontiers that were drawn with the blood of the masses. The bourgeois classes of Europe and the whole world have understood the inevitability of revolution, have sensed the beginning of their end. No trace remains of their past self-confidence. Formerly, the bourgeois world seemed to them to be the only possible world. The unrest of the masses seemed to them to be merely disagreeable but transient friction on the endless road of bourgeois society. This idea no longer exists. The class self-confidence of the bourgeoisie of the whole world has been dealt a mortal blow by the revolution in Russia, Hungary and Bavaria. The bourgeoisie has been shaken. Hence its wavering, its squabbles and quarrelling, its demoralisation and breakdown. The bourgeoisie is going over from its previous brigand notions of crushing Soviet Russia to the idea of tricking, bribing, doing a deal. While its hatred of the workers' and peasants' power remains unchanged, its former strength and self-confidence have gone. This is the revolution's greatest conquest. The uncertainty in the ranks of its

enemy increases the self-confidence of the European proletariat, and the latter's Increasing pressure deepens the disintegration in the ranks of the bourgeoisie.

Over the heads of the Finnish, Estonian, Polish and Lithuanian White-Guard bands we look with confidence to the West, where the numbers of Soviet Russia's allies are growing not daily but hourly. The revolution is striding forward unhindered. There is no power in the world that can halt it.

But we have no right to look only westward, for in the East we still have a dangerous foe, namely, Kolchak. He is trying to thrust a knife into our back at the very moment when we are preparing to mount the threshold of the victorious revolution of the European proletariat. This contemptible adventurer has nothing to lose. There can be no doubt that he does not hope to be able to subject Russia to himself. But with the wild frenzy of a mercenary of the nobles and the bourgeoisie he is striving to do as much damage as possible to the workers and peasants. His main task is to reach the Volga. His aim is to cut the great waterway by which, from the end of April, it will be possible to bring grain to the hungry provinces of central and northern Russia.

None of us can have even the shadow of a doubt that we shall eventually beat Kolchak's army and wipe the counter revolutionary bands off the face of the earth. But we need this victory not eventually but immediately – we need it now. We need to safeguard Moscow and Petrograd from the severest trials of hunger in the coming months of spring and summer. We need to keep hold of the Volga.

The command of the Eastern front has been given the fundamental task of *smashing Kolchak's bands*. But that is not enough: Kolchak must be smashed not on the Volga but farther off, to the east of the Volga. He must not be allowed to approach Samara, or Simbirsk, or Kazan. The Volga must remain a Soviet river throughout its length.

The working class and the poor peasantry of the Volga country will see to that!

Young workers and conscious revolutionary peasants of the Volga country! Communists! The place for all of you is now the army. Both those called up under the mobilisation order and those not so called up, you must get together in small groups and join our regular regiments. A few hundreds of firm, self-sacrificing proletarians are all that is needed to make a whole regiment indestructible.

We need carts, we need boots, we need a strengthened repair service for our rifles, machine-guns and cannon.

**Everyone must help! All the forces and resources of the Volga provinces must at once be mobilised to serve the Eastern front!**

In the next few weeks there will be a bitter struggle for the Volga. We must at all costs emerge victorious from this struggle! The Volga must remain our own Soviet river.

April 12, 1919  
Nizhny-Novgorod.  
En Route, No.31

## **The Eastern Front**

### **Kolchak's Offensive (March-April 1919)**

# WHAT IS KOLCHAK HOPING FOR?

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Kolchak has had some serious successes on the Eastern front. Although the Red Army adds new achievements to its record everyday, it cannot be victorious on all fronts at the same time. Until recently our principal task lay in the South, and thither we sent our principal forces. By so doing we weakened the Eastern front. That gave Kolchak a certain temporary superiority. He used it to attack, and, thanks to this, he achieved partial successes. Kolchak entered Ufa, took Belebey, Menzelinsk, Sarapul. But what is to come next? Do Kolchak and his collaborators hope that they will conquer the whole of Russia, the Ukraine, Latvia and Lithuania, that they will take Moscow and Petrograd, Kiev and Kharkov, Riga and Vilna? Does Kolchak really think that the people who have accomplished the greatest revolution in the world will let themselves be ruled by adventurers from among the Tsar's Admirals?

There can be no doubt that Kolchak himself is without illusions concerning his real strength. Yes, with the help of the Constituent-Assembly-ites he put together an army of a sort. Yes, with the help of the officers and the kulaks, by means of shootings and floggings, he still keeps control of that army. Yes, he obtained a certain temporary superiority and occupied a piece of territory. But can Kolchak hope for further large-scale successes? Can he hope for ultimate victory?

I repeat: he does not think so himself. He knows too well how fragile his army is and how inevitably it will be shattered into fragments by the first serious blow. And that blow will not be long in coming. All Workers' and Peasants' Russia is preparing to inflict a decisive rebuff on Kolchak. Why is he continuing the war? What is he hoping for?

Kolchak's whole misfortune is that there is nothing else left for him to do. Kolchak is not only a hangman, he is also a victim. He deceives the peasants and the officers, but he himself is deceived. The American bourgeoisie, the American stock-exchange, the American Government are deceiving Kolchak. Six months ago the Allied imperialists promised Kolchak, Krasnov and Denikin hundreds of thousands of their own soldiers for the task of strangling Soviet Russia. *It was only because they reckoned on receiving this help from outside that Krasnov, Denikin and Kolchak raised the banner of counter-revolutionary revolt.* In all their appeals Krasnov, Denikin and Kolchak spoke of the aid that was soon coming from the mighty 'democracies' of America, Britain and France. The Russian counter-revolutionaries knew very well that it was beyond their power to withstand on their own a decisive clash with the Soviet forces. Precisely for that reason Krasnov, Denikin and Kolchak begged the governments of the American vultures, orally and in writing, to send them help as quickly as possible. After each setback Kolchak spread the news of fresh landings by the French at Odessa and Novorossiisk, while Krasnov told the Cossacks after every defeat he suffered that Kolchak, together with the British and Americans, was approaching Moscow and Petrograd.

But as time went by, the language of the Anglo-French and American generals and diplomats became more and more evasive. It became even clearer that no help was to be expected from them. Now, the shameful flight of the French expeditionary force from Odessa signifies the complete and final collapse of all

hopes of armed intervention by the bandits of the Entente. They are not up to it! Kolchak and Denikin have been left to their own forces. This means that they are threatened with *inevitable ruin*. But they have no choice. History has already passed sentence on them. They are forced to follow their own road to the end.

The Kolchakites gnash their teeth with malice and hatred. The Anglo-French and American imperialists have deceived and betrayed them. There can be no doubt of that. We have before us a case of betrayal of the minor brigands by the major ones. This has predetermined Kolchak's doom. He knows this himself. In his fury the cheated adventurer is trying to do as much damage to the workers' and peasants' country as he can. He has absolutely nothing to lose. Nothing can save him.

But while Kolchak has nothing to lose, that cannot be said of many of those who are still marching behind him. The SRs and the Mensheviks recoiled in fear from Kolchak. But quite a lot of non-party people, especially from among the officers, followed Kolchak only because they believed he would win. How many citizens there were who said: 'The Soviet government will undoubtedly beat Krasnov, Denikin and Kolchak, but its task will become very much harder when the victorious allies invade Russia in support of Kolchak.'

That was what Kolchak gambled on. With the bait of American aid he caught many officers and lured them on to the road of his traitorous adventure.

This adventure has miscarried. There will be no aid from the Allies. The capture of Ufa and Belebey will change nothing. The Soviet power is growing and getting stronger every day. The Soviet power has recovered Odessa and is recovering the whole of the Crimea. With every day that passes the Soviet power finds new allies in Europe. The imperialist governments are talking openly of the inevitability of negotiations with the Soviet power. Only a short time is left in which those officers who linked their fate with Kolchak's can break that criminal link and return, repentant, to Workers' and Peasants' Russia. By doing so they will save much blood from being shed. The workers' and peasants' government wages ruthless war against rebels and counter-revolution. But it is always ready to extend the hand of pardon to all who have understood the futility and folly of Kolchak's adventure and who honestly declare their complete willingness to work in the ranks of the citizens of the Soviet land.

April 13, 1919  
Nizhny-Novgorod-Kazan  
*En Route*, No.31

## **The Eastern Front**

### **Kolchak's Offensive (March-April 1919)**

# WHAT DOES RUSSIA NEED?

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**Russia needs rest and peaceful labour.** The Russian people need to heal themselves of the grave wounds inflicted upon them by the war caused by the Tsar and the bourgeoisie. Working Russia needs to restore its economy, on new, comradely, cooperative principles.

What Russia is suffering from most of all at present is the forced continuation of the war. The workers have had to quit the factories and defend their country, rifle in hand, on our numerous fronts. Our disordered railways have been wholly given up to military trains and trains carrying supplies for the armies, while the towns are groaning for lack of food. Mobilisation after mobilisation has taken the workers from the fields. Life is hard for the peasants because disorganised and weakened industry cannot provide them with the agricultural implements they need, or with cloth, or, in general, with any necessities.

Both the peasant and the worker need peace, above all. Given two or three years of peaceful labour we could restore and increase our economy, both urban and rural. We could put right both land and water transport, establish a proper exchange of products between town and country. The workers would get bread and meat and milk. The peasants would experience no shortage of nails, cloth, calico, or sugar. We need peace so that the peasants and the workers may appreciate to the full what tremendous gains the Russian revolution has brought the people: no landlords, no land-captains, no greedy capitalists, no usurers – labour in common for the common good!

We need peace. But the enemies of the working class and the peasantry do not want to leave us in peace. In order to get back their lands, their ranks and their capital, the landlords and capitalists have several times raised revolts; they called the Germans into the Ukraine, then they turned to calling in the British and the French, the Americans and the Japanese, surrendering Archangel and Siberia to them.

The peasants and the workers need peaceful, tranquil, honest, comradely labour, but the landlords and capitalists promote conspiracies and revolts, blow up railway bridges, and compel the peasants and workers to create a strong Red Army to defend the country from oppressors both native and foreign.

Soviet Russia's most formidable foe was German imperialism. But that now lies all in ruins. The German revolution overthrew the Kaiser. We were freed from the most fearful enemy.

The imperialists of France, Britain and America, after conquering the German Kaiser, hatefully threatened the workers' and peasants' Russia. All our internal enemies, the supporters of the Tsarist autocracy of the nobles and bourgeois, hoped strongly for help from Anglo-French imperialism. But nothing came of it! The French, British and Americans now have their hands full at home. They are having to fetch their troops back in a hurry. The danger from that quarter has dispersed like smoke.

Thus, the principal enemies of workers' and peasants' Russia are departing from

the scene. The peace and tranquil labour that we desire is coming nearer and nearer. But in order that we may at last be able to lay aside rifle and machine-gun and take up plough and hammer we must finish with the last enemy who dares to menace Soviet Russia, namely, Kolchak.

If Denikin's army in the Donets area and in North Caucasia is still offering resistance, this is only because it hopes that Kolchak will win. If the Estonian, Lettish, Polish and Lithuanian White Guards are still resisting the Red regiments, this is only because they count on Soviet Russia being weakened by Kolchak's bands. Finally, if the Anglo-Americans, having practically given up the idea of making war on Russia, are still marking time in our North this is only because they have not yet lost their last hope for the success of Kolchak's bands.

A blow struck at Kolchak will have decisive significance. The rout of his army will not only secure the Urals and Siberia for Soviet Russia, but will also have immediate repercussions on all the other fronts. The collapse of the Kolchakites will lead at once and inexorably to the complete collapse of Denikin's Volunteers ('volunteers' under the lash) and the final break-up of the Estonian, Lettish and Polish White-Guards and the Anglo-American forces in the West and in the North. [The text has 'east', but this must be a mistake for 'north'.]

Russia, the working classes of Russia, need peace above all. But if this peace is to be won, we must smash Kolchak's bands, and this is now the principal task facing the entire country. Kolchak is our last serious enemy. Three-quarters of the Red Army, if not nine-tenths, can be demobilised after victory over Kolchak. The workers will go back to their lathes, the peasants will go back to their fields. The railways, set free, will start to work exclusively in the interests of the economy. From liberated Turkestan cotton will come to our mills. From the Donets Basin coal will be sent to our factories. The railways will bring the peasants cloth, tools and agricultural machinery, and start to supply the towns with grain and other food stuffs. The country will breathe freely. Emancipated labour will come into its own. Two or three years of peace and tranquillity, and you won't recognise Russia. Our villages will flourish. In our towns economic and cultural activity will be in full swing. The children of the workers and peasants will have access to all the sources of knowledge. The socialist country will take a mighty leap forward along the road of prosperity, knowledge and happiness.

But we need peace. And to obtain peace we need to crush the chief and now almost the only, disturber of the peace – Kolchak.

This is the task on which we must in the coming spring concentrate all our forces, all our will-power.

Russia must and will live! Kolchak shall perish! In the course of this spring his bands will be crushed by the fists of workers' and peasants' Russia.

April 14, 1919.  
Kazan.  
*En Route*, No.32

## **The Eastern Front**

### **Kolchak's Offensive (March-April 1919)**

# BEHIND THE SMOKESCREEN

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A battle is taking place on the Volga-Urals front. On one side are the workers and peasants – on the other, Kolchak's bands. Blood is flowing, wealth, the fruit of the people's labour is being destroyed, villages are being burnt, railway lines and bridges blown up. The fires of war, the dust and smoke of devastation raise a screen on the Eastern front. And why is all this happening? Because the former slave-owners, oppressors and exploiters do not want to live peaceful, laborious lives, but instead want to recover their hereditary rights to oppress and rob the working people.

But what is going on over there, behind the line of Kolchak's front, behind the smokescreen of war, in the Urals and in the depths of Siberia? Who rules over there? What sort of order has been established there? We have received some very instructive information on that score. Every worker, every peasant, should reflect upon it.

Behind Kolchak's back stretches, in a long narrow strip, the Trans-Siberian Railway, which runs to the great ocean. An immeasurable amount of labour and sacrifice was contributed by the working people of our country in order that the Trans Siberian line might be carried through the mountains and the dense forests. In whose hands is this railway now?

Not in the hands of the Siberian workers and peasants. But not in Kolchak's either. The American, Japanese and French governments have disputed a great deal amongst themselves about which of them is to rule the roost on the Trans-Siberian. There are American units there, Japanese detachments, and the remains of the Czechoslovak corps, which consisted of mercenaries of the French bourgeoisie. In the end, the foreign imperialists decided that the Trans-Siberian should be controlled by an inter-Allied, Anglo-Franco-Americano-Japanese commission. That is the situation today. The Trans-Siberian railway has ceased to be Siberian, it has become foreign: it serves not to unite the different parts of Siberia, and the whole of Siberia with Russia, but to enable foreign capitalists to plunder Siberia and carry away from it the riches they have plundered.

'Siberia is a goldmine.' This old popular saying characterised the uncountable natural riches of Siberia. There are deposits of gold, and fur-bearing animals, and grain, and cattle ... All this wealth ought to belong to the working masses of all Russia. But today Siberia, with its riches, has been torn from Russia and made the prey of foreign capitalist invaders. The Siberian workers and peasants are groaning. But even the terrible autocrat Kolchak has, in reality, no authority in Siberia. He is merely the executor of the orders of the American and Japanese stockbrokers. They need Kolchak only to separate Siberia from Russia. They will *plunder* Siberia for themselves.

In war, this happens: in order that one may regroup one's forces without the enemy seeing, a thick smokescreen is created by firing off special smoke-shells. A cloud of smoke divides the surface of the land, and it is impossible to see through this smoke. It is also for the purpose of setting up such a smokescreen that the foreign capitalists need Kolchak. They give him money and shells for this purpose.

They know that Siberia, that goldmine, will repay them with interest the capital thus laid out. And Kolchak performs his task with zeal: the smoke of hell rises over the Urals and the Volga country: thousands of workers and peasants are being slaughtered: villages and hamlets are being burned down: hundreds of millions' worth of the people's wealth is being turned into flame and ashes.

Behind this smokescreen the foreign vultures are carrying on their diabolical work: they are seizing the Trans-Siberian Rail way, taking possession of the gold-deposits, the forests and pastures, preparing to pillage Siberia to the very dregs. Once upon a time the Cossack Yermak conquered Siberia. [Western Siberia was conquered for Russia in the 1580s by Cossacks whose leader, the ataman Yermak, was backed by a powerful merchant family, the Stroganovs] Now, Admiral Kolchak is selling it. What do the interests of the Russian working people matter to Kolchak? Did Kolchak ever have anything in common with the working masses of the country? Did he ever fight alongside the working class and the peasantry against the oppressors? This is a Tsarist admiral who was concerned only about his career, who was ready at any moment to sell himself and his country's wealth to the highest bidder: to Hindenburg, or Wilson, or Lloyd George, or Clemenceau, it was all the same to him. Kolchak found an employer, and undertook to conquer Siberia for exploitation by America. This is the meaning of the Cain's work he is doing.

Behind the smokescreen raised by Kolchak there are, how ever, not only foreign thieves and vultures. There are the millions of workers and peasants of the Urals and Siberia. They look forward with passionate impatience to the time when the smokescreen will be dispersed and they will be able to reach out, through the Urals, the hand of friendship to workers' and peasants' Russia. Recovering Siberia for Russia means, first and foremost, returning Siberia to the Siberian workers and peasants.

We must carry through our task to the end, as quickly and decisively as we can. We must show, once and for all, to all the thugs, burglars and marauders, that Soviet Russia and Siberia are one great, common house of labour, with no entry for scoundrels. During this very spring we must ruthlessly, with the combined forces of the whole country, strangle the Kolchakite serpent. Then the Eastern smokescreen will be dispersed, the air will become transparent and clear over the Volga and the Urals, Soviet Siberia will join Soviet Russia, and the great Trans-Siberian railway will become what it ought to be: a great means for linking, economically and spiritually, the working masses of European Russia and Asiatic Russia.

*En Route*, No.32  
April 18, 1919

## **The Eastern Front**

### **Kolchak's Offensive (March-April 1919)**

# ORDER No.90

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Commissars of the Third Army, April 23, 1919, No. 90, Vyarka

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For several months now the Third Army has been falling back before the advancing enemy. [74] There are absolutely no grounds for attributing this steady retreat to a *superiority of forces* on the part of the enemy. With some variations this way or that, the contending forces were approximately equal. It would also be misplaced to refer in this connection to the army's *tiredness*. It is, of course, very tired, but that is the case on all the fronts, and in the hungry rear as well. Our front is 8,000 versts long, and until we have won a decisive victory on one of the sectors of the front there cannot be sufficient reserves available in the country to relieve the armies now in action. The surest road to rest is victory soon, and victory soon can be attained only through *maximum effort*.

From this follows what must be the principal commandment for the leading Communist workers in the army: to cast aside all talk about the enemy's superiority in numbers, to cease expecting salvation to come from the centre, and to bring about an immediate turn within the army itself – establishing a firm regime in it; making the best of the soldiers, and primarily, the Communist cells, understand that the country's fate now depends on the conduct of the Third Army; *achieving a complete turn-round in morale and going over to the offensive at any cost in effort and sacrifice*.

Until recently the number of Communists in the army was given as 12,000. This is a very serious misunderstanding. If in the Third Army there were not 12,000 but 2,000, or even 1,000 real Communists, that is, self-sacrificing seasoned fighters, we should long since have crushed Kolchak's bands on the Perm front.

(1) It is therefore necessary to *carry out a purge of the Communist cells*. There must be a practical check on how the members of the cell behaved at a difficult moment. It must be laid down as a rule that membership of a cell confers no privileges or rights but merely imposes the duty to fight more bravely and devotedly for the interests of the Soviet land.

(2) It must once more be impressed on the mind of every *commissar* that he is *answerable* along with the commander, for the *fighting capacity of his unit*. The post of commissar of a military unit is one of the most responsible posts in the Soviet republic. The Commissar must be a model of personal courage. At critical moments the conduct of an entire unit and the saving of a position often depends on the commissar. The composition of the corps of commissars must be given an airing. There must be a real check on how the commissars of each unit behaved during the most critical moments. Those commissars whose experiences have tired them out excessively must be replaced. Those commissars who have lost faith in victory or who have come to accept the shame of constant retreat must be sent back to the rear. Those commissars who have entirely submitted to the mood of their units and have concerned themselves mainly with ensuring the security of the retreat must be court-martialled. Those battalions, companies and commandos which have gone off

on their own or which have begun to disintegrate must have special commissars assigned to them. Those Red Army men who have shown devotion and resolution under the test of fire must be promoted to the post of commissar or commander. All this must be done as quickly as possible.

(3) There must be a *check on the composition of the commanding personnel*. A ruthless purge is needed of those commanders in the Third Army who hide themselves away in corners when fighting begins, but who are the first to get moving when the moment of retreat arrives. Care and vigour must be shown in promoting firm, resolute Red Army men to junior posts of command.

(4) A regime of *strict, unwavering discipline* must be established in the army. In some units of the Third Army there are still surviving the habits of guerrilla-ism and atamanism, the practice of discussing combat orders, and on various pretexts failing to carry them out. Direct responsibility must be imposed on commissars and commanders for the fulfilment of combat orders.

Some Communists justify by reference to their membership of the Communist Party the arbitrary violations of military order that they commit. A directly opposite rule must be laid down:

Communists are to be punished with two-fold severity for conduct that violates order and unity of action. No services in the past can or shall serve as justification for anyone who in the future shows himself to be an undisciplined member of the revolutionary military family.

(5) In units which are advancing, it is the heroes who set the tone. In an army which has been retreating for a long time, power is gradually gathered by the *self-seekers*. This danger threatens the Third Army. It is necessary to introduce into the most demoralised units, as rank-and-file Red Army men, genuine and reliable Communists who will bring a fresh eye to investigation of the internal life of a unit, help to rid it of direct agents of Kolchak, handing them over to the tribunal, and will thereby compel the self-seekers to hold their tongues.

(6) It must be laid down as an invariable rule that not one crime, *not a single offence against revolutionary military duty is to be left unpunished*. Investigation must be brief, so that the punishment may follow the crime as quickly as possible. The tribunals must ensure that, by the sentences they pass, they make the less conscious Red Army men and the less firm commanders and commissars realise that it is now a matter of life and death for the working class and that no mercy can be shown to criminals, idlers, cowards and characterless connivers.

(7) On the other hand, the *best* soldiers, commissars and commanders must feel that they are *surrounded by the care and love of the army and of the whole country*. The commissars of units must be in the very midst of the mass of the soldiers, during their service, in battle, at rest and in their recreation. This obligation must apply to the commanders as well. A closer bond must be established between the Communist cells, when these have been purged and checked, and the commanders and commissars, in the work of keeping watch on the conduct of the Red Army men. Commissars of units must periodically submit, through the proper channels, reports on the soldiers in their units, putting forward the ablest of them for promotion to posts of command and recommending them for rewards, and publicising their deeds in the press.

(8) Commissars must regularly furnish, not less often than once a week,

information for the Political Department and correspondence for the army newspaper. An army's newspaper ought not to be a mere reproduction of the Soviet or Communist newspapers. It must never forget for one moment that it is an army newspaper: it must depict *the life of the army in all its details*. Every unit must recognise itself there, as though in a mirror: heroes must be exalted in the consciousness of the masses, and self-seekers subjected to contempt and mockery. Such concrete illumination of the army's internal life has greater educative significance than agitational articles of a general political character. A Red Army man who is capable of following political affairs generally will read general Soviet publications.

All the measures listed are to be put into effect in the shortest possible time. *The period when the roads are unusable must be utilised for complete internal regeneration of the Third Army.* This regeneration must begin at the top, with the commissars, the commanders and the Communist cells. Everyone must shake himself, cast aside fatigue and the habit of retreating which has been formed, stand fast, and concentrate all his energy and will-power on advancing, at whatever cost in effort. There can be no doubt that the forcibly conscripted, compulsorily knocked-together armies of Kolchak will break up into fragments at the first serious blow. *But this blow has to be delivered.*

The Third Army is not weaker numerically than Kolchak's army which opposed it. *Consequently, everything now depends on initiative, resolution, devotion, heroism and self-sacrifice on the part of the Communist comrades.* The Party, through its Central Committee, addresses this call to them: 'Comrade Communists of the Third Army, it is up to you to save the revolutionary honour of the Third Army, and, along with that, to save the revolution.' In the situation which has been created for the Third Army and for the country, Communists can now have no doubts, no hesitations, there can be for them no looking back, no indulgence in criticism, but one slogan only: Forward!

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## Endnotes

74. The Third Army, consisting of the 29th and 30th divisions and a special brigade, was stationed on the extreme left flank of the Eastern front. At a time when, in the Ufa and Orenburg directions, units of the Fifth and First Armies had achieved, down to the beginning of March, some substantial successes, the Third Army, which at first was covering Penn, and then Vyatka, kept on falling back. After stubborn fighting the enemy took Penn, and thereby presented a serious threat to our Ufa group. By mid-April the Third Army had reached Glazov.

## **The Eastern Front**

### **Kolchak's Offensive (March-April 1919)**

# THE TASK OF THE EASTERN FRONT

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This task is a clear and simple one: to smash Kolchak, to destroy his army. But it cannot be accomplished while retreating. *It is necessary to go over to the attack.* This is the principal task of the Eastern front, of its soldiers, commanders, and commissars. *Going over to the attack, that is the demand of the moment.*

During recent weeks the armies of the Eastern front have been retreating. The Perm army has already been retreating for months. This has created a certain habituation to retreat. Units are retreating when there is no justification for this whatsoever in the relation of forces and the objective situation.

Our Eastern front is being strengthened not daily but hourly. The country is working intensely to supply it with reinforcements and all the supplies it needs. But for victory it is not enough to have soldiers and armaments – an unwavering *will to victory* is needed. This must be aroused and tempered in the next few days.

When a ball rolls along under the impact of a jolt that is given to it, it does not stop until it has exhausted all the kinetic energy it has received. This sometimes happens with armies, too, when they have lost their will-power. But in the armies of the Eastern front there is not even the shadow of loss of the will to victory. There is only a weakening of its tension. The commanders and commissars must themselves take the initiative in the advance, and transmit this initiative to the army as a whole.

The season when the roads are impassable has given us a brief respite. This will enable us to bring order into disorganised ranks, to throw out the worthless elements, to renew and give an airing to the commanding personnel and the commissars, where this is needed, and thereby to prepare for the advance.

*An end to the retreat!* We must smash Kolchak. He can be defeated only through an intense offensive all along the front.

Such an offensive will entail many fewer losses than a protracted retreat. One decisive blow, and Kolchak's regiments, created by force and held together by the whip, will shatter into fragments. Such a blow we must deliver.

Commissars and commanders! The Soviet Republic lays a very great responsibility upon you at this time. You dare not lose a single day, a single hour. You must shake up your units and arouse in them an unconquerable will to victory. Not one step back! The hour for the offensive has struck.

Woe to those regiments which fail to obey a military order! Honour and glory to the brave soldiers, commanders and commissars of the Eastern front!

April 24, 1919  
Vyatha  
*En Route*, No.36

## **The Eastern Front**

### **Kolchak's Offensive (March-April 1919)**

# TO ALL CITIZENS OF VYATKA PROVINCE

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Counting on the bourgeoisie of Vyatka and the kulaks of the countryside, Kolchak has scattered his agents all over Vyatka province. They have been given the task: (1) to disrupt railway lines, blow up bridges, and destroy telegraph and telephone communications: (2) to stir up kulak revolts in the rear of the Red forces: and (3) to bring confusion and disintegration into the ranks of the Red regiments.

In places in the town of Vyatka where certain units are quartered, White-Guard Kolchakite appeals have been found which bear such false signatures as 'Peasant', 'Uralian', and so on. A similar agitation is being carried on among the railway staffs and in the villages. Kolchak's agents – hirelings of the Russian and American imperialists – do not stop at anything in their struggle against the workers and the working peasants. In turn the Soviet power will not shrink from using the severest measures in combating the counter-revolutionary traitors and their accomplices.

*It is hereby announced that:*

- (1) All citizens who are caught giving aid, whether direct or indirect, to Kolchak's agents – by providing them with lodging or helping them to move about, by concealing their presence, or by not reporting their activities to the nearest military or civil authority – will be treated as traitors and tried under martial law.
- (2) Responsibility for the inviolability of the railways, telegraph lines and, in general, of all installations possessing military importance, is laid upon the soviets and upon the population generally of those villages and *volosts* through which the railway and telegraph lines pass. The assignment of responsibility for particular lines will be specially announced through the local authorities. In the event of malicious damage to lines, posts, wires or bridges, those kulaks and White-Guards who have been taken as hostages will be shot.
- (3) Commandments of barracks, commissars and commanders are to investigate unremittingly the appearance of suspicious persons in places where Red Army units are quartered. All honourable Red-Army men comrades are to co-operate in this task in every way. Kolchak's hired agents must be caught and exterminated.
- (4) Help, direct or indirect, given to the evasion of military service, either by incitement to desertion or by concealment of deserters, will be punished, in Vyatka province, as an act of treason, with the full severity of martial law.
- (5) Bourgeois and kulak elements must remember that they are living in a socialist republic which is waging a struggle to the death against the enemies of the working class: in the event of the slightest attempt being made to help Kolchak, the ruthless fist of Red terror will descend upon the urban and rural bourgeoisie of Vyatka province.

This announcement is to be posted up in all Soviet institutions and in all public places, and is to be signed personally by the chairmen of the *volost* and village executive committees of Vyatka province.

*En Route*

April 24, 1919, No.35

## **The Eastern Front**

### **Kolchak's Offensive (March-April 1919)**

# ORDER

**By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Third Army, April 26, 1919, Vyatha**

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*To be read in all companies, squadrons, battalions and task-forces*

**Comrade soldiers, commanders and commissars!** The command of your army has given you an order: to prepare for an offensive. This order you must carry Out with maximum concentration of all your strength. Those few days which still remain for preparation must be utilised. You must apply your selves to training. You must correct all shortcomings, make up for all oversights, repair all omissions. Every commander must inspect his unit carefully and strictly. Every commissar must remind the soldiers of his regiment of the lofty responsibility that they bear. Every soldier must remember that the entire country is now looking expectantly to him.

When the order is given to begin the offensive there must be no doubts, waverings, or looking this way and that. Woe to the soldier or the commander who leaves the ranks, as a violator of unity, a renegade! Iron discipline must be established in your ranks. The salvation of the country requires this. Every commander, from section leader up to divisional commander, must remember that he answers for his unit. Every commissar must remember that he shares responsibility with the commander.

I have spent a few days with your army. I have seen the units and talked with soldiers, commanders and commissars. I firmly believe that the moment for a decisive turn has come. There will be no more retreating. The Third Army will go over to the offensive.

I send fraternal greeting to all those units of the Third Army which I was not able this time to meet personally. In the next few weeks, comrades, I shall meet you in Penn and then in Yekaterinburg. May victory crown your banners!

Long live the Third Army!

Long live workers' and peasants' Russia!

## **The Eastern Front**

### **Kolchak's Offensive (March-April 1919)**

# WHAT YOU DO, DO QUICKLY!

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Our armies have taken Bendery. [Bendery is on the Bessarabian bank of the river Dniester.] A wide door has been opened into Bessarabia. In the Kamenets-Podolsk direction Ukrainian units are advancing to link up with the armies of Soviet Hungary. At the same time things are going well in the North too. Four weeks ago the British command was in utter despair, then it seemed to calm down, but now, once more, matters are as bad as they can be for this command. The Whites are rebelling, calling out to our troops, coming over to our side, fighting in our ranks. This happened in the area of Tulgasskaya village, on the left bank of the Northern Dvina. Thanks to this development, our units, despite the extremely unfavourable physical conditions, have occupied at one stroke the highly important fortified area of Tulgasskaya *volost*, up to and including the villages of Karpovskaya and Butakovskaya. We can therefore look forward with complete confidence to the further development of events on the Northern front.

True, we have suffered a big defeat in the West. The Polish legionaries have taken Vilna. However, despite the great importance of Vilna as a Lithuanian centre, the mere fact that Vilna has fallen does not in itself constitute anything dangerous from the military standpoint. Relations between Soviet Russia and Poland will be decided not by the bayonets of those essentially very insignificant forces which in the present conflict are deciding the 'fate' of Vilna for a few weeks. The proletariat of Warsaw, Czenstochowa and Dombrow:a are raising sharply the question of Soviet power. The government of Polish capital can still today hurl shock-groups against Vilna, but it is barely capable of creating any sort of stable regime in Warsaw. The fluctuations of the Western front are consequently of third-rate importance. Over there, the whole matter will be settled all at once, and on a wide scale.

There remains, as before, the Eastern front. It would be hasty to affirm that we have already brought about the necessary change on that front. On the northern sector operations have been almost halted by the very bad condition of the roads. On the southern sector Kolchak is still in some places pressing our units hard. Replacements and reinforcements are coming up from various quarters, but *they are coming too slowly*. Large numbers of Communists are being mobilised, but *they take too long in arriving*. Through supply trains are moving eastward, but *they are moving too slowly*. We need not only to smash Kolchak but to do this quickly, with the minimum expenditure of forces and resources.

I therefore appeal to all institutions and workers in the rear - to the Central Supply Administration, to the All-Russia General Staff, to the military commissariats of districts, provinces and *uyezds*, to Soviet and Party organisations, to the trade unions:

*The Eastern front calls to you: what you do, do quickly!*

*En Route*, No.37  
April 27, 1919

## **The Eastern Front**

### **Kolchak's Offensive (March-April 1919)**

# **DON'T WASTE TIME!**

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The danger from Kolchak has undoubtedly evoked an immense upsurge in the country. All other questions have been put aside for the time being. It has again been shown that the great class bond that unites the worker masses is incomparably stronger than any conflicts or misunderstandings due to differences of trade or way of life. Discontent undoubtedly exists in relation to the state of affairs, or to other actions by the Soviet power. How, indeed, could that not be? The country has not yet escaped from the clutches of hunger and ruin. This discontent sometimes takes acute forms. Incited by the White Guards and the Left SRs, with the help of the Mensheviks and the Right SRs, discontent is at times transformed into local revolts or strikes. But it is enough for a general danger to appear, and all partial questions fall into the background: the working masses are united by awareness that, however hard things may be for them now, temporarily, under the rule of the bourgeoisie they would be incomparably harder and, what is most important, there would be no way out. Hence this militant upsurge, despite the heavy fatigue, hence this readiness to fight to the end for the Workers' and Peasants' Republic.

However, in this matter too the organisational apparatus is functioning too slowly. The path that links the readiness of the working masses to fight and the implementation of this readiness of theirs is proving to be too long.

Reinforcement drafts often arrive too slowly owing to the shortage of uniforms. Local Soviet institutions work, as often as not, in isolation from each other. Uniforms held by the National Economic Council or by the supply committee are not available when required by the military commissariat of the province or the *uyezd*. An end must be put to this. The despatching of reinforcement drafts must be made the central task of all Soviet institution and Party organisations.

Mobilisation of Communists, sympathisers and volunteers is going well, but those mobilised take too long to get to the front.

Workers removed from responsible posts take too much time in handing over their responsibilities. An end must be put to this. The handing-over of responsibilities must be completed in a few hours. Persons mobilised must, so far as possible, be sent off on the very same day to the place to which they have been assigned.

Local Party committees and executive committees try to assemble the persons they have mobilised in large units – in battalions and regiments. This arises from a quite comprehensible and not at all blameworthy feeling of emulation. But this way of despatching reinforcements has bad consequences for the front. It is best to include a considerable proportion of the Communists who have been mobilised as Red Army men in the very next reinforcement drafts to leave, while the rest, as they assemble, should be quickly collected into special companies and sent to the front. We have there, in all our armies, goad, hardened cadres, and in the immediate rear we have well-organised holding regiments. Training and formation proceeds a great deal more rapidly in the circumstances of the zone adjoining the front than it does in the distant rear.

The main task now is *not to waste time*. The arrival of every new reinforcement draft, provided it contains firm cadres, is of enormous material and moral importance for the front. When it receives reinforcements, a regiment is regenerated. Each additional Communist worker can be very important for the life of each separate unit.

But we must hurry. Reinforcements, volunteer formations, commanders, Communists must get to the front without delay, forthwith. And that this may happen it is necessary to finish decisively with red tape and disparity between departments, in every *uyezd* and provincial town. Every *uyezd* must act as though the danger from Kolchak were bearing down directly upon it, and as though repelling that danger depended upon its own efforts. Only thus shall we achieve complete, decisive and, what is most important, rapid success!

Comrades, hurry! Don't waste time!

*En Route*,  
April 28, 1919, No.38

## **The Eastern Front**

### **Kolchak's Offensive (March-April 1919)**

# RUSSIA OR KOLCHAK?

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The country has roused itself. The danger advancing from the East has awakened the great energy of the working masses.

Forces are mobilising, the will is being concentrated: a rebuff is in preparation.

The country is weary, of course. This weariness has been accumulating for many years. The people, burdened with labour, has never emerged from its state of weariness. Weary, it was thrown into the hell of the imperialist slaughter. The February revolution lured it with the phantom of liberation, only to disappoint it and increase its weariness.

The October revolution roused the forces of the people and showed them the way forward. But that same October revolution, which constituted a terrible threat to the bourgeoisie of the whole world, led to a series of furious attacks on the workers' and peasants' power. For seventeenth months we have been waging an almost uninterrupted struggle. They attack us and we defend ourselves. The workers and peasants did not and do not want war, but they did not and do not want to be turned once again into beasts of burden, to be driven at Kolchak's command.

Our exhausted country has defended itself and is still defending itself, pouring out its blood. The German imperialists were the first to count on the country's weariness, then the Anglo-French vultures, and now it is Kolchak's turn. He knows, of course, that he cannot conquer workers' and peasants' Russia, with its many millions of inhabitants. But he counts on our people's suffering loss of heart.

So many calamities, adversities and burdens have fallen to the lot of the working people of Russia during the last five years that one might wonder where they could find the strength to resist and repulse an attack. And Kolchak hopes that the Russian worker will hang down his head, that the Russian peasant's heart will sink, that they will lose courage and say: 'We have no strength left with which to resist, let anybody come who wants to – Kolchak, the King of England, the Mikado of Japan. Let them plunder and strangle, let them do whatever they want: we can't and won't resist any longer.' This is what Kolchak counts on.

And, indeed, if the people's spirit were to be broken, that would mean, our ruin.

But it is not so! It will not happen!

Before our eyes something great is taking place. The terrible danger has brought forth a new uprush of energy and power from the depths of the people. This happens, too, with an individual. Tired, worn-out, half-asleep, he is dragging himself along a forest path, ready to collapse under the first tree-stump and sleep the sleep of the dead. But then, through the evening hush of the forest, he hears the whistle of a robber – and that traveller, half-dead from fatigue, now roused and awakened, stares into the dusk and seizes hold of a stick, a stone, a knife, whatever weapon comes to hand. Mortal danger has restored in him the energy that had ebbed away.

The Russian people are now like a great traveller. Having thrown off the chains of their former slavery, they are marching towards new, great goals – towards the

building of an honest, just life of labour and happiness, based on principles of fraternal labour. But the road is a difficult one. There are ups and downs, potholes and ravines, and sharp stones underfoot. And venomous snakes lurk beneath the stones along the road. A black crow, croaking hatefully, circles overhead and waits for prey. But the traveller, surmounting obstacles, continues on towards his goal, though exhausted with hunger. At certain moments it seems as though he has stopped, either from fatigue or in order to meditate. It is even as though a doubt has stirred in his mind: shall I ever get there?

That was the moment that Kolchak seized. He scraped around, concentrated everything he had, and from Out of the Siberian rear he struck at the Russian people. 'You are exhausted, proletarian: peasant, you are weary. Your heart has faltered, you are giving up the struggle – therefore, you will now be mine. I will crush you under my feet, I will shackle you with irons, I will fasten on you a new muzzle of autocracy, with red-hot rods of steel I will force you to serve, as before, your age-old masters, the landlords, the manufacturers, the generals and admirals. And Russia will again be the Russia of the Tsar and the nobles.'

But Kolchak did not get it right. He observed correctly that the people were tired. This tiredness affects everyone. The whole country wants peace and tranquil labour. But there is not only tiredness. The people have consciousness, and an unconquerable will to freedom, independence and happiness. The Russia of today is a new Russia – not the Russia of the nobles, the bourgeoisie, the Tsar, or Kolchak, but a workers' and peasants' Russia. The alarm-bell has rung out all over Russia, and not only the workers of Petrograd and Moscow, not only the working population of the Volga country, who are directly menaced by Kolchak, but also the peasants of the most out-of-the-way *uyezds* and *volosts* have heard it and understood that the last powerful and dangerous foe is threatening everything that the people have won and, what is most important, their whole future. Before every worker and peasant, before every conscious and honourable soldier of the Red Army the question is now posed: who is to live and who to die – Russia or Kolchak?

Russia means the working people who have taken the government of the country into their own hands and are applying themselves to heal its old wounds and sores and to build a new, rational life. Russia means a people numbering many millions who want to live in peace and fraternity with all other working peoples. Russia means the young and rising generations, our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, to whom we shall hand over a country freed from the barbarism and brutality that weighed upon it for centuries.

Kolchak is the embodiment of all the former injustice of Russian life. To transform the whole country into a frightful hard-labour prison, in which the warders and executioners would be the exploiters who are now aggrieved, and the convicts would be the workers and peasants – that is the only purpose of Kolchak's campaign.

The country has roused itself. In the provinces, the *uyezds* and the *volosts* one question is now the centre of universal attention – how to gather together and concentrate all forces and resources for the purpose of repulsing Kolchak. Besides the mobilising of five age-groups proclaimed by the Council of People's Commissars, all the provinces are trying to form model units composed of the more conscious, revolutionary and self-sacrificing workers and peasants, as volunteers. The example has been set by the Volga provinces, where the Communists of Syzran, Samara, Simbirsk and Kazan are, with feverish energy, forming themselves into

revolutionary shock regiments. The workers of Moscow have one thought, one care – to safeguard the Eastern front. Heroic work in the interests of the Eastern front is being carried on in Petrograd. The workers of Penza have sent a telegram to say that they are forming a shock regiment, in all haste. In Yaroslav and Vologda provinces the Communists are doing their duty, mobilising the best fighters for the Eastern front. Russia has roused itself, province is competing with province and *uyezd* with *uyezd* in the task of repulsing Kolchak. This is a noble contest, inspired by ambition which is the reverse of vain, being an endeavour to render the maximum service to the cause of the workers' and peasants' revolution.

The danger on the Eastern front is great. Kolchak's forces have not yet been beaten, and even his advance towards the Volga has not been halted. But it can already be said, with profound confidence, that Soviet Russia will reply to the Kolchakite threat with a mighty, crushing rebuff.

Do not waste a day, not a single hour! Assemble all forces and all resources and set them to work! Put every worker in his proper place! Every province, every *uyezd*, every *volost* must now work as though the burden of Kolchak's invasion had to be born wholly by itself alone. These spring weeks will decide things for good and all. If Kolchak's forces are scattered, then what remains of Krasnov's and Denikin's bands will disappear

In their wake, the British will withdraw their occupation forces, and Hindenburg will take himself off with his wretched 'iron' battalions.

Kolchak is the only serious danger threatening us. This danger will be overcome, eliminated, crushed. Workers' and Peasants' Russia wants to live, and will live.

Death and destruction to Kolchak!  
Long live Workers' and Peasants' Russia!

## **The Eastern Front**

### **Kolchak's Offensive (March-April 1919)**

# ONCE MORE, DON'T WASTE TIME!

\* \* \*

The situation on the Eastern front continues to be alarming. Reinforcements are too slow in coming up. The necessary effort is not observable in the tempo of work of Soviet institutions. This is due to a considerable extent to the fact that during one and a half years of Soviet power we have grown too familiar with dangers and with the victorious mastering of these dangers. Many comrades think: 'How could Kolchak possibly conquer the Soviet Republic?!" – and with that thought they rest content. This mood threatens us with the greatest dangers. In any case it has the effect of very seriously slowing down the mobilisation of the necessary forces, and thereby putting off the hour of our victory. Yet we need a quick victory. We have no right to waste time. The country is famine-stricken. The country needs grain, coal, oil and cotton. All this can be supplied to the workers and peasants only by means of a quick and decisive victory. And such a victory is possibly only given a truly revolutionary effort on the part of all the advanced forces of the working class and the conscious peasantry.

Work is proceeding too slowly. Many decisions and measures which might have been taken today are being put off till tomorrow. Much time is being lost in the transmission of orders from one institution to another. The responsible workers in the localities by no means always check on the fulfilment of decisions. Too many of them let themselves be lulled with words.

Local interests still often exercise too great an influence on work to support the Eastern front. Too large a number of executives prove to be 'indispensable' for local work. Those who are assigned to the front are not removed from the localities soon enough. The handing over of responsibilities takes too long. Rolling-stock for the movement of reinforcements is not ordered in good time. Disparity and discrepancy is to be found everywhere. In one place an hour has been lost, in communicating with another place half an hour has been lost, in that place, in turn, entire days have been lost ... And the result is that the reinforcements reach the front a whole week later than would have been possible. Time is of more decisive importance in war than in any other sphere.

Comrade members of province and *uyezd* executive committees and Party committees! It depends on you to give a fresh sweep to all this work. No small amount of routine, red-tape, new Soviet Oblomovism [Oblomov, the protagonist of Goncharov's novel (1858) named after him, is an embodiment of complacent laziness. As the critic Marc Slonim writes, "He firmly believes that inactivity is a symbol of social superiority, and that work is a curse". He is contrasted with his friend Stolz, an industrious and methodical German.] has accumulated already in our Soviet mechanism. The work of service to the Eastern front must not be paralysed by these faults. The Central Committee demands that local organisations now devote three-quarters of their forces to work for carrying through successive mobilisations, troop-formations and the despatch of reinforcements to the Eastern front. This decision by the Party's Central Committee is to be taken literally. Therefore, of every four local Party workers, three must be transferred to war work in the broad sense of the word. Once again I repeat: every province, every *uyezd* must act as though the threat from Kolchak stood directly on its own border and could be warded off only by its forces.

It is necessary to hasten the despatch to the front of the comrades mobilised by

the Party and the trade unions.

All energy must be shown in despatching 10-20 persons from each *volost*, in accordance with the decision of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee and the Defence Council on April 25 of this year.

Measures must be taken at the same time to speed up the systematic formation and forwarding of planned replacements.

The Russian working class is facing its last severe trial. This trial it will sustain, and victory will be won – but on one condition, that we do not lull ourselves with optimism, do not rely on others, do not put our trust in 'maybe', do not waste a single moment of time!

Let every Soviet executive, every Party member hang above his desk or his lathe this inscription: *Remember the Eastern front! Don't waste time!*

April 30, 1919,  
Moscow  
*En Route*, No.39

## **The Eastern Front**

### **Kolchak's Offensive (March-April 1919)**

# ORDER No.92

**By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the troops on the Eastern front, May 1, 1919, No.92**

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After a period of temporary weakness and retreat, the Soviet Eastern front has been reinforced and strengthened. We are holding the enemy's attack and on certain sectors have begun to go over to the offensive ourselves. Another week or two, and a turn will become apparent along the whole line of the front. Kolchak's forces will be hurled back.

On the threshold of this new, victorious period in the work of the Eastern armies, I remind them of the need for the strictest fulfilment of my order previously given regarding the attitude to be taken towards deserters from the enemy and prisoners of war:

*Deserters from the enemy* are to be received in a friendly way, as comrades who have freed themselves from under Kolchak's lash, or as repentant adversaries. This applies not only to soldiers but also to officers. Whoever comes over to our side is to be welcomed.

*Enemies who have surrendered or who have been taken prisoner* are in no case to be shot. It is to be kept firmly in mind that in Kolchak's army there is a section who have been deceived and another section who are fighting under compulsion, and that only a very small section of that army consists of monarchist Kolchakites. Even among Kolchak's officers it is only the top layer of admirals and generals that consists of sworn enemies of the working class. The majority of the lower-ranking officers were forcibly mobilised and would be glad to shake off the yoke.

When they have seen on whose side truth and power lie, not Kolchak's soldiers only, but also many of his officers will then work honestly in the Soviet ranks.

Arbitrary shooting of men who come over from the enemy, as also of prisoners of war, will be punished ruthlessly in accordance with military law.

Let Kolchak's executioners shoot prisoners. The workers' and peasants' army will turn repentant enemies into friends.

Commanders, commissars and conscious soldiers are to check strictly on the fulfilment of this order.

The Revolutionary War Councils of the Eastern Armies are instructed to give the widest publicity to this order, to circulate it in all units of the armies of the Eastern front, and to convey it by hand to commanders and commissars of units, so that no-one may excuse himself by pleading ignorance of it. At the same time, measures must be taken to ensure that the order becomes known to all the soldiers and commanders of Kolchak's counter-revolutionary army. Let them decide their fate for themselves!

## **The Eastern Front**

### **Kolchak's Offensive (March-April 1919)**

# THE BEGINNING OF A TURN

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The results of the intense work done on the Eastern front and in the rear are already beginning to show themselves. The line of Kolchak's advance has wavered. [75] On the Southern sector of the Eastern front we have achieved a serious success. Our position at Orenburg and at Uralsk is becoming quite secure. The Samara-Belebey line will soon be ours. The direct threat to the left bank of the Kama, at Spassk, can be regarded as having been eliminated. On the northern sector of the Eastern front the turn has not yet been achieved in forms obvious to all. On the front of the Perm army there is a temporary standstill in operations, due to the continuing impassability of the roads and the necessary preparatory operations. True, the retreat of the adjoining army, to the South, is still going on. But this retreat has nothing in common with what we were seeing on various sectors of the Eastern front until recently. In the given case, the retreat is due to definite considerations by the command, it has been confined in advance to a definite line, and it is being carried out with all the necessary degree of planning.

A turn on the Eastern front has become apparent. The line of Kolchak's advance has wavered, and in the South it has, under our pressure, begun to fall back towards the Urals. It would, however, be extremely light-minded and criminal to suppose that the main task has already been accomplished, that future victory is fully assured. No! Only the first step has been taken. Only a turn has been observed. And what we need is not just a turn, but a complete, decisive, crushing and (most important) rapid victory. All the work of the rear must be filled with this idea. Hurry! Hasten up reinforcements! Don't waste a day, not a single hour! Kolchak has wavered. He must be overturned. The work must be carried through to the end. We must destroy the snake!

May 4, 1919

Inza-Ruzayevka

[Inza and Ruzayevka are stations on the line between Ryazan and Syzran, south-east and south-west, respectively, of Saransk.]

En Route, No.41

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## Endnotes

75. Kolchak reached the apogee of his success in mid-April 1919. Only Orenburg and Uralsk remained in our hands, wedged into his dispositions and obliging him to extend his front widely. The dangerous situation on the Eastern front engaged the entire attention of the Party and of the mass of the peasants and workers in the Republic. On the Volga fortified areas were created, with incredible speed, to serve as defensive strongpoints for the front. Reinforcements were hastily brought up, divisions transferred from other fronts, and masses of Communists drafted into the units. Our first successes were won before Orenburg, to take which Kolchak had diverted two divisions of his Fourth Corps from Zlatoust. In fighting on 27th April on the river Sakimra [The river Sakimra runs into the river Ural at Orenburg.], this corps was almost completely annihilated. This defeat inflicted on the enemy enabled the command of the Eastern front to complete its concentration of a mobile group which, exploiting its favourable position on the flank in the area of Buzuluk, launched an attack towards the end of April in the general direction of Buguruslan. This was taken by our forces on May 4. Orenburg, the defence of which had been left almost entirely to its workers, beat off persistent attacks by the Whites. From that moment Kolchak began to retreat along his entire front. The further course of events can be followed from

the chronology.

## **The Eastern Front**

### **Kolchak's Offensive (March-April 1919)**

## ORDER No.94

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and Commissar for  
Military and Naval Affairs, May 5, 1919, No.94, Kazan

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The armies of the Eastern front have been led for eight months by S.S. Kamenev. Under his command the armies have dealt many a blow at the Czechoslovaks and at the bands of Dutov and Kolchak. Under Comrade Kamenev's leadership the troops of the Eastern front restored to the Soviet Republic Ufa, Orenburg and Uralsk. For a number of reasons our Eastern front weakened temporarily, and Kolchak again took Ufa, forcing our troops back to a considerable distance. In recent weeks, however, vigorous measures have been taken by the Eastern front, under Commander Kamenev's leadership, to restore the situation. These measures have already led to the first serious successes. Over a large sector of the line of the Eastern front our armies have gone over to a successful offensive.

The intense and continuous work of the commander of the Eastern front has made it necessary that he take a short rest. While granting Comrade Kamenev six weeks' leave and giving thanks to him on behalf of the Red Army, I express the firm hope that the troops of the Eastern front, under the leadership of their new commander A.A. Samoilov [Both Kamenev and his successor Samoilov were former officers of the Tsarist army], will develop the successes already attained, and give the Soviet Republic complete victory over Kolchak.

## **The Eastern Front**

### **Kolchak's Offensive (March-April 1919)**

# ORDER No.95

**By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the 'N' Division, May 6, 1919, No. 95,  
Vyatskw Polyany**

\* \* \*

*To be read to all companies, squadrons, batteries and task-forces*

**Comrade soldiers, commanders and commissars of the 'N' Division!**

I got to know the basic nucleus of your division during the memorable battles last year before Kazan. A considerable time has passed since then, and the detachment of those days has developed into a regular, powerful division, of which enemies speak with hatred and friends with respect and love. What has welded your division into unity? A clear consciousness that our struggle is honourable, a holy struggle. The enemies of the working people, the landlords and capitalists, forced us to take up arms. But since that is so, you said to yourselves, we must be real soldiers of the revolution, intrepid fighters. You have survived many battles. You have inscribed many victories on your banners. You have brought freedom to towns and villages.

True, in recent times the weakened Eastern front has wavered. You were obliged to retreat. But if you retreated for a time, it was only so as to take a better run up and then leap forward. The moment for the heroic forward leap has now come. Our oppressed brothers in Perm and in Yekaterinburg await impatiently the hour of liberation. This liberation you will bring them.

When I visited you on May 6, I convinced myself, through talking with your riflemen, gunners, troopers, armoured-car crews, sailors, commanders and commissars that the temporary retreat has not broken your spirit. It is as strong now as ever it was.

Warriors of the 'N' Division! An end to retreating. Not a step back!

Death and destruction to Kolchak's dishonourable bands!

Long live the courageous 'N' Division!

Long live the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army!

## **The Eastern Front**

### **Kolchak's Offensive (March-April 1919)**

# A GREAT TEST

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The Party, Soviet and trade union organisations in the provinces and the *uyezds* are undergoing a great test. On the vigour and the precision of their work depends the success of operations on the Eastern and Southern fronts.

It would be criminal light-mindedness to suppose that with the recovery of Buguruslan, Sergiyevsk and Chistopol [Chistopol is on the river Kaina, about 110km. south-east of Kazan. Sergiyevsk is about 100km. north-east of Samara.] our task on the Eastern front is coming to a close. That is not so, it is far from being the case. Encouraged by the prolonged retreat of our Eastern armies, Kolchak advanced too far. When the turn came in the morale of our forces, when we went over to the offensive, we soon crushed his vanguard. But *only* his vanguard. How numerous Kolchak's reserves are, and what staunchness they will show, can be discovered only in practice. Only the further development of operations will bring us into direct conflict with Kolchak's reserves. And it is not difficult to forecast that the pressure which our armies of the Eastern front are exerting at present will not be sufficient to bring us complete victory.

We have no right to stand still. We have no right to lose tempo. We must keep on advancing, developing our success, not allowing the enemy to halt, carry out the regrouping he needs, consolidate and give us a rebuff.

We now have in our hands the great advantage of the initiative. We must keep it. We must advance, advance, advance – until we have completely crushed Kolchak's bands. But for this purpose the front needs reinforcements. The speed and continuity of their arrival depend on the vigour and precision of the work of the Soviet power at province and *uyezd* level. Up to now this work has been performed very much more slowly than the circumstances required. Resolutions and support for the Eastern front flowed much more abundantly than reinforcements and drafts. And yet there can be no doubt as to the readiness of the workers and peasants to give everything for victory over Kolchak. All that is needed is for the province and *uyezd* apparatuses of Soviet power to work steadily, precisely, with out interruption. It is necessary that nobody shall dare to put off till tomorrow what can be done today.

Our local organisations are indeed undergoing a great test at present. The task of the Party and Soviet centre consists in precisely checking that this test is passed. Enterprising, reliable, capable, conscientious workers make themselves known precisely in critical moments. Brought to the forefront by circumstances, they must in future be given the opportunity to apply their capacities on a wider scale. Contrariwise, those workers who, in the localities, become overgrown with the cobwebs of bureaucratism must be removed from their posts.

The great test which the country is undergoing must in no case be allowed to pass without consequences for our internal work of construction. The straining of all our forces must lead to a purging from the Soviet apparatus of all elements of passivity, thoughtlessness and rot, and to leadership in work being assigned to all the creative elements of the working class.

May 7, 1919  
Kazan-Shikhrany

[Shikhrany is south-west of Kazan, where the line from Moscow joins the Kazan-Penza line.]  
*En Route*, No.43

# The Fight for Petrograd

## ORDER No.79

**By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's  
Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the soldiers of the Northern Army  
defending the approaches to Petrograd, February 11, 1919, No.79, Yamburg**

\* \* \*

**Comrade soldiers, commanders, commissars!**

Having been instructed to visit your front by the Council of People's Commissars, I greet all the honourable, staunch and brave warriors of your army!

I greet you in the name of the soldiers of the Southern front, which has struck a mortal blow at Krasnov's bands and is now triumphantly approaching Rostov and Novocherkassk!

I greet you in the name of the troops of the Ukrainian army, who have liberated Kharkov, Poltava, Yekaterinoslav, Chernigov, Kiev and Yelizavetgrad!

I greet you in the name of the troops of the Eastern front, who, after clearing the Volga, have set about clearing the Urals, and who, after taking Orenburg, have linked Soviet Russia again with Soviet Turkestan!

I greet you in the name of the troops of the Western front, who have freed Latvia, Lithuania and Byelorussia from the German White-Guard yoke!

Comrades! It is only on the sector held by your army that Soviet Russia has, with surprise, observed setbacks in recent times. Instead of advancing and liberating the workers and peasants, as befits revolutionary troops, you have until now been retreating. [\[76\]](#)

Why is this?

Is our enemy so strong?

No, our enemy is few in numbers. You are incomparably more numerous. If you have retreated and enabled the insolent enemy to take town after town, the blame for this lies in the insufficient staunchness of your own ranks.

I know that in your army there were not only individual soldiers but also whole regiments that fought honourably and courageously. They will all be singled out and rewarded. Their names will be uttered with respect all over Soviet Russia. I order the commanders and commissars of all units to compile a careful record of all the soldiers who have distinguished them selves, and to forward this through the proper channels so that they may be rewarded.

But there have also been among you many unconscious, cowardly and even dishonourable soldiers, many self-seekers who, in the moment of danger, have thought not of the working people, not of their comrades-in-arms, but only of themselves, of their own skins. These self-seekers have brought disintegration into

the Red regiments and have often incited them to retreat in shameful fashion. These self-seekers have often deserted and have incited waverers to desert. Such conduct has made your army the weakest and most helpless of the numerous armies of the Soviet Republic.

An end must now be put to this. The Red regiments must not retreat. There can be no desertion from the ranks of the revolutionary forces. The cause for which you fight is the greatest, most sacred cause in the world: you are defending the workers' and peasants' revolution from the onslaught of hateful bands of landlords and bourgeois, who enjoy the support of Anglo-French imperialism.

Your army guards the approaches to Red Petrograd. The Estonian and Finnish White Guards are already boasting that they will capture this great centre of the workers' and peasants' revolution. It shall not be! Your army must pull itself together and rise to the level of the other, the best, the victorious armies of the Soviet Republic. I warn the commanders and commissars that failure to carry out military orders will place a terrible responsibility first and foremost upon them.

The best soldiers must support the commanders and help them to use an iron hand in dealing with the cowards and self-seekers. Not a single crime must be left unpunished. At the same time, not a single feat of arms must be left unrewarded.

The Revolutionary Military Field Tribunal must ruthlessly punish all those soldiers who betray their brothers in battle.

Honour and glory to the brave, conscious soldiers!  
Death to self-seekers, deserters and traitors!  
Long live the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army!

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## Endnotes

76. The reference is to the defeats suffered by units of the Seventh Army which, advancing steadily into the interior of Estonia, and having fallen into disorder through loss of contact with their bases, encountered fresh White-Guard forces in the Reval area and by the middle of February had been pushed back to the line of the river Narova and Lake Peipus. The basic nucleus of the enemy consisted of Estonian units together with the 'Northern Corps' commanded by Colonel Dzerzhinsky. This corps had begun to form in the Pskov area already during the German occupation, with material aid and encouragement from the German command. By the terms of the treaty of Brest the Germans were obliged to evacuate this area, and they decided to hand over responsibility for 'the guardianship of order' to the White-Guard organisations, who had recruiting offices all along the Baltic coast. After the German revolution and the Red Army's advance, this 'Northern Corps' had withdrawn, much battered, behind the Estonian frontier, and began reorganising under the leadership of the Estonian commander-in-chief, Laidoner. Encouraged by this success, the White Guards took Narva and Valk [Valk (in Estonian, Vaiga) is on the border between Estonia and Latvia, on the Pskov-Riga line.] and threatened Pskov. These events were the last military actions of the winter period.

# The Fight for Petrograd

## FINLAND AND THIRTEEN OTHERS

### A Warning to the Finnish Bourgeoisie

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The garrulous and boastful Lord [*sic*] Churchill has listed fourteen enemies who have combined against Soviet Russia. Among them is Finland. In recent times the European newspapers have had much to say about the deal that the Entente has made with the Finnish bourgeoisie. The object of the deal is an attack on Petrograd. For this Britain will give £6,000,000, with a corresponding quantity of grain, shells, and all the rest. Churchill also named the date for the realisation of the deal, that is, for the attack; namely, the end of August. In the language of the stock-exchange, that is called *ultimo*.

Where in all this do lies end and where does half-truth begin?

'Independent' bourgeois Finland is indisputably a very wretched, down-trodden and enslaved country. Having received independence from the hands of the October revolution in Russia, the Finnish bourgeoisie, after suppressing their own proletariat, at once sold this independence in exchange for foreign bayonets to defend bourgeois property. At first Finland became a petty vassal principality of Hohenzollern's, then an underling of the Entente. General Mannerheim sold his hangman's services with equal willingness to the Germans and to the British.

But to whatever depths of political prostitution the Finnish bourgeoisie sank, they could nevertheless not shake off anxiety about some minimum guarantees for the existence of their country. Especially as the mass of the Finnish people, with the exception of a loud-mouthed stratum of petty-bourgeois chauvinist intellectuals, the so-called activists, are not at all disposed to gamble their fate on the card of a military adventure. As for Lloyd George, Clemenceau and the other world-scale swindlers of the League of Nations, who swear by the freedom and independence of small nations, for them, of course, Finland is not an end in itself but merely a third-rate means: to speak plainly, it is an armful of straw which they want to toss on to the Russian bonfire, so as to strengthen the flame of civil war and thereby contribute to the weakening and bleeding of the Russian people. If Finland gets burnt as a result, why should the bandits of imperialism worry about that?

The Finnish bourgeoisie is scared. It is calculating, haggling, asking for a deferment, postulating a better price, agreeing and then again taking fright. This uncertain bargaining has already been dragging on for many months. General Mannerheim was all ready to seize Petrograd in February of this year. He ordered manoeuvres to be held on the Karelian frontier which were to serve as a rehearsal for the attack. However, the affair finished miserably. The Finnish conscripts held meetings. Only two companies turned up for the manoeuvres. We fortified the Karelian Isthmus, strengthened the garrison of Petrograd, put the Baltic fleet on a war footing, and at the same time declared that we would in no case take the initiative in attacking Finland.

That time, the adventure failed to come off. General Mannerheim was defeated in

the presidential election. Urged by the compromisers, the Finnish bourgeoisie elected as President the colourless Professor Ståhlberg [K.J. Ståhlberg was elected President of Finland in the summer of 1919 as the candidate of the Progressive and Socialist parties.], whose policy amounts to this, that he trembles equally before Bolshevism, before the idea of getting mixed up in an adventure, and before the admonishing finger of the Entente.

The election of the trembling Ståhlberg and the departure for Italy of the sabre-rattling Mannerheim seemed to signify the liquidation of the plan for armed intervention by Finland. Foreign newspapers even wrote of something like a breach between Finland and the Entente. But the British Government replied to a question in Parliament that the change of Presidents did not mean that there would be any change in the Allies' attitude to Finland.

And, indeed, great activity is to be observed in Finnish and Estonian waters. The Scandinavian papers, and other sources as well, carry news of substantial transports of military supplies arriving at Finland's ports. According to the same reports, German factories are supplying Finland with machineguns and explosives. There is a revival of talk about the miserable expedition to Olonets. There are reports that an offensive is being prepared in the Karelian sector, at first in the form of raids by 'Greens'. As has been mentioned, in Finland only a small group of frenzied chauvinists are keen to join in the brigand schemes of Great Britain. A section of the officers, headed by Ignatius, went so far as almost to threaten revolt in connection with the retirement of Mannerheim. The Finnish activists think that they will most certainly obtain Eastern Karelia and an ice-free port [The ice-free port in question was Pechenga (Petsamo), which is on the shore of the Barents Sea, not the White Sea. It was ceded to Finland by the peace treaty with Soviet Russia in 1920, but taken back as a consequence of Finland's wars with the USSR in 1939-1940 and 1941-1944.] on the White Sea if they can seize Petrograd as 'security'. This notion is fully in the spirit of the fantastic Finnish legends of the *Kalevala*. [*Kalevala* ('Land of Heroes') was the name given to a collection of old Finnish ballads, arranged as a connected poem, which was published in the middle of the 19th century and played a big part in stimulating national feeling in Finland. It was translated into Western Languages, and influenced Longfellow in the writing of *Hiawatha* (1858). The original of Trotsky's monster cow is a Great Ox, of which the English translation of the *Kalevala* says:

ALL day long there flew a swallow  
'Twixt the mighty ox's horn-tips,  
Striving through the space to hasten,  
Nor found resting-place between them;  
Month-long ran a summer-squirrel  
From his neck unto his tail-end,  
Nor did he attain the tail-tip  
Till a month had quite passed over.]

In these legends, as is well known, figure a gigantic duck, from whose eggs heaven and earth are hatched out, and a gigantic cow with a tail such that a bird takes whole days and night to fly from one end of it to the other. The idea of Petrograd being captured by the Finnish activists, to serve as 'security', is wholly in conformity with the cycle of images in the *Kalevala*. Except that in folklore all this has a naively poetic quality, whereas in the policy of the unbalanced chauvinists it amounts to delirious ravings.

The seizure of Petrograd by the help of the Finns would mean, of course, that Finland itself would become an irrevocable 'security' for Denikin.

However, the question does not rest with the activists. If we are to believe Churchill, British imperialism has obliged the Finnish bourgeoisie to attack Soviet Russia within the next few days. In any case, we shall soon receive the necessary clarification on this point. Compared with our thirteen other enemies, the intervention of Finland cannot, of course, possess great importance in itself: the military forces which Mannerheim bequeathed to Ståhlberg are extremely insignificant. Nevertheless, the question of Finland has now become a matter of principle. The Entente, which has grown weaker from the military standpoint, wants to use the teeth of the little dogs it has hired to gnaw and tear the body of Soviet Russia. The open entry of Finland into their company would raise our enemies morale to some degree and drag out the denouement. That is why Soviet Russia cannot any longer permit bourgeois Finland to play with the idea of an attack on Petrograd.

We are waging too great a struggle on the world scale to have any desire to respond to petty provocation. Therefore we repeat: if Finland remains within the bounds of decorum, not one Red soldier will cross its threshold. This decision is firm and inviolable.

So as to help the Helsingfors government to arrive at the necessary decision, we will remind it of a few fundamental facts. Kolchak, the head of the alliance of fourteen, has been completely smashed. The Urals and Siberian volunteers now already number tens of thousands. The mighty reserves which have been released from the East have been applied successfully on the Southern front only to a limited extent as yet. Denikin has been dealt the first hard blows. He is reeling back southward. Within a short time our offensive on the Southern front will become decisive.

Even now, however, we are fully capable of concentrating against Finland forces sufficient not merely to give a rebuff but also to take the offensive. And not only to take the offensive but also to exterminate those guilty of provocation and banditry. We use that harsh word *extermination* not accidentally. An attempt by Finland's bourgeois mob to strike a blow at Petrograd will evoke on our part a crusade of extermination against the Finnish bourgeoisie.

We have left a long series of provocations from Helsingfors unanswered, partly because we were too busy in the East and partly because we counted on internal contradictions in Finland itself. If this last factor proved inadequate, and the trembling Ståhlberg were to carry out the insolent schemes of Mannerheim, our most immediate and urgent task would be to lance the Finnish boil with a long, sharp knife.

Our policy is dictated not by feelings of vengeance but by revolutionary calculation. Conditions occur, however, when revolutionary calculation calls for ruthless vengeance. That is the case with Finland. We have to show the venal bourgeoisie of the little states that their Cain-like dealings with Britain will not be profitable to them. This lesson we shall give the little states, using Finland as example. In the event of provocation from Finland we shall set ourselves a small task in relation to that country which we shall perform regardless of the pace at which the solution of the tasks of our major war is proceeding.

We shall find the forces required for the execution of the Finnish bourgeoisie. Soviet Russia has undertaken to organise the independence of the peoples of Asia – the Bashkirs, Kirghizes [In accordance with common Russian practice at that time, Trotsky

says 'Kirghizes' for 'Kazakhs'.] and others. These peoples, who have zealously formed their own infantry and cavalry in order to defend the independence they have acquired, know that the Finnish bourgeoisie are Kolchak's assistants and are helping to establish his autocratic rule over all the peoples of the former Tsarist empire. Among the divisions which we are now transferring to the Petrograd front, the Bashkir cavalry is not the least in importance, and, in the event of an attempt by the bourgeois Finns upon Petrograd, the Red Bashkirs will go forward with the slogan – *to Helsingfors*. A ruthless campaign of extermination will be waged against the bourgeoisie which is selling the blood of its own people and the blood of the Petrograd workers in the interests of the British moneybags!

Soviet Russia is vigilant, it will not surrender Petrograd. Any attempt on the first city of the proletarian revolution will evoke from us a crusade of death and devastation.

September 1, 1919  
Moscow-Tver  
*Pravda*, No.194

# The Fight for Petrograd

## PETROGRAD WILL DEFEND ITSELF FROM WITHIN AS WELL

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Our task is not only to defend Petrograd but to finish once and for all with the enemy's North-Western Army. [\[77\]](#)

From this standpoint it would be militarily most to our advantage to let Yudenich's band get within the walls of the city itself, for Petrograd could without difficulty be turned into a trap for the White-Guard troops.

Petrograd is not Yamburg or Luga. The northern capital of the workers' revolution occupies an area of 91 square versts. In Petrograd there are nearly two-score thousand Communists, a substantial garrison, and immense, almost inexhaustible means of defence for use by the sappers and the gunners.

If they broke into this gigantic city, the White-Guards would find they had fallen into a stone labyrinth in which every building would be for them either a riddle, or a threat, or a mortal danger. From which direction should they expect the shot to come? From the window? From the attic? From the basement? From round the corner? From every direction! We have machine-guns, rifles, revolvers, hand-grenades . . . We can cover some streets with barbed-wire entanglements, while leaving others open and turning them into traps. For this purpose all that is needed is for a few thousand men to decide firmly that they will not surrender Petrograd.

What forces has the enemy? Let us suppose that he has 5,000 men, or even 10,000. In the city streets they will be unable to manoeuvre either in compact masses or in extended lines. They will have to break up into small groups and detachments which will lose themselves in the streets and alleyways of Petrograd, without any proper inter-communication, and surrounded by danger at every corner.

The entire apparatus of communication within the city would be wholly in our hands. Occupying a central position, we should operate along radial lines running from the centre to the periphery, aiming each of our blows in the direction of greatest importance for us. The possibility of uninterrupted transfer of troops and the abundance of means of transport would multiply our strength tenfold. Every fighter would feel that behind him was a well-organised base and plentiful mobile reserves.

If the White guards managed even to get sufficiently close to use their artillery, before the arrival of our reinforcements, in that case too they would have gained nothing. An artillery bombardment of Petrograd would, of course, do damage to odd buildings here and there, and kill a certain number of the inhabitants, women and children. But the few thousand Red fighters, stationed behind barbed-wire entanglements and barricades, in basements or in attics, would be subjected to very slight risk in proportion to the total numbers of the population and to the number of shells fired.

Contrariwise, every White Guard who entered the city would be subjected to direct personal danger, for the defenders of Petrograd would shoot him as he advanced, from behind the barricades, from windows, and from around corners.

It would be most difficult of all for the White-Guard cavalry since for each of them his horse would soon become a heavy burden.

Two or three days of street fighting like this would suffice for the invading bands to be transformed into a terrified, hunted herd of cowards who would surrender in groups or as individuals to unarmed passers-by or to women.

The whole heart of the matter lies in not giving up at the first moment. It was said long ago that a great city is a great panic. And there are undoubtedly in Petrograd not a few petty-bourgeois lackey remnants of the old regime, who are without will-power, energy, ideas or courage. This human pulp is, in itself, capable of nothing. But at a critical moment it often swells up strongly, absorbing all the fumes of selfish fear and herd-like panic.

Fortunately for the revolution there are in Petrograd people of a different spirit, a different stamp: the advanced proletarians, and, in the first place, the conscious youth of the working class. Upon these elements rests the internal defence of Petrograd, or, more precisely, the task of exterminating the White-Guard bands if they should burst in to the proletarian capital.

Street battles do, of course, entail the risk of accidental victims and the destruction of cultural treasures. This is one of the reasons why the command in the field has to take all possible measures to prevent the enemy from entering Petrograd. But if the field units do not prove capable of doing this, and leave the way open for the enemy to get into Petrograd itself, this would not in the least mean that the struggle on the Petrograd front was over. On the contrary, the struggle would become more concentrated, more embittered and more resolute. Responsibility for the innocent victims and the senseless destruction would lie wholly with the White bandits. But, at the price of resolute, bold, fierce struggle in the streets of Petrograd we should achieve the complete extermination of the North-Western bands.

Get ready, Petrograd!

More than once have October days been great days in your history. Destiny summons you to write during this October a fresh and perhaps most glorious page in the history of the proletarian struggle.

October 16, 1919

Bologoye-Petrograd [Bologoye is where the line from Pskov joins the Moscow-Petrograd line (the Nikolai Railway).]

'En Route', No. 98

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## Endnotes

77. The North Western Army of Yudenich was created from the formations mentioned in Note 76. In May 1919, Yudenich's forerunner, General Rodzyanko, tried to enlarge his *place d'armes* and by seizing Yamburg and Pskov to increase his resources. On May 14 this corps broke through the Seventh Army's front between Narva and Gdov, took Yamburg and Pskov, and began a swift advance towards Peterhof, Gatchina and Luga. This first offensive was quickly liquidated, and by

the beginning of August, the White Guards had fallen back to their original position. Meanwhile, Rodzyanko, and then Yudenich, continued to build up their forces. The corps became the North-Western Army, which received material aid from the Entente. However, Yudenich was unable to establish good relations with Estonia, whose independence he stubbornly refused to recognise.

# The Fight for Petrograd

## ORDER No.155

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Seventh Army, October 18, 1919, No. 155, Petrograd

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**I**t is stated in yesterday's operations report by the Field Headquarters of the Republic that our troops have withdrawn from Gatchina after a fierce battle. This is not true. There was no fierce battle, but there was a shameful panic, followed by a senseless flight. The Field Headquarters writes on the basis of reports received from the Seventh Army, and the army headquarters reports on the basis of information received from the divisions. Falsehood wends its way upward.

At Gatchina a numerous body of troops were seized with panic as a result of being fired on by a handful of White Guards who had hidden themselves in the park. We are now hearing talk about a flank left uncovered, the presence of the enemy in the rear, and so on and so forth.

A still more senseless retreat has occurred today. One company of a rifle regiment became alarmed when a file of enemy soldiers appeared on its flank. The alarm spread from this company through the regiment, and the regimental commander ordered a retreat. The entire regiment left its position and, covering 8-10 versts at the trot, fell back to Aleksandrovka. When a check was made, it turned out that there had been no enemy on the flank, but one of our own units, on which the panicky company had opened fire and then infected the entire regiment with its own panic.

However, the regiment which had hurried to the rear proved to be not at all a bad one. As soon as it had recovered confidence, it at once turned back and, sometimes marching quickly and sometimes moving at the double, sweating despite the cold weather, it covered eight versts in an hour, and then drove out the (not very numerous) enemy and reoccupied its former positions, suffering only a few casualties. Similarly, the cadets who abandoned Gatchina are not at all bad soldiers. On the contrary, their morale is excellent and they are ready to give their lives defending the interests of the working people.

*The whole trouble lies in the leadership, the command.* The command is extremely passive, irresolute and inclined to panic, repeating uncritically foolish rumours about turning movements and encirclements by the enemy.

*The enemy's strength lies in the weakness of our commanding personnel.* The enemy operates with small, well-armed detachments, which rely on surprise and effrontery. Until there is a direct, hand-to-hand clash, nothing will be achieved. It is quite understandable that the enemy avoids such clashes: his forces are too few, and if he were to get engaged in hand-to-hand fighting with our men he would be ground to dust. The enemy therefore always keeps just within range, and by using his machine-guns and automatic rifles he develops an impressive firepower which conceals the insignificance of his numbers.

Because they cannot see the enemy and do not actually clash with him, our Red Army men are not able to perceive, grasp and firmly realise that the enemy is tiny and they are strong. The commanders' principal task is to make this fact apparent to our soldiers. How can this be done? Very simply: through attack, through a vigorous onslaught on the handful of enemy troops who are concealing their weakness by firing off a large number of cartridges.

The enemy's interest lies in keeping us at firing distance, so as not to let us see him close to and thereby convince ourselves of his small size. Our interest lies in getting close enough to use the bayonets, when the mere sight of us is bound to overwhelm the enemy's scanty forces. We must once and for all stop and suppress the chatter about the enemy having cut us off, got round behind us and encircled us, because, wherever he may appear – to the left, to the right or behind us – we are always in a position to face him, fall on him and crush him with our weight.

A commander who pulls back his unit because 'its flank has been uncovered' must be court-martialled and punished as a traitor. Since we have before us isolated units, small groups, it is senseless to stretch our forces out to form a cordon, an unbroken line, standing shoulder to shoulder. On the contrary, we should form concentrated striking forces to operate in the most important directions. Each such force will inevitably have an uncovered expanse to right and left which will have to be searched by scouts, and when the enemy's presence is discovered, the striking force must, as a whole or in part, come down upon him. When they have themselves firmly grasped this idea, commanders and commissars must explain it to every Red Army man and inspire him with it: whoever says 'Fall back, the enemy is behind us' is either a fool or a traitor.

The enemy operates by night, so as to use darkness to conceal the smallness of his numbers and to frighten us. Night operations call for great secrecy, carefulness and preparation. The enemy is sometimes able to make his night raids only because during the day we mark time, thus enabling the enemy to acquaint himself with the situation and prepare his raid in detail. This must cease. We must make use of the daytime, because we are interested in causing the numerical weakness of the enemy to manifest itself in practice. Besides, our large units are not suitable for night operations. From this the line for us to follow emerges quite clearly – to operate by daylight, not to waste the day. During the daytime we must tirelessly pursue the enemy, and chase him so hard that he will no longer possess either the desire or the ability to worry us by night.

As soon as our commanders stop being afraid of turning movements, Yudenich's army will cease to exist for us. Every small detachment of theirs which impudently separates itself from their other forces will be smashed, for our large units will not run away from these detachments but will attack them.

The task facing the commanders of the Seventh Army is now to educate themselves along these lines and to pass this education on to their army.

We must have a clear appreciation of the truth, and we must not hide it. We must not write false operations reports about a severe battle when what actually happened was a severe case of panic. By such falsehoods commanders excuse themselves for their weakness, and dull the consciences of their soldiers. Falsehood must be punished like treachery. The practice of war permits mistakes but not lies, deception and self-deception: for a mistake can be corrected, but a lie which makes its way upward engenders in turn a mistake that makes its way down ward – and so

on without end.

Fix this in your memory, comrade commander.

*The enemy is undoubtedly less numerous than we are. The enemy does not maintain a continuous front. On the contrary, he has divided his forces into small detachments. These detachments sneak around our units, fearing to get close, and snarl them with their fire. The enemy's whole idea, his whole concern, is that our soldiers shall not see him, but frightened by his shots, shall fall back. You are three and four times, often five times, as strong as he is. The enemy commander is afraid that the Reds may see how few Whites there are, and that the rank-and-file White soldier may see how numerous the Reds are. Consequently, it is in your direct interest, Red commander, to show the Red soldiers how few the Whites are and to show the White soldiers how numerous the Reds are. To this end you must make your unit visible and tangible. To make it visible, you must advance. To smash the enemy all that is needed is to hit him. To hit him you must get near him. Consequently – forward, attack, attack, attack! In this lies the guarantee of your victory.* [Gatchina was in 1923 renamed Trotsk, to honour Trotsky's role in the defence of Petrograd in October 1919. In 1929 the name was changed to Krasnogvardeisk, and in 1944 Gatchina resumed its original name.]

# The Fight for Petrograd

## BEFORE THE TURNING POINT

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The Soviet's North-Western front has rolled back to Petrograd itself. Despite the enemy's undoubted lack of numbers, our units are still retreating. There has so far been no turn at the front. Nevertheless, it is possible to say that events are taking place which herald an inevitable turn.

Why have we fallen back from the Narova to Petrograd? The first reason is the insufficient staunchness – which means the insufficient consciousness – of the units concerned. The second reason is the considerable number of worthless commanders. The third reason is the insufficient vigour, persistence and vigilance of the political workers. The fourth reason is the pre mature reassurance of the advanced workers of Russia, and of Petrograd itself, regarding the North-Western front. We had reached the borders of Finland and Estonia. The compromisers in the Baltic countries had started peace negotiations with us. Yudenich had come to blows with Balakhovich. Therefore it seemed that complete liquidation of the North-Western front was approaching.

An army is an artificial organisation. When the pressure of circumstances slackens, an army starts to come unravelled, vigilance is weakened, will-power grows soft. In one place a nut works loose, in another a screw, and at the first serious jolt the whole mechanism starts to break down.

An active army must be in a constant state of tension: other wise it is quite useless. There was no such tension in the Seventh Army in recent weeks, and the Petrograd proletariat, which has given so many of its sons to all our fronts, was paying too little attention to its own front. When defeats were suffered, first before Pskov and then at Yamburg, the Petrograd proletariat, having seen all sorts of sights and undergone all sorts of experiences, just shook its head and said: 'We'll cope.' But Yudenich's offensive developed. Our units, weakened inwardly by their own passivity, continued to retreat. The front drew nearer and nearer to Petrograd.

At first the advanced workers could not believe what was happening, they were at a loss: how could a band of a few thousand men, even if well-organised, threaten the great city of the revolution? But after the fall of Krasnoye Syclo, and then, especially, of Gatchina, the Petrograd proletariat understood that the situation was very serious. And from that moment on, feverish work began, in two directions: strengthening the front and creating the conditions for defending Petrograd from within.

In order to strengthen the front it is necessary to tighten the screws where they have worked loose. The units have to be purged of commanders who get by through making false operations reports about 'enemy pressure', about 'fighting retreats' and so on, instead of actually leading their units into battle, smashing resistance and advancing. A commander without will-power, without energy, without the urge to win, is just a rag, not a commander. A commissar – and, in general, a Communist – who puts up with shakiness in his unit, and patiently retreat along with it, is good for nothing. We need commissars of steel, who incarnate the

revolutionary will of the working class. Weak-will, flabbiness and sluggishness in his leaders inevitably induces demoralisation in the soldier. Egoism, cowardice, self-seeking lift their heads. But war is war. For victory it is necessary that the individual shall subordinate himself to the whole. Those self-seekers who do not want to accept this must be compelled by brute force to do their duty. A long-drawn-out war cannot be waged and brought to a victorious conclusion by means of improvisation, enthusiasm, individual elan. It demands organisation, precision, assiduity and a strict regime.

Under the impact of defeat, Red Petrograd and the best workers of the Seventh Army have again appreciated all this in all its acuteness, and have called for ruthless measures against everyone who disrupts unity of action, who shows an irresponsible attitude towards military duty, or who does not devote all his efforts to the task. Slovenliness, irresponsibility, laziness, and, even more so, treachery, in wartime bring death and destruction to hundreds and thousands of others. Those guilty of such crimes must themselves be punished with death.

The necessary conditions for a rapid rebirth of the army are: reinforcement of the best workers, and harsh treatment of the worst.

At the same time, the proletariat of awakened Petrograd has resolved not to leave the fate of its Red capital to the field forces alone: it has resolved to defend, if need be, the city of the October revolution from within its own walls. All workers, men and women alike, who, for one reason or another, cannot take part in the fighting in the field, are now being drawn into the organisation of the city's defence. Revolutionary determination to defend themselves is being combined, in this work, with the application of all the technical forces and resources in which Petrograd is so rich. The task of transforming every district of the city into an armoured section of a single, dreadful labyrinth, is perfectly within the capacity of the advanced workers of Petrograd, and is being successfully carried out by them in these days and hours.

The line of the front has worsened in the last twenty-four hours. But the proletariat of Petrograd has understood the danger more profoundly. It wants to eliminate that danger, and it can do this. And that means that the overall situation has improved. Within a day or two the inevitable turn will take place on the Petrograd Front!

October 18, 1919  
*Pravda*, No. 234

# **The Fight for Petrograd**

## **ORDER**

**By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Red Army men, commanders and commissars defending Petrograd, October 20, 1919, Petrograd**

\* \* \*

**Red Army men, commanders, commissars!** Tomorrow will decide the fate of Petrograd. While in the South the Red armies have gone over to a decisive, victorious offensive, have retaken Orel and smashed ten of Mamontov's regiments, on the Petrograd front a series of defeats has forced our troops to fall back to the Pulkovo positions. They must not retreat any further. Petrograd cannot be surrendered – even a temporary surrender of Petrograd would mean the loss of thousands of workers' lives and of innumerable cultural treasures. Petrograd must be defended, no matter what the cost.

All measures have been taken. Additional units have been brought up, giving us an immense superiority in numbers. The commanding personnel have been revitalised and renewed. The best battle-hardened proletarians have been enrolled for the fight. All the conditions for victory are present. All that is needed is for you to want, and to pledge yourselves, to secure this victory.

Remember this: to your lot has fallen the great honour of defending the city where the workers' and peasants' revolution was born.

Forward!

Into the attack!

Death to the hirelings of foreign capital!

Long live Red Petrograd!

# The Fight for Petrograd

## THE FIRST BLOW

\* \* \*

Down to October 21 Yudenich was advancing, meeting only feeble resistance. On October 21 the Seventh Army consolidated itself on the Pulkovo line and repulsed the enemy. Yudenich's advance was halted. On October 22 the Red Army went over to the offensive. The White Guards' resistance proved very stubborn. During October 21 and 22, when Yudenich's offensive was at a standstill, he managed to bring up reserves, and thereby to strengthen his ranks. The fighting became intense.

By the evening of October 23 we had completely conquered Dyetskoye Syelo and Pavlovsk. *This was a serious success.* We had not only halted the enemy's offensive but had also struck him a very heavy blow.

Our units have been regenerated. The apparatus of communication and administration is functioning without interruptions or hold-ups. Thanks to the efforts of the best workers of Petrograd, supply has been properly organised. Units that had been taken unawares by Yudenich's offensive and embittered by a series of defeats are now rivalling each other in self-sacrifice and heroism.

The first crack has appeared in the enemy's ranks. In the past period hardly any prisoners were taken, and the soldiers coming over to us could be counted in single figures. The number of deserters from the enemy and of prisoners taken by us has now suddenly increased. They are arriving in dozens, and soon they will start to arrive in their hundreds and thousands.

Our success is great. *But we are still far from having finished our task.* We have to smash Yudenich, to wipe him off the face of the earth, and thereby to ensure the security of Petrograd once and for all. So far we have dealt the White bands only the first blow.

The danger hanging over Petrograd has been pushed back, but it has not disappeared. The enemy is only two days' march from Petrograd. *Work on the fortification of the city must therefore proceed at full blast.* No less energy must be devoted to the work of keeping the field army up to strength and providing it with horses and all the supplies that it needs.

It would be unforgivable if our first success were to be the cause of thoughtless complacency. On the contrary, it must be the signal for a fresh effort. The enemy has been weakened but not smashed. We have driven him from an important position. He must now be pursued untiringly. All forces and resources for an offensive must now be brought into play: Yudenich's bands must be allowed no rest, no time. The army's apparatus must be improved, communications strengthened, discipline tightened. We must attack, pursue and beat, until the end, until complete victory is won. Then the first blow will soon be followed by the last.

October 23, 1919  
Petrograd

*En Route*, No.100

# The Fight for Petrograd

## ORDER No.158

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, October 24, 1919, No.158, Petrograd

\* \* \*

**A heavy blow has been struck at Yudenich's bands.**

The boastful, lying telegraphic reports of the Anglo-French imperialists had already announced Yudenich's capture of Petrograd. But the heroism of the soldiers, commanders and commissars of the Red Army put an end to that bloodthirsty project of the international vultures. Petrograd has not surrendered and will not surrender. The Seventh Army is advancing. The Whites are retreating. The number of prisoners taken and of men crossing over from the White camp is increasing hourly.

Comrade Red Army men! *Spare the prisoners!* Give a comradely welcome to those who come over to our side. Only a tiny minority of those in the White army are dishonourable, corrupt, venal enemies of the working people. The overwhelming majority consist of men who were duped or who were forcibly mobilised. Even among the White officers a considerable section are fighting against Soviet Russia under compulsion, or have been deceived by the agents of the Anglo-French and Russian stock-exchange speculators and landlords.

Against the White Guards who attack us and threaten Petrograd we act and shall continue to act with ruthlessness. We shall pursue them with fire and sword, until we have wiped them from the face of the earth. But *we shall spare the prisoners*. Senseless bloodthirstiness is alien to the workers' and peasants' Red Army. *Those who come over will not find themselves in the slightest danger among us.* Whosoever has understood the dishonourable character of the White-Guard campaign, in whomever the conscience of the working people has awakened, and who boldly comes to join us, is our friend and brother!

This applies not only to rank-and-file soldiers but also to officers. On the Eastern front many hundreds of officers have come over to us from Kolchak's army, being filled with the greatest respect for the organisation, cohesion and heroism of the Red Army. They are now serving in our ranks.

There can be no doubt that the approaching breakdown of Yudenich's army will impel towards us the better part of the officers who are now still in Yudenich's leading-strings. Every one of them who sincerely and honestly wants to serve the workers' and peasants' power will find a place in our ranks.

Woe to the unworthy soldier who sticks a knife into an unarmed prisoner or a soldier who has come over to us.

Long live the conscious warrior of the Red Army, merciless to the enemy but magnanimous to the prisoner and the soldier who has come over to our side.

# The Fight for Petrograd

## ORDER No.159

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Red Army and the Red Navy, October 24, 1919, No.159, Dyerskoye Syelo (formerly Tsarskoye Syelo)

\* \* \*

### The Two Britains

**Red warriors!**

On all fronts you are encountering the hostile machinations of Britain. It is from British guns that the counter-revolutionary troops fire at you. It is munitions of British make that you have found in the depots of Shchekursk and Onega and on the Southern and Western fronts. The prisoners you take wear British clothing and equipment. The women and children of Archangel and Astrakhan have been murdered and maimed by British airmen and British explosives. British ships are shelling our shores. British gold is sowing corruption, bribing dishonourable elements at the front and in the rear. The British wireless tells lies about and slanders workers' and peasants' Russia every day, trying to poison the whole world with its falsehoods.

Soldiers! Sailors! Your hearts are often filled to overflowing with hatred for predatory, lying, hypocritical, bloody Britain. And your hatred is just and holy. It multiplies tenfold your strength in the struggle against the enemy ...

But even today, when we are engaged in a bitter fight against Britain's hireling Yudenich, I demand this of you: *never forget that there are two Britains. Besides the Britain of profits, violence, bribery and bloodthirstiness there is the Britain of labour, of spiritual power, of high ideals of international solidarity.* It is the vile and dishonest Britain of the stock-exchange that fights against us. The Britain of labour, of the people, is with us. We are firmly convinced that this Britain will soon rise to its full height and put a strait-jacket on the criminals who are now plotting against the working masses of Russia. Moved by this indestructible belief, we cry amid the flame and smoke of conflict: Death to the vultures of imperialism! Long live workers' Britain, the Britain of labour, of the people!

# The Fight for Petrograd

## ORDER No.160

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Red Navy, October 24, 1919, No.160, Petrograd

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The Baltic fleet, which was restored by the joint efforts of our best naval workers, has suffered a grave blow. Three destroyers have been lost, having collided with mines during a bold nocturnal enterprise [81] Many fine lives have been lost. Despite the sorrow which pierced our hearts when we first heard the news of this blow, every one of us can cry, with legitimate pride: the spirit of the Red Navy lives!

The enterprise in which the destroyers were engaged involved exceptional risk. All the sailors who set out in the destroyers knew clearly how great the danger was. And, nevertheless, they went cheerfully and confidently into battle as though to a festival: The spirit of the Baltic fleet lives!

Danger is our inevitable fellow-traveller in the harshness of war. So long as there is war, so long there will be danger, and so long will men go forth bravely to meet it.

Men go forth bravely to meet it.

New vessels have already come up to replace those we have lost. Young, courageous fighters are taking the places of the fallen heroes. The Red Navy is alive, its spirit lives!

But the memory of the fallen will live for ever in our hearts. From the commander of the division to the most junior of the sailors, they gave us an example of valour and solidarity in struggle and in death itself. Even the White-Guard wireless was obliged to acknowledge the courage of the crew and the loyalty of the commanders to the Soviet flag.

May the memory of this blow suffered through the fate of war weld together more closely the family of Red sailors of the Baltic Sea. May its waves wipe away the last traces of dissension. May the flag of the Baltic fleet become the flag of fraternal unity and service to the freedom and independence of the working people of Russia. Glory to the fallen! Long live the Baltic Fleet, and may its spirit be steeled by its trials!

### Endnotes

81. On October 21, when General Yudenich's army, resisting stubbornly, was trying to protect the left flank of its retreating units, movement by the enemy vessels was observed in Koporya Bay. Considering that an enemy landing was possible, the command of the Baltic fleet ordered a night operation to lay a minefield in the bay. The four destroyers which undertook this task – *Mani*, *Gavnil*, *Konstantin* and *Svoboda* – collided with mines, and three of them were blown up

and sunk. The fourth, *Azard*, returned safely to Kronstadt.

# The Fight for Petrograd

## TANKS

\* \* \*

**W**e are advancing and beating Yudenich. It is clear now to the youngest soldier of the Seventh Army that we are stronger than the White-Guard bands.

And yet, only a few days ago, some units of the Seventh Army retreated at extraordinary speed before Yudenich's troops. For what reason? From panic. Taken by surprise owing to the carelessness of many commanders and commissars, these Red Army units did not manage either to stand their ground, or to look around them, or to grasp what the situation really was: they fell back.

A big role in this momentary panic was played by tanks. Few were harmed by them, few even saw them. But the mere word 'tank' produced a fearful impression on many simpletons. This was exploited by traitors, agents of Yudenich, and they filled the young Red Army units with fear of tanks. 'There are tanks on our left', 'There are tanks on our right', 'Tanks have appeared in our rear' ... It was enough to set such a rumour afoot for a mass retreat to begin.

Fear of tanks is a senseless fear. A tank is merely a metal wagon constructed in a certain way and in which machine-guns and cannon are transported. A tank possesses no special means of killing people. It operates by means of machine-gun and artillery fire. A machine-gun or a cannon on a tank is no different from a machine-gun or a cannon anywhere else.

A tank is a vehicle made of metal. The special feature of this vehicle is that it can move across ditches. But on the Petrograd front there are many excellent highways along which an armoured car can move just as well as a tank. And a tank is just as incapable of crossing rivers and marshes as an armoured car is.

Tanks play a big role in positional warfare. In that type of warfare, where soldiers sit motionless in trenches on a particular sector of the front, tanks, which are capable of crawling across trenches, can do a lot of damage. All that is needed is for them to act all at once, in great masses, in tens and hundreds. But in our field warfare two or three tanks cannot play any serious role.

Whence, then, such fear in face of tanks? It is due to their novelty. People are often frightened by something they have never seen before. And not only people, but animals as well. Which of us has not seen how, in the countryside, a horse takes fright when it sees a motor-car? When it beholds the wondrous machine, the horse starts to whinny, its eyes become bloodshot, it rears up, presses its hindquarters on the cart it is drawing; forces the cart to one side, and often tips it into the ditch, injuring itself in doing so.

The senseless fear shown in face of tanks is in no way better than the horse's fear of the motor car. A few individuals may have been killed by the tanks, but tens and hundreds have lost their lives *through fear* of them, because frightened men run away without seeing anything, and the enemy shoots such fugitives down at his discretion.

Tanks are now being produced in our Petrograd factories. Some of our tanks are already operating at the front, and operating no worse than the British ones. But, in them selves, tanks, whether British or our own, cannot decide the issue. Everything depends on living men, on their courage, consciousness, firmness and devotion to the cause of the working class. A brave, resolute unit can use any weapon. To panicky, that is, easily frightened soldiers no weapon will give any advantage: they will simply surrender their rifles, machine-guns or tanks to the enemy.

Comrade Red Army man! When a sudden, senseless fear clutches your heart at the word 'tank', just remember the horse frightened by the motor car – remember it and feel ashamed. After all, man has been given a different brain and a different heart from those of a horse.

Panic is the mother of all calamities. For this reason the enemy does everything he can to induce panic. If, during a battle, somebody starts to scare you with various bogeys, especially with tanks, know that he is a provocateur, a hireling of Yudenich, who wants to win by means of baseness because he cannot win by force.

Red Army man, remember that we are bigger, that we are stronger, that our cause is just. Remember that in Yudenich's ranks men are fighting who are physically no stronger than you are, and who are mentally weaker. If only you will remember how strong you are and, once and for all, expel base panic from your ranks, you will become invincible. Then we shall soon put an end to the struggle, in the North and in the South. After crushing the enemy, we shall all return to our homes, in town and village, return to peaceful labour.

October 25, 1919  
*En Route*, No.101

# The Fight for Petrograd

## ORDER No.161

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Seventh Army, October 28, 1919,  
No.161, Petrograd

\* \* \*

The first part of the Seventh Army's task has been accomplished: the enemy has been thrown back from Petrograd. The Red proletarian capital is out of danger. Everyone, from the army commander to the most junior Red Army man has done his duty and deserves the gratitude of the socialist fatherland. It now remains to carry out with the same success the second half of the task – to destroy the enemy for good and all. There is only one way to do this: not to allow the enemy any respite, to pursue him and beat him until he is completely annihilated. The situation of Yudenich's army is essentially hopeless. It could be saved for a time only by delay on our part. Hence it is the duty of the Seventh Army to concentrate and focus all its strength on pursuing the half-beaten bands. Advance and drive the enemy in front of you, overcoming your own weariness, dog the enemy's heels. Every hour wasted now could be paid for in the future in fresh large-scale losses. Therefore, do not lose a moment. The success of a *battle* depends on its speed.

Red Army men, commanders, commissars! the Soviet power expects that you will exert the maximum effort you are capable of. Forward! Surround the beaten enemy. Cut off his line of retreat. Forward! Do not allow the enemy any respite, chase him, crush him, beat him without mercy. The time for rest will come when the snake has been destroyed.

# The Fight for Petrograd

## ORDER No.164

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the troops of the Seventh Army, October 28, 1919, No.162, Petrograd

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On October 28, having learnt from the army commander's report of some minor military setbacks in the area of the villages *Gostlitsy*, *Dyatlitsy* and *Volkovztsy*, I went to that sector with a view to ascertaining on the spot the reasons for these reverses.

From the report of the commander of the sector, Comrade Kashtanov, and from other commanders it became clear that many junior commanders had, through negligence or ignorance, allowed a number of violations of the Field Service Regulations to be committed, and that these violations had been paid for with the blood of honourable fighters of the workers' and peasants' army.

(1) In *Volkovitsy* village, two platoons of the 'N' regiment, after posting sentries to their south, that is, in the direction of the enemy, failed to carry out reconnaissance to the east of their position, in *Muldy* village, where the enemy were lying, and failed to link up by means of patrols with their neighbours in *Rautil*. As a result, the enemy, after driving our outpost from *Rautil*, appeared unexpectedly in the rear of the two platoons that were in *Volkovitsy*, and took them prisoner. Such a disaster as this would not have occurred if all the requirements of the Field Service Regulations regarding protection of flanks and liaison with neighbouring units had been fulfilled.

(2) A detachment of sailors who were in *Vitino* village, having obtained food from the mobile kitchen, dispersed into houses in the settlement to eat their meal, forgetting to post sentries. The White Guards took advantage of the carelessness of the commander of this detachment of sailors, attacked them by surprise, and drove the sailors out of *Vitino*.

Failure to post sentries on a battlefield, as required by the Field Service Regulations, is one of the gravest of military crimes, and the guilty commander will be severely punished.

(3) Part of a battalion of the 'N' regiment, stationed in *Pereyarovo* village, on learning that the Red units had left the neighbouring villages, set off in an unknown direction without informing the sector commander.

The Field Service Regulations require that, when a unit leaves a position, it must inform the sector commander of the time of its departure, the reasons why it is leaving, and the place to which it is going: otherwise, a detachment which arbitrarily quits its position and omits to report this through the proper channels may put other units in an awkward situation, which is what happened in this case.

(4) A guerrilla detachment which was sent to *Pereyarovo*, and which knew that part of the 'N' battalion was stationed in that settlement, marched thither in a carefree

way, merely throwing out a single patrol of five men, which moved at a distance of two or three hundred yards ahead of the column. The detachment commander forgot that, in war, situations change not only every hour but every minute. In fact, the units of 'N' battalion, fearing encirclement had left *Pereyarovo* and gone off in an unknown direction, without reporting their movements to the sector commander. The advanced patrol of five men were halted in the area of *Pereyarovo* by a shout of 'Who goes there?' Having learnt that a column of Red Army men was coming along behind, the Whites opened fire on the column with their machine-guns, and the detachment retreated, after suffering casualties. In this case, the advanced patrol helped the White Guards by letting them know that they were being followed by a guerrilla detachment of the Red Army.

The Field Service Regulations require that an advanced patrol shall move at a distance from the column such that the latter may be forewarned of any immediate danger of rifle or machine-gun fire. A column must enter a village only after receiving a report from the commander of the advanced patrol that the village is free of the enemy.

(5) The battalion of the 'N' regiment, having been sent from *Krasnoye Syelo* to reinforce Comrade Kashtanov's sector, arrived at this sector without the battalion commander having reported to the sector commander that he was coming.

The Field Service Regulations require any unit approaching a battlefield to report itself to the sector commander. The Regulations stress the special importance of observing this rule when approaching a battlefield. In this case, the battalion commander violated an immutable requirement of the Field Service Regulations.

Failure to observe all the above-mentioned rules and requirements of the Field Service Regulations resulted in units of our forces, taken unawares by the enemy, not only having to give up a number of settlements – *Vitino*, *Glukhovo*, *Pereyarovo* and *Volkovitsy* – but also paying with blood for the carelessness and negligence of their commanders.

For the inefficiency, inattention to the requirements of the Field Service Regulations, negligence and carelessness of some commanders – and also, perhaps, for their ignorance of those Regulations – many brave warriors of the workers' and peasants' army paid with their lives, or were wounded.

Such behaviour cannot be tolerated in the Red Army, and all the military commanders who permitted departures from the requirements of the Field Service Regulations and breaches of its rules will be severely punished.

Everyone must know that laziness, carelessness and contempt for the Field Service Regulations of the Red Army will meet with most ruthless punishment, up to and including death by shooting.

# The Fight for Petrograd

## ORDER No.162a

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, October 30, 1919, No. 162a, Petrograd

\* \* \*

To be read in all companies, batteries and squadrons

Comrade Red Army men, commanders and commissars! The defence of Petrograd depends not only on the Seventh but also on the Fifteenth Army. By pressing Yudenich's troops from the South you safeguard Red Petrograd: the greatest energy and offensive spirit is required of you. You are tired, you are exhausted, but the hour has arrived when all obstacles have to be overcome with the maximum effort of will, beating down fatigue and bringing all your strength to bear. The entire situation demands this. We can now direct at Yudenich co-ordinated blows by the Seventh and Fifteenth Armies. Do not lose a day, or an hour, but press forward, advance: Yudenich's end is near, and this means that the rest that you have deserved is also near.

Long live the Fifteenth Army! [\[82\]](#)

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### Endnotes

[82.](#) At the moment when the initiative passed to us in the Petrograd direction, the Fifteenth Army (commanded by Kork, with Kuk as chief of staff), held the front between Lake Pskov, Seltso, Batetskaya station and Lake Velye. Given its situation in relation to the line of the enemy's principal blow, this army was able by moving straight ahead to threaten Yudenich's deep rear and communications. The Fifteenth Army was ordered by Western front headquarters on October 24 to attack in the Luga-Pskov sector. The wooded nature of the locality, cut up by rivers, marshes and lakes, offered great advantages for defence. Units of the Fifteenth Army, advancing extremely slowly, took Luga on October 31. Only by the combined operations of the Seventh and Fifteenth Armies was the complete liquidation of Yudenich's adventure finally accomplished.

# The Fight for Petrograd

## PETROGRAD, OCTOBER 1917-1919

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On the second anniversary of the October revolution Petrograd stands once more at the centre of the whole country's strained attention. And once again just as two years ago, Petrograd has been threatened from the South-West, and just as happened then, at the end of October (old style) 1917, the fate of Petrograd has been decided on the Pulkovo Heights. In those days the military operations of the enemy and of ourselves alike were shrouded in an atmosphere of absolute uncertainty. Nobody could tell us, even roughly, what forces were attacking us. Some said that there were a thousand Cossacks, others that there were three, five or ten thousands of them, and so on. The bourgeois press and bourgeois rumour-mongering (at that time both of these were very loquacious) monstrously exaggerated Krasnov's forces. I recall that I received the first reliable information concerning the number of Cossacks present from Comrade Voskov, who had observed their trains at Sestroretsk and categorically insisted that the Cossacks numbered no more than a thousand sabres. But it still remained possible that some more units might be on the march, since Comrade Voskov spoke only of entrained troops.

Equally uncertain was the strength of the forces that we were in a position to counterpose to the Cossacks. We had at our disposition the quite numerous garrison of Petrograd. But this consisted of regiments which had lost their capacity to fight in the first upheavals of the revolution. The old discipline had been destroyed along with the old commanders. The revolution had demanded that the old commanding apparatus be smashed. There was as yet no new military discipline: Workers' Red-Guard detachments were hastily formed. What striking power did they possess? Nobody could say, so far. We did not really know where to find the supplies we needed. The old military authorities were not at all in any hurry to make them available to us. The new authorities did not know how to get hold of them. All this created a situation of extreme uncertainty, in which it was easy for panicky rumours to arise and spread.

At Smolny, I forget on what day, a garrison conference was held, with Comrade Lenin and me, at which the commanders were present. A section of the officers had already gone into hiding at that time, but a considerable number had remained with their regiments, not knowing what to do, and, from tradition, considering it impermissible to abandon their units. Not one of the officers who took part in that conference allowed himself even to hint at the inacceptability of 'civil war' and unwillingness to beat off Kerensky and Krasnov. The reason for this was, principally, the complete confusion that prevailed among the officers, who had, of course, no cause to cherish Kerensky's regime, but who had no grounds, either, for rejoicing at the accession of the Soviet regime. There was as yet no organised camp of counter-revolution. The agents of the Entente had not yet spread their nets. In these circumstances, the simplest decision for the commanders to take was to stick with their regiments and do whatever these wanted. To which it must be added that the commanders were already subject to election, and the most hostile elements had been got rid of.

However, none of the commanders wanted to assume responsibility for directing the whole operation, partly because, so far as I recall, none of the participants in the conference had had a great deal of military experience, but, principally, because none of them wanted to push himself forward too much, since they did not know what the outcome would be. After some unsuccessful attempts to induce certain regimental commanders to take charge, the choice fell on Colonel Muravyov, who subsequently played no small role in the military operations of Soviet Russia.

Muravyov was a born adventurer. At that period he considered himself a Left SR (Left-SR-ism then served as a cover for many a sly fellow who wanted to get in with the Soviet regime but was unwilling to assume the heavy burden of Bolshevik discipline). Muravyov's military past, apparently, was that of an instructor in tactics in a Junker training school. Though a Khlestakov [Khlestakov is the ebullient confidence-trickster hero of Gogol's play *The Inspector-General* (1836)] and a braggart, Muravyov was not without certain military talents: quick thinking, boldness, ability to approach soldiers and encourage them. In Kerensky's time, Muravyov's adventuristic qualities had made him an organiser of shock-troops, which were, as we know, directed not so much against the Germans as against the Bolsheviks. Now, when Krasnov drew near to Petrograd, Muravyov himself, and rather insistently, put forward his candidature for the post of commander of the Soviet forces. After some understandable hesitations, his application was accepted. A group of five soldiers and sailors, elected by the garrison conference, was attached to Muravyov with the responsibility of keeping him under continuous observation and, in the event of the slightest attempt at treachery, to put him out of harm's way.

Muravyov, however, did not intend to betray us. On the contrary, he got down to work with the greatest cheerfulness and self-confidence. Unlike other workers in the military sphere at that time, especially the Party members among them, he did not complain about shortages and defects, or about sabotage, but made up for all shortcomings with his cheerful eloquence, gradually infecting others with his faith in victory.

The principal organisational work had to be performed, however, by the workers' districts of the city. There they hunted out the necessary rifle ammunition, shells, guns, horses and harness and wheeled the improvised batteries into positions which they were fortifying at the same time.

The regiments of the Petrograd garrison moved rather sluggishly into their positions. At that time, in the dawn of the October revolution, the mass of the workers were not yet aware of the necessity of stern struggle to consolidate the revolution. It seemed to the masses who had been conquered by the ideological power of the revolution that the question had been finally decided by means of agitation alone, by the power of words. The armed clashes with the Cossacks seemed to them to be a regrettable misunderstanding which accidentally interrupted the triumphal march of the October revolution. They did not take seriously the battles that lay ahead, preferring to send agitators and negotiators to meet the enemy.

The proletariat of Petrograd had a more serious attitude to the matter than the soldiers of the garrison, but they were able to put into the field only the hastily-formed detachments of the so-called Red Guards ...

The outcome of the battle was decided by the artillery, which, on the Pulkovo Heights, did considerable damage to Krasnov's cavalry. Casualties of 300-500 killed

and wounded were mentioned – undoubtedly an exaggerated figure. The Cossacks fought without any particular zeal. They had been assured that the population of Petrograd would receive them as deliverers, and that a minor artillery bombardment would suffice to bring an end to their campaign. They halted, complained to their commanders, held meetings, and entered into negotiations with the representatives of the Red Guards ... Eventually, the Cossacks withdrew to Gatchina, where Krasnov's head quarters was. Kerensky fled, deceiving Krasnov, who, seemingly, was preparing to deceive him. Kerensky's adjutants, and Voytinsky [V.S. Voytinsky, a former Bolshevik, became Kerensky's commissar for the Northern front in the World War, and took part in the attempt by Kerensky and Krasnov to suppress the Bolsheviks in November 1917.], who was with them, were abandoned by him to their fate, and were taken prisoner by us along with Krasnov's whole headquarters.

The onslaught had been repulsed, the October revolution had been consolidated. At the same time an epoch of continuous and intense civil war had opened.

Two years later we have had once more to safeguard the October revolution on those same Pulkovo Heights. Krasnov, who was imprudently released in 1917, is now fighting with Yudenich's forces in front of that same Gatchina where we took him prisoner. Together with these features of similarity there is also, however, an immense difference: in those days Petrograd still swarmed with bourgeois and intellectual elements, groups, circles, parties, newspapers – and all that motley fraternity thought that the world belonged to them, that the Soviet power would prove to be a short-lived accident. The proletariat went into its revolution with great enthusiasm, great faith and élan, but also with a great deal of good humour. During these two years, the broom of the revolution has passed harshly over the bourgeoisie of Petrograd. On the other hand, the workers of Petrograd have undergone tremendous trials. Their enthusiasm does not burn with such an outwardly striking flame as was the case two years ago, but, as against that, they have acquired experience, firmness, confidence, spiritual tempering. The enemy has organised himself and become stronger. It is not a thousand Cossacks who are now attacking Petrograd, but many hundreds of thousands of soldiers, armed by the resources of world imperialism, who are attacking the Russia of October. Petrograd is threatened by tens of thousands of White soldiers who are very well armed. British ships are firing fifteen-inch shells at our coast. But we, too, have become stronger. The old regiments have gone. The improvised detachments of armed workers have also seen their day. Their place has been taken by a properly-organised Red Army which, it cannot be denied, has known its moments of depression, failure and even pusillanimity, but which has always been able, in the end, at the moment of danger, to focus the necessary energy and rebuff the enemy.

Two years ago Petrograd came forward as the great instigator. Today, world imperialism wants to show, in Petrograd, its power to suppress the revolution. The struggle over Petrograd is assuming the character of a world-scale duel between the proletarian revolution and capitalist reaction. If this duel were to end badly for us, that is, if we were to give up Petrograd even temporarily, this severe blow would still not mean the downfall of the Soviet republic. Behind us there still lies an immense *place d'armes* where we can manoeuvre until ultimate victory. On the other hand, a victory for us in the Petrograd duel will mean a crushing blow for Anglo-French imperialism, which has wagered too highly on the Yudenich card. In fighting for Petrograd we are not only defending the cradle of the proletarian revolt but are also fighting in the most direct way for the extension of this revolt all over the world. Awareness of this multiplies our strength tenfold. We shall not surrender

Petrograd. We shall defend Petrograd.

October 30, 1919

*Pravda*, No.250

# The Fight for Petrograd

## ORDER No.163

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs to the Seventh Army, November 2, 1919, No.163, Petrograd

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The overwhelming majority of the commanders of the Seventh Army are honourably doing their duty to Soviet Russia. A certain number of traitors, agents of Yudenich, have, nevertheless, revealed themselves among the junior commanders. These hirelings of foreign capital have in some cases intentionally caused confusion and alarm, have sown panic in their units, and taking advantage of this, have gone over to the camp of the Whites, betraying some Red Army men into the hands of the latter.

I order commanders and commissars to carry out a rigorous investigation, so that none of these cases of treachery may be left unpunished.

The traitors' families must be arrested at once.

The traitors themselves must be entered in the Army's **Black Book**, so that, after the approaching final triumph of the revolution, not a single one of them may escape punishment.

During battle, commanders, commissars and advanced Red Army men must keep a sharp look-out to ensure that traitors do not accomplish their task: *anyone who tries to start a panic, calling on our men to throw down their arms and go over to the Whites, is to be killed on the spot.*

The enemy, at his last breath, is resorting to bribery and provocation. In reply, we must redouble our vigilance and ruthlessness in relation to traitors and provocateurs.

# The Fight for Petrograd

## WILL THE FINNS INTERVENE?

Talk with a representative of the Soviet press

\* \* \*

Recent wireless messages have brought news that the bourgeoisie of the Entente has secured, in exchange for the Aaland Islands [The Aaland Islands were taken from Sweden along with Finland by Russia in 1809. When Finland became independent, the islanders expressed a desire to be reunited with Sweden. Eventually the islands were allotted by the League of Nations to Finland, on condition that they be demilitarised and the inhabitants allowed autonomy.]; agreement by the Finnish bourgeoisie to take part in the bandit campaign against Petrograd. Regarding this question, which is of exceptional interest not only to Petrograd but to the entire country, the following can be said:

(1) The report itself is unconfirmed and is even improbable. Yudenich is rapidly falling back from Petrograd, and the Red Army has been ordered to finish him off at any cost. The excellent situation on the other fronts makes it possible for the high command to assign sufficient forces to rout Yudenich. It seems extremely unlikely, at this moment, that the Finnish bourgeoisie would risk gambling its fate on the doubtful card represented by Yudenich.

(2) If, nevertheless, what seems unlikely were to prove correct, and the Finnish bourgeoisie were really to throw itself upon Petrograd, this attempt would cost it extremely dear. The local command has received all necessary instructions both for the further fortification of the Karelian Isthmus and for the required concentration of manpower. The Soviet Government, true to its fundamental, principled line of conduct, will take no steps and make no statements which might be seen as a challenge or a provocation to Finland. But for this very reason, in firm awareness of the justice of its cause, the Soviet Government will answer an attack by Finland with a resolute counter offensive, making responsible for the attempt on Petrograd not merely the Finnish bourgeoisie as a whole but every Finnish bourgeois individually.

In conclusion, we consider it necessary to repeat once again that there is every reason to suppose that the Finnish bourgeoisie will not need to be given such a severe lesson.

# The Fight for Petrograd

## TO THE SOLDIERS OF GENERAL YUDENICH'S ARMY

Read! Listen! Ponder!

The Soviet power is beating the landlords, capitalists and Tsarist generals on all fronts.

In Siberia we are beating and chasing Kolchak. Our forces are approaching Omsk. Kolchak has fled from Omsk to Irkutsk.

In the South our forces have taken Voronezh and Orel. The Tsarist General Denikin is retreating before the onslaught of the workers' and peasants' army.

Yudenich will not hold out. We have recovered Dyetskoye (formerly Tsarskoye) Syelo, Pavlovsk and Krasnoye Syelo. We have recovered Luga. The Red troops are approaching Gdov. Things look bad for Yudenich, the hangman of the workers and peasants.

Listen, you soldiers serving under compulsion, slaves of the Tsarist General Yudenich: The Red forces are surrounding you more and more compactly. Concentrated against you are powerful artillery, armoured trains, armoured cars, and tanks made in Petrograd.

There is only one salvation for you: *surrender!*

The Red Army is not fighting against workers and peasants, but only against landlords and capitalists.

Soldiers serving the Tsarist General Yudenich under compulsion – *surrender!*

Come over to our side. Kill commanders who try to stop you. Come to us! You will be received as brothers. Peace and fraternal labour will reign in our country. Without landlords, without capitalists and usurers, without Tsarist generals and dignitaries, the country will lead a calm and happy life.

Death to the Tsarist General Yudenich!

Long live united workers' and peasants' Russia!

November 3, 1919, *En Route*, No.103

# The Fight for Petrograd

## ORDER No.164

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's  
Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the North-Western White Army, November  
3, 1919, No.164, Petrograd

\* \* \*

To be read in all companies, task-forces, squadrons and batteries.

In view of the fact that the enemy of the people, the Tsarist General Yudenich, has arbitrarily and forcibly conscripted members of the working population against Workers' and Peasants' Russia, I hereby order, in the name of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers', Peasants', Red Army Men's and Working Cossacks' Deputies:

(1) All units without exception, of the so-called North Western White-Guard Army of General Yudenich are to be *disbanded*. This applies to the lager [?] Cavalry Regiment, the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Riga regiments, the 3rd Talabsky, the Semyonovsky, the 2nd Ostrovsky, the 7th Uralsky, the Vyatsky, the 53rd Volynsky, the Krasnogorsky, the 12th Temnitsky, the 1st Ingermanlandsky, the 9th Krennevsky, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd holding regiments of General Pahien's First Corps, Balakhovich's Cavalry Regiment, the 23rd Pechersky Regiment, the 21st Chudsky, 1st Georgiyevsky, the 2nd Revelsky, the 3rd Kolyvansky, the 4th Gdovsky, the 1st Ostrovsky, the 2nd Litovsky, the 13th Narvsky, the 1st Pskovsky, the Denikinsky, the Voznesensky, the 2nd Tulsky, the 2nd Goraysky, the Kochanovsky, the 1st holding regiment of General Arsenyev's Corps, and to all others.

(2) On receipt of this order, all soldiers of the North-Western Army are released from military service and required to return to their homes.

(3) All commanders of the North-Western Army who obstruct the fulfilment of this order are pronounced to be outlaws, and every soldier is required to kill them on the spot, as enemies of the people.

(4) The following payments will be made, in full, for weapons brought by demobilised soldiers of Yudenich's North Western Army to one of the Red Army's headquarters:

- For a rifle – 600 roubles.
- For a machinegun – 2,000 roubles
- For separate parts – according to valuation.
- For a gun – 15,000 roubles.

(5) Soldiers who have lost working time through the criminal actions of Yudenich will retain, as compensation, their uniforms, and also a horse and other things needed for life as a peasant.

(6) All demobilised soldiers of Yudenich's army are guaranteed free railway travels to their home district.

(7) Concealment of this order from the soldiers will be treated as equivalent to the worst crimes against the state and punished in accordance with martial law.

# **The Fight for Petrograd**

## **ORDER No.165**

**By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, to the Seventh Army, November 3, 1919, No.165, Petrograd**

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**O**ur advance, which was halted for a time, has been resumed. We have brought up huge masses of artillery and technical resources. The numbers of our troops considerably exceed those of the enemy. We have everything needed for a complete rout of Yudenich's bands. It is necessary that the entire apparatus of the Seventh Army should work impeccably.

(1) Those responsible for supplies to the fighting units are to check unremittingly that the soldiers are shod, clothed, fed and provided with ammunition. There must be no interruptions in victualling and supply. Everything needed is available. All that remains is to deliver and distribute it properly. The supply officers of units will bear responsibility that this is done.

(2) Commanders and commissars must conduct their units with a firm hand. Military orders are to be obeyed unconditionally and unquestioningly. No exceptions or excuses will be allowed. Commanders and commissars will answer for their units to the Soviet Republic.

(3) The infantry will keep it firmly in mind that artillery and armoured cars do not replace the infantry but merely assist them.

(4) Communists are to be present in the most dangerous posts, setting an example of courage and tirelessness. Communists who show signs of self-seeking are to be punished with twofold severity.

(5) Severe punishment is to be meted out to cowards and self-seekers. Those who retreat without orders, after being warned, are to be shot on the spot. The battle-police detachments are to bring deserters before the tribunal without delay.

The tribunals are to act on the spot, so that punishment may follow immediately upon crime.

(6) Commanders, commissars, Communists and honourable soldiers are to watch unremittingly that traitors do not disrupt our ranks. Provocateurs and panic-mongers are to be shot on the spot. Each and everyone must be at his post, working not from fear but from conscience, making the greatest effort he is capable of, and remembering that by the unanimity of our onslaught we can, this time, secure the complete annihilation of Yudenich's North-Western Army.

# The Fight for Petrograd

## ORDER No.166

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Revolutionary War Council of the Seventh Army, November 3, 1919, No.166, Petrograd

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The foreign wireless has reported simultaneously two very important pieces of news:

1. The imperialists of the Entente have allegedly obtained from Finland, in return for cession of the Aaland Islands, that country's consent to launch an attack on Petrograd.
2. The White-Guard government of Estonia, certain of whose regiments are supporting Yudenich, has now announced general mobilisation.

Both of these reports, if confirmed, can possess the greatest military significance for the Seventh Army.

The Soviet Government has declared more than once, and proved its statements in practice, that it has not the slightest intention of going to war against independent Estonia and Finland.

On the contrary, the Soviet Government sees it as very much to its interest to demonstrate in practice to all peoples its policy of genuine respect for the right of all nations to self-determination. But, of course, the Soviet Government cannot in any event tolerate attempts by the bourgeoisie of the small states upon the independence of workers' and peasants' Russia. If Yudenich, taking cover from pursuit by the Seventh and Fifteenth Armies, were to be given support by Estonia, the task of the Seventh Army would then be to repulse the attack not only of Yudenich but also of his White Estonian accomplices. In that connection, the Seventh Army must keep it firmly in mind that its purpose is not to violate the independence of Estonia in any respect whatsoever, but only to rout the White-Guard bands: therefore, the Seventh Army will be required to march against the Estonian Army only in the event that and only in so far as Estonian units give active support to Yudenich.

An attempt by the Finnish bourgeoisie upon Petrograd would be such a monstrous and senseless foray that, despite the statement on the foreign wireless, this report must be considered improbable. If, nevertheless, it should be confirmed, then the Seventh Army's task would be not only to administer the required rebuff to such an attack, but also to cure the Finnish bourgeoisie once and for all of any designs against Soviet Russia. In the event that the Finnish bourgeoisie concentrates forces against Petrograd, it will be necessary first and foremost that commanders and commissars explain to all the soldiers of the Seventh Army the brigand character of the attack being undertaken by Finland, and to lay the responsibility for this crime, in full accordance with the facts, not only upon the Finnish bourgeoisie as a whole but also on every Finnish bourgeois individually. Every Finnish bourgeois will answer with his property and his life for this bloodthirsty challenge to the Russian

proletariat, who are ready to live in peace with all peoples.

In accordance with the above I propose:

1. that the line of the Karelian fortification be developed, giving it a completely finished character;
2. that adequate forces, drawn from the numerous reinforcements which have been received by the Seventh Army, be concentrated on the Russo-Finnish frontier;
3. That the command prepare a complete plan for a quick and powerful blow to be struck at Finland in the event of an obvious challenge from that quarter;
4. that all necessary preparatory measures be taken so that the pursuit and routing of Yudenich may, without any hold-up, be continued on the far side of the Estonian frontier;
5. that, in carrying out all these measures, the offering of any sort of challenge to Finland or Estonia be strictly avoided on our part, since we have every reason to suppose that the Finnish and Estonian bourgeoisies will, at the last moment, decline to link their fate with that of Yudenich, who is doomed to complete defeat and destruction. [\[83\]](#)

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## Endnotes

[83.](#) The mistakes on Yudenich's part which hastened his defeat and rout were:

- (a) his refusal to recognise the independence of Estonia and Finland, which made these states unwilling to help him with material resources and manpower, despite the Entente's prompting, so that the North-Western Army lacked protection on both of its flanks;
- (b) the fact that, at the decisive moment, the Allies, too, failed to help the North-Western Army – the British fleet did not turn up before the forts of Kronstadt and Krasnaya Gorka. A major strategic mistake was that, carried away by his drive towards Petrograd, Yudenich failed to concern himself sufficiently with cutting the Nikolai Railway, and so allowed us to concentrate the necessary reserves.

# The Fight for Petrograd

## ORDER No.167

**By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the commanders, commissars and all responsible workers of the Seventh Army, November 4, 1919, No.167, Petrograd**

\* \* \*

The enemy is retreating all along the line. The immediate result of this is the removal of the danger which hung over Petrograd. But the task before the Seventh Army does not consist in removing the immediate threat to the great city of the revolution but in smashing Yudenich's army, destroying it and wiping it from the face of the earth and thereby really safeguarding Petrograd.

It would be extremely dangerous, therefore, to flatter ourselves that the main task has been completed. No, the enemy has not been smashed. He is retreating so as to avoid that fate. Meanwhile, he is retreating in good order, carrying off his *matbzel*.

The Seventh Army's duty is to pursue the enemy without losing fighting contact with him, to strike blows at him, to cut off his escape, to bring disorder and confusion into his ranks, to smash him to pieces – and, eventually, to destroy him utterly.

The Seventh Army will be able to carry out this task only if the leading workers make every effort to improve still further its organisation, discipline, assiduity and precision and to foster in it an unwavering will to victory.

An army can be broken up more easily than it can be created. A little carelessness on the part of one person, a lack of assiduity in a second, some inattention in a third – and the result is the collapse of units and disorganisation of whole armies. What is needed is tireless vigilance, intense attention, staunchness, struggle against all sorts of negligence, lack of assiduity and indiscipline, stern punishment of disorganisers, cowards, self-seekers. There is no other way.

We must not look back at what we have achieved, but forward, at the tasks we have not yet fulfilled.

It is necessary to perfect the *supply* apparatus, ensuring that food and ammunition are quickly brought up and properly distributed.

*Intelligence* work must be raised to the proper level, and carried out with more initiative, courage and resourcefulness. Communications must be steadily improved. The units must be taught to observe strictly the measures laid down for the *posting of sentries*. Economy in expenditure of ammunition must be inculcated, and, in this connection, troops must be taught *fire-discipline*.

All conditions are present for the Seventh Army to become one of the best armies of the Soviet Republic!

To work, then, comrades!

# The Fight for Petrograd

## ORDER No.169

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and naval Affairs to the train of the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, November 4, 1919, No.169, Petrograd

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The last weeks of October and the beginning of November will enter forever into history: in those days the Seventh Army, shoulder to shoulder with the workers of Petrograd, defended Red Petrograd against the White-Guard vultures.

The workers of our train took a worthy part in the heroic struggle of the Seventh Army between October 17 and November 3. Comrades Kleiger, Ivanov and Zastar were killed in action. Comrades Prede, Draudin, Purin, Chernyavtsev, Kupriyevich and Tesnek were wounded and Comrades Adam son, Purin and Kiselis shell-shocked. There was not one among the staff of the train who wavered a hair's breadth in carrying out his revolutionary and military duty. *I do not mention the rest by name because I should have to name all of them.* The workers of our train played an important part in bringing about the turn that took place at the front.

I firmly believe that these latest trials, battles and sacrifices, which have led to a glorious victory, will bind still closer the brotherhood in arms of our train, which has now served for fifteen months the cause of victory for the working class over all its enemies. [\[84\]](#)

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### Endnotes

[84.](#) Comrade Trotsky's train was organised during the night of August 7-8, 1918, in Moscow, and at dawn set off for Sviyazhsk, on the Czechoslovak front. Already in 1918 the train constituted a mobile apparatus of administration. It was equipped with its own printing plant, telegraph, wireless, electric power station, library, garage and bath-house. This train, which organised will-power and brought victory with it, would appear at critical moments at key sectors of the front. During Yudenich's October offensive the train was sent to Petrograd. Out of its personnel was formed a crew for the armoured train named after Lenin, and a commando which was incorporated in a Red Army unit in the Ligovo area. For its participation in these battles the train was awarded the Order of the Red Banner. In the course of the civil war the train made 36 runs, covering a total distance of 97,629 versts.

# **The Fight for Petrograd**

## **ORDER No.170**

**By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's  
Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Red Army and the Red Navy,  
November 4, 1919, No.170, Petrograd**

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**I** have received from the Executive Committee of the Communist International *five* banners to be awarded to the most meritorious units of the Red Army. I have received *three* banners for the same purpose from the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Red Army Men's Deputies. In notifying the Red Army and the Red Navy of this, I can say with confidence that now, when we are victoriously beating the enemy on all fronts, there will be no shortage of units worthy of distinction.

# The Fight for Petrograd

## THE DEFENCE OF PETROGRAD

Report to the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, November 7, 1919

\* \* \*

Comrades! Allow me to begin with a communication which has just reached us from Comrade Zinoviev, in Petrograd. The Seventh Army, together with the neighbouring Fifteenth Army – the two armies which are waging the struggle against Yudenich's White bands – have advanced successfully and recovered the only town which really served as a strongpoint for Yudenich, namely, *Gdov*: If you recall, comrades, that, four weeks ago, our military Situation not only seemed but was in fact extremely threatening, it can be said that the Red Army has in the last month achieved great successes on all fronts.

On our very anniversary, yesterday and today, the Red Army has won back for us Chernigov, Syevsk [Syevsk stands at an important crossroads about half-way between Bryansk and Sumy and between Orel and Konotop.] and *Gdov*.

On the most important front, the Southern front, we have not yet completed our main task, we have not yet crushed the basic nucleus of Denikin's forces, but we have already done heavy damage to it. The enemy is launching no more attacks, apart from isolated attempts by small units. On the contrary, Denikin's retreat is taking place along a line of enormous length, and the Anglo-French press is wondering, with natural and legitimate concern, about what the causes of this retreat can be. 'What has happened to Denikin?', the British and American wireless wonders: who, they want to know, has, so to speak, put the evil eye on this Denikin who not long ago was winning victories? They have learnt something in the last two years, have those gentlemen: they saw how Kolchak who had almost been anointed Tsar by all the stock-exchange speculators and usurers of both hemispheres, how that Kolchak, who had reached out his hand to take Moscow, rolled smartly back eastward, and, according to our information, has transferred his residence from Omsk to Irkutsk – closer to his colleagues, the stockbrokers of Tokyo and New York.

We have done well in the North-West, too. Just before the second anniversary of Soviet power, a blow was struck at us from that corner from which we had ceased to expect one – I refer to the North-Western Army, the army of Yudenich, whom Comrade Demyan Byedny, with or without justification, considers to be a descendant of Judas. Yudenich had hardly any rear, in which respect he was in a weaker position than the two other candidates, Kolchak and Denikin. But he did have plentiful aid from the Entente, he was nearer, more accessible from the sea, and he relied upon the newly formed Baltic states. After his May offensive Yudenich was beaten off by our forces – beaten off but not finished off. In tranquillity, on the territory of Estonia, and backed first and foremost by the Entente, he restored his forces and began an offensive.

Our efforts were strained to the highest pitch, we were busy with Denikin and had been obliged, in order to defend the road to Tula and Moscow, to weaken the Seventh Army, before Petrograd. It was just at that moment, when our position in the South improved and the immediate threat to Tula and Moscow disappeared,

that the blow was struck from Yamburg towards Petrograd. Things had so worked out that all the hopes, appetites and yearnings of all our foes were, so to speak, focused on the question of Petrograd, as though the fate of the Soviet power depended on that. In reality, this was not the case, and now, when the threat to Petrograd has passed, we can say with assurance that even if we had been obliged to surrender Petrograd for a time, we should not, of course, have perished as a result. But the bourgeois classes of all lands, who had been fighting us for two years and were awaiting our downfall with impatience, said to themselves at that moment, when Petrograd seemed to them to be in their grasp: this is the beginning of the end for the Soviet power – from Petrograd it is not far to Moscow. They talked so much about the march on Petrograd, they riveted the whole world's attention so firmly on that campaign, that our victory was a real catastrophe for them.

I have here some interesting and instructive evidence taken from the bourgeois press, mainly that of Scandinavia, from which it can be seen how carefully prepared, both materially and as regards ideas – if one can call ideas what amounted to lies, baiting and slander – how carefully prepared was Yudenich's last campaign. A Finnish bourgeois newspaper tells, in its issue of October 15, how lengthy and thorough the preparation was, and how great the confidence that it would succeed. They mobilised everything they could: Estonian and Ingrian [Ingria (or Ingermanland) is the name of the territory between Petrograd and the Estonian border. Some speakers of Ingrian, a language akin to Finnish and Estonian, still survive there, and extreme nationalists in both Finland and Estonia laid claim to the territory in this period.] units, the British fleet, and Yudenich's army, which they reinforced with the crack battalion commanded by 'His Serene Highness' Prince Lieven (as he was called in orders) and also with units brought from the Archangel Front. All these were, in their way, crack units, in many of which every section was commanded by an officer – that is, there was one officer for every seven or eight soldiers. A soldier who took one step back would be killed there and then.

The advantages enjoyed by the forces of the bourgeois counter-revolution in their fight against us consisted in their being very well supplied with all that they needed, and, of course, in their having greater technical possibilities at their disposal than we had. Who brought those legions from Archangel? The British fleet, of course. Yudenich had tanks. Who supplied those tanks? Britain. Who operated the tanks? Qualified British military specialists. Who bombarded Krasnaya Gorka with big guns? British vessels, monitors, armed with 15-inch guns, the last word in naval artillery technique, which came in only in 1916. Our sailors defended Krasnaya Gorka under a hail of those terrible shells. I have here a wireless report stating that Krasnaya Gorka was to be taken that day or the next, and a report that Kronstadt had fallen to the Wells of the British monitors. They thought our sailors would not stand up to a bombardment by 15-inch guns, but our sailors held firm, and Krasnaya Gorka and Kronstadt are now more firmly in our hands than ever.

I repeat, they prepared for this campaign, they looked forward to it, they thirsted for this decisive moment. In the first days of October, even before Yudenich's blow from Yamburg, one of the bourgeois papers wrote that an offensive by Yudenich against Petrograd was in prospect in the next few days, and would prove decisive: we did not know this at the time, as the newspaper reached us later. The British newspaper was, of course, giving away a military secret, but they are so eager to promise and proclaim the overthrow of the Soviet power that they do this even when it means going against their own military interests. British imperialists of the Churchill type have linked their fate too closely with that of the intervention, and

the desperate bourgeoisie press hard on Churchill saying: 'You have squandered over two milliard francs on the campaigns of the Russian bourgeoisie – that is the figure for the purely military expenditure of British imperialism – and it has all produced nothing except a strengthening of the military power of the Red Army.' Churchill answered: 'Just wait a bit – in a week, or two, or three, General Yudenich will do what Kolchak, who disappointed us, didn't do, and what Denikin didn't finish doing. He will capture Petrograd, and there, in Petrograd, his first task will be to form a mighty army that will advance into the heart of Russia.' A Swedish paper wrote about this plan, at the beginning of the campaign: a short decisive blow at Petrograd, the capture of Petrograd, securing a base, the forming of an army, and then the blow to be struck from Petrograd against Moscow. Everything had been carefully prepared.

True, Britain wanted the blow to be struck from two directions at once, from Estonia and from Finland. And during October the whole British press was egging Finland on – for example, the British newspaper **The Times** wrote in a leading article about Finland's 'moral obligation' to take part in the brigand campaign, saying that this would enhance that country's international prestige. Mighty Britain, in whose hands are all favours and all chastisements, brought the full force of its threats and its promises to bear in order to draw Finland into an adventure in aid of Yudenich. Finland hesitated and wavered all that time, she has still not made up her mind, and we find the reason for this indecision in the Finnish bourgeoisie press. I have some very interesting evidence regarding the growth and revival of the Communist movement in Finland. This is what the newspaper **Karlala** writes: 'Until recent months Bolshevik newspapers have been circulated here clandestinely, publications have come in from Petrograd, but in the last few months our own workers' press has acquired a purely Bolshevik tone. There is a whole series of legal publications which directly and openly threaten revolution in the event of an attack on Soviet Russia.'

There, comrades, is the most important circumstance which has tied the Finnish bourgeoisie hand and foot. To be sure, we read a wireless message about the question having been 'settled', and that General Mannerheim was already on his way from Europe to Finland, and then suddenly things changed again. General Mannerheim has decided against, the Finnish weather would be bad for his gout, and he is remaining in Paris. He has remained in Paris to this moment. And what the Petrograd proletariat and the army did in those critical days allows us to say with complete confidence that even if Finland had attacked we should have held Petrograd. Now, after Yudenich has been thrown back, we no longer fear any attack by the Mannerheimites.

But, of course we were nevertheless profoundly concerned that Finland should not attack. The steps that were taken by Soviet diplomacy were dictated, naturally, by real interests and real considerations, and not by any sympathy with the Finnish bourgeoisie. We never gave anyone any delusions on that score – neither our friends nor our enemies. But it is to the interest of the Finnish bourgeoisie – if, in general, history is going to allow them a certain period of further existence – that a country which is situated only one or two days' march from such a very important centre of our Republic as Petrograd, that this country, in the persons of its bourgeois ruling classes, should say to herself that she will not thrust her head into the crack into which Anglo-French imperialism is pushing her, because it is obvious to the most obtuse Viborg [Viborg (Viipuri) was then the nearest Finnish town to Petrograd. It is now included in the Leningrad Region of the RSFSR.] petty-bourgeois that we cannot live year after year under the constant menace that General Mannerheim, or

somebody else, is going to 'take' Petrograd from us.

In so far as Finland is independent – and we frankly and honourably, without any mental reservation, recognised her independence – the direct responsibility for this independence, for Finland's survival as a country, lies with the Finnish bourgeoisie now in power. And we, considering that history will make its way in Finland too, are getting on with our own work inside our country, and the Finnish proletariat does not and will not demand of us that we engage in armed intervention, because it understands that such intervention would do nothing but harm to the cause of the Finnish revolution in the present epoch. This is what explains why peaceful relations, peaceful co-existence, can exist between us and Finland. But, on the other hand, we repeat that a city in which there are now more than ten thousand working men and women, a city which has been weakened and bled, but which remains, as before, a splendid centre of revolutionary energy – this city cannot live under the Damocles' sword of an attack from Finland, and if the scales were to tip towards intervention by the Finnish bourgeoisie (which we do not want to happen), then we should say to ourselves that, this rime, the matter must be settled once and for all.

And so, Yudenich has been driven even from his Gdov ...; yet success had seemed so possible and so near. One of Yudenich's ministers, the Petrograd barrister Margulies, who was Minister of Supply and of Food in the former Gdov Government, had stocked up everything in Finland, even down to steam candles for almost-conquered Petrograd. They haggled over prices there with the Finnish suppliers, in the name of various governmental institutions. The question seemed already settled. And it must be said that those gentlemen did have some chances of success. Our army fell back to the Pulkovo Heights, to a line only one day's march from Petrograd. From the Pulkovo Heights the city is laid out as though on the palm of a hand: by night it resembles a sea of light – even now, with the shortage of illumination, it represents after dark a large and attractive patch of light. There was Dyetskoye Syelo, which used to be called Tsarskoye Syelo, and which by its very name attracted the attention of the entire international bourgeoisie, so that every little petty-bourgeois, every shopkeeper in Paris knew that Tsarskoye Syelo was the Tsar's summer residence, almost Petrograd itself – and Yudenich and Rodzyanko were there! What a victory! They say that General Rodzyanko came on October 20 to Tsarskoye Syclo, and when he was offered binoculars with which to look at Petrograd, said: 'I don't need to – tomorrow or the next day we'll be strolling down the Nevsky Prospect and we'll be able to see it without binoculars.' Now, comrades, he would need glasses of very high magnifying power.

What caused our retreat? There were a whole number of reasons. War, comrades, as is clear to all of us here who have seen it close to – and which of us has not seen it more or less close to? – war is not so much a material process as a mental one. In that respect the situation of our Seventh Army was made extremely unfavourable. Yudenich hid his tail in Estonia and Finland, and his main base was the British Isles. We were not fighting Finland or Estonia – on the contrary, we were carrying on negotiations with those countries. Estonia seemed to be very interested in peace talks with us. Who was deceiving whom in that case, or whether they were jointly and consciously trying to deceive Russia, so as to facilitate the success of Yudenich's attack, is something that you won't soon discover, because where the international policy of the Estonian rulers is concerned it is extremely hard to make out where they are being deceived and where it is they who are doing the deceiving. But the fact is that these negotiations, the positive significance of which none of us can deny, since they influence the Estonian population, showing them in a practical way that we do not want to coerce Estonia – these negotiations were

taken by the soldiers of our Seventh Army as meaning that peace was an accomplished fact. Some said that they were going to be transferred to the Southern Front, while others simply took a rest, letting their vigilance be dulled, never thinking of the blow that threatened them.

I have already mentioned that we had taken a number of workers and commissars from the Seventh Army for the Southern Front. This state of the army – waiting, slack, not keyed-up – with a front resting on Estonia and Finland, with whom we were not at war, made the army somewhat friable, and that enabled Yudenich to exploit the situation and to use with great success a new mechanical weapon, tanks. Here, again, tanks are not frightening in themselves. In the last analysis, tanks merely operate machine-guns and cannon, and on a battlefield their significance is not great, but their very shape, their way of moving, the aureole surrounding tanks, produced at once a big impression on our soldiers, often evoking real panic. This new technical means, the tanks: clever commanders, especially in the battalions of 'His Serene Highness' Prince Lieven, in the best shock units – all that, together with the limp, waiting posture of our forces, constituted the general preconditions for a campaign which gave the counter-revolution grounds for declaring that they would be in Petrograd no later than the end of October or the beginning of November. However, they did not take account of that moral factor which our army possesses in the form of the advanced workers, the Communists, our great ability to mobilise the army's spirit, to raise and draw taut its will-power within a short space of time.

This ability is not possessed, we can say with confidence, by any other army in the world. We have many shortcomings and deficiencies, though we are striving to eliminate them. We are now armed even with tanks, which operated against Yudenich, and operated with great success. This produced a tremendous impression on our Red Army. Our Red Army men said, gaily:

'Now we have our own Tanka [Tanka is both the Russian word for tank and a diminutive of the girl's name Tanya (itself derived from Tatyana).] at the front.'

But, all the same, we have very many technical deficiencies, and there are cases when, here and there, we have to plug these gaps with bast wisp. But, as against that, we have our irreplaceable, reliable, staunch apparatus of proletarian Communists: the place of our Communist commanders and commissars cannot be taken, on Yudenich's side, by the officers who are so numerous in his principal units. They are, of course, capable of heroism. Many of these officers were killed in the fierce fighting: but they are, all the same, representatives of the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia, capable of making a breakthrough, easily encouraged by success, but losing heart after the first setback. The proletarians of Moscow and Petrograd are quite different: the more they are stricken by the blows of fate, the tougher they become.

We have now experienced this afresh. Every time we are obliged to undergo such a trial we are once more convinced of the strength of the proletariat. Just look at Petrograd ... What a lot of workers we have extorted from Petrograd, how many of them have perished on all our fronts, and yet in the hour of danger Petrograd put forward fresh thousands, who did not let the enemy overthrow them. We divided the task of defending Petrograd into two parts. The enemy was on the Pulkovo Heights, our field army was struggling there, it had fallen back, got into a state where it was unable to fight, and it had to be strengthened, re-grouped and tempered. On the other hand, though, if the field army should nevertheless give up

its positions, and Yudenich should break into Petrograd, we decided to transform the whole city into one armed camp, in which every district, every sector, would be ready to do battle. The Petrograd workers were split into two groups. One group was assigned to the battle-line, with the task of restoring the units of the Seventh Army, while the other was told to fortify the city, dig trenches, form fighting squads, assemble machine gunners and grenade-throwers, form detachments, find suitable buildings, organise command-posts there, occupy the cellars, supply the workers, both men and women, with rifles and grenades with which to greet the enemy in the proper way if he should break in for a few hours. Within a few days we had divided the city into districts, and the districts into subdistricts, organised and distributed the fighting squads, undertaken the necessary fortifications work – and if the Whites had managed to break into Petrograd, they would have had to tear with their teeth at every single quarter, every sector, every district. If the field army had retreated, that would not have meant that Petrograd had fallen. It would merely have meant that the struggle shifted to the streets of the city, and here, in the streets of Petrograd, we did not doubt, Yudenich's army would have been totally exterminated.

But things did not come to that pass. The taking of Dyetskoye Syclo and Pavlovsk was Yudemch's last success. On October 21 his offensive was halted. On the 22nd we went over to the offensive. On the 23rd we took Dyetskoye and Pavlovsk, and, a few days later, Krasnoye Syclo. Our capture of the first two villages already possessed decisive importance. It showed that the Seventh Army had been reborn, that it had recovered its resilience and tenacity, that it had shaken off the weakness of will that had been manifest when it was unexpectedly thrust out of Yamburg, and fell back. Our task consisted in bringing about a turn in morale. Gatchina was taken by the enemy by means of a skilful night raid. A very small unit, possibly only a company – this has not yet been established – got into the park, opened fire under cover of darkness, and thereby created panic. With the skill of trained guerrillas, the enemy exploited the effect of surprise. A single company produced the greatest confusion ... It was necessary, at any cost, to make our units pull themselves together, every soldier had to be made to realise that the enemy was weak and we were strong, the Reds had to be shown the Whites, every soldier in the army had to be filled with confidence in his strength – and that was done by the workers of Petrograd and Moscow. It was necessary to show that tanks are nothing more than iron boxes in which sit some men who are armed with the same weapons as ordinary machine gunners and gunners, and this we were able to do only thanks to the manpower that arrived from Moscow and Petrograd, and which, having arrived, at once set about its tremendous task. But when they had taken their two or three first villages, the question was settled, because we were more numerous, we were well armed, and we wanted to crush the enemy.

We succeeded in effecting the turn. Within a few days we began to take prisoners from among the enemy, and there were even men coming over to us, whereas during our retreat there had been none, precisely because the Seventh Army was steadily retreating. The turn had been made. This fact, comrades, we have had occasion to observe on more than one of our fronts, when one or other of our armies, improvised, that is, created in a short time in a more or less amateurish way, and not well united, lost its distinctiveness as a military body, lost its self-possession, just because it lacked sufficient skill, sufficient training, sometimes because it lacked the commanders it needed, and it went to pieces, so to speak, the ground beneath its feet seeming to fall away. But it was enough to bring into that army a certain number of courageous proletarians who declared firmly that they would die rather than retreat, and the turn came about. This new factor in war

which the old armies of imperialism did not know, and which the British stock exchange has not yet recognised, this new revolutionary tank of ours, the proletariat of Moscow and Petrograd, works wonders.

This tank will overcome all obstacles. All that is needed is that it should understand that *the danger is great*. The whole heart of the matter is there. When, comrades, we suffer some setbacks at the front, the Petrograd and Moscow workers sometimes say: 'Never mind, we'll cope, we've coped more than once before ...' And then often some calamity occurs; but when these workers discover for themselves that the danger is great and immediate, then they always find, hidden somewhere within them, a source of fresh strength, which proves, each time, to be greater than all the strength that they had previously expended. And the fight before Petrograd had a dual significance for us. On the one hand, the stock-exchange had staked a great deal on the Yudenich card, had convinced itself that this attack would be decisive – first Petrograd, then Moscow. Consequently, not to surrender Petrograd would mean dealing a hard blow to the European stock-exchange, discrediting it, making it a laughing-stock in the eyes of the mass of the workers in Europe and America. On the other hand, the question of Petrograd bore the character of an internal test. Is there still some powder in the powder-flask of the Russian revolution and, in particular, in the Petrograd proletariat, after we have expended this revolutionary powder so mercilessly? It has turned out that there is – that Petrograd can defend itself.

The fact that we did not surrender Petrograd is of immense importance for the attitude of the European proletariat towards us and, by repercussion, for the attitude taken up towards us by the European bourgeoisie.

The European proletariat has not begun its revolution precisely because the European bourgeoisie is stronger than ours. There is a certain inertia, a sluggishness in class relations, which prevents an old working class from revolting against an old and powerful bourgeoisie. The European proletariat is moving towards revolt, but by a slower road. Its bourgeoisie, taking advantage of the slow development of the revolution, is fighting us with all the weapons and means it is capable of setting in motion. True, Britain has not hurled her divisions on to our territory, but only her 15-inch shells. Why not? Because she cannot. But if she cannot do that, then even less can she fight the British workers. The proletariat of London, who have threatened the bourgeoisie with a general strike if the war with Russia is continued, who have prudently and cautiously asked themselves whether they are strong enough openly to revolt against the British stock-exchange, will now say to that stock-exchange: 'So, then, you started a fight against Petrograd, against Russia, you promised to set the Baltic Sea on fire. You promised you would take Red Petrograd, but you have failed. Petrograd was and remains a proletarian city.' That is what the British worker will say.

And the more the world's press did to stir up interest in the question of the taking of Petrograd, the more strongly, the more cruelly will world imperialism be discredited in the consciousness of the world proletariat, not only from the moral angle (it has long been without any credit in that respect) but also as regards its real military power. And that interest in the question of the fate of Petrograd was at a high level of intensity we see from that same bourgeois press. A Swedish paper writes in so many words: 'World-wide week of Petrograd fever.' Taking Petrograd, wrote the bourgeois journalists, means opening a new chapter in world history. Thus, under the Pulkovo Heights, where we fought with Yudenich, those comparatively small armies constituted two detachments of the two greatest forces

in the world: on the one hand, the world bourgeoisie, which had contributed everything it could at that moment to the fight against us: on the other, the European proletariat, which at that moment could contribute nothing but its ardent sympathy, since the sea, the ships, the cables and the wireless are not yet in its hands. The struggle acquired, therefore, not only a material but also a symbolic character: it was a trial of strength between the world revolution and the world bourgeoisie. This happened precisely on the eve of the second anniversary of Soviet power. It was as though history was trying, on the day of our festival, to test us, on the one hand, and, on the other, the world stock-exchange, so as to find out by giving a shove, how firmly each was planted on its feet. In the battles before Petrograd the Soviet power showed that it stands firm and unconquerable. Consequently, the Petrograd battles have very great principled and agitational importance, which will take effect in the coming weeks and months.

This does not mean that our task has been completed – no, it has not yet been completed even on the Petrograd front. It has been fundamentally completed, perhaps, only on the Eastern front, where the enemy has been smashed, and where our task now consists in occupying those boundless spaces extending to the Pacific Ocean, organising and consolidating Soviet power there, a task that is already nine-tenths non-military in character. In the South our military task has not been completed. Nor has it been completed yet in the North-West. Petrograd is out of danger, that is beyond doubt, and the enemy has been hit hard, but he has not yet been broken: he is retreating but is not yet fleeing, and, in any case, has not yet been crushed. This task we must perform, and Yudenich's army must be crushed.

The troops from the Petrograd front must be freed as soon as possible for other tasks, primarily on the Southern front, where the turn has been fully accomplished but where all possible forces, will-power and creative energy must be concentrated in the next few weeks, because, as we were shown by the example of the Seventh Army, it is disastrous for us when, after large- scale successes, we allow our organisation to lose impetus, get slack and go to pieces. We then have, by means of incredible efforts and many needless sacrifices, to make up for what we lost through lack of self-control. Fortunately, experience is increasingly hardening us and making us more stubborn and systematic in our work.

There can be no doubt, after all we have gone through on our fronts, that we shall crown our military task with complete victory. In our young army, comrades, we already possess magnificent cadres, warriors the like of whom are rare in world history. If, comrades, we speak frankly about our shortcomings and failures, about the cases of panic that have occurred, then I think we have the right and the duty to speak about the heroism, the extraordinary *élan* that was seen on the Petrograd Front. Read the Denikinites' reports, their newspaper accounts, in which they speak about the way our Red Army men, our cadets, our Communists fight, as they put it, with mad fury. And that is true. There, where in the enemy's small units there was one officer to every seven men, where a third of the enemy's forces were armed with automatic weapons, where they had tanks and motor-cars, and where they did not waste their shots but fired only at our men – there, on our side, we had less skill and were hindered by shortages, but these defects were more than made up for by enthusiasm and heroism.

The Whites claimed that we suffered more casualties than they did, although they admit that their losses were also great. It is difficult to check whether or not this is true. But what is true is that our Seventh Army has dealt the enemy an irreparable

blow. There were many casualties. I saw them in action there – young workers and peasants, cadets from Moscow and Petrograd. What fighters! The regiments that came from the Eastern front, the Lettish regiments – what heroes! They threw themselves, revolver in hand, upon the tanks. A company commander of the Lettish regiment leapt on to a tank, shouting: 'The tank is ours!' These are all facts which Yudeinch calls instances of heroic madness. I believe that, with an army such as this, the third year of Soviet power will see the complete destruction of our enemies and a firm peace, secured by the armed hand of the proletariat.

Yes, I believe that the third year will be a year of peace, of that peace for which we are striving so hard and which we need so much. We are not seeking victory for victory's sake, we are fighting because they are forcing us to fight. What we want is peaceful economic construction, the development and flowering of culture. In the war that has been imposed on us we see a frightful obstacle in the way of our great and sacred task. The first day of peace will bring us the demobilisation of the army, will bring back into our ranks the many hundreds of thousands of proletarians and peasants whom the Soviet land gave to the army in order to defend the independence and freedom of the republic of labour. They will all return, but they will return not just as they were when they left, they will return changed – and changed for the better, not for the worse. Their experiences, the tension they have undergone, will have left deep scars on each man's soul, and hardened his will into steel. Wherever ourcadets and Red Army men may be sent in the future, they will carry out the task they are given. We say to them: 'The enemy is Yudenich – beat him', and they beat him. Tomorrow, when Yudenich and Denikin have been beaten and you bring our warriors back to the rear and say: 'The enemy is the cold, hunger and devastation that prevails in the country – beat them,' all the energy, enthusiasm and self-sacrifice which have been accumulated in the Red Army will enter into the service of peaceful labour, for the well-being of our hungry workers and working women, mothers and children. And we shall then become truly invincible, we shall heal our country's wounds, we shall ensure for it peace, prosperity and free development, and become a free country among other happy countries.

# The Fight for Petrograd

## PETROGRAD, BE ON YOUR GUARD!

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Petrograd has been decorated with the Order of the Red Banner. There, now, is somebody who has really deserved the award! When medals are given to individuals, mistakes can always occur, or there can be occasional cases of privilege. But in the award made to Petrograd there was neither error nor partiality. In this case the merit is plain to the whole country and the whole world.

Does Petrograd's Order of the Red Banner bestow on the city the right to rest? Not yet. The Northern capital stands on the blockaded Baltic Sea, and from two directions, from the West and from the North-West, it lies open to the piercing winds of imperialism. Peace has not yet been concluded either with Estonia or with Finland, and there are not a few scoundrels, both Russian and foreign, who are eager to shed the blood of the Estonian and Finnish workers and peasants in order to restore the Tsarist landlord autocracy and the profits of the Anglo-French stock-exchange.

In October the Estonian bourgeoisie involved its army in Yudenich's adventure. Yudenich was beaten. The White Estonian forces were thrown back, some beyond Luga, some beyond the Narova. Negotiations are in progress at Dorpat (Yuriev). [\[85\]](#) So far as the Soviet power is concerned, the purpose of these negotiations is a most sincere and conscientious attempt to make peace as quickly as possible. What is, for us, the principal condition? It follows quite clearly from our recent experience. The Estonian Government must give real guarantees for the security of our frontier on the Narova. Honest, good-neighbourly relations must be established. These conditions are comprehensible to every Estonian and every Russian worker and peasant. What we want is a real peace, not just a temporary breathing-space in which Yudenich can assemble his forces beyond the Narova and then launch another bandit raid against us.

*Independent Estonia must no longer serve as a kennel for the guard-dogs of the counter-revolution – that is all that our conditions amount to.*

Finland did not participate openly in Yudenich's drive against Petrograd, although, indirectly, she did everything she could to help him succeed. In October and November we made no response whatsoever to the provocation of the Finnish chauvinists. The reason for this did not lie, of course, in any military weakness on the part of the Soviet Republic. In the centre of our country and on our victorious fronts, extending over several thousand versts, we could always have found two or three dozen regiments, that is, a force perfectly sufficient to beat out of our North-Western neighbours all desire to make an attempt, whether direct or indirect, upon Petrograd. If we firmly rejected the use of force, that was because we regard as most important the attainment and safeguarding of peace. We fight only where we are forced to fight, where we are not allowed to refrain from fighting – and we fight only so long as we are obliged to fight. The basic task of the Soviet Government lies wholly in the sphere of economic and cultural construction. Equally alien to the Soviet power are striving for territorial acquisitions and national oppression. Our entire policy in relation to *Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland* follows from

our conviction that *the existence of these countries is possible only if they maintain peaceful and good-neighbourly relations with Russia.*

An Estonia or a Finland wishing to serve as a weapon of the imperialism of the great powers will inevitably be ground to dust between two millstones. A Finland and an Estonia at peace with Soviet Russia will be incomparably more independent in relation to all great-power aggressors.

We need peace. It is no less necessary for Estonia and Finland. But peace between us and them is not what is wanted by a certain third party. If the decisions taken at Dorpat express the will of the Estonian and Russian peoples, peace will be made, for the stronger side, Soviet Russia, does not want war. But if the decisions taken at Dorpat are dictated to the Estonian Government by the Anglo-French stock-exchange, for which Estonia is merely a tiny little weight in the scales of world power, their blood will flow beside the Narova.

The decision has not yet been taken. The Estonian government is hesitating. Nor has the danger yet vanished from the Karelian Isthmus, for the Finnish Government has not declared that it is ready for peace.

The danger has not disappeared. Therefore Petrograd must remain watchfully on guard over the North-Western approaches to the Soviet Republic. The time for rest has not yet come. On the contrary, the Soviet Republic is now passing through days of the greatest tension in most ferocious struggle.

No less self-control is needed in time of success than in time of defeat. Success must not lull our vigilance on any of the sectors of our immense front, and least of all on that sector where, at the apex, stands Petrograd. The danger has not passed, and vigilance must not slacken.

Greetings to Petrograd, city of the Red Banner!

Greetings, and this appeal: Petrograd, be on your guard!

December 22, 1919  
Moscow-Petrograd  
*En Route*, No.104

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## Endnotes

85. The peace treaty with Estonia was signed on February 2, 1920.