

The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 3, The Year 1920

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED



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1920 – year of the war with Poland. In the early months, the Red Army's victories against the White Guards won a breathing-space in which it turned to assist in the reconstruction of the war-torn economy. The first Labour Armies were formed under Trotsky's direction. Then came the Polish offensive. The Soviet Republic replied by swelling the ranks of the Red Army to five million and launching the contentious march on Warsaw. Beaten back outside the Polish capital, the Soviet forces nonetheless regained lost territories, enabled the Bolsheviks to conclude a peace, and proceeded in the South to sweep the counter-revolutionary Wrangel into the sea. The third in a five-volume series, this book is part of an imperishable record of the struggle to defend the Soviet state in the years following the Russian Revolution. Long suppressed in the Soviet Union, these writings and speeches of the leader of the Red Army are here published in English for the first time.

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Foreword

This third volume of Trotsky's military writings covers the year 1920 – the year of the war with Poland.

By the end of 1919, the Red Army had beaten back the White Guards on all fronts. British and French imperialism, at first so confident of crushing the October Revolution, were now encountering not only the strength of the Soviet state itself, but the opposition to intervention which it inspired in the working class in the imperialist countries. A cease-fire was even signed with the Polish chief Pilsudski, whom the French intended to spearhead the renewal of their attack.

In the breathing space it had won, the Red Army turned to labour – to form the first Labour Armies to help reconstruct the shattered economy on socialist lines. At its head, Trotsky knew that the respite was only temporary – that there was no question of disarming in the face of the imperialist enemy, but of reorganising the state forces. In three months' intensive work, important principles were established to guide this work. The Labour Armies would help show the way in establishing the principle of universal labour service – that every citizen of the Soviet Republic capable of work, should put his or her efforts to the service of the workers' state to supply the basic needs of the masses. The militarisation of labour, Trotsky repeatedly explained, was an unavoidable necessity in the period of transition from the war-torn state of Russian society, to the development of a socialist economy. It was to be accompanied by constant agitation to educate the masses and mobilise them for socialist planning. The Red Army men were to be conscious that they were working to help feed the starving workers of Moscow and Petrograd who had sacrificed so much to supply the fronts, and to help the peasants who had also sent their sons to the army, and who must now be educated to reorganise production according to the needs of the Soviet people as a whole.

This work was interrupted in March with the Polish invasion of the Ukraine. The Bolsheviks responded by setting out to teach the Polish gentry and bourgeois a lesson once and for all. The whole country was mobilised. It was during this campaign that the strength of the Red Army grew to five million. Trotsky organised the whole front.

This campaign differed from the previous phase of the civil war, in that it was not against White Guard bands or direct imperialist intervention; it was against the lackeys of imperialism in the Polish ruling class. In his orders throughout the campaign Trotsky is firm in resisting all chauvinist pressure to wage the war on a national basis. He suspends publication of the paper **Voyennoye Dyelo** because of its chauvinist attacks on the Polish nation, issues instructions that soldiers taken prisoner are not to be mistreated, and constantly appeals to the Polish workers and peasants to resist Pilsudski and join forces with their Soviet brothers.

By July, the Polish forces were retreating. The Bolshevik leadership decided to pursue Pilsudski's armies to Warsaw. Behind his public upholding of this line, Trotsky held grave reservations. He opposed Lenin within the Politburo, concerned that the Red Army's advance would rouse nationalist sentiments

among broad sections of the Polish masses, rather than bring them out to greet the Soviet forces as liberators. In the event, the brave efforts of Tukhachevsky's northern armies were defeated outside Warsaw, while the southern armies under Budyonny, with Stalin as commissar, were too far away to assist. The Red Army withdrew; and Lenin soon supported Trotsky in concluding peace with Poland.

Despite being turned back at Warsaw, Trotsky's proclamations insisted, the Red Army had secured the Polish front and regained all the conquered territory. It now remained to cleanse the Crimea of Wrangel, whose White Guard forces had seized on the opportunity of the Polish war to create fresh trouble. In the last campaign of this phase of the war, Wrangel's forces were swept into the sea.

The final section of this volume shows the wide range of Trotsky's concerns throughout this period. In his military orders he pays constant attention to questions of training and educating the Red Army men, insisting at the same time on proper care and supplies being organised, instilling consciousness that the Red soldiers are fighting for the highest cause, that of the proletarian revolution internationally. Fallen leaders of the proletariat, such as Sverdlov, are honoured; the Communist International, meeting in 1920 in Moscow at its historic Second Congress, sends its greetings through Trotsky. Only with this constant attention to the education and training of the Red Army cadre, and upholding of proletarian internationalism, was it possible to bring the Red Army through the year of the Polish war not only intact and at full fighting strength, but with its banner unspotted.

The General Situation at the Beginning of 1920

Our Work at Building the Army and Our Fronts [\[1\]](#)

First Published: This report was published in English, as *Our Military Construction and Our Fronts*, by the Executive Committee of the Communist International in 1920.

Misc: Report to the 7th All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers', Peasants', Red Army Men's and Working Cossacks' Deputies, December 7, 1919

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The Foundations for Building the Red Army

Comrades, the Red Army was first given a legal, legislative basis in the Central Executive Committee's decrees of April 22 of last year, which later received specific approval in the form of a resolution of the 5th All-Russia Congress of Soviets on July 10 of last year [\[2\]](#). Those decrees and resolutions laid down the fundamental lines in accordance with which the Soviet power, and the War Commissariat in particular 'had to build the armed forces of the Soviet Republic. These resolutions prescribed that home-made and amateur methods be completely eliminated in that sphere which is least amenable to them. What this implied was the need to build an army on scientific, correct and regular principles. We were told that quite clearly and distinctly. One of the conclusions resulting was that we must draw former officers of the Tsarist Army into this constructive work, because they were men who knew more about military matters than was known then – or is known even now – to the representatives of the working class. At the same time, those foundations were laid down which define the nature of all our work at building the Red Army. This is not an army 'of the whole people', 'of the entire nation', not a 'democratic' (between inverted commas) army, not an army of the Constituent Assembly, but the *army of the working classes* who are fighting to reconstruct the whole of social life. Consequently, we introduced class criteria into the army. We excluded from the army – against protests which many of you will remember – the exploiting, parasitical, bourgeois and kulak elements.

The army must reflect the regime that we are building in all spheres of social and political life. This regime is characterised by the political rule of the working class, relying on the broad masses of the peasant poor and the working peasantry. The leading role of the working class in the army was consolidated in the form of the institution of commissars, who were chosen from among the most tested, reliable and self-sacrificing representatives of the working class.

In the sphere of the material organisation of the army, overcoming guerrillaism meant for us getting the war economy back on to a proper basis: in the first place, reviving war industry to the needful extent, taking stock of all the property required for war purposes, and establishing a proper procedure for allocating this property and supervising the way it was expended. These were the provisions laid down by the 5th Congress of Soviets. They served as guiding instructions for all our work at building the army. After the 5th Congress of Soviets we went over with ever greater success to building our

armed forces on a regular basis.

First of all, we took as the basis for our army a thorough mobilisation of the working classes of the people. We did not undertake this immediately. To be able to carry out a mobilisation, so as not to leave the matter of the country's military defence to the arbitrary spontaneity of volunteering, we had to have an apparatus suitable for carrying out a mobilisation, in the form of local military institutions. In the first phase, a Supreme Military Council [3] was formed, under the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs; its significance in the history of our military work was that it carried through, with the necessary vigour and consistency, the organisation of military districts and of military commissariats at province, *uyezd*, and then even at *volost* level. Only after this apparatus had been created were we able to proceed to take a census of the population and actually draw it into our military units. The work that was accomplished in this sphere was performed under the constant and colossal pressure of war. Unlike all other countries, which enjoyed before their wars a long period of so-called armed peace, during which they built and equipped their armies, we had to build our workers' and peasants' army – the first in the world – under the direct pressure of the demands of war, with the knife of the bandits of world imperialism at our throats. We created an apparatus, and, using this apparatus, we both built an army and, in the course of the work performed by this army, tested and corrected the apparatus.

Our country has now been divided, for the purposes of military administration, into eight military districts. These districts include 46 provincial and 344 *uyezd* commissariats. Their number is now increasing quite rapidly. Requests are coming in from the Southern Front for experienced military commissars for the Ukrainian provinces: candidates are needed, first and foremost, for Kharkov, Poltava and Kiev [4]

The First Mobilisations

The first mobilisation was a very serious test of our military apparatus and, in a certain sense, of our entire Soviet system. We did not lightly take our decision to carry out the first mobilisation in Moscow, which in the summer of last year, embraced 10,000 workers. For the new, Soviet order to create an apparatus which would be capable of registering, counting and finding the men liable for military service, and which would possess sufficient authority in the eyes of those called up, those mobilised, for them to present themselves and to join their units, was no easy task, comrades. The first mobilisation, of urban workers in Moscow, the most highly educated section, in the political sense, was, of course, the easiest of all. It went off successfully, and we were able gradually to apply the experience thus gained on a country-wide scale. In the course of the last report-period – from our last, 6th, Congress of Soviets until the present congress – we have mobilised very many men. I have no right, of course, to give figures here, but it is not a secret to any of us that we have mobilised tens of thousands in a single month, and sometimes these tens of thousands have gathered into hundreds of thousands, and these hundreds of thousands have already become millions during the two years of our civil war. [5] Comrades, these figures have a twofold significance. Millions of workers and peasants have been torn from their working lives and placed in the harsh, abnormal conditions of a fighting army. At the same time, however, the fact

that the young authority of the revolutionary class has proved capable of placing millions of the country's citizens under arms proves that this authority is strong and sturdy in the support of the working masses. Our army is made up of workers and peasants. Workers account for barely 15 to 18 per cent. But in our workers' and peasants' army it is the workers who hold the position of leadership, as they do throughout the Soviet land in all spheres of life and work. This is given them by their greater consciousness, their greater unity, their higher degree of revolutionary tempering.

The Armies of Our Enemies

As you know, comrades, our opponents, Denikin and Kolchak, who are our principal foes, started with guerrilla units. They, of course, proceeded from the other end. While we were despatching Red-Guard units of Petrograd and Moscow workers all over the country, to spread the sphere of the proletarian revolution, Denikin and Kolchak were forming shock battalions composed of officers, officer-cadets and students. Following our example, they then went over to mobilising the peasant (and even, to some extent the worker) masses. It had seemed to them at first that mobilisation would not be possible, after the break-up of the old Tsarist army and the dissolution of the old psychological ties, the breakdown of that element of discipline which was all that they knew. When they perceived that we – a party which, as they saw it, had arisen out of some sort of depths of anarchical disorder – had proved capable of mobilising hundreds of thousands, millions of men, they, too, resolved to attempt such a mobilisation – for their own purposes, of course. They carried out an extensive experiment in the East, and at the outset this produced what were apparently satisfactory results for them. This was first put to the test by Kolchak, who won great victories with his armies of conscripted men. But subsequent trial by fire and sword gave quite different results for our army and for Kolchak's. So long as Dutov, Kolchak and Denikin's forces consisted of guerrilla units composed of highly-trained officer and officer-cadet elements, they developed great striking-power relatively to their numbers, because, I repeat, these were elements possessing great experience, a high level of military skill. But when the heavy mass of our regiments, brigades, divisions and armies, formed through conscription, obliged them to undertake conscription of the peasantry, so as to be able to counterpose mass to mass, the laws of class struggle came into play. And mobilisation became in their case a factor of internal disorganisation, activating the forces of internal breakdown. All that was needed to reveal this, to bring it to light in practice, was for blows to be struck from our side.

And, however gratifying it may be for us to recognise the direct military strength of the Red armies, what is still more important for us is to understand and define the social, class basis of our victories. We have a regular army and they have a regular army: we have conscripted masses and they have conscripted masses – in our case these masses consist mainly of peasants, and the same is true in their case. On our side, leadership is in the hands of the workers, and, among these, of the most conscious, the revolutionaries, the Communists: on their side, the leaders are officers, students, the most conscious representatives of bourgeois interests. On our side the progress of the struggle has brought unification and tempering, but on their side it has brought disintegration and collapse. That is where the basis of everything lies.

The Communist Party and the Red Army

I said that the army – and this is the fundamental idea in the report which I am making to you – is *a copy, an imprint, a reflection of our social structure as a whole*. It is based on political rule by the working class, relying on the peasantry. The leading role in the working class is played by the Communist Party, the leading Soviet party. And that is why, though I am making this report in my capacity as War Commissar and not as representative of the Party, I cannot avoid speaking of the role that the Communists play in the ranks of our army. The responsible post of commissar is held, in the overwhelming majority of cases, by a member of the Communist Party. In every regiment, in every battalion, in every company you will find a Communist cell. Our regulations, our statutes proclaim, in this connection, that the Communists in the army have no rights, only duties. It would, of course, be extremely optimistic to affirm that every Communist in the army does his duty irreproachably. We are dealing here not with a small, select group, but with a very, very large number of Communist Party members. I am not going to give the precise number, but I can say that it runs into six figures, that is, not fewer than 100,000 men are involved. In actual fact, the number is much greater, and – permitting myself to refer for confirmation to our military specialists, to the commanding personnel, a body which is to a considerable extent made up of non-Party men – I consider that I am justified in saying here, once more, that without this Communist leaven, without the self-sacrifice and exemplary valour of the best representatives of the working class, the army would fall to pieces. More than once the commanders of fronts and of armies, and the commander-in-chief himself, when some sector of a front was in an unsatisfactory state, has applied to the Revolutionary War Council, either directly or through the proper channels, for an appropriate number of Communists to be sent there. Of course, comrades, we appreciate very highly the fact that other parties, too, which consider themselves to be in opposition, and have been so in recent times, have mobilised a certain number of their members for work in the army. They are welcomed there like brothers. But I must at once, while not wishing in the least to furnish a lot of ground for polemics, mention here one fact which is, in my view, instructive and full of significance. When I carried out an inspection in Kharkov I had presented to me the commanding personnel of a regiment, about a quarter of whom were Mensheviks. I was interested in what happened to them subsequently. They showed themselves excellent and dedicated fighters who proved to be equal to the difficult situations in which the Ukrainian army was later placed. But I must add this, that when some hitch occurred in that regiment, when some discontent, some grumbling arose – and in the Ukraine such occurrences easily led to serious complications – these Menshevik commanders would go to the commissar of the regiment and ask that a Communist agitator, with Communist literature, be sent to them as soon as possible. They were good soldiers and wanted victory, and they knew that it would not help their regiment if Martov's declarations were to be distributed in it. [6]

Comrades, in this difficult struggle, about which poets will one day write great things, we have suffered very heavy losses, of soldiers, commanders and commissars ... But we have lost Communists without number! For a Communist there cannot be, and there is not, any question of being taken

prisoner: when a Communist is captured he is irrevocably doomed. There was, true, a case when one of the most outstanding workers in the Moscow district, Baryshnikov, a splendid fighting comrade, did not manage to shoot himself when he fell into the hands of Mamontov's cavalry. Baryshnikov was hanged. Those whom you take away from their usual setting, to the great detriment of local work, and send out there not as rank-and-file conscript soldiers but as spiritual leaders, as men who are going to fight to teach others to fight, to fight and die, those men are all aware that for them there is no possibility of being taken prisoner. How many first-rate warriors, commissars and commanders have put their last round through their own heads when nothing was left for them but shameful capture! During the two years I have been visiting the fronts, comrades, I have observed how a new psychology is acquiring a finer temper! We once heard with interest of the Japanese caste of Samurai, who never hesitate to die for the sake of collective, national interests, the interests of the community as a whole. I must say that in our commissars, our leading Communist fighters, we have obtained a new, Communist order of Sainurai, who – without benefit of caste privileges – are able to die and to teach others to die, for the cause of the working class.

Political Work in the Red Army

The welding together of commissars, advanced workers, members of the Communist cell, and the remaining mass of members of a military unit is effected primarily through political work such as no army before has ever experienced on the same scale. This political work has developed very extensively in recent years, thanks to the large influx of personnel, publications and resources. It is enough to mention that even in January of this year we had not one single school of literacy in the army, whereas now we have 3,800 such schools. Before January 1 we had 32 clubs but we now have 1,315. Before January 1 we had not a single mobile library, but now we have 2,392. We are spending hundred of millions of roubles a year -- in terms, admittedly, of our present miserable currency -- on cultural and educational work in the army. This work will send back to the villages and factories people who will stand two or three heads higher than when they left those villages and factories to join the army.

The Commanding Personnel

The problem of *commanding personnel* presented us with immense difficulties. This constituted a big problem for the state power in all critical epochs, in all crucial revolutionary periods, and it was even harder for us, with our state system which is absolutely new in class content and type. I recall how, on April 22 of last year, when I had to give a report to the Central Executive Committee defining the road for the formation of the Red Army, a report in which I insisted on the need to enlist military specialists in the army and the need to establish the institution of commissars – I would ask the representatives of the opposition to recall this fact, not for the sake of polemics but so that we may be able to learn something from each other if we really wish to work on the basis of the Soviet regime – I would ask them to recall what was said to us on that occasion. I remember it very well, without having to look up old minutes. We were told that we were not going to create

an army, that this was a farcical project, that we were going to appoint commissars like a couple of archangels, one on either side of each counter-revolutionary commander. More than a year and a half has gone by since that time. You know how difficult this period has been, as regards military matters in general and, in particular, as regards the internal building of the army. There have been not a few traitors, not a few cases of former officers crossing over to the enemy's camp.

Let us take the history of the most brilliant army the world has known, the army of the Great French Revolution. It was formed by way of an 'arnalgain', as they said in those days, of the old Royal battalions of the line with the new volunteer battalions. Of the 15,000 officers of the Royal Army, about half fled to the camp of the counter-revolution and the foreign foe, while the other half remained to serve revolutionary France along with the new commanders. Take the civil war in the United States in the 1860s – there the same division in the commanding personnel took place, in a new form. The higher ranks were split, with the majority going to the South, to the slaveowners, and ensuring superiority for the Southerners during the first months and years of the war, until the revolutionary army of the North had created for itself the necessary cadre of commanders, and, through them, of the army. There were ebbs and flows in this process in our case, too: a complex selection, both natural and artificial, took place, in which many factors played a role – but, first and foremost, the actual course of military operations, our failures and successes, our international situation. Collaboration between our commissars and the commanders had very great influence on events. I will permit myself to emphasise here once again that a tremendous impression was made on many former generals, colonels, and so on, by the fact that horny-handed workers from Moscow and Petrograd have shown that they possess ten times as much understanding of questions of politics and world development as the learned military specialists themselves!

The former officers have gradually learnt to treat their commissar collaborators with respect. They have seen, day after day, how the commissars, the representatives of the ruling party, delegated by the centre to perform responsible tasks, devote themselves whole-heartedly to their work, without asking for any privileges, and are in the forefront wherever the greatest danger threatens. This moral influence of the commissars could not fail to attract the best section of the commanders to the class which possesses thousands and tens of thousands of such workers to serve its needs.

Consequently, our army has not just mechanically poured into itself tens of thousands of former regular officers – and it is indeed a matter of tens of thousands – no, our army has organically absorbed many thousands of them, psychologically assimilated them, morally re-casting them and subjecting them to the new spirit that reigns in our army – not from fear but from conscience.

The Command Courses

Along with this, comrades, we established, on the basis of your resolution, a very substantial number of *courses for commanding personnel* for the most militant workers and conscious peasants, drawn both from the old army and from our Red Army. I shall not mention any figures, for fully comprehensible

reasons, but will merely say that there are several dozen such courses. The number of courses has doubled in the year covered by this report, and the number of students attending them has trebled, so that the army is being replenished to an increasing extent, so far as the junior positions of command are concerned, with men who have come directly from the factories and the villages. They undergo short command courses: then, after the necessary military probation period, serve in the best fighting units, the most capable of them are put through military middle schools and become staff cadets, commanders of regiments and brigades, and finally, the best-prepared of them attend our Red General Staff Academy and our Artillery and Engineers' Academy.

Proletarian Commanders

Finally, comrades, we have a certain number of responsible commanders who have not been through either the old schools or our new courses and academies. These are in many cases Communists whom we have sent to the front in order to familiarise themselves with military matters and to bring political consciousness to the Red Army men. Thanks to their personal qualities, they have quickly passed through the necessary probation for undertaking extremely responsible tasks of command. Comrade Frunze, the representative of the Turkestan Front, has spoken here. Unless I am mistaken, his only previous military experience consisted of shooting at a policeman who had fired on some workers. [7] I am unable to inform you whether or not he hit the policeman. He was sent to the front after he had worked in a district military commissariat. At the present time he commands the armies of a front and, in the opinion of the High Command, does so with success. The 8th Army, one of the best, is commanded by Comrade Sokolnikov, who was known to us, in his time as a member of the Party's Central Committee, as an excellent journalist and orator, but a complete civilian. Now he commands an army and, again in the opinion of the High Command, commands it well. Among our most brilliant commanders is a young former Ensign, or perhaps Second-Lieutenant, Comrade Tukhachevsky, who has conducted a number of brilliant operations and decisive actions against Koichak. At the divisional level we find even more heterogeneity. There we discover numerous former NCOs who are now, to use the old terminology, generals commanding divisions. Some of our smaller armies have been commanded by a former junior non-combatant NCO whose previous occupation was peaceful enough – he was a hairdresser. In this sphere, comrades, we have no fixed pattern, no 'principle' of any kind, we seek good, loyal commanders wherever we can find them, and if in some place the divisions holding adjacent sectors are commanded by a former general, a metal-worker and some ex-NCOs, and if they all compete with each other in displaying skill and vigour, that does no harm to the workers' and peasants' revolution. Betrayals have occurred, to be sure, in recent times. Quite recently there was a major act of betrayal in Petrograd, where the conspiracy was headed by a General Staff colonel, one Lundkvist. [8] But, comrades, besides the betrayals and the traitors, besides the agents of foreign imperialism, the Lundkvists, the regular *officers serving* in the Red Army have produced their heroes and martyrs, in the persons of General Stankevich, General Nikolayev and others whose names have not yet been inscribed either in our memories or on paper. Steadfast General Nikolayev, who was hanged by Balakhovich, was solemnly interred in Petrograd. We buried General

Stankevich not long ago here, under the walls of the Kremlin, on Red Square. He was an old man of 62. He was the second-in-command of the 13th Army and was taken prisoner during the retreat. The enemy invited him to go over to their side, but he refused. With a red-hot iron they burned in his chest that red star of ours which many comrades have seen here in Moscow. The old general put the noose round his neck himself, thrusting the hangman aside, and died worthily for the cause of the workers' and peasants' revolution.

Cases of betrayal inevitably give rise, of course, to suspiciousness and vigilant supervision, which sometimes has a painful effect on those comrades and colleagues of ours in army work who have come to us as former officers from the sphere of the old Tsarist army. Many of us have had a number of occasions to observe this difficult type of situation. But I think that a period has now begun in which we shall increasingly leave that problem behind us. The Red Army and the Soviet regime have shown their strength, and that section of the commanders who waver and vacillate, looking to see where power lies, so as to take shelter under it, is getting smaller and smaller. The process which is taking place among the higher commanders of the Red Army, the process of developing not a Party but a Soviet ideology, must now find open expression. There must now be formed such firm views, such a Soviet atmosphere among the former regular officers as would annihilate all those Tushino impostors and migrants [See note on page 195 of Volume I.], so that every regular officer may know that his is not some temporary, mercenary service but a high achievement, a feat of the spirit and of the blood – that for anyone who cherishes an ulterior motive, anyone who harbours a grudge, anyone who looks hopefully towards the Southern front, no place may remain, morally or physically, among the former regular officers who are now honourably serving the workers' and peasants' republic and defending its independence and its future, on all our fronts.

New Prospects

In any event, comrades, in this sphere as in many others, we have left the greatest difficulties behind us, and, as a result, new prospects and possibilities are opening up before us. The transformation of the outlook of the old regular officers, the creation of extensive command cadres from among the workers and peasants, the appearance of a whole number of self-taught commanders from among Party workers, the appearance of outstanding commanders like Budyonny, a former NCO of the old army who now commands with success a very large cavalry formation – this creation of a unified body of Red commanders makes it possible for us gradually to *go over to one-man command*. Because, of course, the combination of a commander with one or two commissars, that combination which in its time was mocked by the representatives of the opposition, is not an ideal and permanent combination in army work. On the contrary, army work requires that the commander unite in his own person military, political and moral authority. The more we acquire a reliable, stable, conscious, devoted body of commanders, the more the ground is established for introducing complete one-man command, while retaining, of course, in all its importance, the apparatus for political work. This is one of the tasks in the sphere of army organisation which we must get down to fulfilling in the near future.

The Supply Services of the Red Army

Problems of supply presented us with enormous difficulties. Our Soviet apparatus was subjected to a very severe test in this sphere, and stood up to it. There was a period when our factories were not producing a single cartridge, rifle, machinegun or gun, a period when the old apparatus had broken down and we had not yet applied ourselves seriously to creating a new one. When we revived our war industry, its production gave extremely modest results in the first month. I will say, while not being able to quote absolute figures, that last month's production gave results that were ten or fifteen times as great as in that first month, when we first got to work. And here we can say what we said about mobilisation: this fact has two aspects. It means that we are forcing our exhausted country to work for war purposes. But we have been forced to fight. Since we have been forced to fight, we must be armed, and we want to be well-armed. We have achieved the necessary results. Our apparatus has proved capable of restoring war industry. In this respect we now stand with both feet quite firmly on the ground. The danger that we might perish from lack of cartridges, rifles, machine-guns and guns, the danger which threatened us eight or ten months ago, no longer exists – it has vanished, it is no more. This very fact, I say in passing, testifies that an apparatus which has proved capable of setting war industry on its feet within a few months will be capable of reviving industry in general when we have made accessible to this industry the sources of coal in the Donbas and of oil in Caucasia, as we have already made accessible the sources of cotton in Turkestan. Thus, in this case, the test which our military apparatus has passed is a test for our regime in general.

The army supply services have now been concentrated, in all their stages – production, distribution, accounting. Several months ago, Comrade Rykov was put in charge of all army supplies, and given wide powers. This circumstance – the concentration of a matter of paramount importance in the hands of one man, with practical co-operation from the trade unions and other labour organisations – has produced, as I have already said, great results in terms of production. In the matter of recording actually available equipment we have also achieved great successes: we know exactly what we possess and what we lack, we know how many pairs of boots and how many greatcoats we shall have next month. It must be confessed that when we began our work it was not so simple for us to count up what we possessed, to take an inventory of it, to learn to move it around in accordance with the requirements and operations of our forces. Our forces are now, basically, all shod, clothed and fed, at least on the fronts that are most accessible to us. Between our supply organs and the Supreme Economic Council, on the one hand, and the People's Commissariats for Food and Transport, on the other – properly co-operative relations have been established, which will increasingly enable work to proceed without interruptions.

Army supply is carried out, however, under difficulties, because our country as a whole is short of supplies: the workers and peasants are without footwear, underwear or overcoats. Consequently, leakages occur, here and there, through which supplies intended for the army pass into the hands of the civil population – most frequently, through the agency of the soldiers themselves. This can be explained, of course, but it cannot be tolerated, for we have, first and foremost, to clothe the Red Army. I do not even speak

about the way in which equipment which is taken from the army becomes all too often material that is bought and sold, the object of criminal speculation in various markets and odd corners. As yet, we have not achieved the necessary results where this matter is concerned. We have now applied ourselves to the struggle against misuse of army equipment. I direct your attention to this prosaic problem, because it is of very great importance for us: we shall not, if we go on at this rate, succeed in keeping our army clothed and shod. We are following two lines in our fight against unbridled wastage and criminal embezzlement. The first is to secure more precise accounting not only from above but also from below, in the army units themselves, more accurate conduct of company and regimental financial affairs, precise individual equipment issue records, introduction of a soldier's service book, in which everything issued to him is precisely recorded. The other line is not departmental in character. We need to mobilise the public opinion of the advanced workers and the conscious peasants, starting with the *volost* executive committees and the factory committees, against the misuse of army equipment, so that it may be made clear to everyone that, at the present time, greatcoats and boots are indispensable elements among the resources that we need to overcome our enemies. Only if this is done can our Central Department for Army Procurement, which is now working incomparably better than a few months ago, manage to furnish clothing and footwear uninterruptedly to the Red Army.

To sum up what I have said about the building of the Red Army, I should say that we have no grounds for changing our methods, the line of our work in the sphere of building the Red Army. What we need to do is to develop, deepen and improve these methods.

The Education of the Commanding Personnel

In the matter of the education of our commanding personnel we are faced with the task of increasing the number of students attending courses and bringing the actual instruction that is given close to the new conditions and forms of our war. There is still, in our teaching in this sphere, too much that is routine, old-fashioned, superficial theorising. Yet the workers and peasants who form the student body require a more practical, down-to-earth system of instruction. In this sense the complaints received from the fronts have found an echo at the centre. Changes are being made and will be carried through to the end.

Care for the Families of Red Army Men

Comrades, we must improve our care for the families of Red Army men in the localities. This is a question of enormous importance, which finds reflection in the soldiers' morale. At the presidium I was reminded about this by one of the delegates. It is an extremely serious problem. And the local Soviet institutions are not doing everything they could where this is concerned.

More care and attention must be devoted to the sick and wounded Red Army men. In that connection facts have come to light which are absolutely inadmissible and shameful for a workers' and peasants' country. It happens

too often with us, partly because of our general poverty and partly because of the blunting of feeling for any sort of misfortune, that a soldier who has been wounded and withdrawn from the front disappears completely from the field of battle, and the medical personnel and nurses are far from always attentive in their treatment of him. I say frankly that the bourgeoisie have managed to surround *their* wounded – who are mostly, of course, officers – with much more attention than we provide for our wounded and sick Red Army men. I ask you, when you go back to the localities, to put this burning question on the agenda for discussion by the local Soviet institutions. We must mobilise the public, Soviet initiative of the workers and peasants, both men and women, to come to the aid of the official medical institutions of the army. The experience of Petrograd and Moscow shows that substantial results can be achieved in this respect.

Army Transport

Regarding transport, I mentioned that we have established proper organisational relations with the Transport Department. The People's Commissar for Transport and his deputy have, by decision of the Council of People's Commissars, been brought into the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic. However, co-operation at the top is not enough. Our railways have, under the conditions of civil war, devoted the bulk of their forces and resources to military transport work. This very close co-operation, which has been made our duty by a decision of the Council of People's Commissars, must be put into effect in the localities as well, especially throughout the lengthy zone of the front and adjacent areas. Many representatives of the armies and fronts are present here, and I permit myself to direct your attention to this question of first-rate importance.

Everything now depends on transport. I say frankly that there is more than one division on the Eastern front that we cannot at this moment, after the rout of Kolchak, transfer to the South so as to finish with Denikin. Where does the difficulty lie? In the sphere of transport. We shall, of course, overcome this difficulty. In the elevators in the store-houses of the Food Department there is a large quantity of foodstuffs. Where is the difficulty? In the sphere of transport. And the chief difficulty where transport is concerned is fuel. Two problems for the army result from this situation. First, the need to pay the closest attention, with very strict control and vigilance, to the use being made of rolling stock at the fronts. Today, the retention even of a single truck, not to speak of a locomotive, surplus to requirements, the unnecessary retention of a truck for even one hour is a most serious crime against the interests of the workers and peasants, and you, comrades, delegates from the fronts and armies, must, when you return to the localities, make all the workers in the War Department aware of this, and establish a state of affairs such that, if anyone falls to show a proper sense of responsibility in this matter, he will be brought to book on the very grave charge of violating the fundamental needs of the working masses in respect of food and other supplies.

At the same time, nobody is so well able as the War Department, with its extensive forces and resources, to help the railways with fuel, especially in the zone adjoining the front, where we have an enormous number of excellent Soviet workers. If Moscow is short of fuel, this is not through 'bureaucratism',

as the opposition says, but because Moscow has given threequarters of her best workers to all our fronts. But at these fronts the best workers, drawing upon the forces and resources of the War Department, can ensure, first and foremost, that the railways of the front and near-front zones receive the necessary quantity of firewood. This is already being done, and it must go on being done, with increasing vigour.

The Forthcoming Demobilisation

These, comrades, are our practical conclusions. As regards prospects, the question arises before us of the further destiny of our Red Army. When it has ended its struggle and we make peace, we shall be faced with the question of demobilisation. This question may seem at present to be too hypothetical to deserve the attention of the highest legislative organ of the Soviet land. I shall confine myself to a few necessary remarks. The question of demobilisation is a very complex and responsible one, calling for a great deal of preparation. We have started on this, and the timeliness of the move will be acknowledged by all, in view of the undoubted turn in our international situation which we have noted at this congress.

The Militia System

But if we speak of making peace in the next few months, this peace cannot be termed a perpetual peace. So long as class states remain, so long as powerful centres of imperialism remain, in the Far East, in America and in Europe, the possibility is not excluded that the peace which we hope to establish in the near future will prove to be merely a more protracted breathing space for us, until the next attack by the imperialist vultures of the West or the East. Since this possibility is not excluded, our concern must be not with disarming but with changing the organisation of the state's armed forces. We need to send back the workers to the factories and the peasants to the villages, to restore industry, to revive agriculture. Consequently, we must bring the soldier close to the worker, the regiment close to the factory, the village and the *volost*. Consequently, we must go over to introducing the militia system for the armed forces of the Soviet Republic. Today, objections to the militia system are subsiding more and more, even among the most conservative section of our military specialists. Actually, the world war taught something about this matter even to some of the most hardened pedants. Every one of the first-class militaristic states entered the world war with an army which appears tiny when compared with the armed forces that they threw into battle in the world war at the moment of its highest development.. Here are a few figures. On the eve of the war, Russia had 1,320,000 soldiers, but during the war this number increased to 6,860,000. France had 630,000, which increased to 4,500,000. Germany had 770,000, which increased to 5,490,000. Austria-Hungary had 390,000, which increased to 3,500,000. The United States had 252,000, but brought this number up to 1,790,000.

In other words, the number of soldiers who fought during the imperialist war was five, seven or nine times greater than the number who made up the regular armies of peacetime. This means that the armies possessed cadres of regular troops, and then, in the course of the war, each improvised a defacto

militia, a large national army, which, however, was based upon the very narrow foundation of the regular army. One national army turned out to be better, another worse, but, in any case, the armies that fought each other were not those armies which the military theoreticians and general staffs of all countries had had in mind. There was no solving of a problem by means of a single lightning-blow. They were obliged to have recourse to their countries' basic resources, on the ground and under it, to reach down to the profoundest depths and, therefore, to improvise.

The socialist parties of the Second International stood for the creation of a militia in peacetime. Jaures urged this idea, with his characteristic brilliance, in the form of bills to be laid before the French parliament, in his book *The New Army*. True, with his democratic utopianism, Jaures supposed that the transition to the new army would take place gradually, imperceptibly, through partial reforms, just as the transition to socialism was, as he saw it, to be accomplished by means of gradual democratisation. In this he was profoundly mistaken. History has shown mankind a different path – a path of most ferocious bloody conflicts, of world-wide imperialist slaughter and then civil war. But the idea of a militia, that is, of the transformation of the army into an armed nation, bringing the army close to the land and the factories, forming territorial districts for the regiments, brigades and divisions, each with its own cadre of commanders and each undertaking the military training of the local workers and peasants, so that every worker and peasant of the appropriate age-group belongs to a particular district, and is consequently included beforehand in a particular regiment and can at once be called up and placed under arms – that idea confronts us as the only possible prospect for our standing army in peacetime. We must switch our system of universal military training on to that path, and this will mean an enormous amount of work. [\[9\]](#)

The Situation at the Fronts

That, comrades, is all that I can tell you about the building of the Red Army. Let me now turn to the question of the actions of the Red Army on our fronts. Maps of our fronts have been provided for you here, drawn by our field staff under the leadership of its chief, P.P. Lebedev. On these maps you will find the line of our fronts as these stood on November 27. Perhaps you will examine these maps later, at your leisure, so as not to get in each other's way during the meeting. The fundamental ideas which I am going to set before you will be quite intelligible without your needing to have maps in front of you.

During all this time, comrades, however our military situation may have altered, in one respect it has remained the same: we have been and are surrounded on all sides. We have a Northern, a Western, a Southern and an Eastern front, with the last-named divided into two sections – the Eastern front properly so called, and the Turkestan front. And it is only our successes on the Eastern front that have opened for us a certain aperture into the depths of the continent of Asia. So far, however, this process has not produced all the results we had expected. It will produce them – but, as of today, we are still surrounded on all sides.

We occupy the central position in relation to all our fronts.

This gives us an immense military advantage and enables us to transfer

reserves from a front that is less important or more stable to one that is more important or less stable. This advantage, however, imposes very heavy burdens on our means of transport, and that, in turn, is reflected in the country's entire economic condition. This state of affairs can be ended only through a decisive victory for us in the South.

The Northern Front

Let us begin our review of our fronts, comrades, with the front which is least mobile, least dramatic – the Northern front. It was formed after Archangel had been seized by the British, through a landing, and principally, through an air-raid. And if we recall that period, when our first regiments – what feeble imitations of regiments they were! – fled without a fight from Archangel when the air squadron of the British bandits appeared above them, and if we compare with those troops the army that we have now, the one that fought before Petrograd, and defended Petrograd, we can say that we have made considerable progress since those days.

After the fall of Archangel the Northern front was a front that moved very little, for the reason that it was never of decisive importance for us. Operations on that front were conducted on a very restricted area – that is to say, over an immense area, territorially, but with the direct military actions taking place in defiles, along railways or along rivers. There were three main directions on that front – Murmansk, the Archangel railway and the Northern Dvina river. From our communiqués you know that no major military events have occurred there. But I will take this opportunity to acknowledge here the exceptionally heroic work performed by our soldiers, commanders and commissars on the Northern front. Climatic conditions are very severe there. The winter brings fierce cold and deep snow. They have sometimes had to drag their guns on sledges, themselves up to their chests in snow. In the autumn and the spring, and in the summer as well, the mud is deep there, and conditions are bad for the health of the soldiers. Our Red forces, which are usually accustomed to advancing, or to becoming demoralised if there is a prolonged standstill, have formed, in that severe atmosphere of the North, units which, despite the immobility of the front, are distinguished by their magnificent stubbornness. And the Northern front has provided numerous fine regiments for our other fronts: in particular, it contributed several regiments for the defence of Petrograd, it gave us a whole number of excellent commanders and workers. It is sufficient to mention the present commander of the Western front, Comrade Gittis, and Comrade Samoilo, who now commands the 6th Army.

The Northern army's task is plain and simple – to cleanse our North country. There can be no doubt that the time is coming, and it is not far off, when the 6th Army will be given by the High Command a broom long enough to sweep the WhiteGuard bands from the White-Sea and Murman coasts.

Until that time comes we shall remain firmly convinced that the 6th Northern Army will not allow the White Guards to move south, towards Petrograd, towards Vologda, to cut the Northern Railway. In the Northern Army we have, in hard and unfavourable conditions, an honourable and reliable sentinel of the Soviet Republic.

The Eastern Front

Our Eastern front has been a very important one, at certain moments the decisive front for the Soviet Republic. Allow me first of all to acquaint you with some figures which are instructive regarding the results of our struggles. These figures will make clear the extent of our victories on the Eastern front.

Taking a general view, as a result of our struggle during the past report-year, our forces have recovered for the Soviet Republic 1,194,000 square versts, with a population of 15,880,000; these figures do not include the area or population

of Turkestan, for which not even approximate data can be provided at the moment. Of this amount, the Eastern front alone had recovered for the Soviet Republic by November 27 1,300,000 [sic] square versts, with a population of 13,213,000 – the lion's share of all the Red Army conquests. These figures are already out-of-date, for in the last few days our army has made significant advances. You know that the conduct of operations on the Eastern front has been principally in the hands of the present Commander-in-Chief, S.S. Kamenev, who is here, at the 7th Congress of Soviets, in one of the boxes.

It was there, on the Eastern front, that we began to create our first regular armies, before Kazan and Simbirsk, in August of last year. We had there our first big success, which culminated in the taking of Orenburg, Uraisk and Ufa. Our successes continued, with short interruptions, until the beginning of March this year, when Kolchak brought up freshly-formed reserves from out of the depths of Siberia and struck at us with a heavy mass of men, forcing our troops to fall back. Everyone remembers those critical weeks in March and April, when Kolchak's troops drew near to the middle reaches of the Volga, when they were only 70 or 80 versts from Kazan and 30 versts from the Volga at Spassk. The world stock-exchange was already quoting Kolchak as the crowned ruler of an enslaved country. It was then that the first great effort was made by the Soviet power, by the Party and the workers' organisations. Within a short time, fresh units were mobilised, formed, armed and trained, and thousands of Communists poured into the armies of the Eastern front. Our general constructive work in the military sphere was given a new tempo, a special degree of tension was achieved. Formation administrations were created at the front which supplemented the work being done by the All-Russia General Staff under the leadership of N.I. Rattel. [Rattel, who was Quartermaster-General of the South-Western front during World War 1, was one of the first Tsarist generals to come over to the Bolsheviks after the revolution.] The intensity of our work in the sphere of the army's political education was doubled and trebled. Under experienced operational leadership this produced results already at the end of April. Beginning in April we went over to the offensive at Buzuluk, Bugulma, and Belebey, an offensive which developed further without a break during May, June, July and August. We crossed the Urals, crossed the Tobol, threw the enemy back beyond the Ishim. At the beginning of September Kolchak made his final effort, bringing up his last reserves to oppose us. We withdrew two hundred versts behind the Tobol and dug in there. Our forces reorganised themselves, absorbed reinforcements, and once more took the offensive, this time dealing Koichak his death-blow. The facts and all the reports that we have received from there testify to this. The most recent report given by I.N. Smirnov, one of the most outstanding workers in our Siberian armies and the

Chairman of the Siberian Revolutionary Committee, states: 'Altai Province has been seized by insurgents. We have despatched a revolutionary committee thither. Tomsk and Yenisei Provinces are in the grip of revolt. The guerrillas are finishing Kolchak off. The army and the Siberian Revolutionary Committee are faced with primarily organisational tasks. The watchword for this winter must be creative work.'

Thus, to a considerable extent, Siberia is now passing from the hands of the army into those of the Soviet institutions, of the Party and the trade-union organisations, for the carrying out of Soviet constructive work in the cultural sphere. [\[10\]](#)

The Turkestan Front

Our successes in the East have necessitated the separation from the Eastern front of a *Turkestan front*. After we had taken and then defended Orenburg and, in that area, had smashed Kolchak's southern army, so that we took 45,000 prisoners, the gate to Turkestan was open; or, more correctly, the moment when the gate to Turkestan would be opened drew near. The final conjunction of the troops of the Turkestan front, that is, of our front which faces towards Turkestan, with the troops that were in Turkestan itself took place, if I am not mistaken, in the middle of September, in the area of Emba station on the Orenburg-Tashkent Railway, which is now operating throughout its length. It has been put to rights technically and the first trains loaded with cotton have passed along it, while trainloads of army units have been sent down it into Turkestan. The difficulty lies, there as everywhere else, in the supply of fuel, but the commander of the Turkestan front has hopes and prospects that these problems will be overcome by means of local resources.

The Turkestan front has opened up inexhaustible possibilities for us.

Our success in the East – reuniting Turkestan with the Soviet Republic, has enhanced the prestige of the Soviet power all over the enslaved and oppressed Continent of Asia. The first envoy we received from Asia was the special mission from Afghanistan. Turkestan is now the object of great attention on the part of all the conscious elements in Asia. And there, in Turkestan, the advanced elements of Asia – Afghanistan, Persia, India, China, Korea – which have been and still are enduring colonial and semi-colonial oppression of their countries, will find new ideas and new means for their national and social liberation.

All this, however, is still in the future. Our most immediate task in Turkestan, on the military side, is to link it up completely with the Soviet Republic through unity of organisation and unity of the army – in the first place, by subjecting all the guerrilla units which they have there to our common regime. About that, however, I shall speak in a general connection, after I have finished my review of the fronts.

The Western Front

The fate of our Western front has been more directly bound up than any other

with the fate of the Soviet Republic. This front, which had been left to us as a heritage from the old imperialist war, was altered to our disadvantage after the conclusion of the first negotiations at Brest-Litovsk. When German militarism collapsed, we took the offensive, in the persons of our Estonian, Lettish and Lithuanian-Byelorussian units ` and this offensive reached its highest point in March. Considerable parts of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Byelorussia fell under the rule of the working class. They formed their own armies there, but at that moment the Entente showed itself able to arm and move against us in good time the bourgeois-kulak elements, together with the peasant elements ideologically and materially under their control, of these countries which had been separated off in the Western zone from the former Tsarist empire. In April these White-Guard armies took the offensive against us. This happened at the same time as Kolchak's offensive in the East and our fierce battles in the South. We were not able to withstand with sufficient success the offensive of the White armies of Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. Consequently, the workers' power gradually retreated in the West, surrendering one point after another, including such major centres as Vilna and Riga. Only at the beginning of September was this retreat halted, along the line of the Western Dvina, from Polotsk to the Dvina, and then along the line from the Berezina to the Pripet. That is where we stand at the present time.

On this Western front, which has remained immobile, since September, from Pskov southward, the northern sector has presented us with a dramatic picture of offensive and fierce conflict. What was at stake was Petrograd and its fate. The world bourgeoisie cast lots for the garments of Petrograd. [11] Petrograd was twice defended by the valiant 7th Army, in conjunction with the 15th Army of the Western Front, with the heroic support of the Petrograd proletariat, on whom you conferred the Order of the Red Banner. Fierce battles were fought there, in which the advanced fighters of the working class generously gave of their heroism, their self-sacrifice and their lives, under the very harsh conditions of the cold days of our early winter: the battlefield before Petrograd was a real battlefield, and many of the bravest and best now lie there forever!

Our armies defended Petrograd. But a moment came when the city was in very great danger, the moment when the question of Finland grew very acute. How did we act? I could now read to you some secret orders, or parts of orders, concerning this matter, which are no longer secret, because the events to which they refer are now behind us. From among these orders I will mention the order issued to the 7th Army concerning the Karelian frontier. In what was said by the representative of the Menshevik group who spoke here we heard a friendly warning: do not attack the small states on our Western frontier, let them decide their fate by means of their own internal forces. To this I reply that we have not in the least intended nor do we intend, to provoke, either directly or indirectly, any of the states which have been correctly described here as vassals of the Entente – despite the fact that they have more than once provoked us. At the same time comrades, when we were fighting for Petrograd on the Pulkovo Heights, the Finnish White Guards fired on our units not only with machine-guns but with artillery, and their airmen dropped dynamite on our territory. From the standpoint of international law, this was obviously enough to justify an outright declaration of war or a direct attack by us. After the first period of difficulty, in the second half of October, we concentrated in Petrograd and in front of Petrograd forces sufficient to give a rebuff in the direction of the Karelian sector. How did we

act? I tell you here, and I can at any moment confirm what I say with official documents, that our order to the commander of the 7th Army, where Finland was concerned, stated that, despite the provocation, the gunfire and the particular outrages committed along the frontier, the army must refrain from any act on our part which might be interpreted as showing a desire or an attempt to attack Finland. At the same time, of course, measures were taken to explain to the Finnish workers why we were unwilling to fight against Finland, to explain our complete readiness to tolerate a bourgeois Finland only two days' march from Petrograd – provided that the Finnish bourgeoisie clearly understood that an independent Finland can survive at a distance of a few dozen versts from Petrograd only on condition that they never cast their forces into the scales in which the fate of Petrograd is being decided. [12] repeat: in the second half of the struggle we were strong enough to launch a counter-offensive, but we told the command in that sector: 'Do not reply to provocation, but if Finland intervenes, if she crosses the frontier, if she tries to strike at Petrograd, then give a full reply, don't just repulse the enemy but take the offensive and carry it through to the end.' The army was ordered to make responsible for any attempt on Petrograd not merely the Finnish bourgeoisie as a whole but every individual Finnish bourgeois in Vyborg and Heisingfors – to treat them all as bandits who had attacked the Petrograd proletariat.

In the battle for Petrograd our Baltic fleet covered itself with glory: as was rightly said here by Comrade Baranov, himself a sailor and a member of the Revolutionary War Council, it not only did what it could and was duty-bound to do on the water, in its natural element, but at critical moments it put ashore thousands of sailors whom we sent to the places of greatest danger.

If we sum up our operations on the Western front, we see that, despite our withdrawal to the line I mentioned, we have, on balance, enlarged the territory of the Soviet Republic by 40,800 square versts, with a population of about two millions.

A couple of additional remarks about Yudenich's adventure. His beaten army has crossed, as you know, into Estonia. Our forces are standing approximately on the line of the Narova, which we regard, until such changes as may be made as a result of a peace treaty, as the frontier between Soviet Russia and Estonia. Here I will permit myself to return for a moment to what the representative of the Mensheviks said from this tribune, when he gave us the advice (which corresponds fully to our own line) not to attack Estonia and Finland. I draw his attention to the fact that the Estonian Government, which attacked us alongside Yudenich and waged war on our territory without any sort of excuse, that this government included the Mensheviks of Estonia.

Our struggle against Yudenich possesses some instructional interest for Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and Poland. We have said frankly that, from the strategical standpoint, the Western front is of secondary importance for us and is therefore not the strongest of our fronts. But we have shown, in dealing with Yudenich's adventure, that at a moment when danger to the vital centres of our country threatens from this front, our command and transport apparatus is sufficiently strong and flexible to switch the right number of fighting divisions to the right place at the right time. However tempting one or other sector of our front may have seemed to our enemies, the memory of our operations against Yudenich will remain as a big notch cut in their

consciousness. They will always recall and keep in mind that we shall always find, both in the centre of the country and on other fronts, a sufficient number of reserves to give a rebuff to any enemy who attacks Moscow, Petrograd or Tula, no matter from which direction he threatens us – across the Narova, across the Western Dvina, or across the Berezina.

The Southern Front

Today the most important front is, and will remain until its tasks have been fully accomplished, the Southern Front. Here, in the South, is our Vendée – on the Don and in the Kuban.

The war in the south is the civil war that has gone on longest. It was begun by Cossack forces before the Czechoslovaks created a fulcrum for the 'Constituent Assembly' and Kolchak in the East. Here, in the South, in the first campaign of this year, starting in January, we dealt a severe, almost mortal blow to Krasnov's Don forces. Our success on the Southern front continued through January, February, March and April, until the middle of May. In the middle of May we were dealt a heavy blow in the chest, and began to retreat. This blow was not dealt by the Don army alone: Denikin's Volunteer Army joined in it, with forces from North Caucasia, the Kuban and the Ukraine. Only the combination of the Volunteer, Caucasian and Don armies gave the Southern counter-revolution superiority over our forces, which during the first four months of this year had struck a hard, a deadly blow at Krasnov's army, and got within 40 versts of Novocherkassk. [\[13\]](#)

The Ukrainian Front

The Southern Front is naturally linked with the Ukrainian Front. In its origin, however, the Ukrainian Front was connected not so much with our Southern as with our Western Front. The Ukrainian Front was a legacy from German imperialism. The collapse of German militarism meant that our Ukrainian Front became dynamic. We advanced southward from Kursk. Our success here was startling. Insignificant forces, together with guerrillas, under the overall leadership of Comrade Antonov-Ovseyenko, cleared the whole of the Ukraine in a short time. In May we conquered the Crimea, in June the Black Sea coast.

This period when we liberated the Southern Ukraine coincided with the moment when Denikin's and Krasnov's forces were amalgamated. Our defeats on the Southern front, in the Donets and Tsaritsyn directions, predetermined our subsequent defeats on the Ukrainian front. The enemy was the same in both places. The extraordinary rapidity with which our defeats occurred in the Ukraine was due to the same cause as the rapidity of our successes: the extreme instability of the situation in the Ukraine. The numerous changes of regime in the Ukraine had shattered social relations and the people's psychology, and for a long period transformed broad circles of the peasantry into human material which it is extremely difficult to form into a crystallised social whole. This is true also of the unconscious section of the Ukrainian working class. A good dozen different regimes succeeded each other within a couple of years, and under these regimes the Ukrainian kulak alone kept firmly on his feet, missing no opportunities for gain. Regimes rise and regimes fall,

but the Ukrainian kulak stays put as master of the countryside. This Ukrainian kulak has armed himself with a rifle, for he is, so far, tougher and more determined than the middle peasant, not to mention the poor peasant. In short, the element of anarchy and of the destruction of all the foundations for human existence in the Ukraine is the Ukrainian kulak, who, having seen off all the regimes that there are in the world, has become insolent and armed himself to the teeth. It can be said with certainty that no regime will survive and stabilise itself in the Ukraine until the Ukrainian kulak has been disarmed. This is the new task for the Red forces which are entering the Ukraine. The Ukrainian front is now wholly merged with our Southern front, for the enemy is one and the same in both places. This enemy is Denikin, whom the Ukrainian kulak has helped to conquer the Ukraine. Our command is now, in the Ukraine as elsewhere, moving forward the regular units of our Red Army. There will, perhaps, be no easy triumphal march of revolt, for our Ukrainian troops have been ordered not to occupy a single town or a single *uyezd* unless sufficient forces are available to ensure that this *uyezd* can be brought permanently under local Ukrainian Soviet authority, and does not become the property of separate irresponsible bands. We shall advance in a planned way. I say 'we' because by virtue of the agreement made between the Ukrainian Central Executive Committee and the All-Russia Central Executive Committee in June of this year, our army has been united with that of the Ukrainian Republic, with a single command, and this arrangement will continue in full force until the Ukrainian Soviet authorities tell us that the bond is to be severed. [14] We are convinced that this will never happen. We are advancing systematically, stubbornly and consistently in the Ukraine, and the fate of the Ukraine will be decided at the same time as that of the Donets area and the Don region, after which the fate of North Caucasia will also be decided.

Our advance is now proceeding with a degree of success with which we can, by and large, be satisfied. We have not yet, of course, recovered such extensive areas in the South as in the East, where our forces have advanced, in the lengthiest of their directions, a distance of 1,750 versts, as the crow flies. In the South we have, so far, traversed 250 versts, as the crow flies, reckoning from the point where the front stood when Denikin was north of Orel. The last phase of our offensive developed in the second half of October. Everywhere we advanced after very fierce fighting. On the South-Eastern sector of the Southern front we enjoyed success in the first period. Then a hitch occurred, which, however, the High Command has good grounds for regarding as only temporary. We are now advancing mostly in the centre and on the right flank, but this is something determined by the temporary distribution of our forces and the enemy's, by the strategical combinations of the front. In general, we enjoy superiority of forces on this front, the initiative is in our hands, we have reserves, we have supplies, we have a firm command – in short, complete victory over Denikin and the counter-revolution in the South is assured.

Comrades, since we are now advancing fairly rapidly on all fronts, the picture I have given you is already out of date to some degree. This picture is dated November 27 and today is December 6. During the intervening period we have taken the following towns: Oster, Kozelets, Lebedin, Akhtyrka, Priluki, Lohvitsa, Gadyach, Grayvoron, Pavlovsk, Novy Oskol, Khotmyzhsk. And news has come in, though this is not yet officially confirmed, that we have taken Bogodukhov, so that we are now within 40 versts of Poltava, and the same distance from Kharkov. In the interval between the compilation of the picture I

gave you and today, the following towns have been taken on the South-Eastern front: Kalach, Staraya and Novaya Kriusha, and Bukanovskaya station. On the Turkestan Front our men have taken the fortified position of Uil. On the Eastern front we have taken Atbasar, Akmolinsk, Semipalatinsk, Pavlodar, Slavgorod and Kainsk.

Denikin and Kolchak

Denikin was undoubtedly much more dangerous to us than Kolchak. The more success Kolchak had the further westward he advanced, the greater was his distance from his main base, from Japan and America, and he depended on the narrow thread of the Trans-Siberian Railway. In Denikin's case, however, the greater his success, the closer he drew to his main base, to Britain, to the Black-Sea ports, to the Western Front, where he could try to link up overland with rich sources of supplies of all kinds, from Britain and France.

White Cavalry and Red

Furthermore, Denikin was and still is, to a certain extent, rich in that type of weapon which it is hardest of all to create, namely, cavalry. While in the ponderous positional warfare of the imperialist conflict, cavalry, however one may evaluate its contribution, was a subsidiary type of weapon, in our 'light' war (light as regards the rapidity of advances and retreats, though not in the casualties involved), our war of field manoeuvres, cavalry plays an immense, in some cases decisive role. Cavalry cannot be improvised quickly, it requires trained horses and suitable commanders. Cavalry commanders were drawn either from aristocratic, mainly gentry, families, or from the Don region and the Kuban, from the localities where men were born to the saddle. In all countries and in almost all epochs the cavalry constituted the most conservative and privileged arm of the service. In civil wars it was always extremely difficult for the revolutionary class to create cavalry. The army of the Great French Revolution did not find this easy to do, and still less did we. If you take the list of commanders who have gone over from the Red Army to the Whites, you will find a high percentage of cavalymen amongst them. His superiority in cavalry in the first period of the struggle served Denikin very well, and enabled him to deal us some heavy blows. But the Soviet Republic told the proletarian that he must get on horseback, ordered the metal worker, the textile worker and the baker to become cavalymen – and they fulfilled this duty to the Soviet Republic.

Besides the Red Cossacks of whom Comrade Poluyan, himself a Red Kuban Cossack, spoke with justified pride, we have a mass of cavalymen from the proletariat of Moscow, Petersburg, Ivanovo-Voznesensk and elsewhere. The proletarian has obeyed the order of the Soviet Republic and mounted on horseback, and this undoubted success in the field of creating a force of cavalry shows that the road which you prescribed, the road of proper, methodical construction, based on those foundations of the art of war which are not accidental and which cannot be changed at will, because they reflect the overall development of mankind, technically and in all sorts of other ways, in both its positive and negative features – that this road of constructive work has justified itself. It is precisely by following this road of combining

revolutionary enthusiasm with regular, methodical organisation that we have secured the independence and the inviolability of the frontiers of the Soviet Republic.

About Guerrilla-ism

Comrades, there is a task to be performed in this connection, a task which is coming our way in those regions which, by the strength of the Red Army, are now being brought into, or restored to, the family of our federative Soviet Republic. I refer to the Ukraine, North Caucasia, Turkestan and Siberia. In all these regions there are large numbers of insurgent workers and peasants who have fought there, rifle in hand, against the counter-revolution, native or foreign, and with whom we are now more and more coming into contact. In the Ukraine we have already made direct contact with the Ukrainian insurgents. In Siberia, thanks to the insurgents, whole regions and provinces are being united with Soviet Russia. The same will be true of North Caucasia after our South-Eastern Front has dealt the decisive blow, as it soon will do, to the right flank of Denikin's army. Having encountered the guerrillas, we must clearly define our policy towards them. And in this matter, comrades, we have already learnt something.

A guerrilla movement has its own orbit, its definite line of development. It usually has an initial nucleus composed of the most self-sacrificing workers and revolutionary peasants. Around this nucleus other elements grow, in proportion as the guerrilla movement meets with success. And, finally, when success has become clear and beyond doubt, adventurers, bandits, seekers after easy pickings pour into it. Consequently, in a guerrilla movement there are combined elements of heroism with elements of anarchy and banditry, self-sacrifice with all sorts of moral brutishness. The more a guerrilla movement stagnates, the longer it remains a guerrilla movement, the more it degenerates into a Chetnik movement, something like the armed bands in the Balkans which slaughter each other across the backs of the peasants whom they plunder and crucify.

And this danger is now arising before us again in the Ukraine, and to a somewhat smaller extent also in Northern Caucasia, in Siberia and in Turkestan. We must approach the question from the very outset fully armed with our past experience.

The Ukraine must and will be an independent country, belonging to the Ukrainian workers and peasants. But individual groups of insurgents are not the personification or the embodiment of the will of the Ukrainian workers and peasants. The Ukrainian proletariat and peasantry express their will in their Soviet state, economic and cultural creative work, and in so far as this work develops in the form of Ukrainian national culture, in the Ukrainian language, none of us, of course, will ever try to obstruct the development of a free Soviet Ukraine. Moreover, just because the Ukrainian people was an oppressed people, crushed by the imperialist Russifiers, it is and will long continue to be sensitive towards any slights, or statements that can be interpreted as attacks on the Ukrainian language, school or culture. It would be contrary both to principle and to practical considerations of current policy, to give offence, directly or indirectly, to this sensitivity. Indeed, as Comrade Rakovsky put it

very well, it is necessary, rather, to ensure that the Ukrainian language becomes the language through which the working masses of the Ukraine receive Communist education. But this question must not be confused with the guerrilla question. Ukrainian comrades, the question of the guerrilla movement is not a question of national culture or language, it is a question of military expediency. For us there is no difference between the guerrillas in the Ukraine, in Siberia and in North Caucasia. And if we let the Ukrainian guerrilla movement continue in the hope that a Ukrainian army will be formed out of it, we shall destroy the Soviet Ukraine once again – and this time for a long period. What is the position? The guerrilla units contain, as we have said, elements of varying and even contrasting value. Once our basic front reaches them, the guerrilla units must be left in the rear, in order to undergo profound internal reformation. The weeds must be cast out of these units, while the best elements must be subjected to the necessary training and disciplining. And we have given a direct order to the armies that, when they encounter guerrillas, they are not to allow a single detachment or a single volunteer from among them to join the active army straightaway, without previously passing through the holding units located in the rear. If a genuine volunteer, an honest worker or peasant, wants to fight for the cause of the working class, he will accept the sacrifice of spending a month in a holding battalion, being taught what we teach the Red Army in matters of drill, tactics and politics. If he is unwilling to do this, it means that under the guise of a volunteer we have here a bandit, one of those, of whom there are not a few, who join the army in order to rob, oppress and ruin the Ukrainian peasants. There can be no place in our ranks for any such. I do not doubt that, with the full approval and support of all that is conscious and honest in the Ukraine, all the advanced workers and peasants, we shall, by means of organised military force, pursue a firm and unwavering policy the guerrilla movement. Makhno's volunteers constitute, of course, a danger to Denikin so long as Denikin rules in the Ukraine, but, on the other hand, it was they who betrayed the Ukraine to Denikin. And tomorrow, after the liberation of the Ukraine, the Makhnovites will become a mortal danger to the workers' and peasants' state. Comrades, the Makhno movement is not an expression of Ukrainian national culture. No, it is a Ukrainian national abscess which must be lanced once and for all.

Conclusions

These, comrades, are the considerations which I have been able to put before you concerning our army-building work in the rear and concerning the work of the Red regiments at the fronts. Everything permits us to suppose that the protracted preparatory work we carried out previously has ensured that we do not merely achieve casual, transient victories, that it has furnished the guarantee of complete victory on all fronts, and, in the immediate future, on our principal and most dangerous front, the Southern front. Consequently – and this is the basic conclusion which we are justified in arriving at – the Soviet regime has created an army in its own image and likeness, and this army has learnt how to conquer. That, comrades, is a considerable conclusion to be drawn in evaluating all our work and all our subsequent constructive activity. Every one of us knows that an army is not something external to a given society, but reflects all of its aspects, both the weak and the strong. Why is militarism hateful to the working class? Because under the bourgeois, noble, class order it was something set over the working masses as the crown of their

slavery: in the military sphere the domination of the noblemen and the capitalist assumes distinct, obvious, clear-cut and particularly burdensome expression. The economic dependence of the peasant or the worker on the rich master is transformed in the army into the open subordination of the proletarian or peasant soldier to the noble or bourgeois officer, a subordination that is not merely military but also social, class subordination. Just as the French Republic deceives the masses by means of the outward forms and framework of democracy, so also it has developed in the army a democratic phraseology in order the more securely to enslave the French workers, as soldiers, to the interests of the French stock-exchange. Everywhere, no matter what country you take, and whatever form of social relations may exist in it, the army wholly reflects these relations and translates into its distinct language of command regulations the fundamental characteristics of the social and state regime. Thus, it is historically true that war is a cruel but also a sure and reliable test of the soundness of social organisms. There may, of course, be cases when, even so, a sound organism will be smashed in war, because superior material force is brought against it. But there cannot be a case, comrades, no, there cannot be, when a rotten, worthless, decomposing, 'moribund' organism can create a strong army capable of waging war. That is the conclusion that we reach.

I recall once more both our debates of April 22 last year in the Central Executive Committee and the declaration made today by the rapporteur of the opposition party. I recall them and I bring them together in my mind. We were told (it was Martov who said this): 'You will not create an army' – that was said on April 22 last year – 'You will not create it because the foundation is rotten.' But we have created an army. Today Martov tells us that we have shown our strength in both the military and the diplomatic spheres, that we have proved equal to these tasks. I assure you that I speak without any ulterior motive, and without a shred of irony when I say that I felt glad when Martov, talking of our army and our international struggle, said 'we', for he thereby contributed a certain ideological and political strength to our work, and strength is what we need. But in his statement he spoke of 'arbitrariness, anarchy, breakdown, moribund Soviet institutions, a dying constitution'. I ask each one of you, how could a regime such as Martov depicted in his statement, a regime of arbitrariness and anarchy, with moribund Soviet institutions, how could such a regime have created the army which, as Martov admits, has proved equal to its task? The army which is opposed not by fourteen foes, as Churchill said (I have tried to count them up, and it turns out that twenty-one nations are represented), but by *one* foe, international counter-revolution, the world bourgeoisie. In the struggle against this all-powerful force, our Red Army has shown itself equal to its task. This has been acknowledged by those opponents who were saying eighteen months ago: 'You won't create an army', and who now say: 'You have created an army, and a good one.' And how can they not say that, when this army is beating, over an expanse of nine or ten thousand versts, the enemy mobilised and armed by world capital? Yes, we have created this army – and who are we? The workers and peasants, those who uphold the Soviet order. They have created it. Therefore, this order which has given birth to this army, and which sustains and supports it, is a robust and sound order. There are weaknesses in it, defects, flaws and gaps. It is easy to point them out. The Soviet mechanism and its constitution are not operating ideally, because the best forces of the Moscow Soviet, the Petrograd Soviet and all the Soviets of Russia are fighting and dying at the fronts. All right, let us admit

that in dying they are violating some paragraph or other of the Soviet Constitution, but let us console both them and ourselves with the fact that they are saving the Soviet Republic and the revolution. The army that you have created is flesh of your flesh and soul of your soul. This is our Soviet Constitution, alive and armed. For our soldiers fight and die with the slogan: 'Long live Soviet Russia! Long live the world republic of the working class! [\[15\]](#)

Endnotes

[1.](#) The report to the 7th All-Russia Congress of Soviets was published as a separate pamphlet, with the title, **Our Work at Building the Red Army And Our Fronts**, by the publishing department of the Political Administration of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, Moscow 1919.

[2.](#) On April 22, 1918 the All-Russia Central Executive Committee adopted decree on compulsory military training. This decree was published in Vol.I of **How The Revolution Armed**, p.157.

On July 10, 1918 the 5th Congress of Soviets adopted a resolution on the creation of a Red Army; this resolution is also included in Vol.I on p.433.

[3.](#) For more about the Supreme Military Council' see Vol.I, note 48.

[4.](#) Though the Red Army in the civil war ultimately totalled over five million, it never had more than half a million rifles, and the maximum number of combatants in it never exceeded 600,000, with 700 guns and 2,800 machineguns, (Sir John Maynard, **The Russian Peasant and Other Studies**, 1942, p.116).

[5.](#) By December 1919 the initiative on the Southern front was wholly in the hands of the Red Army. By mid-December we had cut the railway linking Kiev and Kharkov, and the latter city, surrounded on three sides, had fallen to us. On December 16, Kiev fell to the onslaught of units of the 12th Army, followed on December 30 by Yekaterinoslav. The bulk of Denikin's units quickly retreated, some to the Crimea, the others to Caucasia. It was in this connection that the Southern Front put up a request for the sending of experienced military commissars for the Ukrainian provinces.

[6.](#) Martov made a big political speech at the 7th Congress of Soviets, and read a declaration on behalf of the Mensheviks' Central Committee' in which the Soviet Government was blamed for 'non-fulfilment' of the Constitution and other even more 'serious crimes'.

[7.](#) Frunze was convicted in 1910 of an attempt to kill a policeman. He was imprisoned until 1914, and then exiled to Siberia. He had obtained deferment from the call-up through being a student, and so had never served in the Tsarist army.

[8.](#) The conspiracy which was headed by Lundkvist, the Chief of Staff of the 7th Army, was connected with Yudenich's operations against Petrograd. The basic task that the plotters set themselves was to surrender Petrograd to the White Guards. Rodzyanko's [The reference is to A.P. Rodzyanko, not to be confused with his brother P.P. Rodzyanko (author of **Tattered Banners**), who served with Kolchak.] offensive in May 1919 came too soon, and the conspirators, unprepared, were not able to organise a revolt inside the Red capital. In mid-June 1919 the strategically important fort of Krasnaya Gorka was seized by a small force of White-Guard rebels; within a few days after insignificant fighting, this fort was retaken by a detachment of Red sailors. Mass searches carried out in Petrograd revealed a large quantity of arms, and through the energetic work of the Cheka's organs a plot was exposed, of which one of the leaders was the Chief of Staff of the 7th Soviet Army' the former Colonel Lundkvist. He had provided the Whites' headquarters with detailed information concerning the distribution of the Red units and all our operational orders. The exposure of this plot prevented serious complications for Petrograd.

[9.](#) After the end of 1919 the local apparatus for universal military training acquired an

organisational form which was more like a militia. The departments and sections for universal military training which were attached to the military commissariats were reorganised into territorial regimental and battalion districts and company areas. After that, active work began on introducing pre-call-up preparation.

10. After KoIchak's unsuccessful attempt to launch a counter-offensive on the River Tobol, the Red units of the Eastern front began on October 25, 1919 a fresh, vigorous pursuit of the army of the 'Supreme Ruler'. Petropavlovsk was taken on November 2, and Omsk on November 14, with the capture of many prisoners and trophies. After the taking of Omsk, Kolchak, with his army disrupted through ceaseless retreat, hastened to withdraw towards Krasnoyarsk. On December 24, Tomsk was taken, after a short struggle. On January 7 Krasnoyarsk, surrounded on all sides, fell to our forces, and the remnants of three of the enemy's armies surrendered to us there. The subsequent offensive developed even more impetuously than before. By January 1920, after the capture of Irkutsk, all Siberia was reunited with Soviet Russia (see Map. No. 1)

11. 'And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, "They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots".' (Matthew, 27:35)

12. Speaking at the First All-Russia Congress of Working Cossacks, on March 1 1920, Lenin emphasised how important the non-belligerence of Finland, the Baltic states and Poland had been at the time of Denikin's push towards Moscow: 'If all these small states had taken the field against us ... there is not the slightest doubt that we would have been defeated' (**Collected Works**, Vol.30, p.389). An important factor in the comparative passivity of the border states during this crisis was their distrust of the Whites' intentions towards them – a victory for Denikin and Kolchak would probably mean an attempt to restore 'Russia one and indivisible', and the serious friction that occurred between Yudenich and his Estonian 'hosts' gave a foretaste of this.

13. On military operations on the Southern front during 1919, see Volume II.

14. On June 1, 1919 an agreement was concluded between the All-Russia Central Executive Committee and representatives of the Ukrainian, Lithuanian and Latvian Soviet Republics, on unifying the military organisations of the fraternal republics and creating a unified military command.

15. In this report, as on several previous occasions, Trotsky uses, speaking of the ex-Tsarist officers serving in the Red Army, the Russian equivalent of St Paul's famous phrase in Romans, 13: because 'the powers that be are ordained of God', one 'must needs be subject [to them]'not only for wrath [from fear], but also for conscience sake'.

The Labour Armies

The Transition to Universal Labour Service [\[1\]](#) in Connection with the Militia System

* * *

Theses

1. Socialist economy presupposes a general plan that embraces the entire territory, with all its natural resources, means of production and live human powers, which resources and forces of every kind the proletariat exploits, within the limits of the area covered by the state, just as fully as any individual entrepreneur endeavours to exploit the forces and resources at his command in his factory or his agricultural estate.
2. The continuity and completeness of the production process must be sustained and ensured by *universal labour service*, under which every able-bodied citizen, within certain age limits, is obliged to devote a certain part of his time to one branch or another of the production process.
3. Complete and fully efficient *allocation of living labour power* between agriculture, manufacturing industry and transport, and also between the different branches of agriculture and manufacturing industry, can be achieved only gradually, through economic experience in satisfying the demands of society, by organising labour in a planned way through increasingly precise recording of labour power, its mobilisation and application.
4. Until universal labour service has become normal, having become consolidated by habit into something unquestioned and irrevocable for everyone (which development will be brought about through education, both social and scholastic, and will find full expression only in the next generation) – until then, for a considerable time yet, the transition to the regime of universal labour service must inevitably be maintained by measures of a coercive character, that is, in the last analysis, by the armed force of the proletarian state. [\[2\]](#)
5. It is an elementary condition for any further economic development that the workers in manufacturing industry and transport and the urban population generally, be ensured a supply of necessary *foodstuffs*. Until manufacturing industry has been revived to a sufficient extent, and until a system of natural and mutually advantageous products exchange has been established between manufacturing industry and agriculture, the extraction of foodstuffs from the countryside will naturally depend on payment by the well-to-do sections of the peasantry of a *tax in kind*, the correct imposition of which can be ensured only by the coercive power of the state.
6. It is out of the question for an immediate leap to be made from the present situation of maximum ruin of productive forces and economic chaos, in which fragments from the past are combined with rudiments of the future, into a finished, centralised economy on a country-wide scale. There must inevitably

be a protracted period during which efforts from above to centralise the economy on new social foundations will be supplemented by attempts and strivings *to resuscitate local economic centres* through the forces and resources of neighbouring areas.

7. The state power of the proletariat must take care not only to avoid stifling local initiative in the name of a schematic state economic plan but also, and on the contrary, to give support in every way to local initiative, to sustain it with technical ideas and material aid, supplying the necessary correctives and modifying its own country-wide plan in accordance with the tempo and scale of the development of individual economic centres.

8. It follows that universal labour service can in no case be understood as impersonal labour service by which certain age-groups are fully mobilised and allocated in accordance with a schematic economic plan, as is done by any government, including the Soviet Government, where military service is concerned. On the contrary, the task consists in finding a fulcrum for labour service in local and regional labour connections, habits and customs, basing labour service on certain *territorial and production districts*, defined on the basis of natural-historical conditions and those determined by production and social life.

9. These territorial-economic districts must form the basis both of the Soviet territorial-administrative system (region, province, *uyezd*, *volost*) and of the local military organs (commissariats), in the course of the gradual transition from the standing army to the militia.

10. The significance of the *militia system* lies in its bringing the army close, territorially and in terms of everyday life, to the economic process, so that the live human forces of particular economic areas are at the same time the live human forces of particular military units.

11. Registration of the population for military service must be combined with registration for labour service, so that the existing apparatus of the War Department (the local military commissariats), appropriately modified and constantly improved, may serve as the apparatus for mass conscription of labour.

12. When a particular unit of the Red Army is demobilised, its best cadres must be distributed in the most expedient way, that is, the way best adapted to local conditions of productive life, so as thereby to provide a ready-made apparatus for administering the units of the militia. The cadres of regiments, brigades and divisions, assigned to the above mentioned territorial and production districts and their subdivisions, will perform the work of universal military training of the workers and those peasants who do not exploit the labour of others, in accordance with a programme that will fully ensure the fighting capacity of the militia army.

13. The cadres of the militia must be gradually renewed, as regards their personal composition, so as to ensure the closest connection with the economic life of a given area, as a result of which the cadres of a division stationed in a territory which, for example, includes a mine, with the rural periphery adjacent thereto, will consist of the best elements of the local proletariat.

14. In order to achieve this renewal of cadres, command courses must be

distributed territorially in accordance with the economic and militia districts, and the best representatives of the local workers and peasants must be put through these courses.

15. The transition to the militia system must necessarily be gradual, so that the change-over in the military system does not deprive the Soviet Republic for a single day of the necessary power of defence. For this purpose, a certain number of divisions must be retained from the present Red Army, and stationed in the most important or most threatened directions. The older age-groups and, in general, the longest serving Red Army men, can be discharged from the divisions fairly quickly and replaced by the 1901 class of conscripts.

16. Thus, for the task of introducing the food tax and labour service, the state must and will have at its disposal in the transition period a certain number of the most experienced, reliable and disciplined units, consisting predominantly of proletarians.

17. The next task in the sphere of economic construction is the compiling of a 'small' production plan, that is, one designed for the immediate future and taking as the point of departure for its calculations the most urgent needs and possibilities of production.

18. This plan must, above all, include precise requirements of labour-power for the coal and iron mines, the peat and shale deposits, the most important factories and the state farms.

19. In the armies, a registration of the Red Army men by trades must at once be carried out, so that, when they are demobilised, the most highly skilled elements may at once be allocated appropriately in accordance with the 'small' economic plan.

20. As regards unskilled labour-power, this must be secured both by conscripting those age-groups not included in the Red Army and by early release from the army of recently mobilised men on condition that they work for a certain period in enterprises close to their homes.

21. A commission must at once be set up, consisting of the most responsible workers in the Supreme Economic Council, with extensive involvement of the relevant specialists and statisticians, to draw up a first rough draft of a scheme for the mobilisation of labour, corresponding to the 'small' production plan for the period immediately ahead.

22. The aforesaid plan must be handed over to the War Department so that it may take decisions, first, regarding the use of the methods and apparatus of army mobilisation for the purpose of the mobilisation of labour, and, secondly, regarding adaptation of the system of territorial-militia districts to the territorial-production districts.

23. The final elaboration of the system of labour service must be the task of an inter-departmental commission of representatives of the Supreme Economic Council, the War Department, the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, the People's Commissariat for Agriculture, Food and Labour, and the Central Trade Union Council. 24. Proceeding from all the above, I propose that the Central Committee assign the tasks resulting from these theses to the appropriate departments, and in the first place to the Supreme Economic

December 16, 1919,
Moscow

Endnotes

1. In connection with the complete liquidation of the Eastern front and the rout of Denikin, labour armies were formed from the army units which had been freed from immediate military tasks. Our position on the Western front remained unclear, and fairly strong units of Denikin's army continued to exist in Caucasia and in the Crimea. These circumstances prevented us from being able to undertake in January-February 1920 the demobilisation and reduction of the army. A serious crisis, principally affecting fuel, for the provision of which the organised application of a considerable quantity of labour power was needed, made it necessary to confront the problem of temporarily utilising the free units of the Red Army on the labour front. The first army to be transformed was the 3rd Army of the Eastern front (in the northern Urals), which was renamed the 1st Labour Army. Its basic tasks were to collect foodstuffs and transport them to the nearest stations, to procure fuel, and, finally, to help the local peasantry during the season of work in the fields. In order to restore the ruined sectors of the South-Eastern Railway, which was very important for transporting oil from Grozny, the Second Army was transferred there under the new name of the Railway Labour Army. The 7th Army, defending the approaches to Petrograd, was assigned labour tasks in the digging of peat. Finally, at the same time, the Ukrainian Labour Army began work, with as its main task the production of coal in the Donbas. Substantial use for improving transport was made of the republic's Reserve Army. The large proportion of auxiliary personnel and the comparatively low productivity of labour gradually declined, and, in fact, the labour armies played a role of no small importance in the initial stages of the restoration of our shattered economy. The Red Army's work on the labour front was cut short in April 1920 by the Polish offensive.

The speeches and articles that follow relate to this brief period between January and April 1920. (For the overall situation in the RSFSR on March 15, 1920, see Map. No.1

2. Addressing the 3rd All-Russia Congress of Economic Councils on January 25, 1920 on the subject of the labour armies, Trotsky said: 'This experiment is of the most vital moral and material importance. We cannot mobilise the peasants by means of trade unions, and the trade unions themselves do not possess any means of laying hold of millions of peasants. They can best be mobilised on a military footing. Their labour formations will have to be organised on a military model – labour platoons, labour companies, labour battalions, disciplined as required, for we shall have to deal with masses which have not passed through trade union training.'

The Labour Armies

To the Revolutionary War Council of the Third Army [\[1\]](#)

Telegram

* * *

In principle, I consider your plan completely correct and capable of producing very great results, especially in the transitional conditions of the recently conquered Urals and Siberian areas.

It is necessary:

1. To establish absolutely correct relations with the appropriate economic (production and distribution) organs at the centre.
2. To co-operate in every way in setting up the proper economic organs in the area of your activity and constantly to concert all your work with them as they start to function.
3. To draw up forthwith an economic plan of campaign and, when this has been confirmed, to acquaint the army with it, interest the local population, and set to work to carry it out.

This is my view on this matter. I shall uphold this view in every way before the Government, and I hope that you will be given wide possibilities for working to the advantage of the Soviet Republic in the purely economic sphere.

January 11, 1920,
No.162

Endnotes

[1](#): The telegram to the Revolutionary War Council of the 3rd Army was sent by Comrade Trotsky in reply to the Revolutionary War Council's proposal to transfer the 3rd Army to work on the labour front. Regarding the tasks assigned to the 3rd Army (1st Labour Army) see note 2 in preceding chapter.

The Labour Armies

Order-Memorandum

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the 3rd Red Army – the First Revolutionary Labour Army

* * *

1. The 3rd Army has completed its military task. But the enemy has not yet been completely wiped out on all fronts. The predatory imperialists are still threatening Siberia and the Far East. The mercenary armies of the Entente are still threatening Soviet Russia from the West. The White-Guard bands are still established in Archangel. Caucasia has not yet been liberated ... Consequently the 3rd Revolutionary Army will remain under arms, will retain its organisation, its internal cohesion, its fighting spirit, in case the Socialist Fatherland should summon it to new military tasks.

2. Fully conscious of its duty, however, the 3rd Revolutionary Army does not wish to waste its time. During the weeks and months of the breathing-spell, however long this may last, it will use its forces and resources to revive the country's economy. While retaining its military strength, dreadful to the enemies of the working class, it will at the same time transform itself into a revolutionary labour army.

3. The Revolutionary War Council of the 3rd Army is joining the Council of the Labour Army. In that body, along with the members of the Revolutionary War Council, there will be representatives of the principal economic institutions of the Soviet Republic. They will provide the necessary guidance in the different spheres of economic activity.

4. The hungry workers of Petrograd, Moscow, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, the Urals and all the other industrial centres and areas need food. The main task of the First Revolutionary Labour Army is to collect, in a planned way, all surplus supplies of grain, meat, fats and fodder in the area where it is stationed, to make a precise record of the foodstuffs so collected, to assemble these materials vigorously and rapidly, at the railway yards and stations, and to load them on to the trucks.

5. Industry needs fuel. A very important task for the Revolutionary Labour Army is to fell and saw timber, and to transport it to the railway yards and stations.

6. Living-quarters are needed by those engaged in woodcutting and other work. The Revolutionary Labour Army will build huts where these are needed and will provide accommodation and comforts for the workers who take over.

7. Spring is coming, the season for work in the fields. Our exhausted factories are as yet producing few new agricultural implements. The peasants have

many old implements, however, which are in need of repair. The Revolutionary Labour Army will make available its workshops and its smiths, fitters and joiners to carry out repairs to agricultural implements and machinery.

When work begins in the fields, the Red infantrymen and cavalrymen will show that they know how to wield a plough to turn up the Soviet land.

8. Urals and Siberian proletarians and peasants live and work alongside the workers-soldiers of the 3rd Army. Units of the Labour Army, their Red Army men, commanders and commissars, must maintain friendly, harmonious relations of comradeship and collaboration with all the working people.

9. All members of the army, from top to bottom, must deal attentively and fraternally with the trade unions, the local Soviets, and all executive committees, big and little, keeping it firmly in mind that theirs is an organisation of the working people. Work in the localities must always be carried out in agreement with them, explaining to them the task assigned to the Labour Army by the Soviet Government, and calling on them to give practical support to this great undertaking.

10. First and foremost, the Red Army must take measures to ensure that, in the area where it is working, not a single factory suffers from a shortage of food. If the honest Red Army man is to try and emulate the factory workers in his work, he must at the same time see to it, through his supply apparatus, that the worker is on an equal footing with him as regards rations.

11. Tireless energy in work – just as on the march, just as in battle!

12. All technicians, specialists and craftsmen in the army must be registered and put in the right places, so that the entire military machine may get to work at once in its new field of action, quickly and smoothly, without any interruptions or hold-ups.

13. Precise record must be kept of forces expended and results achieved. There must be careful, conscientious supervision of tools and material used. Not one pound of Soviet grain, not a single log of the people's timber, must be unaccounted for and wasted. Everything must contribute to the foundation of a socialist economy.

14. Commanders and commissars are answerable for their units at work just as in battle. Discipline must not waver by so much as a hair's breadth. The Communist cells must be models of endurance and staunchness at work.

15. Communications between the units of the army are to be strictly maintained. Vigilance must not slacken. Tempering is not to be relaxed.

16. Commanders and commissars must send up through the proper channels labour-operational reports on the amount of grain collected, loaded and transported, on the number of cubic *sazhens* [A *sazhen* is 2.13 metres – *Editor*] of timber felled and sawn, and on all other forms of work performed. These operational communiques will be published in the daily newspaper of the 'First Labour Army', with specific mention of each regiment, each separate labour unit, so that the most diligent and zealous regiments may be honoured for their services, and the backward, slovenly or idle units may try to emulate the advanced ones.

17. The Political Department must work with redoubled vigour, educating the worker in the soldier while preserving the soldier in the worker.

18. Tens and hundreds of thousands of printed appeals and speeches must explain to the most backward Red Army men, and all the workers and peasants living around them, the significance of the great task which the 3rd Army is undertaking.

19. The Army's Revolutionary Tribunal is to punish loafers, parasites, saboteurs and squanderers of public property.

20. Strict record must be kept of the personal composition of units, so that no conscienceless absences from work may occur.

21. A deserter from work is no less contemptible and dishonourable than a deserter from battle. Both are to be punished severely.

22. The most conscious soldiers, advanced workers, revolutionary peasants, Red Army men – to the forefront!

Give an example by your tirelessness, your self-sacrifice, to the backward elements, leading them on to the same path as yourselves!

23. Reduce the army's rear to the minimum. All who are not needed there are to go to the front line of labour.

24. Begin and end your work, wherever possible, to the sound of socialist anthems and songs, for your work is not slave labour but lofty service to the socialist fatherland.

25. Soldiers of the 3rd Army, now the First Labour Army! Your initiative is a great thing. All Russia is being roused in response. The Soviet wireless has already broadcast to the whole world the news that the 3rd Army has, of its own free will, been transformed into the First Labour Army. Soldier-workers, do not disgrace the Red banner!

January 15, 1920,
Moscow
Izv.V.Ts.I.K., No.10

The Labour Armies

To The Working People [\[1\]](#)

* * *

Confirming the decrees by which the introduction of labour service in the Soviet Republic has been put on a properly organised basis, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee addresses itself to the workers, Red Army men and peasants to explain the great importance of universal labour service.

It is only now, as the civil war nears its end, that the Soviet power is finding it possible to get down in real earnest to its fundamental task: reviving the country's economy in the interests of all, improving the situation of the working masses, providing the workers with food, overcoming hunger, cold and epidemics, supplying the peasants with the products of urban industry, raising the country's cultural level, and ensuring a better, freer and happier life for the young generations of the workers and peasants.

All citizens of the Soviet Republic are called upon to be workers on this ground, to be soldiers of the great Soviet Army of Labour.

The industrial proletariat, the vanguard element of the Soviet revolution, is called upon to show an example to all the rest of the working masses through its self-sacrificing work in the interests of raising a socialist economy. In order that the Soviet state may take care of the worker and the working woman, and of their children, every working man and every working woman must devote all their strength to the service of the Soviet state.

The peasant has obtained the landlord's land. But this is only the first step. In the future the peasantry must receive from the socialist state the necessary agricultural implements, electric power, schools and newspapers, together with the necessary products of manufacturing industry. To bring this moment nearer, the peasantry must now help its own state of the working people with foodstuffs and with labour-power. The peasants must help the People's Commissariat of Food to collect a food-stock of 300,000,000 *poods*, to feed the workers in industry and transport during the current year. The peasants must, unanimously and firmly, carry out labour-mobilisation to meet the needs of the state as a whole: procurement and transport of timber, peat and shale, clearing snow from the roads and repairing them, building huts, and so on and so forth. Only thus will the present conditions of economic ruin be overcome. Everything that the peasantry now gives to the Soviet state, in the form of articles of consumption and labour power, will later on be returned to the peasantry hundredfold in the form of products of manufacturing industry.

The workers' and peasants' army, which has protected the workers and peasants with its blood from the onslaught of the landlords and capitalists, must now apply all its free forces and resources to helping the cause of the country's economic rebirth. The Red Army cannot be demobilised until the White-Guard bands have been finally routed, and until lasting and reliable peace has been made with all the neighbouring countries. But, at the same time, every soldier, even though temporarily released from his military tasks,

must devote his labour to work in the economic sphere.

The All-Russia Central Executive Committee approves and greets the formation of the First Labour Army, the assignment of the Reserve Army to the task of improving transport and of the 4th Army to the building of railway lines and other works, and, finally, the formation of a Ukrainian Labour Army with the Donetsk Basin as its centre of activity.

The All-Russia Central Executive Committee charges the Workers' and Peasants' Defence Council to check on the work of the Labour Armies, establishing the closest links between them and the Soviet economic organs and introducing into the situation all such organisational changes as experience may show to be necessary.

The Soviet Republic's economic position is extremely difficult. It can emerge from this on to the high road of socialist development only through universal, stubborn and intense work. The principle of universal labour service, proclaimed in

the Soviet constitution, must now be put into practice. All able-bodied persons must be mobilised for productive work. Workers, Red Army men and peasants must be united into one, great, Russia-wide working team. In the fight against hunger, cold and epidemics that same high intensity of energy must be attained which the working masses displayed in the civil war against their sworn enemies. In order to save the country from economic ruin we need the self-sacrifice, heroism and discipline characteristic of the best units of our army. Labour is the banner of our epoch. The best sons of the Soviet Republic are those who show the greatest energy in productive work.

Working people of Soviet Russia! Workers, peasants, Red Army men!

The All-Russia Central Executive Committee unites you in one great host for a campaign against want, disruption, anarchy, disease, disorder and threatening ruin. You, the conscious, the self-sacrificing, the best – forward!

Long live fraternal, harmonious labour, the saviour and liberator of workers' and peasants' Russia!

Endnotes

1. This appeal to the working people was written by Comrade Trotsky and published in the name of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee on February 4, 1920. Published at the same time were a number of decrees by the Government, the most important of which were the decision by the Council of People's Commissars on the regime of universal labour service and the decree on universal labour service committees.

The Labour Armies

On Mobilising the Industrial Proletariat, on Labour Service, on Militarising the Economy, and on the Utilisation of Army Units for Economic Needs

Theses of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party [\[1\]](#)

* * *

1. The extreme economic decline of the country resulting from the imperialist war and the counter-revolutionary attacks on the Soviet power finds direct expression in the extreme insufficiency or disorganisation of the basic elements of production: technical equipment, raw materials and, in the first place, fuel and labour-power.
2. There are no grounds for counting on reception from outside, in the near future and in significant quantity, of machinery, coal or skilled workers, not only because of the blockade, regarding the future of which it is not at present possible to make any fully confident forecast, but also because of the extreme economic exhaustion of Western Europe.
3. The fundamental lever for raising up the country's economy is, therefore, living labour-power, its organisation, distribution and efficient utilisation.

A. The Industrial Proletariat

4. The industrial proletariat, the chief wielder of political power, must concentrate all its attention and all its efforts in the period immediately ahead upon organising the economy and participating directly in the production-process.
5. To this end it is necessary to gather together the scattered ranks of skilled and trained workers by systematically withdrawing them (as opportunities for doing this occur) from the army, from the food-detachments, from Soviet rear institutions, including state farm and communes, from handicraft work, from the countryside and, in the first place, from the field of speculative activity.
6. Withdrawal and concentration of workers possessing trades must be effected through the combined action of measures for all-round improvement in the food situation and the general living conditions of the workers, of increasingly precise registration of workers, of organised influence exercised on them by the trade unions, and, finally, in all instances where this becomes necessary, of measures of coercion by the state.
7. The implementing of these measures, like all work generally for the development of industry, can produce serious positive results only on condition that there is an all-round strengthening of the organisation of the trade unions

through ensuring that they have the necessary cadres of responsible and experienced workers, capable of putting into practice the principle of iron labour discipline.

8. At the same time, measures must be taken on a wide scale for vocational training of the young generation, starting with the 14-year-olds, so as to guarantee the necessary reproduction of skilled labour power. For this purpose an organ must be created, under the People's Commissariat for Education, with sufficient power and authority and participation by representatives of all the interested departments and institutions.

B. Unskilled Labour-Power

9. All the existing economic conditions, in their combined effect, now call for the recruitment into industry and transport of unskilled – that is, predominantly peasant – labour-power in incomparably larger amounts than ever before.

1. The country's mechanical equipment is extremely impoverished. The wear and tear of machines from the passage of time, work, careless handling, low temperatures in the premises where they are housed, and also during evacuation and re-evacuation, is not being made up for even to the slightest extent. If there is to be a rise in production in the near future, given the extreme deterioration of mechanical equipment, this will require, in many branches of industry, a very great increase in the use of living, predominantly unskilled, labour-power.
2. Procurement of timber, by means of which we shall still, for a long time yet, have to meet an excessively large proportion of our fuel needs; the working of peat and shale deposits to an unprecedented degree; and, finally, intense work of restoration in coal and iron mining and oil-producing areas will call (together with the recruitment of skilled workers) for a concentration of ever increasing masses of unskilled workers.
3. The cultivation of state farms, and also of the extensive waste spaces in regions that suffered with particular severity from the civil war creates a demand for an extremely large amount of labour power both for permanent service and for seasonal tasks.
4. Temporary and emergency work, regular seasonal work and auxiliary work connected with the basic types of work mentioned above (snow-clearing, loading and unloading, building huts, repairing roads and bridges and so on), require, in their turn, extremely large amounts of labour power.

10. Manufacturing industry, transport and the economy in general can, in the conditions described, be provided with the necessary labour-power only through the introduction of *labour service*.

C. Universal Labour Service

11. Socialist construction rejects in principle the liberalcapitalist principle of 'freedom of labour', which in bourgeois society means, for some, freedom to exploit and, for others, freedom to be exploited. In so far as the fundamental task of social organisation is to overcome the external physical conditions

inimical to man, socialism demands compulsory participation by all members of society in the production of material values and sets itself the task of creating a more rational (that is, more economic and attractive to everyone) form of socialised labour. The principle of universal labour service, unshakably laid down in the fundamental laws of the RSFSR, must now be given wide and all-sided application in practice.

12. Complete implementation of the principle of universal labour service within the framework of a general economic plan can be achieved through perfecting the country's entire administrative and economic apparatus and the universal introduction of work-books which will precisely define the place occupied by each citizen and citizeness of the Soviet Republic in the country's economic and defence systems.

13. The transition to wide introduction of labour service must be effected gradually, in forms which, even if far from precise, are capable of providing the labour-power needed by the economy.

14. For this purpose, it is necessary, first and foremost, to determine, in round numbers, the amount of labour-power which is now needed and which, in the present situation as regards food-supplies, instruments of labour and so on, can be immediately set to work to perform the most urgent economic tasks in the course of the period immediately ahead (the year 1920).

15. Along with this, we need to lay down, in a basic decree, what economic needs and requirements must be assigned to local or area responsibility and coped with by means of local labour service.

16. The organisation of labour service, developed on both levels, must be strictly adapted, so far as possible, to the special features of particular areas (local industries, periods of especially intense agricultural work, and so on), and the allocation of forces between state-wide and local labour service must, in the aggregate and as far as possible, be uniform for the whole country, so as to have the least harmful effects on peasant economy.

17. In the immediate future those age-groups must predominantly be drawn into the sphere of labour-service which were least affected by military mobilisation, with recruitment of women on as large a scale as possible.

18. The apparatus for implementing labour service in the localities, for work both of state-wide and local importance, must be created by combining the local agencies of the War Commissariat, the Administration Department of the Executive Committee, and the Department of Labour.

19. The local organ thus indicated (the Committee for Universal Labour Service), being directly subordinate to the Executive Committee, will receive requisitions for labour-power both from the centre, in fulfilment of the general state plans, and from the local Executive Committee, for the economic needs of the given area. It will be the task of the Committee for Universal Labour Service to reconcile the local demands with each other and also with the demands from the centre, which, as a general rule, must be given priority.

20. At the centre a Chief Committee for Labour Service will be set up, consisting of representatives of the Registration and Allocation Department of the People's Commissariat of Labour, the People's Commissariat for Internal

Affairs, the Mobilisation Administration of the All-Russia General Staff, and the Central Statistical Office. In the immediate future this Chief Committee will be extra-departmental, as an organ coming directly under the Defence Council. The institutions of all departments both at the centre and in the localities must carry out all instructions received from the Chief Committee relating to matters of universal labour service.

D. Militarising The Economy

21. In the transitional stage of development, in a society burdened by the heritage of a very difficult past, going over to planned and organised social labour is unthinkable without measures of compulsion directed both at the parasitic elements and at the backward elements of the peasantry and of the working class itself. The instrument of state compulsion is the state's armed force. Consequently, an element of militarisation of labour, to some extent and in some form, is inevitably inherent in the transitional economy based on universal labour service.

The element of compulsion will become less applicable the further the system of socialist economy is developed, the more favourable are the conditions of labour and the higher is the level of education of the rising generation.

22. Militarising the economy signifies, in the concrete conditions of Soviet Russia, that economic questions (intensity of labour, a careful attitude to machines and tools, conscientiousness in use of materials, and soon) must be equated, in the minds of the working people and in the practice of state institutions, with military questions. The entire population of town and country must understand that the elimination of every kind of desertion from work, every sort of self-seeking, unpunctual attendance at work, carelessness, idleness and abuse is a matter of life and death for the whole country, and must be achieved in the shortest possible time, even if this requires very harsh measures.

23. A wide campaign of agitation, spoken and written, must be developed along this line, which, using concrete and constantly renewed material concerning our economic break down and particular successes in overcoming it, must educate the widest masses of the working people in a spirit of watchful and enterprising social supervision of all phenomena and facts relating to the country's economic life, with a view particularly to drawing non-Party conferences of workers and peasants into the fight against improvidence, bureaucratism and red-tape.

The leading role in this work must be played, along with the Party, by the trade unions, to which must be returned the best workers who have passed through the school of war.

24. Formal militarisation of particular enterprises (or of particular branches of industry) which are of special importance at the present time or are especially threatened with breakdown, is to be carried out in each case by special decision of the Defence Council and is to have as its primary purpose the temporary attachment of workers to the given enterprise and also the establishment in it of a stricter regime, with granting to the appropriate organ

of wide disciplinary powers, in so far as the aim to be attained, of putting the enterprise to rights, cannot be realised by other means.

25. Mass recruitment of unskilled labour-power, not organised in trade unions, through labour service, for food-producing, fuel-getting, building, loading and other forms of work, will require, especially at the beginning, labour organisation similar to the military type.

26. Elements of labour organisation and necessary discipline, compulsory both internally and externally, can be introduced among the hundreds of thousands, the millions of workers mobilised through labour service only through the agency of advanced, conscious, resolute and firm workers, especially those who have been through the school of war and have become accustomed to organising masses and leading them under the most difficult conditions.

27. The realisation of labour service must be based upon the fulfilment of the same organisational tasks, in principle, as in the case of the establishment of the Soviet power as a whole and in the creation of the Red Army: providing for the least conscious, most backward peasant masses natural leaders and organisers in the form of the most conscious proletarians – in the overwhelming majority of cases, skilled men. Inasmuch as the army possesses the greatest amount of experience of mass Soviet organisation of this type, its methods and procedures must (with all necessary modifications) be transferred to the sphere of labour organisation, with direct utilisation of the experience of those workers who have been moved from military to economic work.

E. Labour Armies

28. As one of the forms of transition to the introduction of universal labour service and the broad application of socialised labour, those army units, up to the level of large formations, which have been freed from military tasks, must be used for labour purposes. This is the meaning of the transformation of the 3rd Army into the First Labour Army, and the passing on of this experience to other armies.

29. The necessary conditions for the utilisation for labour of military units and entire armies are:

1. Strict and precise limitations of the tasks before the labour armies to the simplest forms of work, and, in the first place, the collection and concentration of food supplies.
2. Establishment of such organisational relations with the appropriate economic organs as will eliminate the possibility of disrupting economic plans and bringing disorganisation into the centralised economic apparatuses.
3. Establishment of a close bond, where possible, of equality in rations and comradely relations with the workers in the same area.
4. Ideological struggle against petty-bourgeois-intellectual and trade-unionist prejudices which see the militarisation of labour or the wide use of military units for labour as an 'Arakcheyev' system [\[2\]](#), and so on. Explanation of the inevitability and progressiveness of military compulsion for the revival of the economy on the basis of universal labour service. Explanation of the inevitability and progressiveness of even closer

rapprochement between the organisation of labour and the organisation of defence in socialist society.

F. Food

30. In all economic plans and calculations, in the mobilisation and application of labour power, in establishing the Soviet regime in newly occupied regions, and so on, the first and fundamental task must be to *concentrate in the hands of the Soviet state* several hundred million *poods* of grain, meat, fish and fats, that is, a *food-stock* that is really sufficient to ensure supplies for the industrial proletariat, the Soviet officeworkers and the peasants mobilised for labour service during the current year.

Only the creation of adequate food bases in the main industrial areas will furnish a lasting and sure guarantee of the realisation not only of the immediate economic plan but also of socialist construction as a whole.

31. Organising public catering for the industrial workers and Soviet officeworkers, starting with the urban and factory centres, is – on the basis indicated in the preceding point – an urgent task for the People's Commissariat of Food, in co-operation with the local soviets and trade unions, and using the relevant apparatus of the War Department. An extensive arrangement of public catering with gradual improvement of the public food-supply, will form a most practical way for public opinion to check on participation by citizens in production, while releasing for productive labour a colossal amount of energy, especially female energy, which is at present being expended, on a 'retail' basis, in the individual serving-up of bits of bread.

Endnotes

1. The theses *On Mobilising the Industrial Proletariat* were adopted by the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and confirmed in the resolution *On the Immediate Tasks of Economic Construction* adopted by the 9th Congress of the Communist Party, on Comrade Trotsky's report.

2. After the victory over Napoleon in the 1820s, Tsar Alexander I, acting through Count Arakcheyev, his War Minister, set up what were called 'military settlements', along Russia's western border and elsewhere. Several hundred thousand Crown peasants were turned over to the War Department and made into soldiers for life. While carrying on their agricultural work, they were organised on military lines and subjected to military discipline. The idea was to create self-supporting regiments and so to reduce the cost of the army. When the victims of this system rebelled they were put down with great ferocity, and the Tsar said: 'The military settlements will be established at all costs, even if it means paving with corpses all the road from Petersburg to Chudovo' (the place, about a hundred miles from Petersburg, where the first of the settlements was located). Arakcheyev's name became a byword in connection with anything that could be seen as 'militarised serfdom'.

The Labour Armies

Bread For The Hungry! Fuel For The Cold!

* * *

The centre of Soviet Russia is hungry and cold. And yet there is both bread and fuel to be had in our immense and wealthy country. We have inexhaustible resources of labour power. What do we lack? Organisation of work.

Under the bourgeois order, work was organised by the capitalists, the entrepreneurs, the managers. They owned the means of production (the factories, the machines, the raw materials), hired labour power, extorted profits and took them for themselves. Driven by hunger and by habit inherited from their fathers, the workers went to the factories, submitting their strength to capital. And production forged ahead.

The factories have now been taken from the capitalists and become the property of the working people. There is raw material and there is labour-power — but as yet we have not created, we have not devised a new form of work-organisation corresponding to the new conditions of production — without capitalists, without bosses, without the master's whip.

This new organisation of work, on co-operative, social, socialist principles, we must create everywhere.

The imperialist war, and the civil war that followed it, exhausted and ruined the country. Our economy can be revived only by concerted, intense harmonious work. All Russia must be transformed into one big factory, in which every citizen is a working man, every citizeness a working woman, and the master is the working people as a whole.

We need to begin with what is basic — bread and fuel. We must supply the factories with wood and coal. We must feed the workers in industry and on the railways. Then manufacturing industry will revive, and the peasants will get the products they need — textiles, nails, salt, farm implements.

We must begin with what is basic: with rye-bread and logs of wood. Everyone must be drawn into this vital task: men and women workers, men and women peasants, Red Army men released from military tasks, and, finally all those who in bourgeois society lived idly and who, under the Soviet order, have not yet been drawn into productive work.

Soviet Russia belongs to the working people. Every member of the working people belongs to Soviet Russia. The socialist state must care for every one of its workers. This can be ensured only if every worker takes care of the socialist state as a whole. The village must work not for itself alone but also for the town. The town must work for the village. The railways must link the town with the village and facilitate the exchange of the respective products of their labour.

The age-old bourgeois-egoist rule: 'It's no concern of mine' does not apply now. The country can be saved from hunger, cold and the threat of epidemics only through intense, tireless, truly heroic work on the part of all citizens, for the common good. All for one, one for all.

This means universal labour service. It is everyone's duty — that is, everyone must devote his knowledge, his intelligence, his strength, and, if need be, his life, to that great whole which is called socialist Russia.

The old organisation of work, on capitalist foundations, has been destroyed irrevocably and forever. The new, socialist organisation is only taking shape. We must all become con-scious, self-sacrificing builders of the socialist economy. Only thus can we emerge into security, warmth and comfort.

We must begin with what is basic: grain and timber.

Our train is making its way to the northern Urals, so that we may devote all our strength there to the task of the organisation of work,^[1] in which the Urals workers, the Urals peasants and the Red Army men of the First Labour Army will join hands.'5

Bread for the hungry! Fuel for the cold! That is the slogan for our train, this time. February 8, 1920, Moscow-Yekaterinburg. 'En Route', No. 106

Endnotes

¹. An eye-witness account of the activity of Trotsky in the leadership of the First Labour Army is given in Chapter XI of *A Prisoner of the Reds*, by Captain Francis McCuUagh (1921).

The Labour Armies

Who is Ruining Transport? Who is Destroying the Railways? Who is Condemning the Population to Hunger and Every Other Form of Hardship?

* * *

Between Vikhrovo and Torbeyevo stations, on the Kazan line [\[1\]](#), our special train buried itself in the snow on the night of February 8, while one of the carriages left the rails. At the previous stations, Zubova-Polyana and Vikhrovo, nobody had warned the train's commandant about snow-drifts. As a result, the special train was held up for 19 hours. Following it, an hour's travelling time behind, was a second train with a particular assignment. This train also lost 19 hours. What was the reason?

The reason was the criminal negligence of the railway administration and of the local *volost* executive committees. The reason was slackness, idleness, sabotage and kulak-type self-seeking.

Let us look at the matter systematically. After a snowstorm at the end of January, work on the sector between Arapovo and Vikhrovo was confined to sending a snow-plough through, whereas what was needed was to get busy with picks, shovels and brooms. After the snow-plough had passed over, a layer of snow remained caked between the rails, in some places four *arshins* deep. [An *arshin* is 28 inches.]

Why? The local executive committees had not indented for labour-power. The Drakino *volost* soviet, the Salazgar village soviet, the Sloimsk *volost* soviet, the Torbeyevo *volost* soviet and the Zhukovka *volost* soviet displayed utter negligence in fulfilling their responsibility for the workers' and peasants' transport. Where 50 men were needed they sent five, or else none at all. What do the kulaks of Drakino and Sloinisk care about the hungry workers of Moscow and Petrograd, or about the needs of the workers' and peasants' country as a whole?!

However, if they have no conscience, they are nevertheless subject to justice. The Defence Council has placed a 55-verst zone along the railway line under martial law. All crimes against transport will in this zone be punished according to military law. One of the gravest of crimes is the failure of the local soviets to clear the railway track. The Military Tribunal will show the men of Drakino, Salazgar, Sloimsk, Torbeyevo and Zhukovka that the Soviet power does not treat matters as a joke when what is at stake is a question of life and death for the workers, for the hungry peasants. The Revolutionary Military Tribunal will begin its work with the chairman and members of the *volost* and village soviets. These criminals will be subjected to the maximum punishment. But what was the local railway administration doing? It was either idling or committing sabotage. Viadislavlev, who was in charge of sector No.6, decided that the special train would get through 'somehow', and so gave no warning.

When Vladislavlev summoned his assistant, Stroganov, and the senior track foreman of the sector, Vlasov, to come to the place where the special train was held up, these two characters refused to come, alleging illness. This was found not to be true. Subsequently, they explained that they had not categorically refused to come, but had felt 'indisposed', and Vladislavlev had not insisted.

Vodyanov, the leader of the work-team, arrived with his men only ten hours after the special train had been stopped. The track foreman of the second sector, Seligin, said that he was ill. This, too, was found to be untrue.

Thanks to all these criminals and saboteurs, the special train remained held up in the snow three *versts* from Torbeyevo station. And what happened? For more than 15 hours not a single representative came along the track from that station to discover why the special train with the particular assignment had failed to arrive for so long. What do the idlers and saboteurs at Torbeyevo station care what happens to trains, or about railway traffic generally?

And what does the Transport Cheka do about it? It practises bureaucratism and spoils paper. The chairman of the Transport Cheka at Sasovo, Perov, summoned the head of the sector and the senior track foreman to 'present a report on the snowdrifts'. Thereby, the bureaucrat from the Cheka took the transport bureaucrats away from their work in order to submit a useless bureaucratic report. The Sasovo bureaucrat did not know that the village soviet of Salazgar, which is no more than a verst and a half from the place where the snowdrift lies, showed their contempt all through January and February for all the Soviet authorities, the Cheka included: during those months, when they were asked to send out 625 men, they sent a total of 77.

Akimov, the Transport Cheka's agent at Torbeyevo station, instead of using the power of the militia to compel the Salazgar people to supply the workers needed, busied himself with miserable formalities, actually covering up for the Salazgar saboteurs.

Here the picture of scandalous conduct on the railways opens up before us in its full dimensions. It is certainly not easy to say who is better and who is worse in this matter. The Tambov kulaks do not send labour-power because not one out of many railway saboteurs and several Transport Cheka bureaucrats took the trouble to see to it in time that the necessary few score workers were sent to clear the track.

To appreciate to the full the lack of discipline and insubordination of the persons and institutions above-mentioned, one needs to remember that what were involved in this case were special-assignment trains, which enjoy a whole number of privileges to facilitate their movement. One can imagine how all these Vladislavlevs, Seligins, Stroganovs, Vlasovs, Perovs and Akimovs behave when dealing with 'ordinary' goods trains, that is, with trains bringing salt for the peasants or grain for the hungry children of Moscow.

The very best of locomotives and the very best of trucks will not get moving along our rails so long as the railway workers commit sabotage, the kulak executive committees loaf about, and the Chekists connive at all this. We need to clear our lines yard by yard, inch by inch – and not only to free them from snowdrifts but also from layers of low-down sabotage and rotten self-seeking.

Martial law over a 50-verst zone along the railways is no laughing matter. All the persons and institutions mentioned here will become convinced of that within a day or two. Everything depends on transport. If transport perishes, the country perishes. But workers' and peasants' Russia does not want to perish, and it will not perish. It will condemn all those to perish who are hindering its escape from the clutches of want and hunger.

February 9, 1920
Torbeyevo-Ruzayevka.
'En Route', No. 107.

Endnotes

1. The experience here described took place on the railway line from Moscow, via Ryazan and Saransk, to Kazan. Ruzayevka is the junction of this line with the line from Penza, and the other places mentioned lie to the west of it – Torbeyevo being about 90 kilometres distant. At the time, the area was on the border of Penza and Tambov provinces: today some of the places mentioned are in the Mordovian ASSR.

The Labour Armies

Order No.194

**By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the
First Labour Army, February 24, 1920, No.194,
Yekaterinburg**

* * *

The labour reports reveal both the extremely small number of Red Army men who have been drawn into productive labour and the extremely low level of the productivity of this labour. I order:

1. Heads of labour sections to assign definite tasks to units, through their commanders and commissars.
2. Commanders and commissars to be called to account for non-fulfilment of tasks.
3. Units which show a lack of conscientiousness in relation to their labour duties to be made penal units, with a very strict regime.
4. All institutions of the army, divisions, etc., to adapt themselves to work, assigning the maximum number of workers to the labour front. Without waiting for instructions from above, they are to show maximum initiative in increasing the number of direct participants in productive labour.
5. Everyone, from the army commander to the youngest Red Army man, to remember that the army has a simple but well-defined task – to fell timber and procure grain, and to load this timber and grain on to the railways.
6. Special plenipotentiaries of the Council of the Labour Army to ascertain on the spot the reasons for the poor progress of work, to arrest the most guilty individuals and to send them to be dealt with by the army's Revolutionary Tribunal.
7. Heads and commissars of administrations and institutions in which idlers are discovered to be held strictly responsible to me, regardless of their previous services.
8. This order to be personally signed by commanders and commissars of individual units and read out in all companies, squadrons, batteries and task-forces.

The Labour Armies

Telegram No.205

To the Provincial Committees of the Party and of the Young Communist League in Perm, Vyatka, Tyumen and Yekaterinburg

*** * ***

In connection with the mobilising of 19-year-olds for labour tasks, the Yekaterinburg Committee of the Young Communist League has mobilised 750 of its members over and above those subject to mobilisation because of their age. In addition, it has assigned a certain number of its members to strengthen the work in Vyatka and Perm provinces. Members of the YCL have enrolled themselves in labour units made up of 19-year-olds, in which they form cells.

The Revolutionary Council of the Labour Army regards as exceptionally important the participation of conscious youth representatives in the labour units of 19-year-olds, among whom there will be a large number of peasants with a low level of consciousness. The Revolutionary Council of the Labour Army expresses its full confidence that the YCL in the other provinces of the Urals will show no less energy and self-sacrifice in the performance of labour tasks and will, following the example of Yekaterinburg province, assign a substantial number of members to this work. The Labour Army Council expects to receive reports without delay on the measures taken in this direction.

February 25, 1920

The Labour Armies

Order No.195

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, February 26, 1920, No.195, Yekaterinburg

* * *

In view of the further improvement in the situation at the fronts it has become possible to discharge the 3rd Army. The army's institutions must be made use of both so as to draw from them forces and resources for factory enterprises, and for labour tasks generally, and so as to transfer the appropriate *matériel* and personnel in order to bring up to strength the military institutions of the Urals District and its provincial and uyezd institutions. As for the units of the army, before being given fresh assignments, they are to be placed under the orders of the Urals District. The 3rd Brigade of the Urals Division will be available to carry outwork of loading and despatch at the orders of the High Command. Particular workers, selected according to their individual qualities, are to be sent either to one of the active armies or to the Siberian Military Districts.

The drawing up of a plan for discharging the 3rd Army in such a way as not to cause any hold-up in the performance of labour tasks is entrusted to a commission for utilising the institutions of the army and the District, under the chairmanship of Comrade Pavlov. This commission is to look immediately into the question of releasing a number of premises which are at present occupied by army institutions that may be liquidated in the near future.

The commission's first report is expected within 48 hours.

The Labour Armies

Basic Propositions

Of a Report to a Meeting of Members of the Yekaterinburg Organisation of the Russian Communist Party, February 25, 1920

* * *

1. The military situation has improved still further with the capture of Archangel and Murmansk.

2. Our international situation is increasingly strong. To a certain extent, we can soon expect to renew economic relations with the capitalist countries.

The results of our international trade will depend entirely on the economic position of Soviet Russia.

If our economy continues to decline, conditions will be dictated to us by the world's merchants who have stocks of goods at their disposal. In one way or another they will drag us down to the position of an enslaved colonial country.

Contrariwise, if our economy grows stronger, this trade will bear the character of a transaction advantageous for the furtherance of socialist construction in our country.

3. The Urals is one of the economically most important regions of Russia.

The economic situation of the Urals continues to worsen:

1. particular enterprises continue to close down.
2. the productivity of labour in the functioning enterprises continues to decline.

Conclusion: the Red Urals region is in danger. And, along with it, Soviet Russia is in danger.

4. The reasons for the continuing economic decline of the Urals:

1. shortage of fuel,
2. shortage of skilled labour-power,
3. shortage of specialists, and bad, that is, unscientific, organisation of production,
4. low level of intensity of labour,
5. shortage of food,
6. shortage of fodder, and
7. shortage of mechanical equipment.

5. The procurement and dispatch of fuel, food and fodder will acquire decisive importance for the fate of the Urals in the course of the next few weeks and months.

Party, trade-union, soviet and, especially, military organisations must at once assign nine-tenths of their forces for work at getting in fuel and foodstuffs. In every institution only the minimum number of workers must be left who are needed to maintain continuity. All able-bodied men to the labour front, for direct participation in productive work, to provide leadership and supervision for this work, to carry on agitation in connection with labour service, and so on.

6. A substantial group of the most responsible and experienced Party members must be nominated for work on transport, in accordance with the decision of the Central Committee. This group to include, first and foremost, all those comrades who have practical familiarity with the work of railway transport.

7. The labour mobilisation of the 19-year-olds must be made the centre of attention for Party and soviet organisations, in particular for the YCL. A section of the workers assigned to economic work must be directed to organise the 19-year-olds and ensure their best use for labour tasks.

8. Every labour mobilisation announced must be carried out unwaveringly and in full. Any resistance must be overcome and, when necessary, put down by armed force. The masses must understand that labour service in the Workers' Republic is no less sacred a duty than military service.

Party members must set an example in the performance of labour service.

9. The apparatus of the Workers' Inspectorate (State Control) must be wholly directed towards checking whether any workers are left in various institutions and organisations who could be more usefully sent to the labour front.

In particular and especially, the Workers' Inspectorate must check on fulfilment of the decision of the Defence Council that railway workers are to be withdrawn from all institutions and placed at the disposal of the railway authorities.

The Workers' Inspectorate, together with the Army Inspectorate, must check as frequently as possible on whether garrisons are assigning the maximum number of Red Army men for work.

10. An intensive struggle - ideological, organisational and by means of repressive measures - must be waged against manifestations of self-seeking among the working class:

1. The Party elements in the trade unions must explain the radical differences between a trade union policy, which haggles and quarrels with the state, demanding concessions from it and eventually urging workers to go on strike, and a Communist policy, which proceeds from the fact that our state is a workers' state, which knows no other interests than those of the working people - from which it follows that the trade unions must teach the workers not to haggle and fight with their own state in difficult times, but by common effort to help it get on to the broad path of economic development.
2. Agitation must not only take the form of mass agitation (both spoken and written) but must also be carried on in the factories and workshops, day by day, through personal example or personal influence by the advanced, Communist workers.

3. Agitational and organisational shock-forces must be despatched to enterprises which are recognised as being the most important and most urgently in need.
4. Strict and exemplary treatment must be handed out to all scoundrels and traitors who (like, for example, the self-seekers in the mint and in the railway workshops) take advantage of the calamities suffered by the workers' and peasants' country to worsen and intensify these calamities through counter-revolutionary strikes and demonstrations.
5. The press must publish both red lists of workers who have distinguished themselves by their energy and self-sacrifice on the labour front, and black lists of self-seekers, idlers and slovens.

11. In accordance with the decision of the Labour Army Council to transform the Verkh-Isetsk factory into a model engineering works, to serve as an example to the whole Urals region, the Party committee and also the trade-union and Soviet organisations must give their full attention to this factory:

1. by strengthening agitational and organisational work,
2. by transferring to this factory from the Labour Army or from other sources a well-united nucleus of advanced Communist workers, and
3. by purging the factory of worthless parasitical and counter-revolutionary elements.

12. A critical checking of the activity of factory managements is needed, with rigorous selection of those workers only whom experience has shown to be able to cope with their tasks.

13. Extensive recruitment of specialists (engineers and technicians) is needed for the organisation of disordered industry. It must be explained to the less conscious workers that, whereas in the past the specialists may have served capital, today, after the rule of capital has been smashed, they will serve the working class.

14. All measures possible under present conditions must be taken to improve the conditions, as regards food, housing and medical facilities, of the workers and of the administrative and technical personnel.

15. In order to arouse labour enthusiasm among the masses, the organisation of voluntary work on days off, in Yekaterinburg and throughout the Urals, must be broadened. It is desirable that in the near future a joint Urals '*subbotnik*' be held, involving proletarians, peasants and the Labour Army.

The Labour Armies

Theses

Of a Report to a Meeting of Communist Red Army Men in Yekaterinburg, February 26, 1920

* * *

1. The transfer of entire armies on to a labour footing is an original and highly complex experiment. Two paths are open here:

1. to adapt the army as a whole to labour tasks, without disrupting its apparatus, so that at any moment the army could be transferred to military tasks;
2. gradually to liquidate the army, withdrawing the necessary workers from it, in groups or individually, together with technical resources required for labour tasks.

2. The first path has been forced on us by the not yet finally settled military situation, which could worsen again and require that the army be transferred from the labour front to the war front.

Being obliged to maintain unwieldy army institutions and apparatuses, the army could detach only a comparatively small percentage of its forces for direct productive labour.

The second path, incomparably more advantageous from the labour standpoint, will open up only when the military situation enables us to put the interests of labour before the need to maintain the army as a fighting force.

3. The 3rd Army was transformed into the First Labour Army while retaining its complete army apparatus, against the possibility that this army might have to be transferred as a whole to Siberia or to North Caucasia. It was this circumstance that set comparatively narrow limits in advance to the utilisation of the 3rd Army for labour purposes. Under present circumstances it could supply the labour front with about 23 per cent of its personnel. In actual fact, the number of workers did not even reach that figure, because the adaptation of the army to labour tasks and even the transfer of units was not yet completed.

4. In recent weeks our military and international situation has considerably improved.

1. we have taken Archangel and are quickly liquidating the northern White Guards, so that the 6th Army is being freed;
2. Denikin's attempt to launch a counter-offensive on the Caucasian front, in which he had temporary success, has been liquidated by our forces;
3. the powerful upsurge of the insurgent movement in eastern Siberia and the agreement reached there with the Czechoslovaks has given us sufficient security in the East;
4. the turn among the ruling classes of the Entente countries towards *de*

facto, if not formal, recognition of the Soviet Republic is so strong that an attack on us by Poland is becoming improbable.

5. Given these conditions, it seems possible to go over to a way of using the forces and resources of the former 3rd Army which is more expedient from the labour standpoint, by dissolving it as an army.

6. The military units of the former 3rd Army will, of course, be retained as such, and temporarily put under the orders of the Urals District for continued use for labour purposes. The units will be kept up to strength by drawing on the army's rear, so as to increase their labour power and raise their revolutionary-political level.

7. The personnel released from the disbanded headquarters and administration of the 3rd Army will be distributed among the economic enterprises and institutions of the Urals and the military institutions of the Urals district, while some of the more highly-qualified military elements will be assigned to the active armies.

8. A corresponding section of army workers must be assigned specially to make up the strength of the territorial cadres which will be called on to do a great deal of work in transferring our armed forces on to a militia footing. In the immediate future the territorial cadres will serve as the apparatus for forming labour units out of the workers and peasants mobilised for labour service.

9. Dissolution of the army apparatus will open up immeasurably wider possibilities for using Communists and, in general, the best workers in the army for labour tasks. The instructions that come down from the Labour Army Council and the Committee on Labour Service must be reinforced by initiative from below. Commissars, and Communists generally, in the army's administrations and institutions must themselves put forward proposals for the best use to be made of their forces in reviving the Urals economy. All such proposals must be submitted, through the army's political administration, to the Committee on Labour Service attached to the Labour Army Council.

10. Extremely useful will be the formation of labour shock-detachments to carry out repairing of locomotives, procurement of timber, organisation of cartage, struggle against epidemic diseases, and so on.

Shock-detachments like this, made up either of skilled or of unskilled workers depending on the nature of the task, can have enormous educational significance, raising by their labour heroism the general level of labour in the Urals.

11. It is necessary, furthermore, to assign a considerable number of commanders, commissars and rank-and-file Communists for work in the sphere of efficient implementation of labour service in the localities. Upon military workers who are used to leading masses in the most difficult conditions must fall a substantial share of the work of organising the mobilised 19-year-olds and setting them to work.

12. Upon the Communists of the former 3rd Army there also lies the duty of taking a very active part in the extensive organisation of voluntary work on Saturdays and Sundays throughout the Urals. The economy of the Urals can be

saved from complete breakdown only by an exceptional effort, only by unprecedented labour heroism. Saturday and Sunday voluntary work, providing us with a lofty example of self-sacrificing collective labour for the common good, must in the next few days and weeks, be raised to a very high level in the Urals. The duty of Communists who have undergone the hard training of war calls them to be in the forefront of this work.

The Labour Armies

Order No.7

**By the Revolutionary War Council of the First Labour Army,
March 3, 1920, No.7, Yekaterinburg**

*** * ***

1.

Deserters from the labour front are to be punished like deserters from the Red Army.

2.

Actions considered as constituting desertion are:

1. failure to appear for labour mobilisation;
2. failure to appear for labour service;
3. evading labour registration;
4. absence from work without valid reason;
5. wilfully leaving work;
6. evading work by assuming fictitious duties, official missions, etc.;
7. evading work by simulating illness;
8. intentional non-fulfilment of norms.

3.

Anyone proved to have facilitated desertion is to be considered a harbourer. Anyone who fails to inform on a deserter in good time is to be considered a conniver. Anyone who gets others to desert, either by persuasion or by threats, is to be considered an instigator.

4.

The fight against evasion of labour mobilisation and labour service and wilful absence from work is the responsibility of the Commission for Combating Desertion, which will be guided by all the orders, provisions and instructions previously issued regarding desertion from the Red Army, and, depending on the nature of the crime, will bring deserters' cases before the Revolutionary Tribunal, or before people's or comrades' disciplinary courts.

5.

For unpunctual arrival at or departure from work, and for absence from work for not more than two days, if the persons concerned do then present themselves voluntarily for work, those guilty are to be called to account forthwith before a comrades' disciplinary court or before the administration of

the enterprise, if this has been granted disciplinary powers.

6.

All organs carrying out registration and allocation of mobilised labour power, and the individuals in charge of works and immediately responsible for their accomplishment, must at once inform the Commission on Desertion of all cases of desertion from work or from assembly points by particular workers, stating where the deserter lives and works.

7.

For failure to take measures against desertion, for carelessness in organising work, for uneconomic use of mobilised labour power and assigning labour tasks which are obviously impracticable, the guilty officials are to be charged and brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal.

8.

In order to prevent desertion and to expose deserters and shirkers, the Commission on Desertion is granted power:

1. to investigate the work being done by enterprises and units,;
2. to call to account persons whose inactivity has promoted the development of desertion,;
3. to take measures to correct the shortcomings discovered, through the appropriate institutions.

9.

For combating evasion of work in the cases mentioned in paragraph 5, the following disciplinary penalties are laid down:

1. reprimand,;
2. demotion, with reduced pay,;
3. transfer to penal status, or assignment to a penal labour unit for a period not exceeding one month.

10.

Transfer to penal status signifies:

1. increase in the amount and time of work to be done, without any payment for extra time;;
2. assignment to unpleasant and heavy work;
3. detention in special premises, under guard;
4. establishment of a strict military regime;
5. as a means of influencing the individual, arrest in accordance with the disciplinary regulations.

The Labour Armies

Order No.198

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the First Labour Army, March 4, 1920, No. 198, Yekaterinburg

* * *

To the All-Urals Commission for Organising *Subbotniks*

Many facts show that the use of labour-power for voluntary work on Saturdays and Sundays is often carried out with criminal carelessness: there is no preliminary plan of work, the number of workers enlisted does not correspond to the task to be performed, or there are not enough tools, and, finally, the task itself, hastily decided on, is quite futile. Under these conditions, enthusiasm for work subsides, and is replaced by natural irritation.

It is therefore considered necessary:

1. Before holding an all-Urals *subbotnik*, to check the work-plan thoroughly, together with the readiness of all the local economic organs to utilise the labour-power expected to turn up.
2. To organise a flying inspectorate which, throughout the day, will check, on the spot, the extent to which the labour-power is used.
3. In all cases of slovenliness and negligence on the part of the relevant Soviet organs, to draw up brief reports and hand these to the Tribunal so that the guilty may be called to account.

Not a single misdemeanour is to be left unpunished.

Every military unit, labour commando or separate group which works with distinction is to be accorded grateful mention in the local press.

The Labour Armies

On the Labour Army

Talk with a Representative of the Soviet Press

* * *

The percentage of workers and the productivity of labour

The idea of a labour army was put forward, as you will remember, by the 3rd Army, which was left for some weeks in an indefinite situation. Because, in this period, our position on the Caucasian front was still uncertain, we could not liquidate the apparatus of the 3rd Army and try to set the entire army to labour tasks. It was already being reported in the newspapers that, if this were done, the 3rd Army could directly assign for work not more than 23 per cent of its personnel. That figure could not but appear extremely small. One must, however, take note that the 3rd Army consisted of a huge administrative apparatus with hardly any army units, these having long since been taken from it and transferred to other fronts. It was a skeleton without any flesh on it. This explains why the army could supply only a small number of workers. Note must also be taken of the condition of the army as regards health: a very large number of typhus victims, and of sick men generally, with a corresponding number of medical personnel. Generally speaking, the lower the level of an army unit, the fewer auxiliary organs and annexes of all kinds it has, the larger is the percentage of workers it can provide. While a regiment can supply 80 per cent and upwards, a brigade can supply between 60 and 70 per cent, and a division, probably, about 50 per cent. Given appropriate organisational changes, on the basis of the experience we have already had, this percentage can be increased.

If we take for comparison the Chelyabinsk mines, in the state in which we found them in mid-February, we see that, out of 3,500 workers, only about 2,000 actually showed up for work. If to this you add the women and the adult members of families living in the same place and providing services for the workers, it turns out that, in actual fact, considerably fewer than 50 per cent of the adult consumers were working.

As soon as our position on the Caucasian front became quite good and the need to transfer the 3rd Army there disappeared, we proceeded, soon after arriving in the Urals, to liquidate the army's apparatus and to make use of its component elements for labour purposes. This provided several thousand skilled workers, who were despatched in groups and teams to various factories. In this way, repair columns were formed, that is, mobile repair workshops for the transport system.

As for direct use of the Labour Army's forces as a whole, what we have here is one cavalry division and one infantry division. The cavalry carried out mainly food-collecting tasks. Its work immediately produced big results. Despite the unfavourable moment, the collection and despatch of grain was greatly increased – in some *uyezds* and provinces, it was multiplied several times.

An immense role was played by the artillery, which concerned itself with the organising of transport, underpinning this with its own transport forces and resources. In every village the gunners began by working for the peasants: mending farm implements, shoeing horses, repairing sledges and carts, and so on. Along with this work they developed extensive educational activity, holding meetings, showing films, presenting plays, and so on. This procedure very greatly mitigated the burdens imposed on the peasantry by cartage service. Also, through their behaviour, our cavalrymen, a large percentage of whom are Communist workers from the Urals, at once established friendly relations with the peasants.

The infantry units were employed principally on logging work. Some comrades have concluded, on the basis of the labour reports, that the productivity of the Red Army man's labour is low, and some idle-minded statisticians and philosophers have argued, in this connection, that 'compulsory' labour in general has a low level of productivity. This is nothing but a liberal smear. If compulsory labour is unproductive (regardless of social conditions), this condemns not just the Labour Army but universal labour service as such, and along with it the entire Soviet order, the further development of which is conceivable only on the basis of universal labour service.

The contrast between free labour and compulsory labour belongs to the epoch of transition from serfowning economy to bourgeois economy. Transferring this concept to the epoch of transition from bourgeois economy to Communist economy is a sign of petty-bourgeois obtuseness. The intensity and purposefulness of work is determined to a very great extent by the personal interest of the workers themselves. For the worker, what is of decisive importance is not the legal form in which he 'partakes' of the fruits of his labour, but what share thereof he actually receives.

Since the Soviet state organises work in the interests of the workers themselves, compulsion is in no way opposed to the personal interests of the worker but, on the contrary, entirely coincides therewith – on condition, of course, that labourpower is used intelligently and economically. This colossal task, the introduction and implementation of labour service, is still all in the future. We are, so far, in this connection, passing through a period of amateurism and rather clumsy experimenting. But all the facts testify that, in this fundamental matter, we shall emerge on to the high road, through increasingly precise organisation of labour service and increasingly accurate implementation of it, and, what is most important, through perfecting, simplifying and defining the relevant economic apparatuses.

At the present time, those Red Army units which are being used as general labour-power are in any case superior to the labour units which have been formed directly through labour mobilisation (for clearing snow, for example). The army units enjoy all the advantages of more accurate organisation, precision, order and strict discipline.

If, nevertheless, productivity of labour in the sphere of timber procurement appears from the labour reports of the first period to be extremely low, there are many reasons why this is so. One is the distance between the place where a unit is stationed and the site where the logging is to be done. Some regiments have been travelling ten to fifteen versts a day, which has cut down their working time to three or four hours. This does not show up in the labour

reports. A considerable number of the Red Army men are from the steppes, and for them the forest is an alien element: they have never felled timber, or sawn it, or chopped it up. They are only starting to acquire the necessary know-how. The tools needed have not always been available in the necessary quantity. Instruction has also not always been adequate. In the initial period the local economic organs were, for quite understandable reasons, unable to utilise the army units. All this has no direct bearing on the use of army units for labour purposes, but it has told heavily on the productivity of labour.

The main task of the Labour Army Council consisted in eliminating all these deficiencies by drawing experienced practical leaders into the work, checking on arrangements in the localities, comparing the arrangements in different logging sectors, and so on. Along with this, the actual recording of labour productivity was made more scientific, so that, in future, account will be taken of the distance the Red Army men have to march to their work-sites, and other important factors affecting the productivity of labour.

A fundamental condition for increasing the productivity of the labour of the Red Army men, as of the labour of all workers generally in the Soviet economy, is the arousing of a spirit of emulation. Until this factor has been brought into play, all our wheels will turn only 'somehow or other'. Organising emulation is the most important task in economic construction – without this subjective driving-force neither coal, nor oil, nor peat, nor the raising of the blockade will help. Emulation between one factory and another, between the different workshops of a factory, between different groups of workers in a workshop, between individual workers: emulation between provincial economic councils, trade unions, railway lines, labour regiments, between the different labour companies in a regiment, between individual Red Army men in a company – this is the most necessary condition for serious economic successes. Emulation must be stimulated and maintained by both spiritual and material factors. By every means available we must foster a sense of labour-honour, both corporate (the factory, the workshop) and individual. So long as the Soviet Republic's resources in consumer goods are extremely limited, it is necessary that an energetic, honest and conscientious worker be fed and clothed better than a careless, lazy and self-seeking one. This applies also to the men in the Labour Army. Those units which distinguish themselves by their work must receive field rations, middling units must receive rear rations, and, finally, units that show an unacceptable attitude to their labour duties must be punished by suffering a cut in their rations and allowances in kind. Such goods as tobacco, tea and so on must be issued as bonuses. This system is now being introduced into the procedures of the units of the First Labour Army. The results will not take long to show themselves.

In the work of the Labour Army Council a whole number of other problems have arisen in practice which, though linked directly or indirectly with the Labour Army, possess significance that goes far beyond that. I will speak about these problems in our next talk.

March 23, 1920
Pravda, No.63

The Labour Armies

About the Organisation of Labour [\[1\]](#)

A report

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Comrades! The internal civil war is coming to an end. On the Western front the situation remains undecided. It is possible that the Polish bourgeoisie will throw down a challenge to its own fate ... But even in that case – and we do not seek it – the war will not demand of us that all-devouring concentration of forces which the simultaneous struggle on four fronts demanded. The frightful pressure of the war is becoming weaker. Economic requirements and tasks are increasingly coming to the fore. History is bringing us face to face in real earnest with our fundamental task – organising labour on new social foundations.

The organisation of labour is, in its essence, the organisation of the new society: every form of society known to history is basically a particular organisation of labour. Whereas every past society was an organisation of labour in the interests of a minority, which organised its own state coercion of the overwhelming majority of the working people, we are making the first attempt in world history to organise labour in the interests of the working majority itself. This, however, does not rule out the element of compulsion in all its forms, from the most gentle to the extremely severe. The element of obligatoriness, of state compulsion, not only does not disappear from the historical scene, but, on the contrary, will still play, for a considerable period, an extremely big role.

As a general rule, man strives to avoid work. Love of work is not at all an inborn characteristic: it is created by economic pressure and social education. One may even say that man is a rather lazy animal. It is on this quality, essentially, that all human progress is founded, to a considerable extent, because, if man did not strive to expend his energy economically, did not try to obtain the largest possible quantity of goods in return for a small quantity of energy, there would have been no development of technique or any social culture. Thus, from this standpoint, human laziness is a progressive force. Old Antonio Labriola, the Italian Marxist, even pictured the man of the future as 'a happy and brilliant idler'. We must not, however, draw from this the conclusion that the Party and the trade unions should, in their agitation, propagate this quality as a moral duty. No, no! We have too much of it as it is. The task of social organisation consists precisely of bringing 'laziness' within a definite framework, disciplining it, so as to urge mankind forward by means of methods and measures invented by mankind itself.

Labour Service

The key to the economy is labour-power – skilled, with elementary training, semi-skilled, raw or unskilled. To work out methods for its accurate

registration, mobilisation, distribution and productive application means to solve, in practice, the task of economic construction. This is a task for an entire epoch – a gigantic task. Its difficulty is intensified by the fact that we have to reorganise labour on socialist principles under conditions of unprecedented scarcity, of frightful want.

The more our mechanical equipment becomes worn-out, the greater the disruption of our railway installations, the less hope there is that we shall receive machinery from abroad, to any significant extent, in the near future, the greater is the importance acquired by the question of living labour-power. It would seem that there is plenty of it. But how are we to get at it? How are we to set it to work? How are we to organise it productively? Already when we were clearing the snowdrifts from railway tracks we came up against very big difficulties. It was absolutely impossible to overcome these difficulties by obtaining labourpower on the market, given the present insignificant purchasing power of money and the almost complete absence of manufactured goods. Our fuel needs cannot be satisfied, even partially, without a mass-scale, unprecedented application of labour-power to the getting of timber, peat and shale. The civil war has played havoc with our railway-tracks, our bridges and station-buildings. We require tens and hundreds of thousands of workers to restore all this to order. For large-scale production in logging, peat-digging and other branches of work we need housing for our workers, even if only in the form of temporary huts. Hence, again, the necessity of devoting a substantial amount of labour power to building work. Many workers are required to organise the floating of timber down the rivers. And so on and so forth.

Capitalist industry is sustained, to a large extent, by auxiliary labour-power in the form of seasonal work by peasants. The countryside, caught in the grip of landlessness, always threw a certain surplus of labour-power on to the market. The state obliged the countryside to do this, through its demand for taxes. The market offered the peasant manufactured goods. Today we have none of this. The peasants have more land, there is not enough agricultural machinery, workers are needed for work on the land, industry can at present give the peasants almost nothing, and the market no longer attracts labour-power.

Yet labour-power is needed more than ever before. Not only the worker but the peasant as well must contribute his energy to the Soviet state, so that the Russia of the working people, and with it the working people themselves, may not be crushed. The only way to recruit the labour-power needed for our economic tasks is to introduce *labour service*.

The actual principle of labour service is quite unquestionable for a Communist. 'If any would not work, neither should he eat.' [2] And, as all must eat, so all must work. Labour service is inscribed in our Constitution and in our Labour Code. But hitherto it has remained only a principle. Its application has always had a casual, partial, episodic character. Only now, when we have been brought right up against the problems of reviving the country economically, have the problems of labour service confronted us in full concreteness. The only solution to our economic difficulties which is correct both from the standpoint of principle and also in practice is to see the entire population of the country as a reservoir of the labour-power we need – an almost inexhaustible reservoir – and to introduce strict order into the work of registering, mobilising and utilising it.

How, in practice, are we to set about getting hold of labourpower on the basis of labour service?

Hitherto, only the War Department has had experience in the sphere of the registration, mobilisation, formation and transference from one place to another of large masses of people. These technical methods and practices were, to a considerable extent, inherited by our War Department from the past. In the economic sphere there is no such heritage, since what operated previously in that sphere was the principle of private rights, and labour-power made its way from the market to each enterprise separately. It is consequently natural that, if so obliged, we should, at least during the initial period, make extensive use of the apparatus of the War Department for labour mobilisation.

We have set up special organs for the implementation of labour service at the centre and in the localities: in the provinces, *uyezds* and *volosts* we already have labour service committees at work. [3] They rely, for the most part, on the central and local organs of the War Department. Our economic centres – the Supreme Economic Council, the People's Commissariat of Agriculture, the People's Commissariat of Transport, the People's Commissariat of Food – draw up estimates of the amount of labour-power they require. The Chief Committee on Labour Service receives these estimates, co-ordinates them, relates them to the local sources of labour-power, gives corresponding directions to its local organs, and through these organs carries out labour mobilisations. Within the boundaries of regions, provinces and *uyezds*, the local organs perform this work independently, so as to satisfy local economic requirements.

All this organisation exists at present only in outline. It is still extremely imperfect. But the course we have adopted is unquestionably the right one.

While the organisation of the new society can be reduced, fundamentally, to a new organisation of labour, the organisation of labour means, in its turn, the proper introduction of universal labour service. This task is not at all exhausted by measures of an organisational and administrative character. It affects the very foundations of the economy and of everyday life. It conflicts with the most powerful psychological habits and prejudices. The introduction of labour service presupposes, on the one hand, a colossal amount of educational work and, on the other, the greatest circumspection in the practical approach adopted.

The utilisation of labour-power must be as economic as possible. In our labour mobilisations we have to take account of the economic and social conditions of each area, and with the requirements of the basic occupation of the local inhabitants, namely, agriculture. We must, if possible, make use of the previous by – employments and seasonal work of the local people. We must see to it that the transferring of mobilised labour power takes place over the shortest possible distances – that is, to the nearest sectors of the labour front. We must ensure that the number of workers mobilised corresponds to the dimensions of the economic task to be performed. We must ensure that the mobilised workers are supplied in good time with the tools they need, and with food. We must ensure that experienced and sensible instructors are put in charge of them. We must ensure that the workers mobilised on the spot are convinced that their labour-power is being used prudently and economically and not expended in a haphazard way. Wherever possible, direct mobilisation

must be replaced by the 'labour task', that is, by imposing on a volost the duty to supply, for example, at such-and-such a time such-and-such a number of cubic *sazhens* of wood, or to bring up, by cart, to such-and-such a station such-and-such a number of poods of cast iron, and so on. In this sphere it is necessary to study experience, as it accumulates, with particular care, to allow a great measure of elasticity to the economic apparatus, to show more attention to local interests and peculiarities of everyday life. In short, we have to elaborate, improve and perfect the procedures, methods and organs for putting into effect the mobilisation of labour-power. But at the same time we must, once and for all, appreciate that the actual principle of labour service has just as radically and irrevocably replaced the principle of free hiring as the socialisation of the means of production has replaced capitalist ownership.

The Militarisation Of Labour

The introduction of labour service is inconceivable without the application, to a greater or less degree, of methods of militarising labour. This term brings us at once into the realm of the biggest superstitions and outcries from the opposition.

To understand what militarisation of labour means in a workers' state, and what its methods are, one needs to appreciate how it was that the army itself was militarised, for, as we all remember, in its early days the army did not at all possess the necessary 'military' qualities. During these two years we mobilised for the Red Army nearly as many soldiers as there are members in our trade unions. But the members of the trade unions are workers, whereas in the army workers constitute about 15 per cent, the rest being a mass of peasants. And yet we can have no doubt that the real builders and 'militarisers' of the Red Army have been the advanced workers, brought forward by the Party and the trade-union organisation. Whenever the situation at the front was difficult, whenever the freshly mobilised mass of peasants failed to display sufficient staunchness, we turned, on the one hand, to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, and, on the other, to the Presidium of the All-Russia Trade-Union Council. From both of these sources advanced workers were sent to the front, and there they built the Red Army after their own image and likeness -educating, tempering and militarising the peasant mass. This fact must be kept in mind today, with all possible clearness, because it throws the proper light on the very meaning of militarisation under the conditions of a workers' and peasants' state. The militarisation of labour has more than once been proclaimed as a watchword, and realised in particular branches of the economy, in bourgeois countries both in the West and here, under Tsardom. But our militarisation differs from those experiments by its aims and its methods, just as the conscious proletariat, organised for emancipation, differs from the conscious bourgeoisie, organised for exploitation.

From the confusion, half-conscious and half-intentional, between the historical forms of proletarian, socialist militarisation and bourgeois militarisation spring most of the prejudices, mistakes, protests and outcries on this subject. It is on such a confusion that the whole position of the Mensheviks, our Russian Kautskyites, is based, as it was expressed in their resolution on matters of principle that was moved at the current Trade Union Congress. [\[4\]](#)

The Mensheviks attack not only the militarisation of labour but also labour service itself. They reject these methods as 'compulsory'. They preach that labour service signifies a low productivity of labour, while militarisation means aimless plundering of labour-power.

'Compulsory labour is always labour of low productivity' – that is the exact phrase used in the Menshevik's resolution. This affirmation brings us to the very essence of the question. For, as we see, the question is not at all whether it is wise or unwise to declare this or that factory militarised, or whether it is helpful or not to give the military revolutionary tribunal power to punish corrupt workers who steal the materials and tools which are so precious to us, or who sabotage their work. No, the Mensheviks have put the question on a much profounder level. By affirming that compulsory labour is always labour of low productivity, they are trying to cut the ground from under all our economic constructive work in the present epoch of transition. For it is beyond question that to step from bourgeois anarchy to socialist economy without a revolutionary dictatorship and without compulsory forms of economic organisation is impossible.

In the first paragraph of the Mensheviks' resolution we are told that we are living in the period of transition from the capitalist mode of production to the socialist mode. What does this mean? And, first of all, whence does this come? Since when has this been admitted by our Kautskyites? They used to accuse us – and this formed the basis of the differences between them and us – of socialist utopianism. They declared – and this constituted the essence of their political doctrine – that there can be no question of a transition to socialism in our epoch, that our revolution is a bourgeois revolution, and that we communists are merely disrupting capitalist economy, not leading the country forward but throwing it back. This was the basic difference, the most profound and irreconcilable divergence of views, from which all the others followed. Now the Mensheviks tell us, in passing, in the introductory propositions of their resolution, as though it is something that does not call for proof, that we are living in the conditions of a transition from capitalism to socialism. And this quite unexpected admission, which, it might seem, is very much like a complete ideological surrender, is made the more lightly and glancingly in that, as the whole resolution shows, it imposes no revolutionary obligations on the Mensheviks. They remain wholly captive to bourgeois ideology. After recognising that we are on the road to socialism, the Mensheviks hurl themselves with all the greater ferocity upon those methods without which, in the harsh and difficult conditions of the present time, the transition to socialism cannot be accomplished.

Compulsory labour, we are told, is always unproductive. We ask: what is meant here by compulsory labour, that is, with what kind of labour is it being contrasted? Evidently, with free labour. What, in that case, are we to understand by *free* labour? That concept was formulated by the progressive ideologues of the bourgeoisie in the struggle against the unfree, that is, the serf labour of the peasants and against the standard-governed, regulated labour of the guild craftsmen. Free labour meant labour which could be 'freely' bought on the market: freedom was reduced to a legal fiction, on the basis of wage-slavery. We know of no other form of free labour in history. Let the very few representatives of the Mensheviks at this Congress explain to us what they mean by free, non-compulsory labour, if not the market for labour-power.

History has known slave labour. History has known serf labour. History has known the regulated labour of the mediaeval guilds. Throughout the world there now prevails wage-labour, which the yellow journalists of all countries counterpoise, as the highest form of freedom, to Soviet 'slavery'. We, on the contrary, counterpoise to the capitalist slavery socially regulated labour on the basis of an economic plan, obligatory for the whole people and, therefore, compulsory for every worker in the country. Without this we cannot even think of the transition to socialism. The element of material, physical compulsion may be greater or less: that depends on many conditions – on the level of wealth or poverty of a given country, on its heritage from the past, on its cultural level, on the state of transport and the administrative apparatus, and so on. But obligation, and, consequently, compulsion, is a necessary condition for bridling bourgeois anarchy, socialising the means of production and labour, and reconstructing the economy on the basis of a single plan.

For the liberal, freedom, in the last analysis, means the market. Can or cannot the capitalist buy labour-power at a reasonable price – that is for him the sole measure of the freedom of labour. This measure is false not only in relation to the future but also in relation to the past.

It would be absurd to imagine that, in the days of serfdom, work was carried on entirely under the stick of physical compulsion, as if an overseer stood with a whip behind the back of every peasant. Mediaeval forms of economic life grew up out of definite conditions of production, and created definite forms of social life, to which the peasant grew accustomed, and which he, at certain periods, considered just, or, at any rate, unalterable. Whenever, under the influence of a change in material conditions, he showed hostility, the state brought down upon him its material force, thereby revealing the compulsory character of the organisation of labour.

The basis for the militarisation of labour is constituted by those forms of state compulsion without which the replacement of the capitalist by the socialist economy will forever remain an empty phrase. Why do we speak of militarisation? This is, of course, only an analogy, but an analogy very rich in content. No social organisation except the army has ever considered itself justified in subjecting citizens to itself to such a degree, and controlling them by its will in every aspect, as the state of the proletarian dictatorship considers itself justified in doing, and does. Only the army – just because it used to decide, in its own way, questions of the life or death of nations, states and ruling classes – was endowed with the power to demand from each and everyone complete submission to its tasks, purposes, regulations and orders. And it achieved this the more completely the more the tasks of military organisation coincided with the requirements of social development.

The question of the life or death of Soviet Russia is at present being decided on the labour front. Our economic organisations, and, together with them, our trade-union and production organisations, have the right to demand from their members all that self-sacrifice, discipline and assiduity which, hitherto, only the army demanded.

On the other hand, the relation of the capitalist to the worker is not at all founded merely on the 'free' contract, but includes powerful elements of state regulation and material compulsion.

Competition between capitalist and capitalist imparted a certain, very limited reality to the fiction of freedom of labour: but this competition, which had been reduced to a minimum by the syndicates and trusts, we have finally eliminated by abolishing private ownership of the means of production. The transition to socialism, which the Mensheviks recognise in words, means the transition from spontaneous distribution of labour-power, through the play of buying and selling, the movement of market prices and wages, to planned distribution of workers by the economic organs at the level of the *uyezd*, the province and the country as a whole. Such planned distribution presupposes the subordination of those distributed to the state's economic plan. And this is the essence of *labour service*, which inevitably enters, as the fundamental element, into the programme of socialist organisation of labour.

While a planned economy is inconceivable without labour service, the latter is unrealisable without eliminating the fiction of freedom of labour, without substituting for this the principle of obligation, which is reinforced by actual compulsion.

That free labour is more productive than compulsory labour is quite true as regards the period of transition from feudal society to bourgeois society. But one needs to be a liberal, or, in our day, a Kautskyite, to see that truth as something permanent and to transfer its applicability to the period of transition from the bourgeois to the socialist order. If it were true as the Mensheviks' resolution says, that compulsory labour is unproductive always and under all conditions, all our constructive work would be doomed to failure. For we can have no road to socialism other than by authoritative direction of the country's economic forces and resources, with centralised distribution of labour-power in accordance with a general state plan. The workers' state considers that it has the right to send every worker to the place where his work is needed. And not one serious socialist will deny the workers' state the right to lay its hand upon the worker who refuses to perform his labour duty. But that is the whole point – that the Mensheviks' road of transition to 'socialism' is a Milky Way, without a grain monopoly, without abolishing the market, without revolutionary dictatorship and without militarising labour.

Without labour service, without the power to give orders and demand that they be carried out, the trade unions will be transformed into a mere form without content, for the socialist state which is being built needs trade unions not for a struggle for better conditions of labour – that is a task for the social and state organisation as a whole – but in order to organise the working class for production purposes, to educate, discipline, distribute, group and attach certain categories of workers and individual workers to their posts for certain periods of time: in short, to exercise their authority, hand in hand with the state, to bring the workers into the framework of a single economic plan. In these circumstances, to defend 'freedom' of labour means to defend fruitless, helpless, absolutely unregulated striving for better conditions, unsystematic and chaotic movements from factory to factory, in a hungry country, under conditions of frightful disorganisation, of the transport and food apparatus.

What, except complete breakdown of the working class and complete economic anarchy, could result from a stupid attempt to combine bourgeois freedom of labour with proletarian socialisation of the means of production?

Thus, comrades, militarisation of labour, in the fundamental sense that I

have indicated, is not the invention of individual politicians, or of our War Department, but is the inevitable method of organising and disciplining labour-power in the period of transition from capitalism to socialism. And if the compulsory distribution of labour-power, its temporary or long-term attachment to particular branches and enterprises, its regulation from the standpoint of a general state economic plan, if all these forms of compulsion lead, always and everywhere, as the Mensheviks' resolution states, to lowering the productivity of labour, then you can give socialism up for lost. For socialism cannot be based on lowering the productivity of labour. Every social organisation is fundamentally an organisation of labour. And if our new organisation of labour leads to a lowering of the productivity of labour, then this will inevitably lead to the ruin of the socialist society we are building, whichever ways we may twist and turn and whatever measures for salvation we may invent.

That is why I stated at the very beginning that the Menshevik arguments against militarisation take us to the root question of labour service and its bearing on the productivity of labour. Is it true that compulsory labour is always unproductive? One has to reply that this is the most pitiful and worthless liberal prejudice. The whole question is: who is applying compulsion, to whom, and for what purpose? What state, what class, under what conditions, by what methods? Even the serfowning organisation was, in certain conditions, a step forward, and led to an increase in the productivity of labour. Productivity increased enormously under capitalism, that is, in the epoch of free buying and selling of labour-power on the market. But free labour, along with capitalism as a whole, having entered the stage of imperialism, blew itself up in the imperialist war. The whole world economy entered a period of bloody anarchy, of monstrous upheavals, of impoverishment, degeneration and destruction of the masses. Can we, in these circumstances, talk about the productivity of free labour, when the fruits of this labour are being destroyed ten times as fast as they are created? The imperialist war and its aftermath revealed that it is impossible for society to go on any longer on the basis of free labour. Or, perhaps, somebody possesses the secret of how to separate free labour from the *delirium tremens* of imperialism, that is, to turn back the clock of social development by half a century, or a century? If it were to turn out that the planned, and consequently compulsory, organisation of labour which is replacing imperialism leads to a decline of the economy, that would mean the ruin of all our culture, a retrograde movement of mankind back to barbarism and savagery.

Happily, not only for Soviet Russia but for the whole of mankind, the philosophy of the low productivity of compulsory labour, 'always and under all conditions', is merely a belated rehash of old-time liberal tunes. The productivity of labour is a magnitude derived from a very complex combination of social conditions, and is not in the least measured or pre-determined by the legal form of labour.

The whole of human history is the history of the organisation and education of collective man for labour, with the object of attaining a higher level of productivity. Man, as I have already permitted myself to point out, is lazy: that is, he instinctively strives to obtain the largest possible quantity of goods for the least possible expenditure of energy. Without this striving on his part there would have been no economic development. The growth of civilisation is measured by the productivity of human labour, and each new form of social

relations must be tested against that touchstone.

'Free' labour, that is, wage-labour, did not appear all at once on God's earth, armed with all the attributes of productivity. It acquired a high level of productivity only gradually, as a result of a protracted application of methods of labour organisation and labour education. Into that education entered the most varying methods and practices, which, moreover, changed from one epoch to another. First of all, the bourgeoisie, using its club, drove the peasant from the countryside onto the high road, after having robbed him of his land, and when he would not work in the factory, it branded his forehead with a red-hot iron, hanged him, sent him to the galleys – and, eventually, it taught the vagrant who had been forced out of the countryside to take his place at the bench in the manufactory. At that stage, as we see, 'free' labour is, as yet, little different from convict labour, both in its material conditions and in its legal situation.

At different times the bourgeoisie combined the red-hot iron of repression, in different proportions, with the methods of ideological influence – primarily, preaching by priests. As early as the 16th century it reformed the old religion of Catholicism, which defended the feudal order, and adapted a new religion for itself, in the form of the Reformation, in which the free soul was combined with free trade and free labour. It found for itself new priests, who became the spiritual salesmen and pious timekeepers of the bourgeoisie. The school and the press, the town hall and the parliament, were all adapted by the bourgeoisie for the ideological fashioning of the working class. Different forms of wages – day wages, piece-wages, contracts, collective agreements – are all merely changing methods in the hands of the bourgeoisie for the labour-training of the proletariat. To them are added all sorts of ways of encouraging labour and inciting to careerism. Finally, the bourgeoisie learned how to take control even of trade unionism, that is, of the organisations of the working class itself, and made extensive use of them, especially in Britain, to discipline the workers. It domesticated the leaders and by means of them inculcated in the workers a conviction that peaceful, organic labour was a necessity, with a faultless attitude to their duties and strict obedience to the laws of the bourgeois state. The crown of all this work was Taylorism, in which elements of scientific organisation of the production process are combined with the most concentrated methods of the sweating system.

From all that has been said it is clear that the productivity of wage-labour is not something given, ready-made, presented to history on a salver. No, it is the outcome of a long and stubborn policy of repression, education, organisation and encouragement pursued by the bourgeoisie in relation to the working class. Step by step, the bourgeoisie learned to squeeze out of the workers an ever larger quantity of products of labour, and one of the most powerful weapons in its hands was the proclamation of wage-labour as the only free, normal, healthy, productive and salutary form of labour.

No legal form of labour which would of itself guarantee productivity has ever been known in history, and it cannot exist. The legal envelope of labour corresponds to the relations and concepts of the epoch. The productivity of labour is developed, on the basis of growth in technical forces, by labour-education, by the gradual adaptation of the workers to changing means of production and new forms of social relations.

The creation of socialist society means the organisation of the workers on new bases, their adaptation to these bases, their labour re-education, with the purpose unchanged: raising the productivity of labour. The working class, led by its vanguard, must itself re-educate itself, on the basis of socialism. Whoever, has not understood this is ignorant of the ABC of socialist construction.

What methods, then, do we possess for re-educating the working people? Incomparably more extensive ones than the bourgeoisie possessed and, moreover, honest, direct, open methods, infected neither by hypocrisy nor by lies. The bourgeoisie had to have recourse to deception, presenting 'its' form of labour as free, whereas in reality it was not merely socially-imposed but actually slave labour. For it was the labour of the majority in the interests of the minority. We, however, organise labour in the interests of the working people themselves, and therefore we can have no motive for hiding or masking the socially-compulsory character of our organisation of labour. We have no need of fairy stories, either those of the priests, or those of the liberals, or those of the Kautskyans. We say directly and openly to the masses that they can save and revive the socialist country and bring it to a flourishing condition only by means of hard work, unquestioning discipline, and the greatest care shown in the assiduous performance of his duties by every worker. Our chief means is ideological influence – propaganda not only in words but also in deeds. Labour service is compulsory, but this does not mean at all that it is coercion of the working class. If labour service were to encounter opposition from the majority of the working people, it would be shipwrecked, and with it the whole Soviet order. Militarisation of labour when the working people are against it is Arakcheyevism. Militarisation of labour by the will of the working people themselves is socialist dictatorship. That labour service and militarisation of labour do not violate the will of the working people, as 'free' labour did, is best shown by the flourishing, unprecedented in the history of mankind, of voluntary labour in the form of *subbotniks*. Such a phenomenon has never been seen before, anywhere. By their own voluntary, disinterested labour, once a week and even more often, the workers are clearly demonstrating not only their readiness to assume the burden of 'compulsory' labour but also their eagerness to give the state a certain amount of additional labour over and above that. The *subbotniks* are not only a splendid manifestation of Communist solidarity, they are also the most reliable guarantee of successful introduction of labour service. These truly Communist tendencies must be publicised, extended and developed by means of propaganda.

The chief spiritual weapon of the bourgeoisie is religion. Ours is frank explanation to the masses of the actual state of affairs, the spreading of knowledge of natural history and technology, and the initiation of the masses into the state's general economic plan, on the basis of which all the labour power at the disposal of the Soviet Government has to be set to work.

Political economy provided the principal subject of our agitation in the period we have left behind us: the capitalist social system was a mystery, and we unveiled that mystery before the masses. Today, social mysteries are unveiled before the masses by the actual working of the Soviet order, which draws the masses into all spheres of administration. Political economy will increasingly pass into the realm of history. Into the forefront will move the sciences which study nature and the ways of subordinating it to man.

The trade unions must organise scientific and technical educational work on the widest scale, so that every worker may find in his own work a stimulus to theoretical thinking, and this in turn may send him back to his work, to improve it and make it more productive. The general press must come into line with the country's economic tasks, not just in the sense in which this is being done at present, that is, not just in the sense of mere general agitation in favour of labour élan, but in the sense of discussing and weighing concrete economic problems and plans, the ways and means of solving them, and, most important of all, the checking and evaluating of results achieved. The newspapers must follow, from day to day, the production of the principal factories and other enterprises, recording their successes and failures, encouraging some and pillorying others ...

Russian capitalism, owing to its belatedness, its lack of independence, and the parasitic features resulting from this, has been able to train the worker masses, to educate them technically and discipline them to the service of production, only to a much smaller extent than European capitalism did with its workers. This task now falls entirely upon the trade-union organisations of the proletariat. A good engineer, a good mechanic, a good fitter must receive in the Soviet Republic the same publicity and fame as was previously accorded to outstanding agitators, revolutionary fighters, and, in the most recent period, to the most courageous and capable commanders and commissars. Leaders in the sphere of technology, both great and small, must occupy the centre of public attention. Bad workers must be made ashamed of doing their work badly.

We have retained, and for a long time we shall continue to retain, the wages system. The further we advance, the more its significance will consist simply in ensuring that every member of society receives all the necessities of life: and thereby it will cease to be a wages system. But at present we are not rich enough for this. Our main task is to increase the quantity of goods turned out, and to this task every other must be subordinated. In the present difficult period the wages system serves us, first and foremost, not as a method for ensuring the individual existence of the individual worker, but as a method of evaluating what that individual worker contributes by his labour to the workers' republic.

Consequently wages, both in money and in kind, must be made to correspond as closely as possible to the productivity of individual labour. Under capitalism, piece-work and lumpwork, the application of the Taylor system, and so on, had as their object to increase the exploitation of the workers by squeezing out surplus value. Under socialised production, piece-wages, bonuses, and so on, serve the purpose of increasing the volume of the social product, and, consequently, raising the general level of prosperity. Those workers who do more for the common interest receive the right to a larger share of the social product than the lazy, the careless and the disorganisers.

Finally, while rewarding some, the workers' state cannot refrain from punishing others, that is, those who clearly violate labour solidarity, undermine the common work, and seriously impair the socialist rebirth of the country. Repression for the attainment of economic ends is a necessary weapon of the socialist dictatorship.

All the measures enumerated above, and a number of others as well, must

promote the development of emulation in the sphere of production. Without this we shall never rise above a mediocre, extremely inadequate level. Underlying emulation is the vital instinct of the struggle for existence, which in the bourgeois order assumes the character of competition. Emulation will not disappear even in developed socialist society, but, with the increasing guarantee of the necessities of life, it will acquire an even more disinterested and purely ideal character. It will express itself in a striving to perform the greatest service to one's village, *uyezd*, town, or to the whole of society, and to receive in return renown, gratitude, popularity, or, finally, just inward satisfaction from consciousness of work well done. But in the difficult period of transition, under conditions of extreme shortage of material goods and a still inadequate development of the sense of social solidarity, emulation must inevitably be, to a greater or lesser degree, bound up with a striving to ensure objects of personal consumption for oneself.

This, comrades, is the sum of resources at the disposal of the workers' state for raising the productivity of labour. As we see, there is no ready-made solution here. We shall find it written in no book. For there could be no such book. We are only beginning, along with you, to write that book, with the sweat and blood of the working people. We say: working men and women, you have taken the road of regulated labour. Only along that road will you build socialist society. Before you stands a task which nobody will accomplish for you: the task of increasing the productivity of labour, on new social foundations. Unless you accomplish that task, you will perish. If you accomplish it, you will make mankind taller by a whole head.

Labour Armies

The question of the use of the army for labour purposes, which has acquired amongst us enormous importance from the standpoint of principle, was approached by us empirically, and not at all on the basis of theoretical considerations. In certain outlying areas of Soviet Russia, circumstances had been created which left considerable military forces free from military tasks for an indefinite period. To transfer them to other, active fronts, especially during the winter, was difficult in consequence of the disorder in railway transport. This was, for example, the position of the 3rd Army, which was stationed in the provinces in and near the Urals. The leading workers of this army, realising that we could not yet demobilise it, themselves raised the question of transferring it to labour activity. They sent to the centre a more or less worked-out draft decree for a labour army.

The problem was novel and difficult. Would the Red Army men work? Would their work be sufficiently productive? Would it pay for itself? In this connection there were doubts even amongst ourselves. Needless to say, the Mensheviks started beating their drums in opposition. The same Abramovich, at the Congress of Economic Councils – in January, I think, or at the beginning of February, that is, when the whole thing was still in draft stage – forecast that we should suffer inevitable failure, for the whole undertaking was senseless, an Arakcheyev utopia, and so on and so forth. We saw the matter differently. The difficulties were great, of course, but they were not distinguishable in principle from all the other difficulties in Soviet constructive work.

Let us look at what, in fact, the organism of the 3rd Army comprises. Few military units were left in that army: in all, one infantry division and one cavalry division – fifteen regiments altogether, plus some special units. The rest had already been transferred to other armies and fronts. But the apparatus of army administration had still remained intact, and we thought it probable that, in the spring, we should have to transfer it down the Volga to the Caucasian front against Denikin, if he had not been finally smashed by that time. Altogether, about 120,000 Red Army men were left in the 3rd Army, in the administrations, institutions, military units, field hospitals, and so on. In this total mass, composed mainly of peasants, there were about 16,000 Communists and members of the organisation of sympathisers, consisting to a considerable extent of Urals workers. Thus, in its composition and structure, the 3rd Army was a mass of peasants bound together into a military organisation under the leadership of advanced workers. A considerable number of military specialists were working in the army, carrying out important military functions under the general political supervision of the Communists. If we look at the 3rd Army from this point of view, we see that it represents in miniature Soviet Russia as a whole. Whether we take the Red Army as a whole, or the organisation of the Soviet power in an *uyezd*, or a province, or in the entire Republic, including the economic organs, we shall find everywhere the same scheme of organisation: millions of peasants who are being drawn into new forms of political, economic and social life by the organised workers, who occupy the leading position in all spheres of Soviet construction. For posts requiring special knowledge we recruit specialists from the bourgeois school: they are granted the necessary independence, but supervision of their work is maintained by the working class, in the person of its Communist Party. The introduction of labour service is, again, conceivable for us only as the mobilisation of predominantly peasant labour-power under the leadership of advanced workers. Thus, there were not and could not be any obstacles in principle to the use of the army for labour. In other words, the objections on grounds of principle to labour armies, on the part of those same Mensheviks, were really objections to 'compulsory' labour in general, and, consequently, were directed against labour service and against Soviet methods of economic construction as a whole. We stepped over those objections without difficulty.

The military apparatus, as such, is not, of course, adapted to guiding the labour-process. But we did not attempt to use it for that purpose. Control had to remain in the hands of the appropriate economic organs. The army supplied the necessary labour-power in the form of organised, compact units, suitable, in the mass, for carrying out very simple, homogeneous tasks: freeing roads from snow, procurement of timber, building work, organising cartage, and so on.

We now already possess considerable experience in the matter of using the army for labour, and can provide an evaluation which is not merely conjectural and hypothetical. What conclusions are to be drawn from this experience? The Mensheviks have hastened to draw them. The same Abramovich, again, declared at the miners' congress that we had gone bankrupt, that the labour armies are parasitic formations, in which for every ten workers there are 100 officials. Is this true? No. This is the irresponsible and malicious criticism of outsiders, who do not know the facts and pick up only fragments and rubbish, here, there and everywhere, and who either proclaim our bankruptcy or prophesy it. In reality, the labour armies have not only not gone bankrupt, but, on the contrary, have had important successes, have shown their vitality, are

evolving and growing stronger and stronger. It is precisely those prophets who have gone bankrupt, those who foretold that nothing would come of the whole venture, that nobody would work, that the Red Army men would not go to the labour front but would simply scatter to their homes.

These objections were dictated by philistine skepticism, lack of faith in the masses, lack of faith in bold organisational initiative. But did we not hear what were fundamentally the same objections when we set about extensive mobilisations for military tasks? They tried to frighten us then, too, by saying that mass desertion would be inevitable after the imperialist war. [5] Desertion did occur, of course, but considered by the test of experience it proved to be not at all on such a mass scale as had been foretold. It did not destroy the army. The moral and organisational bond, communist volunteering and state compulsion combined, enabled us to mobilise millions, to carry through numerous formations and fulfil very difficult military tasks. In the end, the army was victorious. Where labour tasks were concerned we expected, on the basis of our military experience, to get the same results. And we were not mistaken. The Red Army men did not disperse at all when they were switched from military to labour service, as the sceptics had prophesied they would. Thanks to our well-organised agitation, the transference itself was accompanied by a great wave of enthusiasm. True, a certain section of the soldiers tried to quit the army, but this always happens when a large military formation is moved from one front to another, or sent from the rear to the front – in general, when it is shaken up, and when potential desertion becomes actual. But in this case the Political Departments, the press, the organs for combating desertion, and so on, at once came into their own, and today the percentage of deserters from the labour army is no higher than in our fighting armies.

The statement that, by virtue of their internal structure, armies can detach only a small percentage of workers is true only to a certain extent. As far as the 3rd Army is concerned, I have already pointed out that it retained its complete apparatus of administration along with an extremely small number of military units. So long as we – for military, not economic, reasons – retained intact the army's headquarters and its administration, the percentage of workers supplied by the army was indeed extremely small. Out of a total of 110,000 [sic] Red Army men, 21 per cent proved to be occupying administrative or supply posts; about 16 per cent were engaged in routine duties such as providing guards, mostly in connection with army institutions and stores; the number of sick, mostly with typhus, together with the medical personnel looking after them, came to about 13 per cent; those absent for various reasons (official missions, leave, absence without leave), not more than 25 per cent. Thus, the total personnel available for work did not exceed 23 per cent: this was the maximum that could, in that period, be obtained for labour from that army. Actually, at first, only about 14 per cent worked – men drawn mainly from the two divisions, one of infantry and the other of cavalry, which still remained with the army.

But as soon as it was clear that Denikin had been crushed, and that we should not have to send the 3rd Army down the Volga in the spring, to help the troops on the Caucasian front, we immediately set about disbanding the cumbersome apparatuses of the army and adapting the army's institutions more properly to labour tasks. Although this work has not yet been completed, it has already had time to give some very significant results. In March the

former 3rd Army is contributing about 38 per cent of its total number as workers. As for the military units of the Urals military district, which are working alongside it, they already provide 49 per cent of their number as workers. This result is not so bad, if we compare it with the attendance-figures for factories, in many of which not long ago, and in some even today, absence from work, for reasons legitimate and illegitimate, reached 50 per cent and over. Since then, this percentage has been very greatly reduced (June 1920). To this one must add that workers in factories are often looked after by adult members of their families, whereas the Red Army men have to look after themselves.

If we take the case of the 19-year-olds who were mobilised in the Urals by means of the military apparatus, principally for logging work, we find that, out of their total number, more than 30,000, over 75 per cent present themselves for work. This is already a very big step forward. It shows that, by using the military apparatus for mobilisation and formation, we can bring about such changes in the structure of purely labour units as will ensure an immense increase in the percentage of those participating directly in the material process of production.

Finally, in connection with the productivity of military labour, we can now judge on the basis of experience. At first, the productivity of labour in the principal branches of work, despite the great wave of enthusiasm, was indeed extremely low, and might seem quite discouraging when one read the first labour reports. Thus, to procure one cubic *sazhen* of timber one had at first to reckon on taking 13-15 working days, whereas the norm (true, rarely attained in these times) is three days. It must be added that artists in this work are capable, under favourable conditions, of producing one cubic *sazhen* per day per man. What actually happened? The army units were quartered far from the cutting area. In many cases they had to march between 6 and 8 *versts* to and from their work, which swallowed up a substantial portion of their working day. There were not enough axes and saws on the spot. Many Red Army men, born in the steppes, were unfamiliar with forests, had never felled trees, had never chopped or sawn them up. The province and *uyezd* timber committees were far from knowing at first how to use the army units, how to direct them where they were needed and to organise them properly. It is not surprising if all this had as its result an extremely low level of productivity. But after the most crying defects in organisation had been eliminated, results were achieved that were much more satisfactory. Thus, according to the most recent figures, in that same First Labour Army four-and-a-half working days are devoted to procuring one cubic *sazhen* of wood, which is not so far from the present norm. What is most comforting is the fact that the productivity of labour is regularly increasing, in step with the improvement in the way it is organised.

Regarding what can be achieved in this respect we have the brief but very rich experiment carried out by the Moscow Engineer Regiment. The Chief Army Engineer Administration, which guided this experiment, began by setting the norm of production as three working days for one cubic *sazhen* of wood. This norm was soon surpassed. In January, two-and-a-half working days were spent on one cubic *sazhen*: in February, 2.1; in March 1.5, which is an exceptionally high level of productivity. This result was achieved by moral influence, by precise recording of each individual's work, by arousing labour ambition, by paying bonuses to workers who produced more than the average, or, to speak in the language of the trade unions, by applying a flexible scale of

payment which could be adapted to every individual variation in the productivity of labour. This experiment, carried out under almost laboratory conditions, clearly indicates the path we need to follow in future.

At present we have functioning a series of labour armies – the First, the Petrograd, the Ukrainian, the Caucasian, the South Volga, the Reserve Army. The last-named helped considerably, as you know, in increasing the traffic-capacity of the Kazan-Yekaterinburg railway. And wherever the experiment of using army units for labour tasks was carried out with any intelligence at all, the results showed that this method is unquestionably viable and correct.

The prejudice regarding the inevitably parasitic nature of military organisation – under all conditions – proves to have been shattered. The Soviet Army reproduces within itself the tendencies of the Soviet social order. We must not think in the petrified concepts of the past epoch: ‘militarism’, ‘military organisation’, ‘the unproductiveness of compulsory labour’. We must approach the phenomena of the new epoch without preconceptions and with open eyes, and we must remember that the sabbath exists for man and not the other way round [*The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath* (Mark, 2:27)] – that all forms of organisation, including the military ones, are only weapons in the hands of the working class in power, which has both the right and the possibility of adapting, altering and refashioning these weapons until it has achieved the requisite result.

Endnotes

1. The report ‘on the organisation of labour’ is a composite document. Most of it is taken from Comrade Trotsky’s report to the 3rd All-Russia Congress of Economic Councils. With a view to a fuller treatment of the question, the text of this speech has been supplemented with excerpts from Comrade Trotsky’s reports to the All-Russia Congress of Economic Councils and the 9th Party Congress. This report is quoted in full in Chapter 8 of Comrade Trotsky’s book **Terrorism and Communism**, Gosizdat, Petrograd 1920. In the present volume only that part of the report is printed which is concerned directly with military questions. Omitted are the chapters on the single economic plan and on collegiate and one-man management, and the conclusion of the report.

2. Thessalonians, 3:10-11. St Paul warns against ‘some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies’, and reminds his readers that, ‘when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat’.

3. Committees for universal labour service were set up by the decree of the Council of People’s Commissars dated February 3, 1920. By this decree a Main Committee for universal labour service was formed, together with committees at province and uyezd level and, where necessary, also town committees. In the localities these committees were to be subordinate to the local Executive Committees, and were constituted by representatives of the military commissariat, the administration department and the labour department. The Main Committee was directly subordinate to the Defence Council, and consisted of representatives of the People’s Commissariats of Military Affairs, Internal Affairs and Labour.

4. As mentioned in note 16 above, this refers to the 3rd All-Russia Congress of Trade Unions.

5. The total number of deserters from the Red Army up to the winter of 1920 was estimated at 2,846,000, of whom 1,543,000 subsequently returned to the ranks.

The War with Poland [\[1\]](#)

Death to the Polish Bourgeoisie

* * *

Listen, workers; listen, peasants; listen, Red Army men.

Yet another perfidious knife has been raised to strike at you. The Polish gentry and bourgeoisie have begun a war against us. We, the workers' and peasants' government, did everything we could to avoid further bloodshed. We ordered the Red troops not to advance. From the very start we frankly and honestly recognised the independence of Poland. In neither word nor deed have we encroached on her territory. We were ready to make great concessions and sacrifices. We offered Poland an immediate general armistice along the whole front. But nowhere in the world is there a bourgeoisie greedier, more corrupt, insolent, frivolous and criminal than the gentrified bourgeoisie of Poland. The Warsaw adventurers saw our honest love of peace as weakness. The Polish Government announced that they wished to 'liberate' the Ukraine – that is, to occupy that country with their own forces, deprive it of independence, enslave, crush and crucify it, give the land back to the Polish landlords and turn the Ukrainians into slaves. Byelorussia and Lithuania are already groaning under the Polish landlords' yoke. A blow has now been aimed at the Ukraine. [\[2\]](#) And at the same time the Polish bourgeoisie demands Russian land almost as far as Smolensk itself. Tens of millions of Ukrainian and Russian proletarians and peasants are to become beasts of burden for these robber grandees.

But this shall not be! All of us – workers, peasants, soldiers, citizens of the great country which, first in all the world, smashed the chains of bourgeois slavery – we all, as one man, will swear to defend the Soviet Republic from the unbridled Polish bands. The rebuff we shall give will be merciless and irresistible. Death to the Polish bourgeoisie. Over its corpse we shall conclude a fraternal alliance with workers' and peasants' Poland.

April 29, 1920

Endnotes

[1.](#) For the complex and controversial details, military and diplomatic, of the Soviet-Polish conflict of 1919-1920, see P.S. Wandycz, **Soviet-Polish Relations, 1917-1921** (1969) and Norman Davies, **White Eagle, Red Star** (1972). For its repercussions in Western Europe, see E.M. Carroll, **Soviet Communism and Western Opinion, 1919-1921** (1965) and R.H. Ullman, **History of Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1921, Vol.3: The Anglo-Soviet Accord** (1972). – *B.P.*

[2.](#) Throughout the winter of 1919-1920 Poland carried on active preparation for a spring offensive against the Soviet Republic, which, having emerged from the fronts of the civil war, was undertaking partial demobilisation and transferring a number of armies to labour duty (see note 11.) Pilsudski decided to strike his main blow at the Ukraine, with the ultimate aim of annexing the whole of the country lying on the right bank of the Dnieper. The agreement signed by Pilsudski with Petlyura for a Polish-Ukrainian federation also

influenced his choice of main operational direction. In mid-April 1920 the Red Army on the Western frontier was disposed over a wide front, from Lake Osveya [Lake Osveya is near the border between Byelorussia and Latvia. Litin is about 20km. north-west of Vinnitsa.] to the Dniester. This front was held by the 15th and 16th Armies of the Western front and the 12th Army of the South-Western front. On April 25, taking advantage of their substantial superiority on the Ukrainian sector of the front (60,000 bayonets and 11,000 sabres against 15,000 bayonets and 3,500 sabres), the Polish army launched an offensive towards Kiev and Odessa (see map No.2).

The War with Poland

To the Red Warrior on the Polish Front

* * *

Red warrior on the Polish front! The eyes of the entire country are now upon you. The working people have set you to guard the Soviet Ukraine and Soviet Russia. These two sister countries want peace more than anything else, so as to devote all their forces to labour. After your brothers in the East, North and South had smashed Kolchak, Yudenich and Denikin, we all hoped to return to the peaceful plough, to the axe, the blacksmith's hammer and the lathe. But the world bourgeoisie decided to make one more, final and desperate effort to overthrow us, or, at least, to hold back our advance toward a life of freedom and justice. The aggressors and oppressors of all lands let loose upon us the Polish bourgeoisie, who not so long ago were crawling on their bellies before the Tsar and gratefully licking his hand for every sop he threw them, but are now trying to tear out the throat of workers' and peasants' Russia, which frankly and magnanimously recognised Poland's freedom and independence.

We wanted peace, but they would not give it to us. They wanted war – so they shall have war.

Red warrior on the Polish front! All Russia of the working people is behind you. The workers of the whole world look toward you with hope and love, for you are defending freedom against oppression, labour against exploitation, justice against dishonour.

April 29, 1920

The War with Poland

The Polish Front and Our Tasks

* * *

Theses

1. The imperialists of the Entente, while carrying on negotiations about trade relations with Soviet Russia, were at the same time holding on a leash White-Guard Poland, Finland and Latvia. Uncertainty and contradiction reign in the camp of the imperialists themselves, where all questions are concerned, and especially the question of which policy to choose in order the more surely to smother workers' and peasants' Russia.
2. A section of the imperialists of the Entente countries, especially those who produce articles of mass consumption, hoped to break up the socialist economy being built by us by way of exchanging commodities with the kulaks through the agency of the White-Guard co-operatives. Heavy industry, and above all the arms industry, preferred a military defeat for Soviet Russia and direct plundering of her natural riches. Certain governments of the Entente, and even certain members of these governments, wavered and still waver from one side to the other, depending on which particular capitalist circles they are themselves connected with, and on how they evaluate the staunchness of their armies and Soviet Russia's power to resist.
3. White-Guard Poland, like the other small border states, has no independent policy of its own, and is guided by greed mitigated only by cowardice. When the Entente, influenced by an acute need for raw materials, turned more definitely towards trade negotiations with us, the bourgeoisie of the Western Border states abandoned the idea of further conquests and plundering at Russia's expense. A series of peace talks began: first with Estonia, with whom we signed peace, and then with Latvia, Poland, Finland, Romania and Lithuania. [\[1\]](#)
4. But then a different wind started to blow in the ranks of the Entente. The wave of labour enthusiasm in Soviet Russia on the one hand, and, on the other, our firm policy towards the cooperatives [On March 20, 1920, the Soviet Government virtually nationalised the consumers' co-operative societies.], evidently made the bosses of the Entente realise that, although trade with us is quite possible and economically advantageous to both sides, nevertheless the stock-exchange will not succeed in undermining through trade the foundations of the socialist economy that we are laying. At the same time, the stormy growth of the proletarian revolution in Germany, and its obvious approach in all other countries, including Britain, are impelling the imperialist governments of all countries to take the path of ferocious struggle against the worker masses, both at home and abroad, and therefore, to launch new military adventures against Soviet Russia.
5. Feeling that the leash on which their masters held them was slackening, and egged on by the more extreme imperialist countries of the Entente, the Polish

bourgeoisie launched an offensive in the Ukraine, openly proclaiming their intention to occupy that country, so as then to establish there (through the agency of figure-head caretakers such as Petlyura) their own rule – military, national, economic and political.

6. At the same time, Finland and Latvia suddenly put forward absurd territorial demands. The Latvian delegation did not conceal the fact that its territorial demands were formulated on direct orders from Warsaw, so as to facilitate the Polish offensive towards Vitebsk and Smolensk. [The territorial dispute with Latvia concerned, in particular, the important railway junction of Dvinsk (in Lettish, Daugavpils). This was eventually recognised as forming part of Latvia.]

7. Thus, the question of our future relations with the Western border states, like the question of the blockade and of possible trade relations with the Entente countries, is once more to be decided by the sword of war.

8. Having launched an attack on us after all our concessions and after we had stated our willingness to make further concessions for the sake of peace, the Polish bourgeoisie thereby put its own fate at risk. It proclaimed that it cannot and does not want to exist alongside Soviet Russia. By so doing it has driven itself into a trap. For there can be no room for doubt as to the outcome of the impending conflict. The gentry and bourgeoisie of Poland will be routed. The Polish proletariat will transform their country into a socialist republic.

9. But just because the fight will be a fight to the death, it will be an extremely intense and severe one. The Polish Government, in which stock-exchange scoundrels operate hand-in-hand with scoundrels from the camp of social patriotism, will mobilise against us not only the fierce hatred of the big, middle and petty-kulak bourgeoisie and the haughty arrogance of the gentry, but also the national prejudices of the backward working masses, whom the monopoly yellow press systematically poisons with the venom of chauvinism.

We have therefore proclaimed from the very outset, and in the future we shall confirm in action, that defeat of the Polish White Guards, who have attacked us *will not change in the slightest our attitude concerning the independence of Poland.*

10. It follows from all this that we must see the war with Poland not as a partial task for the Western front, but as the central task for all workers' and peasants' Russia.

11. All Party, Soviet and trade-union organisations must immediately undertake a most extensive and intensive agitation, throughout the country – not confined to the towns, but reaching into the deepest depths of the countryside – to explain to the whole population of Russia the meaning of our policy with regard to Poland, the history of our attempts to achieve peace, the aims of the Polish attack on us, and the historical significance of our war with White-Guard Poland. The workers and peasants, men and women alike, must realise and feel that the war with Poland is their war, is a war for an independent socialist Russia, for her alliance with a socialist Poland and with the proletariat of Europe and the entire world.

12. Concentration of the country's attention and efforts on the Western front must not lead in the least to a halt in the economic measures on which Soviet Russia has been concentrating its attention in recent months: the restoration of

transport, the procurement of food, fuel and raw materials. The intense character of the struggle against bourgeois Poland will require a rear that is staunch economically – this applies above all to the transport apparatus – and capable of sustaining the front as this advances westward.

The economic organs, central and local, must very strictly review their programmes so as to concentrate on *what is really and absolutely necessary*, so as thereby to secure the proper balance between direct support for the front and the ensuring of future success in the sphere of transport and in the basic branches of industry.

13. The transference of some of our army units and of whole armies on to a labour basis was evidently interpreted by the Polish chauvinists as a sign of fatigue and military weakness on our part. We must show in action how wrong our enemy's calculations were. The army authorities, central and local, together with the corresponding economic institutions, must review the list of army units engaged on the labour front, immediately release most of them from labour tasks, and get them into combat-readiness so that they can be sent as soon as possible to the Western front. On the labour front, army units must, except in cases determined by special circumstances, be replaced by persons mobilised for labour service.

14. The local Party organisations must at once discuss fully what they can contribute to aid for the Western front. First and foremost, the Central Committee's order regarding the mobilisation of workers for the Western front must be completely carried out.

From this standpoint there must be a fresh re-examination of the personnel of all Party, soviet and, in particular, economic institutions, the process of going over from collegiality to one-man direction must be accelerated, and the workers released in this way must be placed at the disposal of the Political Directorate of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic.

15. The non-Party workers and peasants must everywhere be summoned to mass meetings and conferences to discuss the question of the war with Poland and to set up *committees for aid to the Western front*.

16. All the People's Commissariats and their departments must at once convene conferences to work out plans for agitational, organisational, economic and other forms of aid to the Western front.

The People's Commissars will, every Saturday, submit to the Defence Council (with copies to the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic) brief factual reports on the aid they have provided during the previous week to the commissariats of the Western front.

April 30, 1920

Endnotes

1. Peace negotiations with Estonia began even while General Yudenich's North-Western Army was still in being. The negotiations went ahead more speedily after the rout of that army, and on February 2, 1920, a treaty of peace was signed with Estonia. On April 16, 1920, a Russo-Latvian peace conference opened in Moscow. Owing to the exaggerated

economic demands made by the Letts, the negotiations dragged on very slowly, and the peace treaty was not signed until August 11. Peace negotiations were proceeding at the same time with Finland and Lithuania.

The War with Poland

To All Workers, Peasants and Honourable Citizens of Russia

* * *

The troops of the Polish landowners and capitalists have seized Zhitomir and are threatening Kiev. With the co-operation of their hireling Petlyura and the aid of French gold, the Polish White Guards have led into treason the Galician units [1] which a few months ago came over to the side of the Soviet power. [2] The Polish ruling classes are replying to the frank and honest proposals of Soviet Russia with a dishonest attempt to seize Right Bank Ukraine. [3] Furthermore, the Polish Government has declared openly its intention to seize the whole of the Ukraine so as to hand it over to Petlyura's Directorate. Pilsudski's government is following in the footsteps of Hohenzollern, who sent troops into the Ukraine on the pretext of helping the Kiev Rada. To bloodthirsty violence is added a disgusting masquerade. At the same time, the Polish bourgeois press is calling for seizure of all the lands which belonged to Poland 150 years ago, right up to Vitebsk and Smolensk.

The Polish Government, which derives its pedigree from the magnates and adventurers who more than once in history have crucified and betrayed the Polish people, kept silent until recently about its peace programme, concealing its real intentions: now it has begun to speak with deeds. It is showing us how it conceives peace with the Russian people. Listen, workers and peasants! The Polish peace, the peace that the Polish landlords and capitalists want to bring you on their bayonets, means complete enslavement not only of the Lithuanian and Byelorussian but also of the Ukrainian workers and peasants, and of millions of purely Russian people. The new-fledged Polish gendarmes are getting ready to master them.

Russian workers, peasants, Red Army men! Shall we surrender to the Polish gentry, to be plundered, trampled on and desecrated, that Russian land which we have freed from our own gentry and defended with our blood against the Yudeniches, the Denikins and the Kolchaks? No, this shall not be. We are for the independence of Poland, but we are also for the independence of working people's Russia and of the Soviet Ukraine.

After throwing off the yoke of the Tsar and the bourgeoisie, the Russian workers and peasants freely recognised, of their own free will, the right of the Polish people to self-determination and renounce all claims whatsoever on Polish territory. This solemn declaration remains valid even now. At Brest-Litovsk, faced with ruthless German militarism, the representatives of the Soviet power openly spoke up in defence of the Polish people.

The Soviet power has in no way displayed hostile inclinations towards Poland. Even when the Polish landlords and capitalists destroyed by armed force our fraternal Soviet republics of Byelorussia and Lithuania, and seized their territory, we, despite our ardent sympathy with the peasants and workers of Byelorussia and Lithuania, were ready to conclude peace with Poland, for we

were convinced that its heroic working class, who joined with us in struggle against Tsardom over many years, would know how to curb their exploiters and so help to liberate Lithuania and Byelorussia.

We were ready to reach agreement with the Polish rulers, so long as the Polish working people still put up with them, in order to avoid further shedding of the blood of the Russian and Polish workers and peasants. But the chauvinists of Warsaw shrank from open peace negotiations. They were afraid that when they openly put forward their bandit programme, and when this was just as openly rejected by Soviet Russia, the Polish soldiers, whom they had drugged with lies about defending the fatherland, would indignantly refuse to shed their blood for the power-lust and profit-seeking of the Polish gentry. In order to evade the stern judgment of open peace negotiations, the Polish Government refused a general armistice and, in an ultimatum, proposed that talks take place in the town of Borisov, which had been captured by the Poles. In this they pursued a twofold aim: to keep our delegates in an atmosphere of Polish militarism and 'frighten' them with an offensive into the Ukraine, and, at the same time, by a partial armistice on the Borisov sector to tie our hands in selecting the direction for our counter-blow. Deciding that our sincere endeavour to go over from war to peaceful construction is evidence that we are weary and weak, the Warsaw chauvinists conceived the notion of imposing their will on us, reinforcing this by spreading treason and carrying out acts of violence and pogroms.

Workers, peasants and Red Army men! You have now to show the Polish White Guards that they were cruelly mistaken in their calculations. We recognised, and we continue to recognise, the independence of Poland. But we did not recognise the right of Polish capitalists to exploit Russian workers, we did not recognise the right of Polish landlords to take away the land of Russian peasants, to turn them into their beasts of burden, we did not recognise the right of the Polish militarists to crush, oppress and torment the Russian and Ukrainian peoples. We wanted, and we still want, peace – and Soviet diplomacy is ready, as before, to respond to the first gleam of common sense among the Polish White Guards, so as to establish peace on foundations answering to the interests of the Polish and Russian peoples. But we are not going to lower the socialist banner before the insolence of the Warsaw bullies. Soviet Russia, which conquered Denikin, Koichak and Yudenich, will show itself able to prove, with fire and steel, to the Polish gentry and to all those who stand behind them, that the time when the Russian working people were defenceless has passed.

Until now, the Red forces on the Western front have been forbidden to advance. [4] The Soviet Government was trying to demonstrate thereby, to the deceived Polish people, that it was sincerely striving for peace. The Warsaw rulers have taken advantage of the immobility of our forces to attack the Ukraine, and have penetrated deep into its territory. The Ukraine is in danger, and, with it, Soviet Russia!

Workers and peasants! The war is not over. The Polish incendiaries are trying with all their might to fan its terrible flames. The criminal aggressors must be given a merciless rebuff.

Advanced proletarians! The war is not over. Mobilise afresh the best fighters for the idea of socialism. Communists, you are the soul of the workers' and

peasants' army. Your task is not finished. To the Western front!

Red Army men, Red sailors, Red Cossacks! You were hoping to go back to peaceful life – to tilling the soil and working at the bench. The Polish gentry are not letting you do that, they want to make slaves of you. You must once more take up your tried weapons, to defend yourselves. You must strike such a blow at the Polish landlords and capitalists that the echo of it will resound in the streets of Warsaw and throughout the world.

Peasants! The fighters on the Western front, who are defending you from enslavement, need food. Meet your obligations fully – thereby you will safeguard yourselves from a slavery more burdensome than the old serfdom.

Working men and women in war industry! To the bench!

French imperialism is generously supporting Poland with war supplies. You on your part, must increase production of everything needed by the Red fighters. Do not let them suffer from shortages, either of cartridges, or of underwear, or of boots.

Honourable citizens! You will not let the will of the Russian people be ruled by the bayonet of the Polish gentry, who have declared many times, with characteristic shamelessness, that it is indifferent to them who is master in Russia, provided that Russia is helpless and weak.

The Polish aggressors will be smashed. And not only because we are stronger numerically, but, above all, because we are bound together in spiritual defence of the new society of justice and fraternity that we are creating.

The war waged against us by the Polish bourgeoisie is a war of robbery and conquest, a bloody adventure. Our war against White-Guard Poland is a war of revolutionary self-defence, sacred defence of the independence of the working people, defence of a happy future for our children and grandchildren.

After we have routed Pilsudski's bands, the independence of Poland will still remain inviolable for us. With the Polish proletariat and the Polish peasantry, who will become absolute masters in their country, we shall without difficulty form a fraternal alliance. Only the gentry and bourgeoisie who are our common enemies keep us apart. Into battle against the enemy!

Troops of the Western front! Behind you stand not only the Russian working class, not only Russia's working peasantry, not only all our Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, and everything that is honourable in the Russian people, but also the working people of the whole world. The Polish workers whom you will help free themselves from the bourgeois yoke will be for you.

Forward, Red warriors!

Down with the Polish invaders, aggressors and oppressors! Let us say to the proletarians and peasants of Poland:

- 'For our freedom and yours.' [\[5\]](#)
- Long live the brotherhood of the working masses of Poland and Russia!
- Long live the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army!

- Long live independent workers' and peasants' Poland!
 - Long live the Soviet Ukraine! Long live Soviet Russia!
-

Endnotes

1. On April 23 the Galician units on the South-Western front, influenced by counter-revolutionary agitation, betrayed the Soviet power and began open mutiny. Abandoning the line of the front, these units (the 2nd and 3rd Galician Brigades) moved to the rear, towards Litint and Vinnitsa. This mutiny contributed greatly to disrupting the disposition of the 14th and 12th Armies. The 1st Galician Brigade remained loyal to the Red Army and showed great courage on the subsequent fighting. These moves coincided with the vigorous offensive by the Poles on the South-Western front.

2. After the revolution in Austria, the Ukrainians of Eastern Galicia set up a government in Lvov, and Petlyura proclaimed the union of Eastern Galicia with the Ukraine. However, Polish forces invaded Eastern Galicia, claiming the region for Poland. In September 1919 Petlyura, frightened by Denikin's advance, concluded an armistice with the Poles, but some of the Galician units of his army, indignant at this move, went over to the Red Army.

3. 'Right-Bank Ukraine' refers to the part of the 'Russian' Ukraine lying on the right (west) bank of the river Dnieper. The term 'West Ukraine' is usually confined to the 'Austrian' Ukraine, i.e., Eastern Galicia.

4. Already at the beginning of the 20th century the high level of industrial development of Poland made possible the development in that country of powerful proletarian organisations. Continual strikes by the Polish workers, underground activity by the Polish Social-Democrats, the development of strong organisations of the Bund (unions of Jewish handicraftsmen), all created in Poland strong traditions of revolutionary struggle. It must be noted, however, that Polish industry suffered severely during the world war, and the country's proletariat was dispersed, partly in Russia and partly in Germany.

5. 'For our freedom and yours' was the watchword of the Polish patriots in exile after the 1830 revolt in Russian Poland, when they took part in fights for freedom in other countries, notably in Hungary in 1848-1849.

The War with Poland

Order No.309

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the Western Front and the 12th Army, May 1, 1920, No.309

[The order number in the original book states 209, corrected here to read 309]

* * *

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

To the Red warrior on the Polish front!

Greetings to you, Red warrior on the Western front! The eyes of the whole country are now upon you. The working people have set you to guard the Soviet Ukraine and Soviet Russia. These two sister-countries wanted peace, more than anything else, so as to devote all their strength to labour. After our invincible regiments in the East, the North and the South had smashed Koichak, Yudenich and Denikin, we all hoped to return to peaceful labour – to the plough, the axe, the blacksmith's hammer and the lathe. But the world bourgeoisie decided to make one last desperate effort to overthrow us, or, at least, to hinder our advance towards a free and just way of life. The aggressors and oppressors of all lands set the Polish bourgeoisie on us – that Polish bourgeoisie who, not long ago, crawled on their bellies before the Tsar and gratefully licked his hand in return for any sop, but who are now trying to tear out the throat of Workers' and Peasants' Russia, which frankly and magnanimously recognised Poland's freedom and independence.

We wanted peace, but they would not give it to us. They wanted war, so they shall have war! Let fearful punishment descend upon their criminal heads!

Red warrior on the Polish front! All the working people of Russia are behind you. The workers of the whole world look to you with hope and love, for you are defending *freedom against oppression, labour against exploitation, justice against dishonour.*

Victory and glory to the Red warrior on the Polish front!

The War with Poland

The Polish Front

Talk with a Representative of the Soviet Press

* * *

First of all, about the causes of the war. They can be considered from two angles: (a) the causes which impelled the Entente to bring about, or to permit, this war, and (b) the causes which drove the Polish Government into war. Poland is, of course, only a means in the hands of the Entente. But this does not eliminate the question why the Polish Government should have agreed to play this base and dangerous role of dishonourable provocateur of a new war.

On the part of the Entente, the Polish war is merely a fresh attempt, an episode in the imperialist struggle against Soviet Russia. And if this attempt miscarries, then the world bosses will step over the political corpse of Pilsudski, just as they stepped over the physical corpse of Kolchak, and proceed to find new measures and new instruments. On the part of Poland itself, the war bears a plainly Bonapartist character, even if this is only third-rate Bonapartism, caricatural, low-powered, literary, combining romanticism with petty knavery: ... in a word ... Pilsudski.

The social contradictions in Poland go very deep. Traditions of revolutionary struggle are very strong. [\[1\]](#) This whole situation is only temporarily (and then not for very long) covered up by a national ideology that is nourished by the not-yet-exhausted sentiments of the honeymoon of the independent Polish republic. The party of Pilsudski, 'the Chief of State', is partly in the government, partly underground: the bourgeois imperialist party of the National Democrats is partly in the government, partly operating above it, in the ante-rooms of the Entente. Pilsudski tries to support himself on the middle elements – on the urban intelligentsia, or on the upper circles of the peasantry. Napoleon (I apologise for the comparison) also based himself on the peasantry, but only after the latter had obtained the land of the feudal lords. Pilsudski, however, leaves the feudal lords fully in power. They stand above him. Napoleon waged war against monarchist Europe, which was egged on by the French feudal lords. Pilsudski, however, acting on the orders of the stock-exchange and egged on by the Polish feudal lords, is waging war against revolutionary Russia. When Napoleon entered Poland, he proclaimed the abolition of serfdom: Pilsudski, on entering the Ukraine, restores the land to the Polish landlords. Thus, whereas Napoleon, owing to the impetus given him by the revolution, still continued a certain inertia of the progressive movement, Pilsudski, under the impetus of the kicks administered by his great-power bosses, is now carrying out the dirtiest and bloodiest behest of the world counter-revolution.

The feature of Bonapartism in the governmental politics of Poland is expressed in the fact that Pilsudski, having been lifted by a national petty-bourgeois wave, and having got caught up in the class contradiction between the haves and have-nots, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, is trying formally

to balance these contradictions with democratic fictions – giving the decisive word in all matters, of course, to the bourgeoisie, and for that very reason being obliged to seek a way out from the inner insolvency of his policy through ever greater inflammation of chauvinistic feelings, kindling of aggressive appetites and sabre-rattling, and, finally, through war. All this goes well enough with the traditions of the Polish gentry who, the more they isolated themselves from the oppressed masses of the working people, covered up their moral emptiness all the more with vainglory, posturing and boastfulness.

Our Soviet diplomacy has shown exceptional restraint in dealing with this cockerel of the Polish gentry, whose comb is covered with gilt tinsel and who has replied to all the arguments of common sense with a warlike 'Cock-a-doodle-doo'. Not only to representatives of the old school of diplomacy but also to some revolutionaries, it seemed at times that the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs was showing itself excessively long-suffering when it replied to crude provocations with calm and persistent explanation of its point of view. While the principal task which our diplomacy set itself – avoiding war with Poland, even at the expense of very big concessions – was not accomplished (not, of course, through any fault on the part of our diplomacy), nevertheless the contradiction between the two policies, the gentry-Bonapartist one and the worker-peasant one, stood out in full clarity before the whole world.

And this was a very great service rendered by Soviet diplomacy. After all that had happened, after our unconditional recognition of the freedom and independence of the Polish Republic, after our persistent and repeated offers of peace talks, after our openly issued orders to our armies of the Western front not to cross a certain line which we defined publicly – the most double-dyed demagogues and charlatans of the international yellow press will be quite unable to present to the working masses the irruption of the Polish White Guards into the Ukraine as an attack by the Bolshevik 'oppressors' on peaceful Poland.

It would, all the same, be a very serious mistake to underestimate the Polish threat to the Soviet republic. There can be no doubt that the war of the Polish bourgeoisie against the Ukrainian and Russian workers and peasants will *end* with a workers' revolution in Poland. But, at the same time there are no grounds for supposing that the war will *begin* with such a revolution. For a century and a half the Polish people were subjected to unheard-of oppression by Tsardom. Hatred for *Russia* and things Russian, insofar as they were identified during a long historical epoch with *the Tsar* and things *Tsarist*, entered deeply into the consciousness of the broad petty-bourgeois masses, taking hold even of a backward section of the working class. This is the historical fixed capital on which Mr Pilsudski wants now to draw bloody interest. We must make not only the advanced Polish proletariat, who know this already, but also the backward Polish peasant, realise that the irruption of the Polish troops into the Ukraine, unprecedented in its insolence and baseness, *changes in no way our attitude to the independence of Poland*. This independence must not, however, be transformed into a threat to our existence and our peaceful labour – it must be supplemented by friendly relations on the basis of collaboration and the exchange of economic benefits. By its onslaught upon us the Polish Government has proclaimed that it will not allow the Soviet Ukraine and Soviet Russia to co-exist with bourgeois Poland. The Polish working masses must, consequently, understand that peaceful coexistence between Poland and Russia can be ensured only by the overthrow

of the greedy and unbalanced Polish bourgeoisie.

Let us not forget that the entire apparatus of the press and other media for processing public opinion are in Poland in the hands of the ruling chauvinist clique. The Warsaw Government is even trying to depict the invasion of the Ukraine as 'liberation' of the Ukrainian people from the Muscovite yoke. The initial easy victories of the Polish army served for a time to give support to this sort of official legend. The pressure of the Entente, of its military and economic might, upon the consciousness of the Polish masses is still very great. Fear of losing their independent existence, torn from the hands of French imperialism, is still strong. And these feelings will persist until the Polish people, deceived by their ruling classes, come face to face with another military power which will force them to reckon with it – the power of Soviet Russia and the Soviet Ukraine.

We must inflict a thorough military defeat upon the armed forces of White-Guard Poland, so as to make politically and psychologically inevitable the revolutionary defeat of the Polish bourgeoisie. This second task must be wholly carried out by the Polish proletariat. Our duty is only to facilitate this task, by shortening, so far as possible, the road to Waterloo that is being followed by the Napoleon of the Polish gentry.

It would, I repeat, be extremely light-minded to suppose that victory on the Western front will simply fall into our laps. For a long time the Western front remained in the background. Even after its significance had begun to increase, we continued to despatch our best forces and resources to other fronts. True, Comrade Gittis, during his period as commander of the Western front, did an immense amount of organisational work, but the front was bound, both operationally and morally, by the protracted situation in which we were looking forward to peace talks and obliged ourselves not to cross a certain line. Hence it is quite easy to account for the advantage that the Polish command enjoyed by concentrating substantial forces under cover of talks about ... peace talks, and launching them along the line of least resistance, into Right-Bank Ukraine.

It would show pitiful lack of spirit if we were to take fright at the first successes won by Pilsudski. These were inevitable. They were foreseen. They resulted from the previous development of our relations with Poland. The deeper the right wing of the Polish troops penetrates into the Ukraine, turning against itself Ukrainian insurgents of all kinds, the more fatal for the Polish armed forces will be the concentrated blow which the Red fighters will give them. Our whole task now consists in all-round preparation of this blow. [2] In dealing with this matter, the War Department is only a transmission mechanism. It can only group correctly on the Western front that which it receives from the country. *The struggle with Poland must cease to be a partial task for the Western front, as it has been up to now, it must become the most important, fundamental and leading task for all Workers' and Peasants' Russia.*

May 2, 1920

Endnotes

1. By order of the High Command and of the Government of the Soviet Republic, our units were forbidden to cross the line of the Byelorussian and Ukrainian front, which ran through

Drissa, Disna, Polotsk, Borisov, Ptich, Chudnov, Pilyava and Bar. [Drissa, Disna and Polotsk are all on the Western Dvina, Borisov is on the Berezina, Ptich is north-west of Mozyr, Chudnov south-west of Zhitomir, Pilyava north-east of Proskurov, and Bar about 40km west-south-west of Vinnitsa.] This order was carefully obeyed by our forces before the Polish attack on the Ukraine.

2. According to the operational plan of the Western front, the main blow was to be directed from the Polotsk-Lepel [Lepel is about 80km. south of Polotsk] area along the line of least resistance. The direction chosen for the main blow was towards Molodechno [Molodechno is where the Minsk-Vilna railway crosses the Polotsk-Warsaw line. Lida is where the Baranovichi-Vilna line crosses the Polotsk-Warsaw line.] and Lida. On May 12 the Commander-in-Chief of the Western front, Comrade Tukhachevsky, after completing the concentration of seven divisions into a shock group, gave the order for the armies of this front to go over to the offensive, and this began on May 14. The 15th Army hurled itself on the feeble units of the Poles' Lithuanian and Byelorussian divisions, routed them and advanced rapidly towards Molodechno. By switching units from the South-Western front the Poles succeeded in concentrating a sufficiently strong body of reserves, and halted our offensive by a counter-blow in the Postavy direction. We did not attain complete success in our May offensive, but this preparatory operation helped to raise the Red Army's morale. After this operation, the Western front gradually went over to passive operations (see Map. No. 2) [The Soviet plan had been drawn up already on March 10, 1920, at a meeting in Smolensk between Gittis, then commanding the Western front, and the commander-in-chief, S.S. Kamenev. At that time there were only eight infantry divisions and four cavalry brigades on the Western front. It was decided to concentrate 22 infantry divisions and the 1st Mounted Army there by April, when an offensive would be launched toward Lida. However, the movement of troops took longer than had been expected. In particular, Budyonny's cavalry were able to begin their move from North Caucasia only so late as April 3. Postavy is about half-way between Dvinsk (Daugavpils) and Molodechno, just inside the present border between Lithuania and Byelorussia.]

The War with Poland

The War with Poland

Report to the Joint Session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Red Army Men's Deputies, and the Leaderships of the Trade Unions and Factory Committees, May 5, 1920

* * *

Comrades, the Northern, Eastern and Southern fronts emerged from the October revolution and the civil war. The Western front, however, we inherited from the old imperialist war with Germany and Austria-Hungary. And our first concern, the first words we spoke, after the October revolution, were directed to liquidating the front that we had inherited from the past war. Our task consisted in achieving peace. Our gloating enemies have, up to now, reproached us that we fought for peace, that we rose in the name of this peace, and yet, instead, all the horrors of external and internal war descended upon our country. But this merely shows that the working class encounters most fierce resistance on its road, and cannot accomplish its task without severe struggle. By force of arms, by bloody conflict, it has to destroy the very foundations of that order which gives rise to bloody conflict.

The line of the Western front, which we inherited from Tsardom, changed more than once during the three years of the revolution, and its changes reflected great events which shook Europe and the whole world. Kerensky's government tried, by means of its ill-fated offensive, to change the line of the front: this only led to an enlargement of the area occupied by the Germans. As soon as power passed into the hands of the workers' and peasants' soviets we at once tried to liquidate the Western front by proposing peace to the Austrian and German Governments. You all remember that tragic period. After peace negotiations in which we upheld the peace programme of the workers' revolution, we found ourselves obliged – because we were still too weak – to sign, on March 3, 1918, peace with German militarism, which was then the mightiest of all. At that time, the frontier ran through Yamburg, east of Pskov and Polotsk.

Under the heavy helmet of the German occupation army, pseudo-independent states were fabricated. There was Mannerheim's Finland, whose hatred for us bore a purely social, reactionary-capitalist character, for, as regards the national question, the Soviet power recognised Finland's independence from the first day that it began to live and struggle. Estonia was set against us, a country against whose independence we had never raised our voices, and also Latvia, Lithuania and Byelorussia, Poland, and, finally, the Ukraine, which was entirely occupied by May 1, 1918 by Hohenzollern's troops, summoned by the Kiev Rada.

In that difficult period, our policy towards the border states was the same as it is today. We not only recognised and sanctioned the independence of Poland,

we upheld this independence against all-powerful German militarism. Our delegation at the Brest-Litovsk negotiations flatly refused to recognise as representing independent Poland the government of Kucharzewski, that wretched agent for the Berlin vultures. German imperialism badly needed – above all so as to influence the public opinion of its own working masses – to obtain our recognition, direct or indirect, of that oppressive occupation regime in Poland which was given out as being national self-determination of the Polish people. In that period the agents of Hohenzollern were already trying to steal this formula from the Russian revolution and use it as cover for their conquests and oppressions. We were too weak to help oppressed Poland in arms. But we were with the Polish people against its oppressors, and we counterposed to the robber's lie of German diplomacy our revolutionary truth about Poland. It would be absurd and unworthy for us, a revolutionary party, to take pride in the fact that we did not, even by silence, help the Hohenzollerns to prostitute the formula of self-determination for the Polish people, in those days when, as it seemed, we were dependent on Hohenzollern . . . But can it be doubted that there is no other government in the world which, placed in similar circumstances, would have refused to perform this imponderable, yet very substantial service to German imperialism – getting from it in return an easing of the terms of the peace treaty?

Afterwards, when Count Mirbach came to live in Moscow, and was sometimes to be seen in a box at the Bolshoi Theatre, at sessions of our Soviet Congresses, we did not retreat one inch from our position. Mirbach solicited us to acknowledge, directly or indirectly, that Poland, crushed beneath the Hohenzollern jackboot, was an independent, self-determined Poland.

We said, in reply, that we were obliged to talk with the German hangmen of Poland, that we could talk and might even, perhaps, be obliged to sign a treaty with the Polish government, as the agent of the all-powerful hangmen. But we would never, under any circumstances, agree to say that we saw, in the Poland crucified by German imperialism, a free, self-determined people.

At the end of 1918, on the anniversary of our October revolution, a revolution took place in Germany which had and continues to have immeasurable importance for the fate of the Western front, as also for the fate of the whole world. The border states were shaken: the hour of liberation sounded for the Ukraine. The Kiev Rada, to which Petlyura belonged and which had invited the German troops into the Ukraine, had ceased to exist long since. After making use of it, the Germans had thrown it away like old clothes, and appointed their agent Skoropadsky. He fell after the fall of Hohenzollern. A wave of revolts swept over the Ukraine. Petlyura's clique complained to the whole world that the Ukraine had been conquered by Moscow's troops. That was long ago, and since then the Ukraine has seen many changes. But, nevertheless, I consider it necessary to affirm that Moscow's troops took almost no part in the liberation of the Ukraine from the Skoropadsky and Petlyura regimes. The establishment of Soviet power was achieved by guerrilla forces, by spontaneous revolts, from which fact it can clearly be seen what power is truly popular and truly national in the Ukraine.

After the Ukraine, the whole Western front began to totter.

The German forces-broke up, were discharged, and either departed or, if they remained, offered no resistance. The regular Red forces which made up

the thin screen on the Western front were very few in numbers and very weak. Among them were Red Letts, Red Estonians and Red Finns. These units advanced westward without resistance and, I would say, almost without leadership.

By March 1919 Red territory had been widely extended to the West, to include Riga and Vilna. Our Red Army was kept very busy in that period, in the East and the South, both alternately and simultaneously. In the West the flood tide was succeeded by an ebb, and Red territory began to shrink.

But while the outline of the Western front altered, while this line was broken in one place or another, the line of our policy remained unaltered, being based on the principle of complete, sincere and unconditional readiness to recognise the self determination of the peoples who had formerly been part of the Tsarist empire. It was, of course, not easy for us to knock this truth into the heads of the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois classes of those countries – and it was precisely with them that we had to deal. They were too much accustomed to measure everything with the yardstick of their own views, sympathies and antipathies. For that very reason they did not believe in the sincerity of our intention to recognise their independence, and, just because of that, they supported every step taken against us, when our task was to concentrate all our forces on serving our country's economic needs.

After the border states had, with the help of West-European imperialism, become capable of creating their own armed forces, they did not only send those forces against their own workers, settling accounts cruelly with them, they did not merely purge a considerable area of territory of the Soviet organisation – they also advanced a considerable distance eastward. The line of the Western front had been altered again.

As regards Poland, after she had seized Lithuania, Byelorussia and a substantial portion of Ukrainian and Great-Russian territory, that is, by the end of last year, it seemed that she had attained a certain equilibrium between her appetite and her strength. We did not have peace with Poland, but military operations did not develop, consisting as they did of more or less significant actions by isolated reconnaissance detachments. No serious engagements took place. On both sides the conviction grew stronger that there would not be war, that the war was over and that, soon, diplomacy would draw the balance and would sign a peace treaty which, whether good or bad, complete or only half-complete, would mean peace. Thus, our Western front lived under the sign of an expected early peace, and our Soviet diplomacy did everything to hasten the coming of this peace.

At this gathering which we have convened as a war meeting, as an expression of everything that is thoughtful and organised in the proletariat of Moscow, in order to issue a country-wide call to war, I consider it necessary to draw the balance of the last period of the work of our diplomacy in relation to Poland, the continuous efforts we made to establish peaceful relations with her.

Through all the changes in the balance of forces and in the line of the front in the West, our diplomacy held to one and the same revolutionary line, that is, recognition of the right to self-determination of the peoples who previously were held under the yoke of Russian Tsardom, and who, for that reason, may

be distrustful and inclined to suspect any encroachment upon them by Russia. Only with difficulty, and by deeds, not words, did we compel our enemies to convince themselves that we are the only party, the only state, the only government in the world that really recognises the self-determination of peoples.

But here, too, our enemies, Poland included, said: the Bolsheviks are not united on this matter, there are different groupings among them. Some recognise the independence of Poland, others reject it – there is a war party among them. The bourgeois measured us by the yardstick of the bourgeois state, in which, unfailingly, there exists a war party which, in the manner of Ludendorff, subjects the government of its country to its own will.

Here there is no war party: here there is the clear and distinct programme of the Communist Party, steeped in the blood of tens of thousands of proletarians, and this is at the same time the programme of our government: this programme is binding upon us, and what the programme binds us to do, that we do, that we serve, in word and deed, with our blood and with our lives, in the underground, on the barricades and in power. From the first day that history smashed to smithereens the lid placed by German imperialism over the border states, our diplomacy began to take steps to establish peaceful relations with them, and not least with Poland. The first Polish government formed after the occupation, that of Moraczewski, a petty-bourgeois chauvinist, engaged in hateful and savage baiting of Soviet Russia. In reply to our direct proposals for the establishment of a line of demarcation, an armistice and peace, the agents of Moraczewski's government, as you all remember, on January 2, 1919 killed members of our delegation, of the Red Cross mission [\[1\]](#), the most peaceful of organisations, which these 'Christian', these 'Catholic' governments regard as standing beneath the banner of the cross. They killed all the members of the delegation, and at their head Comrade Wesolowski, one of the founders of the party of the Polish proletariat, a worthy, devoted, self-sacrificing and profoundly humane revolutionary and person. That was the first reply of the chauvinist petty-bourgeois government of Moraczewski to the peace efforts of our diplomacy. So then, did our diplomacy cease its efforts? Not in the least! With patience and system which truly deserve the highest recognition, our diplomacy did not let a single opportunity go by, day after day, for stressing that peace was possible and necessary.

Moraczewski's government fell. It was succeeded by the openly bourgeois government of Paderewski. At first Paderewski seemed disposed to take up a different position in relation to Soviet Russia. A semi-official representative, Alexander Wieckowski, was sent to Moscow. The Commissariat for Foreign Affairs at once engaged in talks with him about all the basic questions of our relations with Poland. Wieckowski went back to Warsaw. There was no reply. Again a wave of bourgeois distrust and bourgeois hatred of Soviet Russia arose in Poland – a wave of hope in the plans of Clemenceau, who was still in power at that time, and of Lord (*sic*) Churchill, who foamed at the mouth as he threatened us.

On April 18, 1919, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs again raised the question of Russo-Polish relations. Around this time, the Polish troops, violating all the so-called 'rules' of war, disguised themselves as Red Army men, got into Vilna, and seized this Lithuanian city. At that moment, of course, the Polish chauvinists thought that they were strong and we were powerless.

Our situation on the other fronts was difficult. Consequently, after seizing Vilna, the capital of Lithuania, the ruling Polish White Guards considered that the time had come to proclaim that they would not talk with the Soviet power, which had violated all international usages – they said this, they who had killed our Red-Cross delegation, they who had disguised their Legionaries in order to capture Vilna in thievish fashion.

On December 22, 1919, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs put to the Polish Government an open and formal proposal, over the wireless, to enter into peace negotiations. Comrade Chicherin made use for this purpose of statements by the Polish deputy-minister for foreign affairs, Skrzynski, who impudently and lyingly affirmed in the Sejm that the Soviet Government had never put any peace proposals to Poland. On December 22 Comrade Chicherin addressed a formal note to Poland over the wireless, and the entire world read it. However, there was no reply.

On January 28, 1920, that is, more than a month later, a fresh appeal to the Polish Government and the Polish people was sent out, over the signatures of the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, and the People's Commissar for Military Affairs. This appeal, which was perfectly formal and precise, included in its proposals: first, confirmation of Comrade Chicherin's note of December 22; second, a categorical statement that we held the territory of Poland to be inviolable; and, third, the announcement that, while awaiting the Polish Government's reply and hoping for an armistice and peace, we were ordering our troops not to cross a certain line. This line was defined: it was the line on which our troops stood at that moment. We further declared in our note that we had made no agreement, deal or secret treaty, either with Germany (as Poland feared) or with any other country that might be aimed, directly or indirectly, against Poland. Finally, we concluded the document with a declaration that, between Russia and Poland, there was no disputed question that could not be settled peacefully, through diplomatic negotiations, or, insofar as what was involved was disputes over territory, through a plebiscite. That was the document that we issued. Nor did we stop there. Without waiting for the Polish reply, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee had approved and ratified, at its session of January 2, the appeal we had addressed to the Polish Government and people, and issued a declaration in which the peaceful intentions and desires of Russia toward the Polish republic were again clearly and distinctly formulated.

And so, on January 28, we sent our note. Two months were required by the Polish Government before, under pressure from the Polish worker masses, it saw itself obliged to give a formal reply to our note. On March 27, Patek, the Polish foreign minister, proposed that talks begin at Borisov, that is, in a town captured by the Poles, in the zone adjacent to the front. Our diplomats replied on March 28, that is, on the very next day, proposing, first, an immediate armistice, as a necessary condition for peace talks, and, second, that the talks be held on neutral soil, Estonia being suggested. The Polish bourgeois government refused outright to agree to a general armistice, and proposed that the armistice be confined to a small sector near Borisov. In other words, the Polish government said to us: 'There will be no armistice at the front. While negotiating we shall continue to advance. Here is the little town of Borisov, which we have taken from you. We command you to present yourselves in this place. Here, around Borisov, we shall arrange an armistice for your benefit – three sazhen to the right, three sazhen to the left – but in other sectors, if

we so wish, we shall advance.' I have been told that the archbourgeois and arch-hostile-to-us British newspaper The Times wrote that this was an unprecedented demand and these were unheard-of conditions. Only a barbarian 'Excellency', drunk with victory, with his foot on the neck of a prostrate foe, could speak like this. But we are not prostrate, we are and shall remain firmly standing on our two feet. A feeling of disgust at the insolent stupidity of the polished savages of Warsaw affected us very strongly, but, nevertheless, our diplomacy did not allow itself to be ruled by feeling, but listened only to the voice of reason. In calm words, which even jarred on some comrades – 'How can one reply to this insolent provocation in such an unruffled tone?' they exclaimed – in calm words our diplomats explained that we could not agree to Borisov. This was not at all on grounds of prestige, comrades! You know very well that we despise what bourgeois diplomacy calls prestige. For us all that matters is the interests of the working masses. If a chance to bring peace nearer by 24 hours, or even by 24 minutes, were to appear before us, no prejudices about 'prestige' would stand in our way. But the question here was not one of prestige. How could we allow an enemy, armed to the teeth and still fighting, to choose the places where there would or would not be an armistice? And if, in order to rebuff the enemy who was continuing to advance, we needed to direct a blow in the direction of Borisov, were we to let the enemy tie us hand and foot? It is quite obvious that we had to refuse this demand. Nevertheless, we tried to accommodate the Warsaw government. We proposed as venue for the peace talks not only Estonia (to whose government we had applied for permission to organise a peace conference on Estonian soil, and from whom we had received a courteous reply), we also proposed either Petrograd, Moscow or Warsaw. Furthermore, we did not even insist on a general armistice. This proposal of ours was rejected without explanation. On April 7 the Polish Government replied that it would not engage in any further discussion with us about the place where negotiations were to be held. A case unprecedented in history, even in the view of The Times, when the government of a country fighting against us demands, in an ultimatum, that we conduct negotiations in a town it has taken from us and which is almost in the front line! When we propose a number of other towns – ours, Polish or neutral – they reply: we are not going to negotiate with you about the place where negotiations are to be held!

What did our diplomats do? They did not lose their self-control. They did not allow their line to deviate. On April 23 they announced to the whole world, in an open note, that, besides any neutral country, Petrograd, Moscow or Warsaw, London or Paris, they would agree to a different place in the area under Polish occupation. If you want it to be Grodno, all right; if you want it to be Bialystok, let it be Bialystok. Only it must not be a town in the zone of military operations. That was the proposal sent by our diplomats in reply. No answer came. Our diplomats addressed themselves, with our proposal, to the Entente, to Britain and France, who stand behind Poland, and asked them to intervene, if they wanted peace and trade relations with us. No answer. The Warsaw adventurers wanted war at any cost.

Meanwhile, Pilsudski, the 'Chief of State', as he calls himself, and commander-in-chief of the Polish Army, was assembling his divisions and preparing his Petlyurist masquerade for conquering the Ukraine. In the way he brought Petlyura – that distinguished war-lord from Sorochintsy fair [\[2\]](#) – into the business, – Pilsudski showed himself to be a true pupil of the German imperialists, even to the point of slavish repetition of details. When, in the

spring of 1920, the Germans decided to plunder the Ukraine, they chose as their screen, or fig-leaf, a miserable concern that called itself the Kiev Rada. Petlyura belonged to this outfit, and served in those days as an obedient tool in the hands of Hohenzollern and Habsburg. After the German imperialists had used Petlyura, they cast aside this ridiculous dictator out of Ukrainian musical comedy, like a rag for which they had no further need. When Skoropadsky fell, Petlyura sold his services to the Entente, and used their money to form his bands. However, the Soviet revolution in the Ukraine soon swept him away. Now, when Pilsudski, urged on by the same predatory elements of imperialism, has undertaken to enslave the Ukraine, he is hiding himself behind that very same Petlyura. And the wretched 'Hetman', who sold himself to the Austro-German generals and the Anglo-French imperialists, has not failed, of course, to sell his services to the Polish gentry. After Pilsudski had seized, in March, Mozyr, Kalinkovichi, Ovruch and Rechitsa, on April 23 he opened an offensive on the Vothynia-Kiev front, taking Zhitomir and Zhmerinka, and aimed his main forces towards Kiev. At the present moment the Polish forces are directly threatening Kiev and the entire Ukraine, and thereby also Soviet Russia, which is linked to the Ukraine in spiritual, material and military unity.

Having burst like a savage wolf into the Ukraine, Pilsudski issued a foxy manifesto which was supposed to explain that he was not strangling the Ukraine but liberating it. It was with the same recipe that Wilhelm II liberated the Ukraine two years ago. In exchange for Right-Bank Ukraine, where Pilsudski promises to establish Petlyura's rule (only fools can believe this), Petlyura will surrender to Pilsudski the territory lying west of the line of the Zbruch and the Styr, or the Goryn [\[3\]](#) – that is, all Eastern Galicia, Western Volhynia, Polesia and the Kholm district. This territory comprises more than 100,000 square versts, with a population of seven and a quarter million, of whom Ukrainians, Byelorussians and Great-Russians account for five and a quarter million. Thus, in this Sorochintsy fair, the great war-lord Petlyura is selling five million Ukrainians to the Polish gentry in return for a promise by the latter to make Petlyura their caretaker in Right-Bank Ukraine.

This disgusting deal will be resisted not only by the proletarian and the farm-labourer, not only by the middle peasant of Kiev province, but even by the Ukrainian kulak who lives on the right bank of the Dnieper – the most backward kulak in every way. This will mean a wave of protest and indignation involving 99 per cent of the population. This inevitable protest, rifle in hand, against Petlyura and his master Pilsudski, is a complete and unquestionable guarantee that victory will be ours in the hard and heavy struggle that lies ahead of us.

Yes, the struggle will be a heavy one. The Polish army is not small. It has been formed with great thoroughness during the last year. It possesses a considerable reservoir of manpower: within the present frontiers of Poland there are about 35 million people. True, only a little over 38 per cent of them are Poles, and this fact – the coercive regime of the Polish gentry not only over their own workers and peasants but also over masses of people of other nationalities – will, of course, have a disintegrating effect on the Polish army. But that will manifest itself just as will the class contradictions, which are very acute in Poland, and will also have a decisive effect – only after we have struck a conclusive blow.

The Polish working class did not and does not want war. The Polish peasants

have received only crumbs from the new regime, the regime of Pilsudski and his gentry allies – or, more correctly, they have received only the promise of crumbs. They cannot support this regime for long; they cannot be enthusiastic for a war that will bring them increased state taxes, and, if it becomes protracted, will reduce them to utter poverty, utter exhaustion.

This is all beyond doubt, but it is not as yet clear to all the Polish peasants. National prejudices are still strong with them. After a long epoch of oppression Poland has, so far, been an independent republic for too short a time. National feeling is still too fresh, the honeymoon period of state independence is still not over, and it is on these sentiments that the 'Chief of the Polish State', Pilsudski, is trying to base his policy. Not yet outworn are the distrust and hatred felt by the more backward peasant masses towards Russia and things Russian, because in their minds and memories 'Russia' and 'Russian' mean 'Tsar' and 'Tsarist'. This is the historical capital from which 'Chief of State' Pilsudski hopes to draw interest.

Thus, an extensive reservoir of men, old national traditions, now renewed by the creation of the republic, and a longestablished attitude of suspicion towards Russia and everything Russian – those are the elements which constitute advantages that weigh in the balance in favour of Pilsudski and the forces backing him.

But, looked at broadly, his regime is one that is inwardly weak, and which, not only in its basic features, but also in many details, recalls Kerensky's. Uncertainty and discord rule all through the higher officer ranks of the army. There are two different organisations among them: the officers who support Pilsudski, and the officers who support the National Democrats – the Polish equivalent of our Cadets and Octobrists. These two organisations are locked together in mutual hostility. The workers are discontented. The peasants are discontented. These are all factors of bitter conflict both among the leading circles and between them and the rebellious lower orders. But all these factors will come to fruition as the final outcome, the crown, of our ultimate efforts. It would be a most profound error to suppose that history will begin by opening up before us the Polish workers' revolution, thereby sparing us the need to wage an armed struggle. No. So long as wide masses of the peasantry and petty-bourgeoisie in Poland think that the Entente is everything, that the Entente will see to everything, that the Entente wants war with Poland, and that, in order to preserve her independence, Poland is obliged to fight us, if not from internal motives then under the pressure of external force – so long as this view, disseminated and upheld by Poland's yellow journalists, exerts a substantial influence, there is no other way out for us but to demonstrate that, besides the power of the Entente, another power exists, the power of the Russian workers and peasants, the power of our Red Army, and that any infringement of the frontiers of Soviet Russia and the Soviet Ukraine will meet with a merciless rebuff.

Today, comrades, in these weeks when the working class of Russia, tired, underfed, anxious to get down to peaceful labour, is again addressing itself to warlike tasks, rising up to deliver a merciless rebuff to the Polish gentry – in this period everyone in our country who is honourable, thoughtful and decent, even if he does not agree with our social programme and our methods of action, must recognise that the only force that now defends the independence of the Russian people and the future of Russia is the Russian working class, is

the government of that class, the Soviet Communist power. And that, comrades, is why many who were yesterday our enemies, and who today are still our opponents on grounds of principle where social, religious and other questions are concerned, feel obliged to bow before the great role that the working class is now playing, as the pivot on which our country depends and without which it would fall into the abyss. I will quote an example here, a fact about which I was only just now asked in a written note: the example of a General who played a big role in the epoch of Tsardom and who under Kerensky was Supreme Commander-in-Chief, a man who by his age and education is not one of our own people, namely Brusiov. He sent a letter to the chief of the All-Russia General Staff saying that the former government had always made a serious mistake in denying independence to the Polish people, and that the Soviet Government had acted quite rightly in recognising that independence. However, he says, from the moment that Poland – it would have been more correct to say, the Polish bourgeoisie, which grovelled before the former government, licking its hand, but now wants to tear out the throat of the Russian people – from that moment, says Brusiov, it has become the duty of every citizen to help the Soviet power. And he proposes that an advisory board be convened – not, of course, to take command, as some fear – no, an authoritative military advisory board which will set to work on questions of supply, reinforcements, training of commanders, better use of the railways, and so on.

Brusiov is a man from another epoch, from a different school, and undoubtedly he holds views which are far removed from our own. But from the moment when he frankly, honestly and courageously declares that he wants to help the Russian working class with his knowledge and experience, we say to him – welcome. In this fearful conflict we shall accept support and help from all honourable citizens. We were against what the Germans call *Burgfrieden*, that is, 'civil peace'. We were against peace between the enslaved proletariat and the robber bourgeoisie. We said: 'No civil peace but civil war!' But when the working class is fighting for its independence and freedom, and when representatives of other social classes, which have already been deprived of their advantages and privileges, recognise the leadership of the working class and come to its aid, we say that we shall accept such aid, welcome it and make use of it to our utmost ability.

Comrades, I should like you to carry away from this meeting, as your chief conclusion, the thought that the struggle which lies ahead of us will be a hard and intense struggle. The Polish bourgeoisie knows that, in attacking us, it has put its entire destiny at risk. And those who stand behind it know that White-Guard Poland, oppressor of the Polish proletariat which is linked with the proletariat of Petrograd and Moscow by decades of joint revolutionary struggle – that this White Guard Poland is trying to erect a barrier between us and Europe. The Polish gentry say that the Russians, those barbarians and Scythians, must be thrust far back to the East. But we are striving toward the West, to meet the European workers, who know that we can meet them only over the corpse of White-Guard Poland, in a free and independent workers' and peasants' Poland.

The struggle will be a terrible one. But, if you ask me about the likely outcome of this struggle, I say to you that I have never been so sure that we shall be victorious, and shall finally crush the enemy, as I am this time. We have been fighting for two and a half years without a break, and in that period

we have learnt something. We have had, of course, and shall continue to have setbacks such as we suffered at Zhitomir, and perhaps more serious ones than that. On the Western front, which was a secondary front for us, and across which our diplomats carried on negotiations for a long time, it was not difficult for Pilsudski to strike at us. But we possess reserves and reinforcements. When we shifted our army from a war footing on to a labour footing, we said that we were winding up our armed forces from a skein into a ball. But if our enemies, seeing our reorganisation, should decide that this is taking place because we have grown weary and want to give up, then we shall put everything into reverse and unwind the ball into a skein. That is, indeed now being done. Our railways, fuelled with sunflower seeds and reinforced by thousands of workers, have been working with redoubled energy. Our labour regiments are moving from every direction towards the Western front. Undoubtedly, these regiments are short of that element which is the salt of our army, that is, advanced workers. It has happened with us more than once that a young, politically immature regiment has failed to show sufficient vigour and strength, but it was enough to add to them just one handful of our salt, that is, a group of Communist workers, for a completely different result to be achieved at once. We are therefore proclaiming a Party mobilisation, with the warning that the struggle will be hard and stubborn. We have taken all measures to secure in every way our needs for the winter campaign that lies ahead, especially as regards supply.

Our first order has been carried out. The Communists of Petrograd, who are already here among us, are setting off today for the front. It is the Muscovites' turn next, and that of all the rest of the country. Communists – to the Western front!

Torn once again from economic work, they will arrive on the Western front and will say to the many tens of thousands of Red Army men, workers and peasants, who have gathered and will gather there: we, the proletarians of Moscow and Petrograd, have come to you as envoys from the very heart of our country, because this heart is under threat from the Polish gentry and bourgeoisie. Brother peasants, we have not shed our blood in our country in order now to bow like slaves to force, to put our necks submissively under the yoke of Pilsudski and his mighty masters. If the Polish gentry have sought war, if they have forced war upon us, then this war, with all its thunders and calamities, will fall upon their heads, and victory will be ours, victory for workers' Russia.

The whole of this report was repeated on May 10, 1920 at a meeting in Gomel, and was dedicated to the Minsk command courses, in memory of the encounter before Rechitsa. As given in Gomel, the speech ended with these words:

The town of Gomel, which stands almost in sight of our front, is one of the towns that are potentially endangered. So that this potential danger may not become actual, our front needs to be given a firm, reliable rear. The Polish gentry have many agents in our country. I did not speak idly or in jest about those supporters of Pilsudski and Petlyura that there may be even here, in small numbers. They operate on the railways, they spread lies, poison, slander and provocations among the Russian workers, peasants and Red Army men. These spies try to cause damage everywhere, wherever and however they can. Our task, the sacred duty of all honourable citizens, under these difficult

conditions, is to help the Red Army in every way we can. We must keep close watch on the activity of suspicious persons, agents of Pilsudski and counter-revolution, and bring down upon them the merciless fist of the revolutionary tribunal whenever they are found guilty of attacking or harming the workers' and peasants' republic.

Today, comrades, I was before Rechitsa. There, on our front, I was told of the indescribable atrocities that have been committed by the Polish White-Guard officers and kulaks on captured and wounded Red Army men. They no longer recognise the status of prisoners-of-war. They are hanging not only Communists but every ordinary non-Party Red Army man who falls into their hands, they are exterminating even the wounded and the sick. Comrades, I asked if this was not an exaggeration, a slander – because one ought not to slander even an enemy. They told me: 'So-and-so arrived on such-and-such a date, another fought his way here – they are all men worthy of trust, they have all seen, and they all confirm, these frightful atrocities.'

How have we answered this? Today we have issued from the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic an order to all the troops of the Western front not to avenge these abuses on helpless Polish prisoners. If we take a Polish worker or peasant prisoner, comrades, let that Red Army man's hand be cut off who lifts a knife against anyone who is captured, unarmed, sick or wounded. We fight only against armed men. Why do the Polish gentry shoot our workers and peasants whom they take prisoner? Because they know that an honourable Red Army man always remains a sworn enemy of the magnates and aggressors. But if we sit down beside a Polish worker or peasant whom we have taken prisoner, and put to him our truth, against the lies of Pilsudski and his magnates, then that Polish worker or peasant will become, within a few weeks or a few days, Pilsudski's bitterest enemy. In this way we transformed into revolutionaries the German soldiers who later revolted against Wilhelm, and also Austrian and Hungarian soldiers, and soldiers of Kolchak and Denikin. They all passed through our school. We did not shoot our prisoners, but made conscious fighters of them. Therefore, the Polish Legionaries, too, the Polish workers and peasants, whom we take prisoner, must not fear cruelty and execution – no, we must bring them the light of Communism, the light of our doctrine of the brotherhood of all working people. Whereas they have come to us under the yellow banner of robber imperialism, they will leave us under the red banner of revolution and communism. We need ruthless struggle in battle, and magnanimity towards the captive enemy. Ruthless hatred for the magnates and capitalists, an outstretched hand of friendship for the Polish working masses. We will not permit anyone to encroach on our rights, but we will not lay a hand on the independence of the Polish people. And we believe, we know, that the Polish republic will come out of this war different from what it was.

For centuries our country, Russia, stood beneath a banner on which appeared a two-headed eagle. What was the significance of those two heads? One of them bit and tore the Russian working people, while the other was directed at the borderlands – at the Poles, the Lithuanians, the Estonians, the Finns -and menaced other peoples beyond Russia's borders. Such were the two heads of the predatory Tsarist eagle. We have cut off both heads, we live today beneath a new banner, on which appear a sickle and a hammer, the symbols of labour – and labour leads people to brotherhood.

The Polish republic is not a republic of labour – no, it is a republic of the bourgeoisie and the gentry. Its emblem shows a white eagle: true, an eagle with only one head, but this is the head of a bird of prey, which turns both to the right and to the left, to bite and tear both its own Polish workers and peasants and also the Ukrainians and Byelorussians. This white eagle is already covered all over with blood. And our task now is to cut off the head of the predatory Polish eagle, and thereby to help the Polish workers and peasants to raise over the Polish republic a flag that will display, just as with us, the symbols of labour. And then there will be no enmity between Poland and Russia, there will instead be unity and brotherhood, and we shall all be able to devote all our strength to tranquil, peaceful, honest labour. And then we shall lift our country out of poverty, disorder, want and sickness, and transform it, through the labour of hundreds of thousands of workers and peasants, who are now shedding their blood at the fronts, into a flourishing garden, where people will, amid prosperity and tranquil and happy labour, take pleasure in science and art, and create better conditions for the coming generations, so that all mankind may become, at last, the truly free master of our planet.

It is for that cause, comrades, that we must now give a rebuff to the Polish gentry. And this rebuff we shall give them! They have thrown down their challenge to us, and we shall fight this war to the end. 'It is for our freedom and yours,' we say to the Polish workers and peasants, 'that we are advancing to meet you!' Long live workers' and peasants' Poland! Long live workers' and peasants' Russia! And long live the world revolution, which will liberate all the working people!

Endnotes

1. In December 1918 a Soviet Red Cross mission arrived in Warsaw, with the aim of dealing with the problem of Russian 'displaced persons' in Poland. The mission was led by a Polish Communist, Wesolowski, and the Warsaw Government accused it of engaging in political agitation. The mission was ordered to leave Poland, but, on the way out, its members were murdered by their escort of Polish gendarmes.

2. *The Fair at Sorochintsy* is a story by Gogol (in the collection **Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka**), full of comical Ukrainian peasant characters: Musorgsky based an opera on this story.

3. The river Zbruch, a tributary of the Dniester, was the old frontier between Austria (Eastern Galicia) and Russia (Right-bank Ukraine). The Styr and the Goryn are two rivers in Polesia, east of Pinsk: about 30 miles apart, they run northward into the Pripet. In the agreement made between Pilsudski and Petlyura on April 21, 1920 it was provided that the fate of the districts of Rovno, Dubno and Kremenets, lying between these rivers, should be settled in a later, more precisely formulated treaty.

The War with Poland

The Polish Front

On the Occasion of the Creation of a Special Advisory Board Under the Commander-In-Chief

* * *

The appointment of A.A. Brusilov as chairman of the special advisory board has naturally aroused considerable interest.

The establishment of a special advisory board to include, along with experienced military specialists, some outstanding Communist workers, was understood by some – in direct contradiction to the letter and the meaning of the order by the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic [\[1\]](#) – as the establishment of a new command apparatus, collegial in character. There can, of course, be no question of any such thing. The special advisory board works under the Commander-in Chief, S.S. Kamenev, in whose hands all power over military operations is concentrated. The task of the special advisory board is to work on problems of military administration and supply connected with the service of the Western front (formation, training of commanders, replacements, all aspects of supply, transport, etc.). There is no need to explain how important this group of problems is, and how important it is to apply in solving them the experience of those outstanding military workers who make up the special advisory board.

The chairman of the special advisory board himself, A.A. Brusilov, is too well acquainted with military history, and rich enough in personal military experience on a broad scale, to tolerate any idea of fragmenting the power of command. He has made this sufficiently clear in his letter, printed below, to the Chief of the All-Russia General Staff. From the text of this letter [\[2\]](#), which gave a considerable impetus to the creation of the special advisory board, readers will see what the motives were that impelled A.A. Brusilov to offer his services to the Soviet Government for the defence of Russia against the invasion by the Polish gentry, and also those views of A.A. Brusilov's which are sufficiently accounted for by his entire past, and which are separated by an entire historical epoch from the views of the Soviet power. Whereas A.A. Brusilov sees in Orthodoxy the national sign of a Russian man, this point of view does not, of course, seem convincing to the Russian proletariat, the majority of whom have broken radically with Orthodoxy, as with all forms of religion, and yet who nevertheless are now the pivot of the Russian nation, the bearer of its great socialist future – just as the Polish proletariat, which has torn itself away from the superstitions of Catholicism, is the principal creative force in the Polish nation.

But it is significant in the highest degree that A.A. Brusilov recognises as absolutely correct the Soviet policy expressed in unconditional recognition of the independence of the Polish republic. No less significant is that A.A. Brusilov, by the very fact of his offering his services for the fight against bourgeois gentry Poland, has confirmed, so to speak, in the eyes of certain social circles,

that the workers' and peasants' power possesses the right to expect and to demand support and help from all citizens who are honourable and devoted to the people, regardless of their past education in this great struggle in the West on which the future of working people's Russia depends.

May 7, 1920

Endnotes

1. By order No.818 of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, dated May 2, 1920, in order to ensure all-round elucidation of the problems connected with the struggle against Poland, it was resolved to set up a Special Advisory Board under the Commander-in-Chief, to consist of persons of authority and with the task of recommending measures for increasing our forces and resources for the fight against the attack by the Polish counter-revolution. A.A. Brusilov was appointed chairman of this Advisory Board, and its members were prominent figures from the old General Staff: Polivanov, Klembovsky, Baluyev, Gutor, Verkhovsky, Zayonchkovsky, Akimov and others, together with some responsible political workers: Serebryakov, Danishevsky, Skvortsov and Aleksandrov.

2. In his letter addressed to the Chief of the All-Russia General Staff, N.E. Rattel, Brusilov referred to the need to arouse popular patriotism, without which, in his view, it was impossible to create an army capable of fighting. Brusilov proposed that an Advisory Board be formed of persons possessing experience of war and of life, and stressed that this Board must not interfere in any way in operations. Brusilov noted that all operational decisions must necessarily result from the individual will of the Commander-in-Chief alone.

The note here printed, together with Brusilov's letter, was published in **Pravda**, No.97, May 7, 1920.

The War with Poland

Order No.210

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Forces of the Western Front, May 8, 1920, No.210, Smolensk

* * *

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

Having arrived on the Western front, in the name of the Council of People's Commissars and the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, I greet you, comrade Red Army men, commanders and commissars!

The fate of the Russian people is now being decided on the Western front.

We wanted to reach an agreement with the enemy even at the price of heavy concessions, for the Soviet Government's main aim was to spare the blood of the workers and peasants and preserve their strength for peaceful labour.

But Poland is now controlled – behind the backs of the Polish working people – by a bourgeois-gentry clique, a government of adventurers, which is incapable of thinking ahead. They are ruled by blind greed and savage hatred for workers' and peasants' Russia. Their brains have been clouded by conceit, by boasting and by the impunity that they have enjoyed. The more concessions we offered for the sake of safeguarding peace, the more convinced they became that we were weak and defenceless and could be overthrown without difficulty.

Behind the screen of negotiations, they assembled their forces in the Ukrainian front and prepared acts of betrayal in the Galician units which had previously fought on the side of the Soviet Ukraine: and in this way the Polish gentry seized not only Volhynia but also the capital of the Ukraine, Kiev.

Soldiers of the Western front! Red Kiev is in the clutches of the Polish aggressors. The workers' and peasants' Ukraine is threatened with serfdom and enslavement to foreigners. At the same time a great menace looms over all Russia.

There is only one salvation from the yoke, from slavery -must strike a *decisive, merciless, crushing blow* at the bourgeois gentry troops.

Regiments of the Western front! Get ready to strike the blow! Close your ranks more tightly! Grasp your rifles more firmly!

Long live the union of fraternal revolutionary consciousness with the iron discipline of self-sacrificing fighter!

Let there be no wavering or indecision among us!

Let the heavy hand of death fall upon every self-seeker and deserter who betrays his brothers in the hour of difficulty

Honour and glory and a fraternal embrace to every brave fighter!

Warriors of the Western front, forward!

The War with Poland

Kiev is in the Hands of the Polish Gentry!

* * *

Under the cover of negotiations about peace, the government of the Polish gentry concentrated substantial forces on its front and, beginning on April 23, launched a broad offensive towards Kiev. Simultaneously, the commanders of two Galician brigades which, a few months ago, came over voluntarily to our side, raised, at a signal from the Polish command, the flag of counter-revolutionary mutiny. Thus, *the Polish army's first successes were prepared for by perfidy and treachery.*

The Poles' offensive developed on a broad front, from Ovruch [Ovruch is about 100km. south-south-west of Mozyr and 160km. north west of Kiev.] to the Dniester, and in two weeks the advance by numerically substantial Polish forces culminated in our abandonment of Kiev. Today the Polish gentry have put both feet on that table at which, a few days ago, the workers' and Red Army men's deputies were sitting.

The boastful and garrulous Polish gentry are now telling the whole world about the great valour of the Polish White-Guard force and their unprecedented victories. We, of course, know what this boasting is really worth. On the Kiev front the Poles were twice, if not three times, as strong numerically as we were. To this fact must be added the treason of the bribed Galician officers and the continual revolts by the bandit swine of whom there are so many in Right-Bank Ukraine. The forces of the Polish gentry had great success because they were faced only by scanty Red regiments. Our forces were absorbed for too long a time by the Eastern, Southern and Northern fronts. The Western defence-line long remained secondary for us. It is not surprising that the bandit 'Excellencies' enjoyed success at first. Kolchak, too, knew success: he almost reached the Volga.

Denikin, too, knew success: he even took Orel. But every such success by the counter-revolution multiplied our energy tenfold, brought tens and hundreds of workers and peasants to their feet, and led not merely to a rebuff for the enemy but to his merciless destruction. The Polish invasion will suffer a like fate.

Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine, is today in the hands of the Polish landlords. Our workers' and peasants' country has suffered a hard blow. But this blow will not cause us to give up and lose heart. On the contrary, it will arouse a feeling of anger and a thirst for stern vengeance in the hearts of millions of Russian and Ukrainian workers and peasants.

Today, already, a wave of volunteering is sweeping over the country. Tomorrow it will rise twice and three times higher.

Soviet Kiev is again in the hands of the gentry, in the hands of foreigners! This news is arousing all the honourable working people of the united Soviet lands. Province will compete with province, *uyezd* with *uyezd* in bringing help to

the Western front.

Kiev will be torn from the hands of the enslavers. The dishonourable Polish gentry, who oppress our brothers, the Polish workers and peasants, will be dealt a mortal blow. The working masses of Kiev and Moscow reach out a brotherly hand to the workers of Warsaw.

May 8, 1920, Moscow-
Smolensk
En Route, No.110

The War with Poland

Order No.213

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the Commissars and Commanders of the Western Front, May 9, 1920, No.213

* * *

The Western front was for a long time a passive front. Operations were confined to actions by reconnaissance units, and the initiative lay predominantly with the Poles.

The passivity of the Western front had a harmful effect on the morale of units and even of commanders and commissars.

At the present time *the Western front is the most important front of the Republic*. Its importance far exceeds that of the Eastern and Southern fronts, at the height of our operations against Kolchak and Denikin. On the Western front the fate of the Russian and Ukrainian peoples is being decided.

Yet the change in the morale of the Western front which is needed for complete and final victory has not yet been achieved. A large number of young Red Army men have joined the units there who have not yet been battle-hardened, who have not yet become accustomed to military discipline, and far from all of whom appreciate the significance of our war with the Poland of the gentry.

The commissars and commanders must understand that they now face tasks which are incomparably more serious and responsible than those of a month or two ago.

I. An indispensable condition for the success of every measure (agitational, educational, organisational or penal) taken with a view to ensuring the combat-capacity of the units of the Western front is *proper organisation in the field of supply*.

The Western front is now at the centre of the whole country's attention. There are grounds for hoping that the front will be guaranteed everything necessary, as regards both artillery and engineering supplies and also clothing and food. The supply apparatus must be given particular attention by commanders and commissars. Workers with initiative and resource must be put in charge of the supply organs, men who will not act formally but will show foresight, combining the forces and resources available to them, especially as regards transport, so that boots, bread and bullets may reach the soldiers in good time.

Especially important is it to watch out that those in the rear do not profit at the expense of the fighting men. It is necessary, overcoming all obstacles, to see to it that supplies get to the front line, especially during an offensive.

The supply organs must be prepared for no easy and brief campaign but for a prolonged and stubborn struggle.

The Red Army man must be fed, clothed, shod and washed [Frequent and thorough washing had become vitally important owing to the epidemic of typhus, carried by lice.] – this is now demanded by the whole country, which looks with love towards the Western front.

II. *Agitation* must be conducted better. Every Red Army man, even the most backward, must think over all the steps that were taken by the Soviet Government in order to avoid war, and must clearly understand and feel that the entire responsibility for the bloody conflict lies, wholly and exclusively, upon the Polish bourgeois gentry. The forces sent from the centre must be utilised and distributed intelligently. In each platoon, section and squad there must be a Communist (who may even be only a young one, provided he is devoted to the cause) who will keep an eye on the morale of those fellow-fighters nearest to him, explain to them the tasks and aims of the war, and who, in case of perplexity, will approach the commissar of his unit or some other responsible political workers, for elucidation. Without such internal, unofficial, day-by-day and hour-by-hour agitation, carried on cheek-by-jowl, under all conditions of the combat situation, official agitation alone, effected through articles and speeches, will not bring the necessary results.

III. *The conduct of Communists* in the Red Army has decisive significance for the morale and the combat-capacity of units. It is therefore necessary to distribute Communists correctly, to guide them attentively and to keep careful check on their work. On the Western front there are a lot of Communists who, as has been said, have grown used to the passivity of the front and who sometimes fail to notice symptoms of disintegration. On the other hand, there are many young Communists on the Western front who have not yet been tested in army work. These young Communists must at once be placed under a proper regime, that is, a regime of strict assiduity and high responsibility imposed on every Communist at the front. The new comrades must realise straight away that they are joining the ranks of the front at a moment when they are called upon to make the maximum effort and show wholehearted self-sacrifice.

The Revolutionary War Councils and Political Departments of armies, the commissars and Political Departments of divisions, the commissars of brigades and regiments, must carefully check up on the behaviour of all Communists subordinate to them with respect to combat functions, after every fresh battle ordeal, ruthlessly eliminating those who have shown a lack of resolution and meting out stern punishment to selfseekers.

It is a Communist's duty not merely to fight selfsacrificingly but also to encourage in every way, and, where necessary, to compel others to fight.

IV. Commanders must concentrate their efforts on *preparing for battle the units and replacements continuously arriving from the centre*. Reconnaissance must be raised to the proper level of efficiency. In accordance with the nature of the struggle as a war of manoeuvre, the Red Army men must be trained by every means to show initiative, resourcefulness, enterprise and flexibility. Every commander, however modest his position, must be filled with the thought that upon his behaviour depends the fate of the Russian people, and

must set himself the aim of making his unit a model in every respect.

V. The war may prove to be stubborn and protracted. If it does, enormous importance will attach to the *holding units*, which alone can provide fully suitable replacements for the active forces. It is the holding units of the front and of the armies that complete the preparatory military training of the Red Army man, bring him into the atmosphere of life in the front-line, and get him ready for the tasks which he has to perform, for the dangers which he will encounter. Consequently holding units must be surrounded with special attention. Material living conditions in them must be made as favourable as possible. Their whole time must be occupied with military training, political instruction, sport, the practice of skills, and games. The permanent staff of holding units must consist of experienced workers who are used to detecting the mood of Red Army men and taking steps in good time to remove all misunderstandings.

VI. The prolonged passivity of the Western front and the peace talks held with Poland engendered in many Red Army men and in the local population an insufficiently serious attitude to military duty. Hence a considerable development of *evasion of military service*, and even of *outright desertion* in the zone adjoining the front. A complete and radical change must now be brought about where this is concerned. During the next three weeks, failure to turn up for service, absence without leave and desertion must be eradicated. The front and rear Commissions for Combating Desertion, the Special Sections, the local organs of the Cheka, the Political Departments, the local Party organisations, the military authorities in the field and in the rear will take concerted action to this end, working out in each area a definite plan of campaign, which will include, on the one hand, extensive agitation, and, on the other, round-ups, arrests, confiscation of property and shooting of the worst of the deserters.

VII. The organisation of *battle-police detachments* is one of the most important tasks for commanders and commissars. Every large military formation must have behind it a network of *battle-police detachments*, which may be thin but must be firm and trustworthy, managed skilfully and in a centralised way in accordance with the operational tasks of the given formation. Ease and impunity of desertion can corrode the best of units. The young soldier who tries to escape from the enemy's fire, which he has come under for the first time, must encounter a firm hand that masterfully sends him back with a warning of the stern punishment awaiting all who violate their military duty. A self-seeker who takes to his heels must find himself facing a revolver, or running upon a bayonet.

Battle-police units must be headed by workers with a firm will and tried courage. The head of all the battle-police units in a division must be directly subordinate to the commander and commissar of the division, and the head of all the battle-police units in an army to that army's Revolutionary War Council.

VIII. The work of the *Revolutionary Military Tribunals* must be brought really into line with the stern seriousness of the whole situation.

After our victories on the Eastern, Northern and Southern fronts and after the Entente had begun negotiations with us, when it could seem that the epoch of intense armed struggle had been left behind us, the All-Russia Central

Executive Committee abolished the practice of executions by shooting, so far as the rear was concerned. This abolition was also reflected at the front, where, in accordance with the more favourable situation, a milder regime was introduced.

It is necessary that the new, radical change in the situation shall be clearly realised by all leading workers of the Western front, and, in the first place, by the Revolutionary Military Tribunals. The mortal danger which again hangs over workers' and peasants' Russia brings with it inevitable danger of death to all who do not carry out their military duty. Commissars and commanders who fail to show sufficient courage, firmness and assiduity will be subject to the severest punishment. Egoistic, self-seeking elements in the army must be convinced by experience that death awaits in the rear whosoever tries, treacherously to escape from it at the front.

Sentences must be so formulated as to serve an agitational purpose, and must be published as widely as possible.

IX. The Polish command possesses a ramified spy *network* in the area of the Western front and the zone adjacent to the front. This consists primarily of bourgeois-gentry and petty-bourgeois chauvinist elements of Polish nationality, but also of mercenary scoundrels of other nationalities. Numerous Polish spies have made their way into the Soviet service, and are active not only on the railways and in Soviet civil institutions, but also in the ranks of the Red Army. Thorough and persistent struggle against Polish espionage is a necessary component of our military task. We must inculcate in the Red Army man the measures of particular caution to be observed when talking with strangers who show an interest in military operations.

Commissars and commanders, and, following them, all conscious Red Army men, must give every assistance to the Special Section, as the organ of struggle against spying by the Polish gentry and counter-revolutionary provocation in our ranks.

The Western front needs shaking up, from top to bottom. Slovenliness, sluggishness, lack of foresight, and, even more so, cowardice and self-seeking, must be burnt out with a red-hot iron.

The most severe measures for establishing revolutionary military order are justified, because they bring victory nearer, and thereby reduce the number of needless sacrifices.

The socialist republic orders you to be victorious: let everyone do his duty.

The War with Poland

What Do They Want?

* * *

What do the Polish gentry want? Why, to what end, are they attacking the Ukraine and Russia, which had offered them peace? That the Polish gentry are thoughtless, arrogant and stupidly boastful is known to everyone. But, surely, they must be pursuing an aim of some sort, since they have drawn the Polish people into a bloody and dangerous conflict with our Federative Republic?

Their first and chief aim is *land*. Polish landlords possessed a large amount of land in the Ukraine, in Byelorussia and in Lithuania. Poles were few in number in all these regions, but as rich property-owners they played an important role there. In the province of Vothynia Poles made up less than 10 per cent, in Podolia province they were a little over 2 per cent, and in Kiev province one-and-a-half per cent. Nevertheless, the Polish gentry are striving to get these provinces into their clutches, at whatever cost, in order thereby to recover their rich estates, factories and houses.

The Polish peasant is discontented. The independent republic of Poland has given him nothing. The landed estates remain, as before, in the hands of the gentry. Hence, the revolutionary ferment among the peasant masses is getting stronger all the time. Pilsudski's Government, the landlords' loyal steward, seeks a way out of this situation by directing the attention of the Polish peasants towards the Ukraine, Byelorussia and Lithuania: 'That's where you will get land for yourselves.'

The Polish soldiers, the so-called Legionaries – which means, for the most part, those same Polish peasants – would have liked to end the war as soon as possible, had not the officers from the gentry encouraged the Legionaries with hopes of gaining land and other benefits. 'Every Legionary will receive a good share of the Ukraine's black earth' – this is the song that Pilsudski's agents croon in the ear of the duped Polish soldier.

Finally, there is one more, not unimportant cause that has impelled the Polish Government to take the path of war, namely, its endeavour to intimidate, scare and subdue the Polish proletariat. The workers of Poland are siding ever more strongly with the Soviet power. They are calling on the Polish peasants to fight resolutely against their own landlords and capitalists, to establish in Poland a workers' and peasants' power on the model of what we have in Russia and the Ukraine. Our victories over Kolchak, Yudenich and Denikin have inspired the Polish working class, filling its heart with revolutionary joy. Hence the vicious, boiling hatred felt by all the Polish exploiters and oppressors for workers' and peasants' Russia, their striving to do her harm, to damage her, to hit at her, to break, humiliate, overthrow and crush her. This urge beats like a hammer in the brains of Poland's gentry and rulers. Frenzied hatred for the workers has deprived them of reason and incited them to the dreadful crime of a war of conquest.

Thus, from whatever angle one looks at the war, its cause is *the greed*,

cupidity and lust for power of Poland's rich men, the landlords, the capitalists, the exploiters of the working people. It is they who have caused the war, and against them that our counter-blow must be struck.

The Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Lithuanian and Russian workers and peasants must join with the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, strengthen its ranks with volunteers, support it with food and everything else that they can provide, so as to rout the mob of robber gentry who are trying to plunder and enslave our working masses.

May 9, 1920
Smolensk-Bryansk
En Route, No.112

The War with Poland

Order No.214

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the 16th Army, May 10, 1920, No.214, Novozybkov

[Novozybkov is about 60km. east of Gomel, on the line from Bryansk.]

* * *

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

For a long time the 16th Army remained in the background. It was numerically weak, and its task was merely to hold the front. At the present time, when the troops of the Polish gentry have developed a broad and deep offensive to the south of the 16th Army's position and have penetrated into the very heart of the Soviet Ukraine, a task of exceptional importance has fallen to the lot of the 16th Army. Fresh units are entering the 16th Army. The basic units of the Army are receiving fresh replacements. The Republic is taking all measures to supply the regiments of the 16th Army with everything they need, and thereby to ensure that they have complete and indisputable superiority over the enemy. [\[1\]](#)

The most important guarantee of victory is moral superiority. This is wholly on our side, for the Polish troops are attacking in the name of aggression and robbery, whereas we are defending our workers' and peasants' country in the name of freedom and peace.

Comrade Red Army men! Give a fraternal welcome to the new fighters who are joining you.

Comrade commanders and commissars! Bind the old and new elements of the army together in unity of consciousness and unity of the task to be fulfilled.

The Socialist Republic is moving its 16th Army to the forefront of the fight. Millions of working people are summoning you, comrades, to perform a great deed in order to save the country.

Red Warriors of the 16th Army! Close ranks more tightly around our banner!

Forward against the enemy!

Blow after blow, until his complete destruction—until complete victory!

Endnotes

[1.](#) The 16th Army was formed in mid-1919, at a time when, under pressure from the Poles, our units had left Byelorussia and withdrawn behind the Berezina. The winter of 1919-1920 saw only insignificant operations on the Polish front. The 8th and 17th Divisions of the 16th

Army withstood the Poles with difficulty along the wide front of the entire Western frontier: part of the 15th Army was diverted during this period to carry out the liquidation of Yudenich.

With the spring of 1920 the 16th Army received substantial reinforcements, and it played an active part in the summer campaign against the White Poles.

The War with Poland

Order No.215

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Transport to the Province of Gomel. May, 10, 1920, No.215, Gomel

* * *

Into battle against desertion!

At this time when the Polish gentry are threatening to seize Gomel Province, there are within the borders of this province a large number of persons who have avoided presenting themselves at the appointed time for military service, and also outright deserters.

The Polish gentry want to take the land from the peasants and give it back to the landlords, to hand the factories over to the capitalists, and to subject the working people to the rich and to the Catholic priests.

A deserter from the Red Army is a direct helper of the Polish gentry. Those who, inside the Soviet land and inside the Red Army, harbour deserters are also helping the invasion by the foreign gentry.

The time has come for a stern showdown with the deserters in Gomel Province!

I order the military authorities in the field and in the rear to undertake, with co-operation from the railway authorities and all civil authorities generally, a resolute campaign against desertion:

1. Uyezd, volost and village Soviet organs (revolutionary committees) are to be informed that they, and in particular their chairmen, bear direct and immediate responsibility for the fight against desertion. *Volost* revolutionary committees which fail to take measures against self-seekers, traitors and agents of the Polish gentry are to be arrested and brought before a tribunal.
2. Families which harbour deserters are to be penalised at the expense of their property (confiscation of horses and other animals, etc.), regardless of whether or not they are brought before a tribunal.
3. Assizes of the tribunals are to be organised in all *uyezds*, with instructions to deal ruthlessly, on the spot, with cases of deliberate desertion.

If the Polish gentry win, hundreds of thousands of the best workers and peasants will be shot or hanged. Slavery and tyranny will prevail throughout Russia.

Listen, peasants and workers!

Your Workers' and Peasants' Republic is threatened with mortal danger!

Whoever betrays the working people in the hour of danger can be shown no mercy!

Death to deserters and traitors!

The War with Poland

Order No.217

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the troops of the Western and South-Western fronts, May 10, 1920, No. 217, Gomel

* * *

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

Spare the enemy prisoners and wounded!

From all sectors of the Western and South-Western fronts come reports of unheard-of atrocities committed by Polish White-Guard forces upon captured and wounded Red Army men. They are tortured, beaten, shot and hanged. Needless to say, the gentry-hangmen slaughter all Communists who fall into their hands. But that same fate befalls non-Party Red Army men as well. Moreover, Red Army men who are wounded or sick do not survive capture by the dishonourable aggressors.

These facts arouse justified fury and desire for vengeance in the heart of every warrior. Such vengeance is just. But it must be aimed at those who are really responsible for the dishonourable attack and the brutal atrocities – at Pilsudski's Government, at the Polish gentry and the Polish bourgeoisie. It would, however, be wrong and unworthy of revolutionary fighters to take vengeance on Polish prisoners. No, the Red Army will show magnanimity towards a captured and wounded enemy.

To a captured Polish Legionary, be he peasant or worker, we shall explain the criminality of his ruling classes. We shall enlighten his mind and make of him our best friend and cothinker, just as we did with our German, Austrian, Hungarian, Kolchakite, Denikinite and other prisoners-of-war.

The Polish gentry know that an honourable Red Army man is their mortal and irreconcilable foe. That is why they slaughter our soldiers, even when taken prisoner.

We know that the Polish peasant or worker can regard himself as our foe only as a result of ignorance and of his Government's power of deception. When these enemies from lack of consciousness become our prisoners, we shall transform them into conscious friends.

Our vengeance for our brothers who have been shot, hanged and tortured in captivity must find expression in a courageous and selfless onslaught on the Polish White Guards.

The War with Poland

For the Soviet Ukraine!

* * *

A terrible danger is advancing upon the Soviet Ukraine from the West, from Poland. The Polish gentry have already seized a substantial part of the country. But although the Polish landlords' government is conquering by force of arms purely Ukrainian regions, it still dares to depict its brigand campaign as 'the liberation of the Ukraine'.

Since not even a fool will believe that Pilsudski, along with his magnates and capitalists, is going to liberate the Ukraine, these gentlemen are putting forward, for show, the so-called 'General' Petlyura, presenting him as the destined liberator and ruler of the Ukraine. The Polish troops, do you see, are merely helping Petlyura: the Polish magnates and capitalists want nothing for themselves. They are merely helping workers and peasants who are oppressed by the Soviet power – this being guaranteed by that same Petlyura, who is riding into the Ukraine in the baggage-train of the Polish Army.

Who is this Petlyura? We know him by his deeds. At the beginning of the revolution he was a member of the Kiev Rada. When the working classes of the Ukraine rose in revolt against the Rada and set up Soviet power, Petlyura appealed to the German and Austrian Kaisers and humbly begged their Imperial majesties to send German troops into the Ukraine to uphold the authority of the Kiev Rada. Wilhelm's forces came in, took possession of the whole Ukraine, trampled the working people into the ground – and then the German military authorities, with a kick from their jackboot, chucked into a corner the wretched Ukrainian traitor for whom they had no further use. In his place the Germans set up Hetman Skoropadsky. Such was the first chapter in the activity of the great Petlyura.

In November 1918 the German revolution broke out. Wilhelm Hohenzollern fell, and after him his Ukrainian steward, Hetman Skoropadsky. The Anglo-French capitalists hankered after the Ukraine. French troops landed at Odessa.

General Petlyura crept out of his dark corner and appealed to the capitalist governments of Britain and France to send as many troops as possible to the Ukraine, in order to establish the authority of Petlyura's Directorate. In gratitude for their doing this, Petlyura promised the usurers of London and Paris that he would serve them loyally and faithfully, that is, with the property and the sweat of the Ukrainian peasants. And Petlyura received money and munitions from the Anglo-French imperialists. He began to form an army. But then the second Soviet revolution broke out in the Ukraine, the French troops were driven from the Black Sea coast, and Pan Petlyura [Trotsky calls Petlyura 'Pan Petlyura' as though he was a Polish gentleman.] and his Directorate were also swept away along with the landlord and bourgeois rubbish. This was the second chapter in the story of Petlyura.

After he had served the German Kaiser against the Ukraine, and then had tried to sell his soul to the Anglo-French stockexchange, but had again suffered

utter ruin, Petlyura vegetated in obscurity in some out-of-the-way place.

But now the third chapter opened. The Polish landlords decided to recover, at whatever cost, their lands and their sugar-works in Volhynia, Podolia and Kiev Province. Their loyal protégé, the Chief of the Polish State and Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Polish forces, Pilsudski, rejected all the Soviet Government's peace proposals and began an offensive into the Ukraine. But, in order to conceal, if only partly, the robber character of his campaign, in order to dupe the more ignorant inhabitants of the Ukraine, Pan Pilsudski resolved to take Pan Petlyura along with him into the Ukraine. Needless to say, Petlyura readily sold his services to the Polish landlords, just as, previously, he had sold himself to the German Kaiser and the Anglo-French stock-exchange. In this way the Polish gentry were enabled to pillage the Ukraine behind a facade provided by Petlyura.

In gratitude to the Polish magnates for having found him a job, Petlyura handed over to Polish ownership all the lands lying west of the Zbruch and of the Styr or the Goryn, that is, all Eastern Galicia, Western Volhynia, Polesia and the Kholm district. These regions have a population of 7,250,000, of whom 5,250,000 are Ukrainians.

There are still in Right-Bank Ukraine, and to a certain extent even in Left-Bank Ukraine as well, some simple-minded folk (especially among the ignorant kulaks) who think that power in the Ukraine will really be handed over to Petlyura and to the kulaks, who will take possession of the land and all the country's wealth. But they miscalculate. The Polish gentry are not fighting for the sake of Petlyura and the Petlyurist kulaks of the Ukraine. The Polish gentry will take possession of the land and wealth for themselves. Pilsudski may even grant Ukrainian lands to landless Polish peasants, so as not to offend the landlords in Poland itself.

When that happens, even the obtuse kulaks of Right-Bank Ukraine will realise that Petlyura is nothing but a traitor who, as though at a fair, trades in the Ukraine, offering it in turn to the Germans, the French and the Poles. Then, many of the petty guerrilla bands who have been confused by Petlyura will turn their weapons against the Polish gentry and against Petlyura. Then, the most prejudiced and ignorant people in the West of the Ukraine will realise that their own independence and that of the Ukraine can be preserved only under Soviet power.

But no, the Polish gentry shall not take possession of the Ukraine, not even temporarily! After Kiev fell into the hands of the bandit 'Excellencies' a cry of indignation rang through all Russia, and a call: *To the South, to the aid of the Ukrainian workers and working peasants!*

From all the fronts where Soviet Russia had proved victorious – from the East, the South and the North – the best units, the best commanders and commissars are moving to the West, to fight the Polish White-Guard troops. Every honourable person is in revolt in the Ukraine itself. The great battle against the last enemy will end in complete rout for the hordes of Pilsudski and Petlyura.

We shall be victorious. Forward – for the Soviet Ukraine!

May 11, 1920

Nezhin

[Nezhin is about 120km.
north east of Kiev, on the
line linking it with Konotop
and Kursk.]

En Route, No.114

The War with Poland

In a State of Intoxication

* * *

The initial victories of the Polish troops have finally turned the heads of Poland's ruling classes. Even among the Polish bourgeoisie there were until not long ago quite a few people who viewed Pilsudski's Ukrainian adventure mistrustfully. But since the capture of Kiev the chauvinist fever has evidently taken final possession of the gentry-bourgeois and pettybourgeois circles in Poland. Pilsudski has become a national hero. Doubts have been cast aside. Kiev is now already behind them, and new targets loom up – obviously, Kharkov and Moscow. The heads of the Warsaw rulers are swimming with the intoxication of chauvinism.

Hardly anything is now to be heard of Petlyura. Instead, the figure of Skoropadsky has appeared on the horizon. The German wireless brings the news that a gathering of Tsarist crows has begun in Berlin. One of the first to arrive was Wilhelm's Hetman Skoropadsky, and he was followed by a number of former dignitaries, Ukrainian landlords and owners of sugarworks. They are all awaiting impatiently further victories by the Polish troops, so as to return to their old familiar haunts.

Petlyura's representatives in Berlin are already mournfully lamenting. 'The Ukraine will be freed from the Soviet power,' they say, 'only if the Poles really do confine themselves to liberating the country and then handing it over to ... Petlyura. But if the Poles want to take the Ukraine for themselves,' Petlyura's envoy moans, 'there cannot fail to be a fresh Soviet revolt in the Ukraine.'

They have not yet killed the bear, yet they are already quarrelling over its skin.

Meanwhile, the Polish command rushes ahead, without thought for the morrow. At the end of April Pilsudski announced that the Polish forces would confine themselves to Right-Bank Ukraine. But after their initial easy victories this cautious plan was cast aside. The Polish forces crossed the Dnieper below Kiev. The petty local bandits whom the Soviet power had not yet succeeded in stamping out facilitated and hastened the advance of the Polish units, the right wing of the Polish forces penetrated deeper and deeper into the Ukrainian steppes, the Polish front became thinner and thinner, and their distance from base grew longer and longer.

Meanwhile, a steady concentration of forces was taking place on our front against Poland. The whole country had roused itself and was sending to the West its best sons and everything it possessed that could help the Red fighters and ease their warlike task.

Wrapped in the drunken fumes of chauvinism the Polish gentry hurtled into this savage, criminal war. We honestly worked for peace down to the last moment, and went to war with a clear and sober head. A drunkard is capable of making a reckless raid. But it is the sober man who wins, because he takes

account of all dangers, foresees all possibilities, assembles the necessary forces and, combining clear thought with a firm will, strikes a crushing blow.

Let bourgeois Warsaw still rejoice today with criminal exultation over the blood that has been senselessly shed. The time will soon come when the Red Army will show that it knows how to win victory in the West just as it won victory in the North, the East and the South. The intoxication of Poland's cheap victories will soon be followed by a frightful hangover. Pilsudski's military clique will drag down into the abyss, when it falls, the ruling classes of Poland. The Polish working class will take over the helm of the state. May victory over the Polish counterrevolution be crowned with a fraternal alliance with Soviet Poland!

May 13, 1920
Smolensk
En Route, No.115

The War with Poland

That Which is Soviet and That Which is of the Polish Gentry

* * *

White Poland possesses a quite substantial army. The foreign wireless gives its numbers as 500,000. With the money of the French capitalists this army has been well armed and equipped. Through the efforts of French regular officers the army of the Polish gentry has acquired a proper form of organisation. Consequently, we have before us an enemy who is strong.

It would be criminal light-mindedness on the part of the workers of Soviet Russia to shut their eyes to this fact. On the contrary, we must tirelessly explain to the working masses of our country that only *the greatest possible effort can bring quick and decisive victory*.

But, at the same time we now have the right to say that the Soviet Army has every justification for victory and that with every day that passes its hope of victory will be transformed into certainty.

We shall never find ourselves weaker numerically than our adversary. We have powerful reserves on all our former fronts. We have powerful sources of replacements. If need be we can counterpose to the Polish troops a force twice and three times as large as theirs.

Our troops are well armed. They are being better supplied with every passing day. All parts of the country are competing to furnish the Western and South-Western fronts with everything they need. The animal-transport resources of the fronts are steadily increasing. Thanks to petrol from Grozny, motortransport resources are also reviving and expanding. This gives us every reason to hope that even with the rapid advance that we hope to carry out, the troops will continue to receive without interruption all the materials and resources they require.

But what is most important is *the morale of the troops*. This is *truly splendid*. The original divisions of the Western front are

competing with the divisions which have been transferred from other fronts in their readiness to put up with the hardships, difficulties and sacrifices involved in defending the Workers' and Peasants' Republic. Our glorious Red veterans, tempered amid the smoke and flame of almost three years of revolutionary war, stand steadfast at their posts. Around them rally the youngsters who have come to encounter their first experiences of war.

And what leaps to the eye first and foremost when one tours the units of the Western front is the extraordinarily *increased consciousness* not only of the old Red Army men but also of the young ones, of the peasants who have only just left their villages.

The forces of the Western and South-Western fronts know what it is they

have to fight and shed their blood for. They have indestructible faith in victory. We have seen our Red regiments on various fronts. Their driving force was always revolutionary consciousness. But never has the flame of socialist enthusiasm flared up so high as now, on the Western front. After many days of hard marching, our soldiers came of their own free will to hear a few words of greeting on behalf of the Soviet centre and to voice, in a thunderous 'Hurrah!', their readiness to give themselves utterly for the cause of the working people. There is not a suspicion of chauvinism in their attitude to the Polish people. The slogan that met with the most enthusiastic response was that of fraternal alliance with an independent Workers' and Peasants' Poland.

The Polish Army can try to rival us in numbers and armament. *But it will not equal our spirit.* Over there, the army belongs to the gentry. There, a deep class gulf yawns between the commanders, drawn from the sons of the gentry, and the soldier masses, a gulf that will grow ever wider as the war goes on. Over there, the aim of the war is exploitation, aggression, robbery. Our commanders are inseparably bound up with the army of the working people, in unity of life and purpose. The task of the war is, for us, defence against dishonourable attack. The spells woven by Polish chauvinism will burst like soap bubbles. The war-like enthusiasm of the Red troops will burn ever more brightly.

Over there, the army is an army of slaves, held by force, steeped in priests' lies and bourgeois dupery, an army of the Polish gentry. Ours is an army built upon the irresistible striving of the working people to free themselves, and therewith the whole world. There can be no doubt as to the outcome of the conflict between these two armies: *that which is Soviet will rout that which is of the Polish gentry.*

May 15, 1920
Mogilev
En Route, No.116

The War with Poland

Order No.220

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Transport, May 15, 1920, No.220, Mogilev

* * *

To be hung in prominent places in stations, buildings and carriages and given wide publicity on all railway lines: the Nikolai, the North-Western, the Moscow-Windau, the Alexander, the Western and Riga-Orel lines

Pilsudski's agents are working harder and harder in our rear. They are devoting their attention principally to destroying our army stores and damaging rail-tracks. In Moscow the artillery depot at Khodynka was blown up by agents of the Polish gentry and, although this explosion did not seriously damage our military interests, it did result in pointless loss of life. On the 12th Army's front a few days ago, Polish agents, using a slab of gun-cotton, destroyed the permanent way, causing a train to be derailed. Finally, on May 15, at 3.30, at the 106-verst point (between Shklov and Kopys) [Shklov and Kopys are between Mogilev and Orsha.], there was an explosion caused by a slab of gun-cotton. This time no casualties were suffered.

These facts call for a tenfold increase in vigilance, above all in the zone adjoining the front, and especially along the railway lines. Not only the Special Sections and Chekas but each and every Soviet worker, every honourable citizen must strive to protect railway bridges, store-houses and other valuable installations. Maximum vigilance is called for on the roads, at railway stations and in the streets of towns. We must not forget for one moment that roaming amongst us are base hirelings of the Polish gentry, and that only attention and energy on the part of all honourable citizens will enable us to exterminate this vermin.

Be vigilant, Communists! Be vigilant, workers and peasants!

Ruthless treatment for Polish spies, raiders and bombers!

Death to the agents of the Polish gentry!

The War with Poland

About Bonar Law's Speech

* * *

In his speech of May 20, in the House of Commons, Bonar Law, explaining the help that imperialist Britain is giving to Poland, referred, *inter alia*, to a message from Comrade Trotsky to French soldiers, in which it was said that 'we regard without much alarm the hostile advance of the feeble Polish forces: when we have finished with Denikin, and that day is near, we shall hurl a heavy rifle [*sic*] on to the Western front.' [\[1\]](#) Seeing in these words a threat to the independence of Poland, the British Government had undertaken to help her, and is now fulfilling that commitment.

I did not write any letter to French soldiers; but a phrase similar to that quoted by Mr Bonar Law was included in my letter to Comrade Loriot, a leader of the French Communists. This letter was written on September 1 of last year, when Denikin was as near to Moscow as he ever got. The threat from Yudenich was no reason for the unimpeded advance of Polish White-Guard troops into regions which could in no case be regarded as part of Poland. The French comrades, like honourable workers throughout the world, were at that time following with alarm the development of military operations in our West and South-West. In my letter I explained that the operations of the Polish forces could not possess decisive significance, that our main enemy was Denikin, and that after defeating him we should be able to transfer sufficient reserves to the Western front to safeguard the Soviet Republic from attack by White-Guard Poland. It is trebly absurd to see in these words a proclamation of a future offensive by us against Poland. In the first place, intentions of that sort are not announced in the Press, and my letter was published in good time in No.5 of **Kommunistichesky Internatsional**, on page 511. Secondly, such a statement could not, in any case, have been addressed to French Communists. And, thirdly, it would have run counter to the entire policy of the Soviet power.

Mr Bonar Law would probably have appreciated this if he had taken the trouble to think, but he had no reason to make such an effort. Britain, like every other country, is now divided into two sections. There is the honourable majority of the people, who want peace with Russia and understand fully the dishonourable and base character of Poland's attack on her, and of the support given to this attack by the Entente. And there is the predatory minority, who approve of and support any harm done to the Russian people, whatever motives may have dictated this. Since the policy of intervention is based on this minority, Mr Bonar Law has no grounds for being too fastidious in his choice of arguments.

May 1920

Endnotes

[1.](#) According to the **Times** of May 21, 1920, Bonar Law said: 'In October last year there

— was a belief and fear that the Bolsheviks, having been freed from the pressure of General Denikin, would throw their whole force on the bordering states. They had given reasons for that belief, because in a message sent by Trotsky to the French soldiers he had said: "We can watch this temporary advance of the feeble Polish troops without being too alarmed. When we have finished with Denikin, and the day is near, we will throw ourselves on that front with overwhelming reserves." ` A translation of Trotsky's letter to Loriot and other French Communists appears in **The First Five Years of the Communist International Vol.1** (London, New Park Publications, 1973, pp.88-91.) In this, the final phrase is given as: 'we shall pour our heavy reserves on to the Western front'. A closer rendering would be: 'we shall fall upon the Western front with heavy reserves'. – *B.P.*

The War with Poland

Postal Telegram No.2886-a

**To Comrades Chicherin, Lenin, Karakhan, Krestinsky, Radek
and Kamenev**

* * *

News has just come in that our forces have taken Kiev. As they left, the Poles blew up the aqueduct, the power-station and the Cathedral of St Vladimir. [1] Such senseless and base acts of destruction did not happen even in the imperialist war. The Germans destroyed Rheims Cathedral because it was being used for military purposes [2], but the destruction of a monument of art just for the sake of destruction – that did not happen even during the imperialist slaughter.

The destruction of the aqueduct dooms between 600 and 700,000 people to frightful epidemics. The destruction of the city's power station creates very great distress for the population, while serving no military purpose. Thus, what this means is that the maximum harm has been done to those very people whom Pilsudski and Petlyura were going to liberate from us. An extensive agitation must therefore be developed without delay.

The Moscow Committee must forthwith send out into the streets agitators who will relate these facts at corners and crossroads, and call for vengeance on the Polish gentry. Brief appeals to this effect must be issued forthwith, to be distributed in the streets and posted on walls.

Rosta [*Rosta* was the Soviet news agency which later became 'Tass'. – *BP*] must set its apparatus to work, informing the provinces by wireless and calling for demonstrations of protest and anger there.

In all our agitation we must fasten direct responsibility upon Britain and France for the outrages committed at Kiev and Borisov. The Cathedral of St Vladimir, the power station and the aqueduct were blown up with French dynamite and British guncotton, by the hands of French [*sic*] incendiaries. Everything said by Lloyd George to Krasin must be looked at in the light of the explosions in Kiev and the conflagration at Borisov.

We shall appeal to the representatives of the British, French, Italian and other workers present on our territory, we shall appeal to the proletariat of the whole world, with a call for ruthless vengeance on the ruling classes who are arming the Warsaw scoundrels for their crimes, which are unprecedented in history.

In our agitation, besides the themes already mentioned, this point must be stressed: in reply, we shall smash the Polish gentry, we shall wipe the landlord and capitalist barbarians from the face of the earth, but we shall not revenge ourselves on the working people of Poland, with whom we seek to form a fraternal alliance. We shall not destroy monuments of art and technical

installations like aqueducts, electrical equipment and so on. On the contrary, to the free and fraternal Polish people, when they have thrown off the yoke of the bourgeoisie and the gentry, we shall render whatever help we can for restoring their destroyed technical apparatus.

June 29, 1920

Endnotes

1. The Poles denied that they committed these acts of vandalism, claiming that the only deliberate damage they carried out during their evacuation was blowing up the bridges over the Dnieper, for strictly military reasons. The Vladimir Cathedral is still on the itinerary for tourists visiting Kiev. A note in Trotsky's **Works** (in Russian), Vol.XVII, Book 2, p.620, states that the report of the blowing-up of the Vladimir Cathedral turned out to be incorrect'. – *B.P.*

2. The Germans alleged that the tower of Rheims Cathedral was being used for spotting by the French artillery, but the Archbishop denied this. – *B.P.*

The War with Poland

Postal Telegram No.2886-b

To Comrades Lenin, Chicherin, Karakhan, Krestinsky and Radek

* * *

We must at once launch a planned, systematic, energetic international campaign on this theme. (1) Every day we must mention on the wireless, in different connections and in different ways the destruction carried out in Kiev and the burning of Borisov. [\[1\]](#) (2) Instructions must be sent to Litvinov, Krasin, Gukovsky[I.E. Gukovsky was at this time Soviet ambassador to Estonia.] and all the others to do all they can to ensure the most extensive use of the base outrages committed by the Polish authorities, placing direct responsibility for them on the British and French Governments. The aqueduct was blown up with French dynamite, the Cathedral with British guncotton, and so on.

In our agitation, over the wireless, in the form of notes, and so on, we must at once take the offensive, and in relation to all matters, on every occasion, speak again about Kiev and Borisov, denounce, demand an accounting, and so on.

The whole tone of our diplomatic dealings and declarations, in the next few days at any rate, must become angry and denunciatory.

June 12, 1920

Endnotes

[1.](#) Borisov was taken by Red units on May 25, 1920. During May 28 the Poles subjected the town to incessant bombardment from the right bank of the Berezina. Using chemical and incendiary shells, the Poles destroyed the entire town, so that only smoking ruins remained.

When they left Kiev, the Poles blew up the bridges, a number of big buildings, the aqueduct the power station, a number of factories and the Vladimir Cathedral. [see *Postal Telegram No.2885-a*, Chapter 38 note 2. – TIA

The War with Poland

Speech at a Meeting in the Murom Railway Workshops

* * *

Comrades! In the entire history of mankind there can hardly have been a people who have endured such sufferings as the Russian people during the last few years. Hardly ever in history can a great people have found itself faced with such grim danger of losing for a long time its independence, its hope of free development, as the Russian people has been faced with in these years. The working people of Russia, exhausted by the previous regime and the imperialist war, made heroic efforts to rebuild their life on new principles, to transform our country into one great labour co-operative, so as by common, united, that is, harmonious labour to treat our old wounds and sores and raise the economy and culture, the people's welfare and the education of our country to a great height.

But at the moment when Russia's working people were making this attempt, the greatest in history, they were surrounded by enemies, who have allowed us neither rest nor pause right up to this day. The most powerful, rich and predatory bourgeois classes of Britain and France have sent against us one enemy after another. After we had smashed Kolchak, in the East, the White-Guard bands of General Miller in the North, and Denikin, in the South, we hoped that we should be given a respite, that we could get back to peaceful labour, and, first and foremost, revive our transport system. Because, comrades, without transport there can be no Russian nation, in the sense of a single family, united economically and culturally: there are scattered peasants dispersed among their villages, but there is no socialist nation, no industry, no science, no art, no intellectual development, no progress.

If the railways were to collapse it would mean the ruin of Soviet Russia. Consequently, while grasping our rifles and beating off the enemy's onslaughts, we looked forward with hope and patience to the time when we could devote all our strength to transport, then to our backward economy, and then to the schools, so as to rescue our children from darkness and ignorance. And at the moment when we had begun to transfer all our forces to the economic front, the British and French bourgeoisies set upon us the Polish gentry, the Polish bourgeoisie, led by that traitor to socialism, Pilsudski. So that today our attention is split between transport and the Western front. We cannot revive transport if we do not smash the Polish gentry, and we cannot smash the Polish gentry unless we have transport. Consequently, it is these two tasks that now determine how every honourable person in our country lives, works and devotes his efforts; namely, the struggle against the Polish gentry and the struggle against the ruinous state of transport.

On the Polish front we at first suffered serious defeats: thanks to the suddenness of their attack, the Polish gentry tore from our grasp Volhynia, Podolia and then Kiev as well. In the Smolensk direction danger threatened Gomel and Smolensk, and Pan Pilsudski's newspapers wrote that the gate to

Moscow was open.

Comrades, in that critical moment the Soviet power did what it has always done when the country is faced with major problems. It turned to the working masses, to the workers and peasants, both men and women, and said frankly that the Soviet Republic was threatened with a very great danger, the most terrible of all the dangers there have been because the greedy and voracious Polish gentry, armed by the Anglo-French capitalists, are trying to impose upon our weakened, impoverished and exhausted country the rule of themselves and of their more powerful masters, the British and French, to reduce Russia to slavery, to colonial status, to load her with chains of imperialist oppression and coercion. However weakened our country may be, economically, even now, when we weigh every pound of grain, the working classes, who are creating a new order in their own image and likeness, yet found within themselves reserves of strength, reserves of revolutionary energy, and sent their best sons to the Western front, to serve as replacements and reinforcements.

And the situation on the Western front changed at once. The offensive of the Polish White-Guard forces was halted. Furthermore, we achieved very big successes on the southern sector of the Western front: Kiev was recovered, and we advanced far to the west, towards Rovno and Brest-Litovsk, we recovered Vinnitsa, we took Zhmerinka [Zhmerinka is about 40km. south west of Vinnitsa. - B.P.], and the Polish troops are falling back in ever greater disorder. [1] How was this accomplished? By will-power, by the concentrated effort of the conscious workers, both men and women. It was accomplished because the conscious will of the workers does not work blindly, in the dark, but is armed with science. The Red Army is armed with military science. The Soviet power summoned from the ranks of the former officers all who were honourable and conscious, all who were willing to devote their powers, their knowledge, to the cause of the working people. Thanks to this, and also to the fact that the working class has itself trained up new Red commanders from its own midst and has enlisted all the best and honourable from among the former officers, our command on the Polish front has proved to be incomparably better than the Polish gentry's command. We dealt the enemy a splendid blow in the Kiev direction. On that front we have broken through with our cavalry, which is already worldfamous. Comrade Budyonny's army has thrust a sharp wedge into the White Polish ranks, has broken them, has recovered Kiev and is now pursuing the Polish troops which are falling back piecemeal in a far-westerly direction.

Comrades! On our transport front we need to apply the same methods as on our military front: consciousness, discipline and cohesion of the working masses. There were ignorant people, and there were kulaks and counter-revolutionaries disguised as friends, who lamented because the Soviet power and the Red Army was introducing iron discipline, strict order and severe punishments for anyone who violates proper military order. Comrades! If, during these two-and-a-half years, we had not introduced firm, iron discipline into the Red Army, our people would long since have been lying staked out on the ground, with all the vultures of the world tearing at their body. What saved us? Internal cohesion, unity, iron discipline. And if, comrades, we want to restore our transport system, we need to militarise our workshops and depots, not just in words but in commands. We must militarise our bodies and our souls.

What does our workers' militarisation consist in? In this, that the workers say to each other: 'Our situation is one of mortal danger. Such a situation calls for extraordinary efforts. We have to devote ourselves wholly to saving the working class of Russia and the working people of the whole world.' A situation of mortal danger calls for the establishment of an ultra-strict regime, unconditional subordination, unconditional fulfilment of military orders. And is our transport system not faced with mortal danger? Are we now working in normal conditions? Is it now a question merely of raising output by 5 or 10 per cent? Is it just a matter of increasing productivity by one or two pairs of locomotives? No. It is a question of saving our country from the inevitable disaster, the unavoidable ruin which threatens us if we should give in.

In face of ruin we must have discipline, firm, iron discipline! While honour and respect is due to the honest, self-sacrificing worker who devotes himself wholly to work for the common good, because we have no capitalists and work for the people as a whole; while, I say, the honest worker deserves respect and honour, and we must see to it that he enjoys the best conditions, through rewards and bonuses – the self-seeking worker must meet with contempt and punishment! Bonuses to the worker who gives the country more than the average. The normal wage to the worker who makes the average contribution. Punishment to the worker who is lazy and careless.

The workers' situation is difficult in every respect – as regards food, clothing and footwear. It is more difficult than it has ever been. I should be deceiving you if I were to say that your situation will get better tomorrow. No. Ahead of us lie months of hard struggle before we can lift our country out of its frightful poverty and utter weakness, before we can cease to weigh the bread-ration on a pharmacist's scales, before the whole country can be adequately fed. The country's situation demands that we raise the level of the economy *despite* the shortage of bread. And if we have won victories in the war through moral unity of the working masses and training of the workers in the art of war, together with the enlistment of specialists, then we shall do the same in the sphere of transport: we shall weld the workers together and we shall call upon all the honourable and conscientious specialists, technicians and engineers who are ready to give their powers to serve working people's Russia, not for the capitalists but to save the country. Such specialists will be welcomed amongst us. And at the same time we shall organise technical and administrative courses for advanced railway workers.

I will go on with my comparison regarding the transport front. We did not beat the Poles at once all along the line. They had more troops than we had. How did we proceed? We concentrated our strength in one place, in a strike-force. This strike-force – Budyonny's cavalry – broke through the front. At once the torn flanks of the Polish forces began to bend back, fearing that our cavalry would penetrate into their rear. Then we struck at these bent-back flanks. They bent back further and further, and through the gates thus opened our infantry forced their way in and pushed on westward.

In the sphere of the ruinous state of our transport system, too, we need to *break through the front*, that is, to choose the point that is most convenient for us and aim at this point a stout strike-force directed against ruin. Comrades, the People's Commissariat for Transport has come to the conclusion, after discussion, that Murom must be one of the points where we shall break

through the front of transport ruin. That is why we have come to you. You have excellent workshops here, which will in the next few weeks be strengthened with the necessary equipment. You have skilled workers, and whatever is lacking in this respect we shall endeavour to supply to you. The Murom workshops occupy a very important place in our railway network, and not just in relation to the Kazan line, either. The productivity of the Murom workshops is at present extremely low in comparison with the programme that was drawn up when these workshops were built. At present these workshops are fulfilling only one-third of the programme for which they were established. We must, by means of combined efforts, ensure that the Murom workshops attain 100 per cent output -that is, an average not of ten but of thirty and even more locomotives repaired.

How can we achieve this? By establishing labour order in the workshops, by transferring hither all the workers needed, by strengthening and enlarging the equipment, by precise checking on productivity, and by a proper use of bonuses. Bonuses to the worker who produces more than the average. The normal wage to the worker whose output is average. Finally, a sharp warning to the worker whose attitude to his work is slovenly, and punishment for the one for whom warnings prove insufficient. There is no other way. This is the way recommended by the People's Commissariat for Transport, hand in hand with the railwaymen's union. And the workers of Murom, showing their sense of responsibility to the working class, will help us raise the level of the Murom workshops and make them foremost among the railway workshops of the whole country.

We have a programme for reviving transport. It is very simple. We shall begin with the locomotives. At present we have 16,000 locomotives in Russia, of which 10,000 are out of order. No more than 6,000 locomotives are operational. That means that 60 per cent of our locomotives are out of order, in need of repair. We need to attain a situation in which not more than one-fifth of our locomotives are out of order. This is the programme we have set ourselves to fulfil in the next few years. The Murom workshops will play a big part in this programme. The task which has been assigned to you for the time being -repairing ten locomotives a month - will be increased as the necessary means and equipment are made available to you. You must accomplish this task. It can be done only if everyone says to himself that a 'sick' locomotive, standing there in that mortuary, is a misfortune not just for the Kazan line but for every working man and every working woman. Because if you are without bread, without footwear, without kerosene, at a time when there are millions of poods of coal in the Kuban [sic] [Something has evidently got lost here - presumably, Trotsky referred to coal in the Donbas and grain in the Kuban. - B.P.] and 300,000,000 poods of oil in Baku, this is because we are not able to transport it all. If we could transport these riches, the peasants would have kerosene, we should have petrol and the workers' homes would have electricity, the peasantry would give leather in exchange for kerosene, we should have bread. The key to all this is the locomotive, and this locomotive is 'sick'. It must be restored to health. And every working man and every working woman must know that the 'sickness' of the locomotive affects every one of them. And so, comrades, if each one of us grasps this idea, we shall overcome not only the Polish landlords but also our more formidable foe - the ruinous state of the economy.

We need to be filled with awareness that everything around us belongs not

to the kulaks, not to the capitalists, but to the working people as a whole – that it belongs to us. We shall not tolerate disorder in our economy. We must establish order with a firm hand, so as to be able to take control of the whole economy. We must create labour discipline, in which it will be all for one and one for all, and if we learn to do this – and we must, for otherwise we shall perish – then we shall fulfil our programme for the year, and in five years we shall have brought about a great change, when there will no longer be any shortage of bread and footwear, and we shall create a mighty front against the ignorance which corrodes the mind and spirit of the working people.

When we have dealt with the Polish landlords and the ruinous state of transport we shall advance in seven-League boots. The accursed heritage we have received from the past – cold, hunger, ignorance, illiteracy – we shall destroy – once and for all. And out of ignorance and poverty, out of filth and disease, we shall raise up a new generation – our children, who will learn to see themselves as the masters of the earth. There will be no sons or daughters of the proletariat, born doomed to slavery, to look up at the children of their oppressors, born to give orders to those condemned to live as slaves. We shall destroy that accursed slavery. We shall raise up a new, freer, more enlightened generation. We summon you to this struggle. To the front against formidable foes, against the Polish gentry! Into battle against the ruinous state of transport! For the future of our children! For the glorious future of our free, working people's Russia!

June 21, 1920

Endnotes

1. While on the Western front a temporary lull began (see note 24), events on the South-Western front took a considerably more favourable turn for us. On May 25, after a march covering a thousand versts, Comrade Budyonny's Mounted Army concentrated in the Uman area. [Uman is about half-way between Kiev and Odessa. – B.P.] On May 26 this army, together with the southern group of the 12th Army, began its offensive. Getting quickly into the rear of the enemy's Kiev group, by June 8 Comrade Budyonny was already before Berdichev and Zhitomir. [Berdichev and Zhitomir are about 180 and 200km. respectively north-west of Uman. – B.P.] The defeats suffered in their rear forced the White Poles quickly to abandon Kiev and Zhitomir and begin a panicky withdrawal westward. On July 4 the Mounted Army captured Rovno, and on July 12 Kamenets-Podolsk (see Map No.2) – S.I. Ventsov.

The War with Poland

Order No.230

***By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the
Republic,
June 30, 1920, No. 230, Moscow***

* * *

In No.13 of **Voyennoye Dyelo**, an article appeared, entitled *Marshal Pilsudski's First Steps in War*, which was riddled through and through with a spirit of crude chauvinism. It is enough to mention that the article speaks of the 'innate jesuitry of the Polacks', which is contrasted with the honest and straightforward spirit of the Great-Russian race. There is no need to explain how greatly this sort of crude and false generalisation contradicts the spirit of fraternity which inspires the attitude of the Russian working class towards the working masses of Poland. This article testifies to the utter incapacity of the present editors of **Voyennoye Dyelo** to perform their responsible duties.

With a view to preventing any possible further dissemination of chauvinist poison by the military-science journal of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, I hereby order:

1. That publication of **Voyennoye Dyelo** be suspended pending radical changes in the composition of the editorial board.
2. That those directly responsible for publishing the chauvinist article in question be identified, so that they may be removed once and for all from involvement in the work of bringing enlightenment and education to the Red Army.

The War with Poland

A Necessary Correction

* * *

The People's Commissariat for Military Affairs considers it necessary to deny a number of erroneous and obviously malicious reports which have been put about by West-European and American bourgeois agencies regarding the organisation of the command in our armies on the Polish front.

It has been frequently reported abroad that command in the war against the Poles is being exercised by the former Supreme Commander-in-Chief A.A. Brusilov. This report is completely false. The front against Poland is divided into a Western front and a South-Western front. The armies of the Western front are commanded by Comrade Tukhachevsky. In the old army he held the rank of Lieutenant. In the Red Army he commanded the First Army in the fighting against Kolchak, the Eighth Army in the fighting against Denikin, then the Fifth Army in the fighting against Koichak, and the South-Eastern front in the fighting against Denikin. The operations conducted by Comrade Tukhachevsky against both Denikin and Kolchak ended in their complete defeat. Comrade Tukhachevsky is 27 years old. He has been a member of the Communist Party since the beginning of the revolution.

The South-Western front is commanded by Comrade Yegorov. In the old army he held the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel and commanded a regiment. In the Red Army Comrade Yegorov commanded the Tenth Army, against Denikin, was wounded in action, and, after recovering, received the command of the Fourteenth Army, and subsequently of the armies of the South-Western front. Comrade Yegorov, who was a Left Socialist-Revolutionary when the revolution began, has been for the last two years a member of the Communist Party.

The French press, and the foreign press generally, refer to the commander of our cavalry army as General Budyonny. Although Comrade Budyonny has beaten and is beating Russian, Polish and French generals he is himself a former NCO, and a member of the Communist Party.

Overall command of all the armed forces of the Republic, and so of the armies of the Western and South-Western fronts, is exercised by Commander-in-Chief S.S. Kamenev, with P.P. Lebedev as his Chief-of-Staff.

Reports that in the Red units in certain sectors commands are given in the German language are the purest invention. There is not a single German officer in all our armies. Needless to say, the ranks of the Red forces are open to volunteers of all nations who see it as their duty to fight for the cause of communism against imperialist aggression.

July 11, 1920

The War with Poland

Order No.231

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the Forces of the Western and South-Western Fronts, July 17, 1920, No.231, Moscow

* * *

The Polish bourgeois press, which bears a very big share of responsibility for the dishonourable attack by the Poland of the gentry upon the Ukraine and Russia, is now frenziedly accusing our victorious Red forces of treating with cruelty the Polish soldiers they have taken prisoner, even including the sick and wounded.

There can be no doubt that the overwhelming majority of the accusations levelled by the Polish press, the Polish telegraph agency, the Polish Red Cross Society and so on are so much disgusting chauvinist slander. But it may be that there have indeed been isolated cases when more backward Red Army men, that is, those who are less filled with the liberating idea of communism, have torn the hearts out of captured Polish soldiers. The unbridled, absolutely unprecedented violations and atrocities committed by the Polish White Guards in the occupied areas against Communists, against Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Great-Russian, Lithuanian and Jewish workers and peasants, the senselessly monstrous acts of destruction carried out by them in Kiev, Borisov, Bobruisk and other places – all these facts may in isolated cases have darkened the consciousness of Red Army men and impelled them to take thoughtless vengeance on individual Legionaries whom they have captured – men who are slaves of the Polish bourgeoisie and gentry.

It is all the more important now., when the army of bourgeois-gentry Poland is breaking up under our blows, and the number of prisoners constantly increasing, that the most resolute and thorough measures be taken to ensure that Order No.217 (on humane and comradely treatment of captured Polish soldiers) be enforced with absolute strictness and without any exceptions.

I hereby order:

1. That it be explained, tirelessly and repeatedly, by means of both the spoken and the written word, to the Red forces and, in particular, to the new formations, that the Polish soldiers are themselves helpless victims of the Polish and AngloFrench bourgeoisies and that it is therefore our duty to receive Polish soldier prisoners as our deluded or deceived brothers, so as later to send them back to their liberated Polish homeland as brothers who have been enlightened.
2. That all rumours and reports of atrocities committed against >Polish prisoners or against the local population, whatever the source of these reports, be very thoroughly investigated.
3. That commanders and commissars be firmly reminded of their responsibility for seeing that this present order is strictly obeyed.

The Workers and Peasant's country loves its Red Army. It is proud of its army. It demands that the army's banner remain spotless.

The War with Poland

To the Workers, Peasants and All Honourable Citizens of Soviet Russia and the Soviet Ukraine [\[1\]](#)

* * *

The British Government proposed to us on July 11 that we stop the war with Poland and send our representatives to London for negotiations about peace with Poland and the other border states. Lord Curzon, the British Minister of Foreign Affairs, states in this connection that, in the event of an armistice being concluded, the Polish forces are to withdraw to the frontier which was laid down for Poland by the Peace Conference in December of last year. In the same note it is proposed that we refrain from disturbing Wrangel in his Crimean 'sanctuary'.

To this offer of mediation by the British Government we, the Council of People's Commissars, have replied with a refusal. We shall give an account of this action of ours to the Russian and Ukrainian peoples, and we express our firm conviction that what we have to say will also reach the Polish people.

The People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs has issued, in Russian and in foreign languages, a **Red Book** on Russo-Polish relations, in which precise documents reveal, day by day, on the one hand, the energetic, sincere and honest efforts made by the Soviet power to ensure peace with Poland, even at the price of heavy concessions, and, on the other, the obstinate, malicious and predatory striving of bourgeois-gentry Poland, incited by the Entente, to strike a mortal blow at Soviet Russia. If Britain had not wanted the war, she could easily have prevented it. It would have been sufficient to refuse Poland military supplies and money. But Britain wanted the war. While carrying on negotiations with us so as to appease her own worker masses, she was at the same time steadily despatching military supplies to Pilsudski and Wrangel, for use against the Russian workers and peasants. Britain brought the Polish war about and Britain is responsible for it.

Lord Curzon refers to the League of Nations, in whose name he puts forward his proposal. But one of the members of this League of Nations is Poland, which has launched a bandit, robber campaign against us. Also a member of that League is predatory Imperial Japan, which, under cover provided by its allies, is now carrying on monstrous aggressions against the Far-Eastern Republic. [\[2\]](#) If the task of the League of Nations was to serve the cause of peace it ought to have prevented Poland from starting the war and required Japan to evacuate Eastern Siberia. But it did not do so. All the members of the League of Nations, and especially France, Britain and America, are bound together in common responsibility for causing Poland's war on the Ukraine and Russia. The most powerful members of the League of Nations helped and are helping Poland as much as they can. They did not even answer us when, in April, we appealed to them to restrain the criminal hand of the Pilsudski Government, which was then already lifted to strike at us. Now, however, when the White-Guard Polish forces have been dealt hard blows by the Red Army, the League of Nations, which bears responsibility for the war, comes

forward, olivebranch in hand – or, more precisely, Britain, under cover of the League which it leads, offers us her mediation to reconcile us with Poland and the other border states, and invites us to send peace delegates for this purpose to London, that is, to the centre where all the plots against the Soviet Republic are cooked up, and whence the order was issued to Poland to begin her assault on the Ukraine and Russia. No, it is not for Britain to act as mediator and conciliator in the bloody struggle which her criminal bourgeoisie engendered and is sustaining!

But the British Government, as we have seen, does not restrict itself to the question of Poland. In this same note of his, dated July 11, Lord Curzon proposes to us no more and no less than that we stop the war against Baron Wrangel, promising on his behalf that he will withdraw his bands south of the Isthmus, so as to place them on the Crimean Peninsula, which Britain puts at his disposal. It was only a few days ago that this same Lord Curzon was declaring, in the name of the British Government, that it is a condition for trade relations between us that Russia and Great Britain reciprocally undertake to refrain from interfering in each other's internal affairs – yet, hardly has the British Government acknowledged receipt of the assent of the government of Soviet Russia to this condition, than Lord Curzon considers himself called upon not merely to interfere in Russia's internal affairs but also to make a present of part of our federal Soviet territory to a certain rogue who is in the service of British imperialism.

This is not the first time that the British Government has shown interest in Baron Wrangel and the Crimea. When the Red forces, after routing Denikin, were about to cross the threshold of the Crimea in order to finish off the remains, commanded by Wrangel, of Denikin's army, Lord Curzon stepped forward bearing that same olive branch and proposed that we agree to a complete surrender by Wrangel and his forces on condition of an amnesty. We agreed, and, at the insistence of the British Government, immediately stopped our advance. Thereupon, Lord Curzon at once altered the conditions and, instead of talking about surrender by Wrangel, began to talk about our not intruding into the Crimea. At the same time, Britain's ministries of war and the navy were vigorously at work arming and supplying Wrangel's forces. The result of this prearranged collaboration between Curzon, Churchill and Wrangel was a fresh offensive by the White-Guard forces at the beginning of June, northward from the Crimea. It is quite obvious that the offensive by Baron Wrangel, for whom Lord Curzon had previously asked an amnesty, was planned with the intention of supplementing the attack by White-Guard Poland and was, therefore, dictated from the same centre, namely, London. And now, as though nothing had happened in the past, the British minister of foreign affairs again proposes that we refrain from attacking Wrangel, and agree to settle his hireling on a part of Russia's territory.

No, neither Lord Curzon nor the British Government as a whole, nor the League of Nations which it leads, have any call to interfere in the Russian Soviet Federation and, in the role of peacemakers, to put an end to the civil war which they themselves criminally brought about and inflamed.

All the previous work done by the British Government, its allies and helpers shows that their mediation now pursues one aim only: to save from deserved defeat Pilsudski and Wrangel, whom they set upon us, and to make it possible for Pilsudski and Wrangel to recover, reorganise, bring their armies up to

strength, arm, and launch another campaign against workers' and peasants' Russia.

It is clear that we could not condemn the working masses of Russia and the Ukraine to the perils of another war, in which all the efforts and sacrifices made would be repeated, from the beginning. That is why we rejected British mediation, in which bloody cunning was concealed behind phrases about love for peace. In so doing we acted in the interests of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic and of the working people of the whole world, whose eyes we are opening to the monstrous crimes, without precedent in history, which are now being committed under the lying cover of the League of Nations.

It goes without saying that our rejection of this hostile mediation does not in the least signify any change in our policy towards Poland. Now, when the Red Army is winning victories, we are just as far from any encroachment on the independence of Poland and the inviolability of her territory as in the days of our greatest military difficulties. That Soviet Russia knows how to deal carefully and attentively with the rights of other peoples, including small ones, and not in words only but also in deeds, is proved by the examples of Estonia, Georgia and Lithuania. [Georgia was at this time still under Menshevik rule, and Soviet Russia had recently signed a treaty with the Georgian Government. - B.P.] We have made peace with all these countries without any mediation by the League of Nations. Bourgeois governments are in power at present in these small countries: nevertheless, they had no need of interference by the world-scale predators in order to establish with Russia peaceful relations advantageous to themselves. We are now carrying on peace negotiations with Finland, Latvia and Armenia [Armenia, which has a common frontier with Soviet Azerbaijan, was at this time still ruled by the Dashnaks. - B.P.] and have every reason to suppose that these negotiations will soon lead to the establishment of peaceful relations. We are ready at any moment to enter into negotiations with Romania, a country which the *agents provocateurs* of the French stock-exchange are tempting to set out on the bloody path of White-Guard Poland.

Soviet Moscow has more than once proposed peace to Warsaw, and if now, after the bitter experiences suffered in the service of Anglo-French capital, Poland, ignoring Paris and London, should approach Moscow directly, *peaceful relations between Russia and Poland will be established very much more quickly, reliably and lastingly by this direct route.*

We repeat what we have often said before: there is not a single question in dispute between Russia and Poland which could not be settled peacefully, to the advantage of both sides. The territorial question cannot present any difficulty for us. Together with the real representatives of the Polish people we shall without difficulty fix a frontier for Poland incomparably more more correct and in accordance with the interests of the Polish people than the frontier which Marshal Foch and his associates defined, under the influence of Sazonov, Maklakov and other representatives of the Great-Russian White Guards. [3]

This is especially clear from the example of the Chelm district, where the rulers of the Entente drew their frontier line through the living body of Poland, following the traditions of their former Tsarist ally. [4] The true frontiers of Poland, which we, Soviet Russia, shall fix together with the representatives of the Polish people, will run considerably further east than the frontiers drawn by

the imperialists of London and Paris, who are equally hostile and hateful towards the working people of Poland and of Russia.

In order that the Polish people may obtain an honourable peace, a just frontier and, in the person of Russia, a fraternal neighbour, ready to go to their aid and share everything with them, it is necessary that the Polish working people fling off their backs their present rulers, who have discredited themselves forever, who brought about this dishonourable war, and who must pay for it. The Polish people must cease to be a tool in the hands of their bourgeois-gentry government and Sejm, who are themselves a tool in the hands of Anglo-French capital. The Polish workers and peasants must get rid of their capitalists, their landlords, their oppressors, and set up Soviet power in their country – the power of the workers and peasants. This is the shortest and most direct route to the most honourable and just peace. At this fateful moment of history we recommend this route to the Polish people, before the eyes of the peoples of the whole world – and we pledge ourselves to give every help we can to the Polish people in taking that route.

We have rejected mediation by the League of Nations in our war with White Poland and its accomplice, Wrangel. But this does not, of course, mean that we decline to go on with our negotiations with Britain and other countries, whether these are or are not members of the League of Nations. Our peace policy remains unchanged. While rejecting Lord Curzon's mediation we are ready at any moment to enter into trade relations with British industrialists and merchants, just as with the capitalists of other countries. In justification of his policy, Lloyd George recently explained to the House of Commons that Britain has often been obliged, in Africa, to have dealings even with cannibals. [Speaking in the House of Commons on June 7, 1920, Lloyd George said that Britain had 'opened up most of the cannibal trade of the world'. – B.P.] Where this question is concerned we have this much common ground with Lloyd George and his government that we consider that, so long as Europe and America have not gone Communist, Soviet Russia must, in the interests of her economic development, engage in trade relations with capitalist cannibals. We merely deny them the right to come forward in the role of saviours of small nations and peacemakers in the civil war. We know them too well to trust them. We warn the working masses of France, Britain, Poland and all countries against trust in bourgeois governments, which are incorrigible in their greed, incurable in their baseness, indefatigable in their criminality.

And, first and foremost, we warn, put on guard and summon to be vigilant you, the working people of the Soviet Republic. The League of Nations has come forward with words of peace on its lips – that is, holding behind its back a knife intended for us. Its agents are making frenzied efforts at this moment to urge Romania and other states that are our neighbours to leap into the bloody chasm of war.

Be on your guard, Red Army men, men and women workers, peasants both men and women. With profound striving for peace and brotherhood between all nations, but also with profound mistrust towards world imperialism, we grasp our revolutionary sword with redoubled strength. We shall wage the struggle for the defence, consolidation and prosperity of our socialist republic to the very end, against all enemies, and at the same time we shall help the Polish workers and peasants to free themselves from their oppressors both Polish and foreign.

- Forward to the complete rout of the White-Guard bands of Wrangel!
- Forward against the bourgeois-gentry aggressors of Poland!
- Long live a free, fraternal, workers' and peasants' Poland within wide and just frontiers!
- Long live the workers' and peasants' Red Army!

Endnotes

1: This is Trotsky's draft, dated July 20, 1920, of an appeal which was published in **Pravda** and **Izvestiya** next day, with certain changes. The sentence 'Britain brought the Polish war about, and Britain is responsible for it' was omitted, together with the reference to London as 'the centre where all the plots against the Soviet republic are cooked up, and whence the order was issued to Poland to begin her assault on the Ukraine and Russia'. In the paragraph beginning: 'In order that the Polish people may obtain an honourable peace ...', the words following: '... it is necessary ...' became: 'that the Polish people should want this. We should long ago have come to an honourable peace settlement with the Polish workers and peasants. The cause of peace now depends above all on pressure by the Polish workers and peasants on their bourgeoisie and landlords.'

For Trotsky's letter to members of the Politburo, July 13, 1920, advocating acceptance of the British offer to mediate between Soviet Russia and Poland, while rejecting any outside interference in the civil war against Wrangel, see Trotsky's **Writings on Britain**, Vol.I (London, New Park Publications, 1974), pp.100-101. – *B.P.*

2. The Far Eastern Republic was set up in 1920 with its capital first at Verkhne-Udinsk (now Ulan-Ude) and later at Chita, and claiming sovereignty over the whole of Eastern Siberia, from Lake Baikal to the Pacific Ocean. In form it was a parliamentary democracy with a radical but not Communist policy, but *de facto* control was maintained by the Russian Communists. The purpose of this manoeuvre was to win American support in getting rid of the Japanese who were in occupation of parts of Eastern Siberia and protecting White forces there. A combination of diplomatic with guerrilla activity (the latter celebrated in the well-known *Song of the Partisans of the Amur*) eventually brought about evacuation by the Japanese, and in November 1922 the Far Eastern Republic applied for, and was granted, absorption into the RSFSR. – *B.P.*

3. Sazonov, once the Tsar's Foreign Minister, then the Provisional Government's ambassador to Britain, was appointed Foreign Minister by Admiral Kolchak. Maklakov had been the Provisional Government's ambassador to France. – *B.P.*

4. Here Trotsky seems to have been misinformed. The demarcation line laid down by the Allies in December 1919 and reiterated by Curzon in July 1920 (hence the name 'Curzon Line') included Chelm in territory to be considered as indisputably Polish. In 1912 the Tsarist Government had aroused indignation among the Poles by detaching Chelm (in Ukrainian, Kholm) from the Kingdom of Poland and making it the centre of a new province with a majority of Ukrainians in the population. – *B.P.*

The War with Poland

Order No.232

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, July 31, 1920, No.232, Moscow

* * *

Citizen Ernest Lafont [Lafont, a Socialist member of the French Chamber of Deputies, joined the French Communist Party in 1920, but left it in 1923. – B.P.], who has come to Soviet Russia, via Poland, together with his wife Zinaida Lafont, visited while in Warsaw the French military mission, which is the centre of all the hostile activity of the imperialist counter-revolution directed against the socialist republic. Having arrived in Russia, Deputy Lafont offered no explanation, on his own initiative, to the government of the Soviet Republic, nor did he take, immediately and urgently, any steps to facilitate the Soviet Government's conduct of the war against the bourgeois counter-revolution. In a private conversation which took place in the presence of Comrade Jacques Sadoul, Deputy Lafont communicated a number of extremely interesting pieces of information connected with his stay in Warsaw – information which, in the view of Jacques Sadoul, whose competence and conscientiousness is not open to suspicion, possessed a clearly defined significance, which he has set forth in a letter. The significance of what Deputy Lafont said, as this is set forth by Comrade Sadoul, is that the social-chauvinist Daszynski, one of those most guilty of the Polish attack, and now a member of the Polish Government, looks on an armistice with Russia as a breathing-space that will serve to facilitate the concentrating of armed forces for a fresh onslaught on Soviet Russia.

When questioned by me, Deputy Lafont, while not rejecting such an estimation of the 'peaceful' steps taken by the Polish Government, insistently denied that what was said by Daszynski (whose party Lafont, as we know, regards as a socialist party) bore the meaning alleged. Regardless of what may account for the statement made by Deputy Lafont, the fact remains fully established that a deputy who considers himself a French Socialist, during a war between a socialist republic and a bourgeois republic which is acting as a mere tool in the hands of the imperialists of the country in whose parliament Deputy Lafont sits – that Deputy Lafont has travelled, as a neutral observer, from Paris to Warsaw and from Warsaw to Moscow, has engaged in 'comradely' discussion with Daszynski, with members of the French military mission and other organisers of the rotten, dishonourable attack on the Soviet Republic, and has deliberately refrained from denouncing before the Polish, French and Russian proletariats those who are their most inveterate enemies.

In view of all the above and in order to safeguard the interests of the Russian Socialist Republic against 'socialists', Deputy Ernest Lafont and his wife, Citizeness Zinaida Lafont, who is politically in solidarity with him, are to be expelled from the territory of the Soviet Republic, and the reasons for this exceptional measure are to be made widely known both in Russia and throughout the world, for the information of the worker masses.

Their expulsion is to be effected by the Special Section of the All-Russia Cheka.

The War with Poland

On the Military-Political Campaign in Connection with the Conclusion of Peace with Poland

(Communicated to Comrades Lenin, Krestinsky, Chicherin, Zinoviev, Bukharin and Steklov and to the Moscow Committee of the Party, August 11, 1920 – L.T.)

* * *

Theses

Despite our excellent military situation, we have done every thing possible to speed up the peace negotiations with Poland. [1] However, the Polish command continues to evade a businesslike meeting with our plenipotentiaries, and this evasion is systematic and malicious. The facts, in their chronological order, make it clear that Poland is manifestly avoiding an encounter with our representatives. It would appear that it is the policy of Polish governmental circles to compel us to take Warsaw, because this ought, in its turn, in the view of the Polish Government and of all those who stand behind it, to provide favourable conditions for military intervention by the Entente. The provocation being practised by the Polish Government is perfectly obvious. If we were to halt our pursuit of the retreating Polish forces, we should thereby deprive ourselves of the fruits of victory. If we pursue the Poles we shall penetrate into Polish territory and shall find ourselves obliged to take Warsaw. In that event, the Polish Government, having malevolently dragged out the negotiations, will raise a howl about our annexationist and imperialist intentions, so as to create the possibility of intervention.

It is quite obvious that the Polish Government would not have engaged in such reckless provocation unless it was backed by at least one of the big powers. Naming which power this is presents no difficulty. It is not Britain, whose government, for a number of reasons which we shall not stop to discuss, is interested in reaching an agreement with us. The power that stands behind White Poland is France. The French Government is most unwilling to allow peaceful relations to be established between Soviet Russia and Poland or other countries, because this would inevitably lead to the downfall of the present government of France – the blindest, greediest and most dishonest of all the governments in the world.

The French Government has nothing to lose. It has spent more than one million on its operations against Soviet Russia. Only the other day the French Parliament discovered that the four millions destined for restoring France's northern *départements* has been squandered by Monsieur Clémenceau for the purpose of devastating Russia. The French Government is like a gambler who, each time he loses, doubles his stake in the hope of winning back what he has lost. Millerand and Foch, in violation of all their undertakings and trampling on the last vestiges of decency, are loading seaplanes for Wrangel on ships that had been earmarked for bringing home prisoners of war. At the same time,

behind Britain's back, France is systematically disrupting Russia's negotiations with Poland. France's aim is to entrap not only Russia but also Britain, conveying to public opinion the impression that Russia is evading the conclusion of peace, despite Britain's insistence. However, these gentlemen are playing too crude a game. We have caught them red-handed, and we shall denounce them before the working people of all countries, and, in the first place, of Poland and France. Russia wants peace on the basis, on the one hand, of the complete inviolability of Poland, and, on the other, of serious and real guarantees that Poland will not again serve as a military instrument of the French plutocracy against Soviet Russia. The Polish Government would have made peace long since if it had not been for France. France does not want peace. France wants to draw both the French people and Britain into war with Soviet Russia. May the workers of France realise this, and may they succeed in curbing their government.

August 11, 1920

Endnotes

1. To appreciate what our position was on the Polish front in mid-August it is necessary to note briefly the main phases of our offensive towards Warsaw. After July 5, following a swift blow which broke through the enemy's positions, the 4th, 15th and 3rd Armies moved into a decisive offensive all along the front. Comrade Gay's cavalry corps, advancing deeply into the enemy's rear, cut the Warsaw railway (at Turmont station) and increased still further the disorder in the Polish armies. On July 7 the 16th Army forced a crossing of the Berezina and on 11th July took Minsk. As a result of these defeats, the Poles withdrew to the line they had originally designated for defence, along the rivers Narew and Western Bug. Bitter fighting began along the line of these rivers. On August 3 our forces took Lomza: two days earlier, after five attacks, they had captured Brest-Litovsk, which meant that Warsaw was put in immediate danger. (See Map No.3).

Despite our brilliant situation, the Soviet Government agreed to a Polish proposal that an armistice be concluded. However, our delegates were unable to begin practical negotiations. The first meeting with the Poles at Minsk produced no results: the changed relation of forces at the front had an unfavourable effect, from our standpoint, during this encounter. Only on September 21, after our defeat before Warsaw, did the negotiations begin, at Riga, which were to lead to the conclusion of peace. (For more details on the course of these events, see the chronology.)

The War with Poland

Order No.233

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the Red Forces Fighting against White-Guard Poland, August 14, 1920, No.233, Moscow

* * *

Heroes! You have inflicted a shattering blow on White Poland, which was attacking us. Nevertheless, the criminal and frivolous Polish Government does not want peace. Pilsudski and his agents know that nothing threatens the independence of Poland, to whom, we, Workers' and Peasants' Russia, have agreed to give frontiers wider than those indicated by the Entente. But Pilsudski fears the coming of the day when he will have to justify the war to the Polish people, and he is hoping for intervention by France and Britain. For this reason the Polish Government is evading peace negotiations. Not daring to admit this openly, it is playing hide-and-seek. Its delegates do not turn up on time, or, if they do, they come without plenary powers. The wireless station in Warsaw does not accept our answers, or else the Polish Government pretends that it has not seen them, even when we have receipts from the Warsaw wireless station.

We want peace now, just as we did on the first day of the war. But precisely because of this we must wean the government of Polish bankrupts away from playing hide-and-seek with us. Red forces, forward! Heroes, on to Warsaw!

- Long live victory!
- Long live independent fraternal Poland!
- Long live the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army!

The War with Poland

A Refutation

(From the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs)

* * *

Rumours are being spread in the German Press to the effect that the Soviet Government is not in a position to halt the advance of the Red Army, which is alleged to be operating independently. The meaning and purpose of these reports is quite obvious. The German counter-revolution is trying to frighten public opinion with the possibility that the Red Army may launch an offensive even in spite of Moscow's plans. Needless to say, such reports are malicious lies. The Red Army's advance, although exceptionally rapid, is being carried out with extreme regularity so that the farthest forward points are, as a general rule, being occupied by the Red regiments on the dates laid down by the High Command. The Red Army's independence finds expression in the fact that it distinguishes very well between its friends and its enemies, and knows firmly what it is fighting for, but not at all in refusal to subordinate itself to the orders of the central authority elected by all-Russia congresses of workers', peasants' and Red Army men's deputies.

August 16, 1920

The War with Poland

Order No.239

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the Forces of the Western Front, September 3, 1920, No.239, Moscow

* * *

In giving a rebuff to the Polish gentry, the Red forces helped the Lithuanian people to free themselves from the Polish yoke. The forces of the Western front were ordered in due time to leave Lithuanian territory within a period fixed by agreement with the Lithuanian authorities. The units of the Red Army were at the same time ordered to treat the Lithuanian forces as a friendly army – and this order remains fully in force today. The Soviet Government has made a peace treaty with the government in Lithuania which obliges army units, commanders and commissars to seek peaceful and amicable agreements with the relevant Lithuanian authorities where all problems arising from the military situation are concerned.

At the present time the armies of the Polish gentry, which we drove out of Lithuania, are again invading its territory, threatening the independence of the Lithuanian people. For this reason the Red forces are compelled to administer a rebuff to the Polish gentry even within the frontiers of Lithuania. In this situation, every Red Army man must firmly keep in mind that bourgeois-gentry Poland is the common enemy of ourselves and of the Lithuanian people. After that enemy has been defeated, all our forces will at once leave the territory of Lithuania, into which they entered as liberators and from which they will depart as friends.

The War with Poland

Order No.240

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the Forces of the Western Front, September 8, 1920, No.240, Smolensk

* * *

With a view to all-round improvement of the administrative apparatus of the active units, the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic has decided to appoint comrades to posts as commanders and commissars to the Western front without regard to the position they occupied previously – that is, if necessary, to appoint a former Army Commander or member of a Revolutionary War Council to be a Divisional Chief of Staff or Divisional Commander, or to appoint a former Divisional Chief of Staff or Divisional Commander to be commander or commissar of a brigade or regiment, and so on. These appointments are not to be seen as constituting demotions caused by unfavourable evaluation of the previous activity of those concerned. The Red Army, like the Soviet Republic in general, is not interested in quarrels over precedence, but is guided exclusively by the interests of the cause.

(A similar Order, dated August 23, 1920, No.235, Kharkov, was issued to the forces of the Southern Front – *L.T.*)

The War with Poland

Is a Second Lesson Needed?

* * *

During several months before Pilsudski's offensive towards Kiev we insistently sought peace. We addressed ourselves to the Polish Government. We addressed ourselves to the Polish people. We addressed ourselves to the governments of Britain and France, which domineer over Poland. We did not obtain peace, because the bourgeois-gentry government, obedient to the will of the French stock-exchange, dreamt of overthrowing the Soviet power. The Polish Government hid its bandit intentions behind a diplomatic mockery: refusing an armistice, it demanded, using a tone as though we had been defeated, that our plenipotentiaries present themselves at Borisov to hear the orders of 'their Excellencies'.

By their senseless drive into the Ukraine the Polish gentry compelled us to wage a major war against them. The Red forces won a number of brilliant victories in this war. We advanced a distance of hundreds of *versts*, cleared the Polish gentry out of the Ukraine, and liberated Byelorussia and Lithuania from their yoke. Pilsudski was given the lesson he deserved. Pressed hard on all sides by the Red forces, he appealed to us with a proposal for peace. The Soviet Government had declared earlier that, despite the victorious irruption of the Red forces into Polish territory, we do not covet a single inch of this territory, and are ready, taking account of the actual area of settlement by the Polish people, to recognise a frontier for Poland which is more generous than that laid down by Lloyd George and Clemenceau. It seemed that nothing stood in the way of an immediate conclusion of peace. But at this point fortune smiled, so to speak, on the forces of the Polish gentry. Weakened by their glorious 600-*verst* advance, exhausted by hardships, separated from their bases, the Red divisions came up against fresh Polish troops who struck at them from Warsaw – and they fell back. [\[1\]](#)

As soon as the Workers' and Peasants' Army began to withdraw to the Bug, in order to concentrate its forces, the wine of chauvinism went to the heads of the Polish gentry. They took their lucky success to be the start of complete victory. And Pilsudski is again unwilling to make peace. The governments of Britain and even France realise that the successes of the Polish army are not well-founded. Lloyd George is 'advising' the Polish gentry not to incur fresh risks, but to make peace as quickly as possible. The American President Wilson, a vicious enemy of Workers' and Peasants' Russia, is giving the Polish bourgeoisie the same advice. But no, Pilsudski won't agree! The Poland of the gentry has recovered Lomza – so why should they not go on to conquer Moscow?

Peace negotiations are being conducted by the Polish delegation as though their only concern is to drag out the time. The representatives of bourgeois-gentry Poland criticise and protest, but refrain from stating their own conditions. And this is not a matter for surprise! They do not dare to put forward such senseless brigand conditions as the frontiers of 1772, because

the whole world would laugh at them, and the Polish working people would rise up against them. On the other hand, they cannot make up their minds to put forward reasonable peace terms, based on the independence and peaceful coexistence of Poland and Russia, because they know that we should accept such terms. And the Polish Government does not want peace. Pilsudski has openly said so in the Polish press. He has proclaimed that the Polish Government's aim is 'the final routing of the armed forces' of Soviet Russia. What is this: chauvinist madness? frenzied class hatred towards working people's Russia? Both the one and the other. Pilsudski's government momentarily sobered up, so to speak, after our stormy victories in July and August. But it was enough for the Red forces to halt their advance and begin retreating for the government of Poland at once to forget the lesson they had received. We are trying to bring the war to an end. As before, we want peace. If they will not give it to us, we shall know how to impose it. If one lesson was insufficient for Pilsudski, we shall let him have another.

September 8, 1920.
Moscow-Smolensk.
En Route, No.12

Endnotes

1. The complete defeat of the Polish armies and our units' advance to the Vistula compelled the Polish High Command, with the support of the French General Staff, to apply themselves feverishly to the restoration of their armed forces. Second-line divisions quickly began to appear at the front, intensive and successful formation of volunteer units was undertaken, and strong fortifications were raised before Warsaw.

On our side, contrariwise, the units of the Western front were exhausted and weakened. In addition, there was a lack of complete co-operation from the forces on the South-Western front, whose main effort was focused on Lvov, in a direction at right angles to the thrust of the Western front. The weakness of the left wing of the Western front and its position in rear echelon, together with the impossibility of quickly bringing back the First Mounted Army from the Lvov direction, created a situation favourable to the Poles for striking a counter-blow northward and north-eastward from the Lublin area.

On August 16 the enemy dislodged the weak units of our Mozyr group and the left-flank units of the 16th Army, and on August 17 took Siedlce. This considerably helped the enemy's manoeuvres in the rear of our units fighting before Warsaw. Under the impact of these events, our drive towards Warsaw was stopped, and a general retreat began (see the chronology and Map No.4)

The War with Poland

Order No.241

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the Western Front and the zone adjoining the front, September 9, 1920, No.241, Minsk

* * *

Severe punishment for the agents of the Polish gentry!

A considerable number of friends and agents of the Polish gentry, enemies of the working people and the Workers' and Peasants' power, remained behind in the regions liberated by the Red forces. At first they lay low. But when our Red forces suffered a temporary setback, these Polish hirelings and White-Guard reptiles lifted their heads in our rear. They began to spread rumours that the Red forces would soon quit Byelorussia. This stupid rumour was taken by speculators trading in foreign currency. The provocateurs acting for the Polish gentry, who sometimes (as, for example, in Smolensk) call themselves SRs, are trying to give the Byelorussian peasant in the barracks the idea that the war will cease at once as soon as the Red Army leaves Byelorussia.

Naturally, the honest Byelorussian peasant, who groaned for a year under the yoke of Polish occupation, cannot be convinced by such talk. He knows that the Red Army did not seek war. The war was started by the Polish gentry. We threw them out of Byelorussia. We have no designs on Polish land. The war will stop as soon as Poland renounces her encroachments on the Ukraine, Byelorussia and Lithuania. The Byelorussian peasant needs peace, as does all Workers' and Peasants' Russia.

But so long as the landlords and capitalists of Poland will not agree to peace, and continue to threaten working people's Byelorussia, we must and shall wage ruthless war against the White-Guard forces of Pan Pilsudski and against his agents in our rear.

It is the responsibility of all military organs and of the Soviet power generally in the area of the Western front to intensify vigilance in the towns, along the railway lines and in the villages, and to take the most severe measures against the troublemaking *agents-provocateurs* of Pilsudski, under whatever names they may hide themselves. Death to the enemies of the working people. Long live Soviet Byelorussia!

The War with Poland

We Are Stronger Than We Were

* * *

Our retreat from Warsaw has been depicted in the enemy press – that is, the bourgeois press of the whole world – as a complete debacle for us. The more terrified the international exploiters had been by the mighty march of the Red regiments on Warsaw and Lvov, the more loudly, the more shrilly did they squeal with joy, when they heard the first rumours of our setback. Still more acute was the turn that took place in the bourgeois-gentry clique in Poland: from panic and disarray, from howling and lamentation, the oppressors of the Polish people went over at once to absolute intoxication by the successes they had achieved. The Polish newspapers again recalled the frontiers of 1772. The Polish delegation at Minsk tried to talk the language of victors, just as in the days when Pilsudski and his Patek 'ordered' the Soviet Government to send their delegates to Borisov.

But the world bourgeoisie's wave of rapture is now gradually subsiding. Matters are settling down and the true significance of events is becoming apparent.

What has happened? Who has suffered defeat?

When we urgently proposed peace to the Polish Government on very favourable terms for them, the headquarters of the Western front was in Smolensk. Polotsk was under fire from the Polish artillery. The front ran between Borisov and Orsha. Gomel was in danger, and the Polish and Petlyurist forces were only a few days' march from Kiev. Pilsudski's army took the offensive and seized the Kiev area. To this absolutely unprovoked and insolent blow we replied with a counter-blow. With incomparable *élan* our Red forces cleared the enemy out of the conquered regions of the Ukraine, liberated Byelorussia and Lithuania, and stabbed deep into Poland. In their ardent forward rush our divisions inevitably became overstretched and cut off from their bases: the apparatus of communication and administration was slackened, and thereby became more susceptible to the enemy's blows. When, before Warsaw, they came up against a concentration of White Polish forces, the Red forces recoiled. This was, of course, a major setback. But such setbacks are inevitable in a big military campaign. War does not proceed like a chronometer, in which the movement of each wheel, each hand, is calculated to a second. War is a fierce struggle between two powerful forces, and is inevitably associated with unexpected events, and this is especially true of manoeuvring, revolutionary war.

But what is the general balance of operations up to now?

1. The armies of the Western front advanced 500-600 versts and then retreated, in face of a counter-blow, a distance of 200 versts. Thus, we advanced, altogether, 300-400 versts. The headquarters of the Western front moved from Smolensk to Minsk, which not long before had been in the hands of the Polish gentry. The Ukraine has been cleared of the

enemy. Lithuania is independent. Byelorussia is free.

2. Their momentum exhausted, the White Polish forces came to a halt. The Red forces concentrated in new positions and restored their apparatus, making it sounder than ever before. The old cadres, tempered in battles on all the fronts of Soviet Russia, pulled themselves together after the temporary setback and closed their ranks more firmly. Fresh reinforcements are flowing in a broad stream into the new divisions. Volunteers, Communists, members of trade unions are marching at the head of these fresh reinforcements, inspiring them with zeal for victory.
3. Our comparatively insignificant losses of *matériel* have been more than made good. The interruption in supplies caused by the retreat has now been eliminated. The feeding of the army becomes day by day more regular and complete.
4. The commanders, commissars and Red Army men have acquired a closer knowledge of the enemy and have learned the road to Warsaw.
5. The line of the front runs 400 versts farther from Moscow and 400 versts nearer to Warsaw than it did on the eve of the Polish advance towards Kiev.

Such is the balance, such the result. We have dealt the Poland of the gentry a mighty blow. And today we feel more capable than ever before of dealing a second blow, mightier than the first.

We are stronger than we were. And we are growing stronger with every hour. Sound, harmonious work is going on all along the front. Not a single hour must be lost, and not a single hour will be lost.

The Western front will do its duty to workers' and peasants' Russia, its creator!

September 10, 1920
Minsk
En Route, No.124

The War with Poland

The Polish Gentry Do Not Want Peace

* * *

While sending a peace delegation to Riga, Pilsudski at the same time declared to Polish journalists that it is not possible to make peace with Soviet Russia, that it is necessary to destroy Soviet Russia's fighting force, that is, the Red Army. By making this statement the head of the republic of the Polish gentry showed that the Polish Government talks about peace only in order to appease its workers and soldiers, but is, in fact, striving to continue the war.

True, it may be said that one ought not to give much credence to what Pilsudski says: he is a light-weight figure, somewhat like our Kerensky. Neither of them can make both ends meet, either in deeds or in words. Kerensky launched the senseless adventurist offensive of June 18 against the Germans, swore great oaths, boasted and ... miscarried. [On the offensive of June 18, 1917, see note 5 to Volume I] Pilsudski, boasting loudly, launched an offensive into the Ukraine, and achieved no better result. Ending the war without victory means for him losing the last vestiges of credit even among the petty-bourgeois chauvinists. As for the revolutionary Polish workers, on the one hand, and the serious, businesslike capitalists, on the other, they have long ceased to believe Pilsudski, just as, here, people ceased to believe Kerensky. This is why Pilsudski has blundered into a dead-end – promising peace, so as to appease the workers and the worn-out soldiers, and at the same time comforting the petty-bourgeois chauvinists with extremely stupid hopes for a defeat of workers' and peasants' Russia.

Consequently, one may not accord much value to what Pilsudski says. However, the matter is not confined to Pilsudski alone. Where the question of peace with Soviet Russia is concerned, Pilsudski apparently expresses the views of all the rulers of Poland, who do not want peace. This is most vividly demonstrated by the latest telegram sent by the Polish Foreign Minister, Prince Sapieha, to our People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Comrade Chicherin. The Polish prince proposes to the Soviet Government no more and no less than that it begin negotiations at Riga not only with the Polish delegation but also with 'the delegation of the Government of *the Ukrainian Democratic Republic*'.

What is this republic? Where is it to be found? We do not know. There does exist the Soviet Ukrainian Republic, which forms part of the Russian Soviet Federation. True, the government of the Kiev Rada called itself the government of the Ukrainian 'democratic republic'. But that government ceased to exist long ago. The former head of the Kiev Rada, Vinnichenko [\[1\]](#), has frankly and honestly repudiated his former errors and come over to the side of the Soviet Ukraine. Another member of that government, Hetman Petlyura, has sold himself to everybody who wanted to buy him, and ended by entering the service of Pilsudski.

When he advanced on Kiev, Pilsudski demanded the restoration of Hetman Petlyura in his rights. But this stunt ended in miserable failure: the Red Army drove Petlyura out of the Ukraine, along with his boss Pilsudski.

After that, no more was heard of Petlyura. The delegation of the Polish gentry came to Minsk to negotiate with the Russian and Ukrainian Soviet republics. Our peace delegation included Comrade Skrypnik, representing the Ukraine, the Polish delegation did not so much as breathe a word about there being any Ukrainian government other than the Soviet one. It was agreed by both delegations that the negotiations be transferred to Riga. And now, on the eve of the opening of these peace negotiations, in Riga, the Polish prince asks our workers' and peasants' government whether we are agreeable to negotiate with Petlyura's government.

In the name of what territory is Petlyura going to speak? In the name of the Ukraine? But the Ukraine is with us, it is in the hands of the Ukrainian workers and peasants. In the name of Eastern Galicia, perhaps? But, in the first place, a substantial part of Eastern Galicia is occupied by the Red Army, and, in the second place, the Polish gentry are certainly not going to give Petlyura Eastern Galicia, where there are many Polish landlords' estates.

What does the initiative of the Polish prince signify? That is quite clear. The Polish gentry do not want to make peace with us, and so they are once more putting forward their earlier demand, namely that, with Petlyura as go-between, we make a present of the workers' and peasants' Ukraine to the Polish gentry.

This demand is impudent and at the same time ludicrous. One might really suppose that Poland had beaten us. Where? When? How? True, we retreated from Warsaw. But, as against that, we drove the Polish gentry out of the Ukraine, cleared them from Lithuania, and liberated the whole of Byelorussia. We did not try, and we do not mean to try, to conquer Poland. Our entry into Poland had the purpose of finally compelling the Polish gentry to make peace. And today we have no designs on Poland, its frontiers or its independence. We merely want peace.

But since the Polish gentry have again brought up the question of the Ukraine, this means that *they* do not want peace. Evidently, the lesson they were given was not enough for them. The Red Armies of the Western front are ready to repeat that lesson.

September 11, 1920
Lida,
En Route, No.125

Endnotes

1. The Ukrainian nationalist Vinnichenko, who had emigrated in 1919, returned in the summer of 1920 and voiced support for the Soviets. However, he left soon afterward, and resumed his opposition to them.

The War with Poland

Order No.242

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the Red Army and the Red Navy, September 24, 1920, No.242, Moscow

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The All-Russia Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers', Peasants', Red Army Men's and Working Cossacks' deputies decided on September 23 to approach the Polish Government with a proposal to conclude an armistice within a period of ten days and to sign the basic conditions of peace, and in this connection the All-Russia CEC decided, with a view to ending the war as soon as possible, to make extremely big concessions to Poland. [\[1\]](#)

Every warrior in the Red Army and the Red Navy knows that we are waging war not for the sake of conquests, not for the sake of annexations and indemnities, and not for so-called military glory. We are defending ourselves and fighting for peace. Where the slightest possibility exists for us to do this, we strive to safeguard peace for the working people at the price not of blood but of concessions. The supreme organ of workers' and peasants' power in our country is acting in this way now, in an endeavour to avoid a winter campaign.

The meaning of the All-Russia CEC's decision regarding peace with Poland must be explained to every warrior in the Red Army and the Red Navy. It is the duty of commanders, commissars and Political Departments to explain to the fighters at the front and the servicemen in the rear the actual scope of the concession which the Soviet power is offering to the Government of bourgeois gentry Poland, in order to avoid any further bloodshed.

So far as we are concerned there is not the slightest obstacle to the conclusion of peace. If White Poland refuses peace this time as well, the Red Army, aware of the lofty rightness of its cause, will not shrink from fresh, grave sacrifices, so as to ensure victory for workers' and peasants' Russia and, along with victory, a lasting and just peace.

Endnotes

[1.](#) In the resolution of September 23, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee once more recognised the complete independence and sovereignty of the Polish Republic, and decided to propose through its peace delegation, with a view to obviating a possible winter campaign, that peace be concluded on the following terms: the RSFSR to withdraw a number of conditions which the Polish Government had declared unacceptable; [\[2\]](#) the Soviet Republic to agree to sign an armistice and to recognise as the frontier a line running considerably further to the east than the one laid down by the Supreme Council in December 1919. These concessions were made by the Soviet Republic with the sole aim of saving the working people as soon as could be from the burdens of a possible winter campaign.

[2.](#) The 'objectionable' terms now withdrawn included these: the Polish army to be reduced to 50,000 men; a 'civic guard' to be formed in Poland, composed exclusively of trade union members; all Poland's war industries to be demobilised, and no war material imported; an amnesty to be granted to political offenders; and the railway from Volkovysk through Bialystok to Grajewo to be put under Soviet control (this would ensure direct contact with Germany).

The War with Poland

Peace with Poland has been Achieved!

* * *

On October 12, a preliminary treaty of peace was signed between Soviet Russia and the Soviet Ukraine, on the one hand, and, on the other, bourgeois-gentry Poland. This preliminary peace is not yet final, but, basically, it does predetermine final peace. The conditions of the Treaty of Riga between Poland and ourselves are very burdensome. We were obliged to make extremely big concessions to the Polish bourgeoisie – or, to speak more correctly, to the imperialists of the Entente. Eastern Galicia, the western strip of the Ukraine, a considerable part of Byelorussia and all Lithuania fall, *de facto*, into Poland's power. In addition, the Soviet Republic has to hand over to Poland part of its gold reserve, so that Poland may use this to pay that part of the old Tsarist debts which France has charged to Poland.

Thus, the peace conditions are very burdensome for us. But they are nevertheless not so burdensome as war conditions. Peace has been achieved. There will be no winter campaign on the Western and South-Western fronts. There can be no doubt that the preliminary peace will be ratified by the supreme organs of both parties. At the cost of very big concessions and very heavy sacrifices the workers' and peasants' government has been able to win the peace which the bloodthirsty *provocateurs* of French diplomacy wanted to disrupt at all costs, with the aid of their numerous helpers in all the bourgeois countries.

We shall not now analyse the influence that the peace which has been concluded will have on the situation of Poland and her internal life. But we do recall this fact: the Polish Government could have had without war a peace no less favourable than the one which has now been concluded with us. In March and April of this year – that is, before the White Polish advance on Kiev – we offered Pilsudski peace with a frontier for Poland which was more extensive – that is, which embraced more Ukrainian and Byelorussian territory – than the frontier established at Riga. The Polish Government did not accept our offer at that time, but launched an offensive into the Ukraine, seized Kiev, and compelled us to defend ourselves. We cleared the enemy from the Ukraine, dealt a heavy blow to the Polish army, and pursued it up to the walls of Warsaw, demanding that peace be concluded. The Polish Government did not want peace, and found itself obliged to enslave its country still further to Britain, France and America, so as to obtain from them the military supplies it needed in order to continue the war with Russia. The Polish command succeeded in thrusting our forces back eastward, into the territory of Byelorussia and the Ukraine, but even after that there was no way out for the Polish Government but to make peace with us. Thus, after all the bloody battles fought, the frightful devastation suffered, the innumerable sacrifices incurred, peace was signed on terms less favourable to Poland than those which we had offered on the eve of the war. We do not doubt that the Polish working people themselves will draw the balance of this war and evaluate the policy pursued by their ruling classes.

Millions of workers and peasants of Russia and the Ukraine realise that the Soviet Government has acted quite correctly in buying peace even at the price of big concessions. Our Soviet republic needs peace above all, to revive its economy, to bring well-being to the working masses. The peace we have made is burdensome, but it is peace, and we welcome it.

The workers and peasants of the Ukraine and Russia are clearly aware of why it is that this peace is a burdensome one. While the Red Army was fighting heroically against the White Polish forces, armed by the Entente, the bands of the Russo-German baron [\[1\]](#) hired by the French bourgeoisie were operating behind the Red Army's back. Only idiots can suppose that Wrangel can possess any independent importance and can actually take power in Russia. He was assigned a different role: the French stock-exchange ordered Wrangel to bring help to bourgeois-gentry Poland by means of his advance into Russia. The Crimean dog snapped at the legs of the Red Army so as to help the Polish Government seize Byelorussia and part of the Ukraine. A similar role, though on an immeasurably smaller scale, was assigned to the Ukrainian Wrangel – Petlyura. These traitors, who have sold themselves to everybody in turn that was willing to buy them, are the ones guilty of our having been forced to make peace on burdensome conditions.

The role played by the Wrangelites is clear to the whole world, and they are despised even by those who have bought them. It is highly possible that Wrangel will now be betrayed by his employers, just as Koichak and Denikin were betrayed. The French newspapers are already writing that France has no intention whatsoever of seizing Odessa or other Russian ports. It may be that now, after the signing of the preliminary peace treaty with Poland, even the most embittered and obtuse French imperialists are intending to refuse support for the Wrangel adventure. It may be, though, that these declarations in the newspapers are being made to deceive the French workers and to lull our vigilance.

But no, this shall not succeed, not in the least! All our attention is concentrated on the front against Wrangel. The whole country has now turned its face to the South. Everything surviving from the old history of Russian that is dishonourable, greedy and predacious is concentrated there in the Crimea and on the adjacent shores of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov -and it must all be destroyed.

In the North, the West and the East we have, essentially speaking, no fronts left. We now have only one front – in the South. By the anniversary of the October revolution now approaching, we must bring to completion the work we began three years ago. We must finally cleanse the Soviet Republic, we must smash Wrangel.

October 13, 1920,
Kharkov
En Route, No.134

Endnotes

[1.](#) Baron Wrangel's family was of Danish and Swedish origin, being descended from Gustavus Adolphus's famous general in the Thirty Years' War. The family contributed

numerous prominent servants to the Tsarist state, including the Admiral after whom Wrangel Island is named.

The Southern Front and The Fight Against Wrangel

Woe to Those Who Do Not Carry Matters to a Finish!

* * *

Our situation on the Polish front is now completely favourable. In the South we have torn Kiev from the hands of the enemy. Though plundered, disfigured and half-destroyed, Kiev is now ours. In that direction the Red forces are advancing. In the North the enemy's counter-offensive has been halted at present, and it is to be hoped that here, too, we shall recover the initiative.

While hailing these successes by the Red Army we must, however, consider them only in relation to the immense task which faces us, namely, to defeat, rout and crush the last onslaught by the last reserves of world imperialism upon Soviet Russia and the Ukraine.

Part of the army of the Polish gentry has been damaged, and very seriously. But only part of it. The main mass of the White-Guard forces of Poland are still in being, and retain their fighting capacity.

Protected by Curzon's diplomatic notes, by Lloyd George's speeches and, most important, by the aid of Churchill's shells, Wrangel is carrying out an offensive in the south of the Ukraine, trying to make his way into the rear of our forces which are engaged in pursuing the retreating right wing of the Poles. [\[1\]](#)

The example of Wrangel shows, precisely, how perilous it is not to finish a task once begun. We routed Denikin in a few moves, by means of extraordinary efforts. A small remnant of the mighty White-Guard forces of Southern Russia was left in the Crimea. If we had continued our push south, hot on the heels of the retreating enemy, we should have crushed and annihilated him without a battle. But a hitch occurred in our operations when all that remained was to bring them to conclusion. [\[2\]](#) The army was tired after its very great effort, and the rear calmed down, deciding that the job had been done and that Wrangel, down there, would be finished off 'somehow or other'. It was this that enabled Wrangel to swell up into a rather malignant boil on the body of the Ukraine. And now we are having to expend three times as much strength in order to clear the enemy from the Crimea. Woe to those who do not carry matters to a finish!

At present our overall position on the Polish front is favourable. But for us to be able to develop our offensive it is necessary that the front be supplied, renewed and revived without interruption. It is necessary that the armies of the Western and South-Western fronts receive, every twenty-four hours, the supplies and replacements they need, together with the necessary shot of revolutionary energy in the form of volunteer battalions and groups of Communists. If a partial setback in one locality coincides with another such setback in another locality, merges with it and becomes more serious, this can

lead to a catastrophe. Every little wound must be healed at once, every gap filled up without a delay. Then partial setbacks, blunders and defeats not only will not undermine the front, they will not even hinder for long its victorious advance.

The task must be carried to a finish – not only in the south but in the west as well. This can be done only by concentrating all our forces on this task. Do not dissipate energy, do not let attention wander. What we need is not half-measures, but actions of exceptional decisiveness and on the widest scale.

All forces and resources against the Poland of the gentry and its hireling Wrangel – this is the slogan under which the next session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee of the Soviets will meet.

June 16, 1920

Endnotes

[1.](#) The Polish front concentrated on itself the entire attention of the Soviet Republic and the Red Army. This made it impossible to assign sufficient forces for the liquidation of the Crimean group of White Guards. Meanwhile, under Wrangel's command and with much material aid from the Entente, a rapid restoration went forward in the Crimea of the forces which had gathered there from various quarters after the final defeat of Denikin. By the beginning of June, General Wrangel had succeeded in forming three corps and a strong force of cavalry. The Entente supplied this army with a wealth of technical resources for combat. On June 6 Wrangel began active operations. Exploiting his superiority in cavalry, he considerably extended his *place d'armes*, pushing us back towards the Dnieper, from that river's mouth up to Nikopol, and also towards Berdyansk. His subsequent northward advance threatened the units of the South-Western front which were then pursuing the Kiev group of the White Poles (see maps Nos.5 and 6.)

[\[2\]](#) General Denikin wrote, in **The White Army**, about the situation in the spring of 1920: 'The Crimean corps under the command of General Slashchov was still firmly entrenched on the isthmuses and barred the entrance to the Crimea. The Bolshevik forces opposing us were small – only about five or six thousand. The rest were engaged against Makhno and other rebels. The Soviet Command were certain that the White armies at Novorossiisk, with their backs to the sea, were done for, and that the transference of large forces [from there] to the Crimea was impossible. The Crimea therefore did not receive much attention – an omission for which the Soviet Government later paid a heavy price.'

The Southern Front and The Fight Against Wrangel

On The Front Against Wrangel

Report to the Moscow Soviet of Workers', Peasants', Red Army Men's and Cossacks' Deputies, August 17, 1920

* * *

Our overall military situation, comrades, is, of course, completely favourable, since on the main front, the front of struggle against White Poland, our Red forces have accomplished the principal part of their task, the task that the working class of Russia set them, namely, to rout the army of White-Guard Poland. True, we are at present held up at the approaches of Warsaw, but this was quite unavoidable, if we consider that since the beginning of the offensive, that is, since July 4 – forty days ago – our forces have advanced 600 *versts* in the principal direction, which means an average of 15 *versts* every 24 hours, without a break. Naturally, as a result of this, the army has been stretched out very far from its rear, the heavy units have lagged behind, and so the temporary hitch, the temporary hold-up on the Warsaw front was something that was quite unavoidable. We advanced a distance of 600 *versts*, and the White Polish army retreated that same distance, while in the deep rear the Polish Government was endeavouring to organise a second volunteer army, composed predominantly, if not exclusively, of elements from the bourgeoisie, students and noblemen's sons. As the experience of Denikin and Kolchak showed, armies of that sort possess much patriotic feeling and much spite, but not a great deal of military sense, and there can be no doubt that this army will be defeated. And if, temporarily, for a couple of days, our advanced units are held up at the approaches to Warsaw, this circumstance does not affect matters in the least – especially since the Polish front is now split into a military sector and a diplomatic sector, with two centres, one in Warsaw, the other in Minsk.

You know that some very influential Polish gentlemen came to Minsk, those same gentlemen who had, earlier, invited us so insistently to come to Borisov, which was subsequently destroyed by fire. Negotiations for an armistice and for peace with us were postponed through the fault of the Polish Government. This is now a fact known to the whole world – and known not only to the working class of Great Britain but also understood, it seems, pretty fundamentally, by the imperialist government of that country. The peace negotiations have become not only the touchstone on which will be tested the remains of the ill-will – or, more correctly, of the teeth – of the Polish counterrevolution: on this touchstone we shall also test the strength of the friendship that unites France, official France, with official Great Britain. The peace negotiations acquire exceptional importance because the period of enmity and quarrelling between two most important European governments, the British and the French, is taking its course upon an unstable foundation – a stormy workers' movement.

To judge from the information we have received from various sources, the scale of the remarkable agitation amongst the workers, their interest in and striving for action, is such that Great Britain has never, perhaps, since the time of Chartism, experienced such a period as it is experiencing now, in connection with the Russo-Polish war and the Russo-Polish peace talks. The notes which the British diplomats send us are merely caricature, a reflection, a caricatural shadow, like reflections of light playing on a wall, of the profound events and realities which are now taking place in British life. This means, first and foremost, the influence exercised by the British working class. Whatever Lloyd George and Curzon may say, if there had not been held in London a congress attended by two thousand delegates from all over the country, all our replies, from beginning to end, would have remained unread. [1]

In the presence of such a serious factor as the will of the aroused working class of Great Britain, we can say that our diplomatic activity now enjoys a great basis of support in that country. And some reports say that in France, too, where the situation is more gloomy as regards the state of the labour movement, an upsurge is observable, that the federation of the trade unions of the metal-workers and the building workers has already backed the British Council of Action, proclaiming the need and the duty for them, for their unions and for others to whom they appeal, to bring about a general strike if France will not start negotiations for peace. Thus, our diplomatic position, which results from our military position, has improved because our Red forces stand only 20 *versts* from Warsaw. It is for this reason that the activity of Comrades Kamenev and Krasin in London has proved so successful.

On the front against Wrangel we cannot boast of success. This was a subordinate, secondary front. Our strategy, the strategy of the revolutionary epoch has taught us this particularly clearly. Our strategy developed in this way, that we went over more and more from a cordon system, the system of keeping a taut rope on all fronts, to a system of strike-forces. In the infancy of our Red Army strategy we tried to place armed Red Army men everywhere all around the Soviet Republic, guarding the approaches to it from every direction. We have now become much stronger, more mobile, more flexible and bolder. We leave open, more often than not, wide, even very wide gates for our enemies to pass through; but at certain points in the most important directions we concentrate very powerful strike-forces, with, behind them, in the appropriate places, substantial reserves – and, when we have allowed the enemy to come a long way in, we hit him on the flanks and in the rear, and sometimes frontally as well, when necessity requires this. But we have entirely abandoned our old, primitive strategy of being equally strong everywhere, on every inch of our borders – which meant, more correctly, being equally weak everywhere. This was the strategy of infancy, and these considerations apply not only to sectors of particular armies and fronts but to the entire front of our Red Army as a whole. In other words, we say this: we have the front against Wrangel in the South and the Polish front in the West – are we to distribute our forces in a cordon, stretched like a taut rope? No. Which front is the more important? That is what we ask, and we decide that the Polish front is the front of life and death for the Soviet Republic. The Wrangel front can become important and significant only when we have achieved victory on the Polish front. Essentially, Wrangel is nothing but the hired guerrilla of the Polish gentry, a detachment hurled into our rear. Consequently, our first task is to rout the Polish army. We left a wide gateway open for Wrangel. We said to ourselves: this Crimean guerrilla who has joined the Ukrainian guerrilla Makhno

will advance, perhaps, 100 versts northward, taking Aleksandrovsk, Orekhov [Orekhov is about 30 miles south-east of Aleksandrovsk (Zaporozhye.)], Kherson and Yekaterinoslav. It will, of course, be hard for us to lose these places even for a month – this was how we reasoned – but no danger greater than that is entailed. The Polish front will decide, in the full sense of the word, the fate of the Republic, the fate of the revolution. That was why we concentrated our strike-force in the West, leaving outposts over there in the South, to hold up Wrangel's offensive.

And now we are approaching the diplomatic outcome of the work done by our Red strike-force on the Western front – in Minsk and in London. The moment is now drawing near when we shall have to evaluate the Wrangel front differently. This front now assumes primary importance, especially because, previously, Wrangel's *place d'armes* was the Crimea, which was very inconvenient for him, and, if he used it, that was thanks to the support given him not only by the French but also by the British navy, which backed him with all sorts of supplies. Today Wrangel has *places d'armes* on this side of the Crimean Isthmus, and, with the help of the French navy, he is now trying to transfer his operational base to the eastern shores of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov – that is, by means of a landing, to break into the Don and Kuban regions, rally counter-revolutionary elements and create out of the Crimean front a Southern front with an important Cossack wing.

While we were able to allow ourselves the luxury of ignoring Wrangel for the time being (and we were obliged to do this), treating him as of secondary importance, now, when he has advanced further, when he has secured a larger base and wider possibilities, we have to say: stop, Wrangel's front cannot be allowed to develop any further.

If we take the milieu surrounding him and in which he operates, namely, the population of the area concerned, we must say that this population is less favourable to us than the population on the Polish front. Where the regions of Byelorussia and Lithuania were concerned (we have, as yet, no precise information regarding Poland), everywhere that our Red units went they found themselves on home ground, in the sense that they encountered ardent sympathy on the part of the overwhelming majority of the peasant masses. Striking scenes were observed of fraternal welcome by the local inhabitants to the Red Army men and units. In areas where food was in extremely short supply they shared everything they possessed with the Red Army. There, the average daily advance was 15 *versts*. Fierce battles took place there, with a very high percentage of casualties on our side. There were days when we stood, fought and gave ground. As against that, there were 40 days when we advanced 25-30 *versts* a day – not only cavalry, but infantry units as well – and in such a situation it was quite impossible to feed the army by means of the regular supply apparatus. So what did the feeding and welfare of the army depend on? Principally, on the local inhabitants, and they saw to this on their own initiative, with the greatest willingness and readiness. Where our territory adjoining the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea is concerned, you know that an important role is played there by the Ukrainian kulaks, who have not yet been worked over – they have not passed through the harsh school of Soviet power exercised by the Committees of the Poor. And General Wrangel finds in these kulaks a reservoir of support and co-operation. Consequently, the rear of the army with which we are combating Wrangel contains a large percentage of sympathisers with Wrangel, and this strengthens his position. We have not yet

carried out in that region a purge of counter-revolutionary elements, including the counter-revolutionary officers who are Wrangel's agents.

If we turn to consider the composition of Wrangel's army, we must say, first of all, that his principal forces consist of cavalry, drawn not from the Don but from the Kuban: the Kuban Cavalry Division is Wrangel's chief strike-force. His infantry he has directly inherited from Denikin's army, and the best units of his forces are the Volunteer Corps, which consists of three divisions – the Drozdovsky, Markov and Kornilov divisions. [2] These are old-established organisations, divisions which fought against us as elements of Denikin's army. Naturally, they have grown weaker, declined and altered, but they still retain a certain nucleus of men who are hardened, ruthless, filled with savage hatred of the workers' and peasants' power, and, finally, a reserve of men who have nothing to lose – and it is just these who constitute the steel frame of General Wrangel's army. Kuban Cossacks make up his principal cavalry units. They are his shock-troops, his Guards, and they do him great service. Add to this a comparatively favourable milieu. What would happen if Wrangel were to win further successes, if his front were to extend more widely? We know how this process goes, from start to finish. He would resort to bringing his forces up to strength by large-scale conscription of peasants: what he could obtain and get together through volunteering he already possesses – he has hundreds of volunteers, but he needs thousands ... Consequently, his army would swell in size, just as Kolchak's and Denikin's armies did. And as it swelled, antagonism would develop within it – that is, the closely welded upper element of officers, bourgeois and kulaks would come into silent internal conflict with the peasant lower ranks, and this conflict would result in the swollen army bursting asunder and breaking up into its component parts. That is what would happen if Wrangel's army continued to advance successfully. But such a fate for Wrangel's army would have to be paid for by us with the loss – temporary, but painful in the highest degree – of regions precious to us, the ruin of the economy of the Donets coalfield, the temporary loss of North Caucasia, Grozny and, perhaps, Azerbaijan and Baku.

Comrades, when we look back over the long months we have spent without the Donets Basin and without the oil of Baku, and when we look at our 'oil-corridor' from Baku to Astrakhan, which runs on up the Volga, and which is now, in the fullest sense of the word, our hope for restoring the economy, for ensuring that old men and women and children do not die of cold in Moscow – when we look at the past and foresee a danger of its being repeated, we must say now, and with firmness, to the whole country, this shall not be, we shall not surrender to Wrangel's bandits the regions of the Donets Basin, North Caucasia and Azerbaijan, conquered by us with the blood of tens of thousands of workers.

Comrades, what must be done in order that these regions may not be surrendered? You know that our methods where this is concerned are perfectly clear and precise. First, we must create – or, more correctly, must strengthen and enlarge – our own cavalry, to oppose the enemy's. You know that we have created a force of cavalry. We have Comrade Budyonny's mounted army, which has won a well-merited reputation even among the Polish gentry. The French press writes of it in no other way than as 'the army of General Budyonny', because the French generals who sit at the Polish army's headquarters are greatly upset at being beaten in every possible way by this NCO of ours. But, comrades, our army, Budyonny's mounted army, is still

needed over there, in the West, because the task has not yet been completed in that direction; and although, I repeat, we have good support there, we are not going to weaken our Western front by so much as a single bayonet or a single sabre. On the contrary, reinforcement and replacement, together with supply, are proceeding normally on the Western front and will continue to do so until the White-Guard Polish army has been reduced to the size of 50,000 men which we have laid down in our peace terms. We shall then have a substantial armament at our disposal again and shall be able to bring back Budyonny's army: everything will then be very much simpler. But until that time comes, until peace negotiations have begun, the Polish front will retain its independent importance and the Wrangel front must be sustained by independent measures and not at all at the expense of the Polish front. Therefore, we must create and strengthen a force of cavalry here, in order to oppose Wrangel's cavalry. The Communists were once given the task of getting on horseback, and many of these Communists, many thousands of them, are today firmly astride their horses, riding in Comrade Budyonny's army. It is still too early for us to dismount. On the contrary, we need a fresh inflow of Communists who want to be first-class Communists and to test themselves on the Southern front. Cavalry units must be formed, even if they are only small ones, isolated squadrons. They must consist, first and foremost, of volunteers, with a good Communist nucleus, and it must be the most important task of the trade unions to see to this. Everything must be concentrated against General Wrangel's cavalry, and this task must be carried out everywhere. In the localities we must form squadrons and despatch them to the South. We already have cavalry there, but sending them our squadrons will be like adding salt to this cavalry. We must form our own rear for the Southern front, and every local soviet must take part in constituting this rear. You must detach your best workers from all your soviets and send them to the shores of the Black Sea, to the Kuban, to the Don, so that this rear may be strengthened by agitational work, and, where necessary, also by the application of an iron hand, because we need to strengthen the South, and we have to perform our strengthening work in the Kuban, into which Wrangel is trying to penetrate. Then we must increase production in war industry, which is bound up with the army, and must, first and foremost, give attention to aircraft: Wrangel has an excellent air-force, well-supplied with everything it needs.

You know that we found 28 seaplanes which were destined for Wrangel, who needed them for landing operations – and landing operations on the Don and Kuban coasts are, I repeat, his principal task. We must strengthen our air force and aviation resources on our Southern front. And to do this we must expand our aircraft industry. In other words, comrades, instead of gazing at the brilliant advance of our forces towards Warsaw, instead of comforting our hearts with the magnificent upsurge of the labour movement in the West, in Britain, we must once more concentrate on a hard military task – on the front against Wrangel. We must hold congresses to organise practical work, assemble our executive organs, those of our trade unions and soviets, to discuss in a businesslike way, and every week, or twice weekly, to consider and check on what we are going to do in this matter during the coming weeks: how many volunteers for the front against Wrangel, how many Communists, how many specialist workers who have been working honestly in various branches of government and administration: by how much the productivity of the war-industry factories has been increased through transferring additional labour-power to them, and so on and so forth. The whole art of victory – or, if not all,

then nine-tenths of it – consists in paying attention to every detail, to every trifle. In war, as in every serious task, there are no such things as trifles: it is out of trifles that our successes and our setbacks are made. Only through work like this, only through attention to every detail – economic and administrative attention – shall we ensure victory. And here and now I address myself to the presidium of the Moscow Soviet, which must make its voice heard all over Soviet Russia.

In conclusion, I come back to the point that our international situation is very favourable. Poland and Wrangel are the enemy's two wings. After we broke the power of Poland, France remained. The French Government is the most obdurate, the most backward and (I tell you this in confidence) the most stupid government in the world. Britain is engaged in negotiations with Comrades Kamenev and Krasin, and so we do not want to say anything bad about that country, but we know that the British are old, experienced robbers. Lloyd George knows the whole state of affairs, he knows how he can act at any moment, he studies every situation very well, he possesses subtlety and dexterity, and also flexibility, such as the French Government lacks. The latter consists exclusively of lawyers, a most noxious breed of mankind. They teetered on their hind legs before German imperialism for 45 [sic] years, clinging for support to the Russian Government.

These lawyers remained for 45 years after the Franco-Prussian war of 1871 in a state of permanent trembling. These greedy and cowardly petty-bourgeois, who had been defeated in 1871, bought themselves new possibilities by spending French blood, and thanks to the support of Britain and the United States, and when they had achieved victory they at once went out of their minds and decided that the whole world was under their command. Marshal Foch and Millerand, that wretched renegade from among the ex-Socialists, imagine that they have only to send a force of black-skinned Senegalese somewhere and they can dictate their will to world history.

We have already given a lesson to those lawyers who have got above themselves, to the hirelings of the French stockexchange: we have given Poland a lesson. They said openly: Poland means us, Poland is our left flank. Well, if that is your left flank, all right, take this and sign for it. And they signed.

But, after that, they at once said: we recognise Baron Wrangel, we recognise his government. You know that, in the Crimea, the priests now never call him anything but the pious boyar Peter. He has Peter Von Struve [sic] for his Foreign Minister. And France has immediately adopted this government of the two pious boyars, Peter Wrangel and Peter Struve. That is France's right flank. We have already disposed of the left flank. The French are acting almost as recommended in the Gospels: after receiving a blow on their left cheek they are offering us their right cheek. [*Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also* – (Matthew, 5:39)] Today, comrades, we have, of course, no grounds for saying that the fatherland is in danger, as we did say at certain critical moments, for we are too strong for Wrangel to constitute a mortal danger to us. But, having learnt from bitter experience, we do not shut our eyes to a small or middle-sized danger. And Wrangel does constitute a danger, one which yesterday was small, is now trying to become middle-sized, and may, if we stand about gaping, grow into a big danger – if we consider that the French stock-exchange is supporting him with all its resources, trying

to make him grow bigger, and is even promising him the help of some forces, about which we as yet have no information. While these forces are preparing to advance overland, where the railway workers will be unwilling to let them proceed, we must speed up our work here, and keep it well in mind that a blow at Wrangel, must be a crushing blow, will at the same time be a splendid blow struck at the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie of France. And, on behalf of the Moscow Soviet and the Moscow proletariat we say to the working class of the entire country: 'Through Wrangel, France has offered us her right cheek – hit it as hard as you can, and teach her a lesson.'

Endnotes

[1.](#) Anglo-Russian negotiations for a trade agreement had begun in London already at the time of the Polish offensive towards Kiev. On our side these negotiations were conducted by Comrade Krasin. They proceeded extremely slowly, their first phase being concluded only on June 6, when an agreement was signed for unrestricted commercial relations, on condition that both parties refrained from hostile acts and agitation.

The Red Army's victories over the Poles caused the negotiations to speed up, and Comrade Kamenev went to London as head of a special political delegation. The British Government courteously promised full restoration of relations on condition that we at once halted our advance on Warsaw. British military circles, especially the War Minister, Churchill, threatened us with war if we did not fulfil this demand. These threats evoked a unanimous rebuff from the British workers. During the talks in London a conference was held of representatives of the Trades Union Congress, the Labour Party and the Parliamentary Labour Party. [\[4\]](#) This conference declared that, in the event of war, the full industrial might of the organised proletariat would be brought to bear to oppose the military adventure. At the centre and in the localities, Councils of Action were formed, in order to take resolute measures, going so far as the calling of a general strike.

[2.](#) These divisions were named after White commanders who were killed in 1918, in the early stages of the civil war, and had become legendary heroes of the White cause.

3. There is no note 3.

[4.](#) The reference is to the special conference of the British Labour movement held at Central Hall, Westminster, on August 13, 1920, to hear a report from the Council of Action against British intervention in the Russo-Polish war. It was attended by 689 delegates from trade unions and 355 from the Parliamentary Labour Party and constituency organisations.

The Southern Front and The Fight Against Wrangel

Order No.234

By Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, August 18, 1920, No.234

* * *

In order to rout the hireling of the French bourgeoisie Baron Wrangel the Southern front needs to strengthen its cavalry units. I order each military district, immediately and with exceptional energy, to set about forming cavalry units: squadrons, troops and mounted machinegun troops (in accordance with the establishments laid down in the order of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic 1919 No.465, p.1201/226).

There are to be converted into these formations:

1. as regards personnel – predominantly, Communists, sympathisers and volunteers wholly devoted to the workers' and peasants' power, making use for the purpose, as extensively as possible, of the appropriate available staff of the district.
2. as regards horses – on the strict responsibility of the relevant commanders and commissars, all horses of cavalry type that are needed are to be taken from army units, administrations, institutions and establishments of the War Department, at both district and central level.

For this same purpose, purchase of suitable horses from the population, on a voluntary basis, is to be undertaken on a large scale.

The Central Supply Administration is to take very urgent measures, disregarding all established priorities, to ensure that the units being formed receive arms and all other articles of supply.

Special attention is to be given to the successful formation of these units by the districts, with extensive agitation in the localities to point out the particular importance of the present measures for the defence of Soviet Russia.

Special attention will be paid to the district and provincial commissariats which distinguish themselves by their greater progress in carrying out this military order.

The formation of units is to be completed by September 1 of this year.

The order is to be transmitted by telegraph.

The Southern Front and The Fight Against Wrangel

We Need a Southern Frontier

* * *

In 1918-1919 the Soviet Republic had no frontiers at all, but only fronts. The North was in the hands of the Whites, who threatened Vologda and even Petrograd. The Eastern (Kolchak) front ran along the Ural and even along the Volga. In the West we found ourselves in a state of war, overt or covert, with Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania. In the South, Denikin's front reached beyond Orel. War was being waged against us, on all fronts, by one and the same enemy, the imperialism of the Entente countries. But none of those countries was in a position to send its own army against us – neither Britain, nor France, nor the United States. The working masses would not allow it. The imperialists therefore resorted to round-about methods in their fight against us. On the one hand, they helped the Russian White Guards to seize some part of our coast – on the White Sea, on the Pacific Ocean, on the Black Sea, on the Caspian Sea – and thereby created places d'armes for these White Guards, malignant boils on the Soviet organism. On the other hand, the imperialists of the Entente directed against us the bourgeois governments of the small border nations which had seceded from the old Tsarist Russia.

If we look back over the fierce conflict of the last two-and-a-half years, we shall have no difficulty in assuring ourselves that, on both of these roads, we succeeded in gradually cutting the ground from under our enemies' feet. We cleared the North: there the White Guards can find no foothold. With Finland we have concluded an armistice which will be transformed in the near future into a peace treaty. Estonia has made peace with us, and Latvia also. We are at peace with Lithuania, which rightly sees in Soviet Russia her defender against the aggression of White-Guard Poland. Thus, in the North we have reached our natural frontier, the ocean, and in the West we have established a substantial section of our state frontier by means of peace treaties. In the West, we still have to settle with Poland and Romania. We have dealt a mighty blow at Poland. True, she has now, by gathering all her strength, and by virtue of being armed to the teeth by France, thrown our forces back from Warsaw. The Polish and French bourgeois press is shouting about a major victory. Yet what this victory consists in is that, after losing 600 versts, they have recovered a few dozen. If Poland does not hurry up and make the peace there can be no doubt that we shall not merely get back what we have lost, but shall finish off White-Guard Poland.

Romania will have to come into line with Poland, that is, will have to make peace. Sooner or later, in a matter of weeks, the former Western front will be transformed into the Western frontier, on its southern sector, just as has happened already on its northern sector.

The Eastern front has moved forward from the Volga to Lake Baikal. But beyond Baikal there is no front in the proper sense of the word. There, the Far

Eastern Republic has been formed, as a buffer state between ourselves and Japan. The Japanese are evacuating Chita, and General Semyonov is petitioning the Soviet power for an amnesty. [\[1\]](#)

In the South, however, the task has not been completed. We swept the Whites from Archangel, but we did not sweep them out of the Crimea when we should have done. Consequently, we left at the disposal of French imperialism and its hired bands in the South of Soviet Russia a place d'armes, that is, a space to which French ships could bring arms and where the White Guards could concentrate their forces and from which they could launch an offensive against us. The Crimean Peninsula is the last pawn in the hands of world imperialism. However powerful the navies of Britain and France may be, wherever Russia's *terra firma* is in our hands, a navy is helpless: we have seen this in connection with the fates of Petrograd and Odessa. But the White Crimea still constitutes a serious point of support for the Anglo-French fleet against Soviet Russia. If Sebastopol were in our hands, the Anglo-French brigands would never be able to get a foothold. Recovering the Crimea means removing the last point of support for the world's usurers in their struggle against Soviet Russia.

In Caucasia we have made peace with Georgia and Armenia. The White Guards' attempts to raise revolt in the Kuban will have no chance of succeeding once we have cleared them out of the Crimea. We need to secure a clear and definite frontier in the South, along the shore of the Black Sea. How is this to be done? We must smash Wrangel.

August 23, 1920
Kursk-Kharkov
En Route, No.117

Endnotes

[1.](#) The buffer state in the Far East (the Verkhne-Udinsk, later the Far Eastern, Republic) came into being as a result of negotiations with the Czechoslovaks in March 1920. This republic formed a Revolutionary People's Army which fought against Semyonov, who had taken over the heritage of Kolchak and established himself in Chita. On October 21 1920 Chita was captured by units of the Revolutionary People's Army. Together with the remains of General Kappel's corps, Semyonov withdrew into Chinese territory, where he formed the Asiatic Division, commanded by Baron Ungem, which became notorious for its bandit raids.

The Southern Front and The Fight Against Wrangel

The Last Born

* * *

Wrangel is the last of a long series of generals who have mutinied against the workers' and peasants' power. The first to rise was Kornilov, then there was Kaledin, on the Don, with alter him, Krasnov, and in the Ukraine, Skoropadsky: Dutov revolted beyond the Volga, Kolchak in Siberia, in the South Denikin raised the flag of rebellion. Yudenich launched an offensive against Petrograd. All were defeated, annihilated, crushed. Every one of these generals was a defender of the interests of the nobility and of big capital. They succeeded in confusing a section of the Cossacks, especially the richer ones. They raised the flag of 'Russia one and indivisible' while making deals first with the German Emperor Wilhelm, when he was powerful, and then with the Anglo-French bourgeoisie.

Kolchak, Denikin, Yudenich seriously thought they could seize power: they prepared to restore the monarchy, give the land back to the nobles and the factories and banks to the capitalists, and rule over all Russia with their support. All that remains of these schemes are the wretched remnants hiding in the Crimea, and at the head of these remnants stands the German-Russian Baron Von Wrangel [*sic*]. He was known as a loyal supporter of the German Kaiser [\[1\]](#), and at one time tried to join up with him. After the defeat of Germany, Wrangel offered his services to the British and French Governments. But the French Government treated Wrangel with distrust, for the time being, because they regarded him as a German agent.

Wrangel's services were needed when the campaign of the Polish gentry against the Ukraine and Russia was being prepared. France hired the German baron to help the White Polish army. No-one, of course, seriously believes that Wrangel will take power and rule over Russia. But he is needed in order to weaken the workers' and peasants' republic, to damage the Red Army's rear, to co-operate with the Polish gentry's forces, which have been reorganised with the help of French officers and French war materials and are now once more advancing eastward.

Denikin stood, in words at least, for 'Russia one and indivisible'. But the successor to the mutineer generals, Wrangel the Last-Born, is openly fighting for the dismemberment of Russia, for rule by the Polish gentry over the Ukraine and Byelorussia.

Wrangel feels cramped in the Crimea. He sits there as though in a bottle. Although he has now thrust his head out through the bottleneck, he is about to pull it in again to escape from the blows that rain down on him. This is why Wrangel is breaking out towards the Don, the Kuban and North Caucasia. The last-born general wants to establish his base over there. He dreams of drawing the Kuban Cossacks into civil war once again and bringing upon them the same ruin to which Kaledin, Krasnov and Denikin subjected the Don.

Wrangel's landing on the shore of the Sea of Azov is the last reckless attempt by the last-born to find a fresh point of support for his work of destruction, devastation and ravaging of the working people's country.

Men of the Don and the Kuban! If Wrangel were to succeed, even for a few weeks, in establishing himself in your lands, it would mean new burdens for you, new sacrifices, new outrages, ruin and destruction. If you desire to live quietly and work peacefully, help the Red Army to crush the White-Guard bands of the last-born general before they leave the seashore.

August 25, 1920
Taganrog-Rostov
En Route, No.119

Endnotes

[1.](#) It is not clear what this allegation is based on. Wrangel was living in the Crimea when the Germans occupied it. While on a visit to his family estate, he passed through Kiev and called on Skoropadsky, with whom he had served in the Russo-Japanese war. Skoropadsky invited Wrangel to become his chief of staff, but Wrangel said he was sure Germany would lose the war, and rejected the offer. In September 1918 he went to the Don and joined the Volunteer Army.

The Southern Front and The Fight Against Wrangel

Order No.236

**By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the
Republic to the 9th Army, August 26, 1920, No.236,
Yekaterinodar**

* * *

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

Do not just drive them out, destroy them!

Baron Von Wrangel landed his expeditionary force with a view to raising a revolt in the Kuban and the Don country by the former landlords, rich men, Tsarist officers and Cossack kulaks. [1] At the same time, Baron Von Wrangel tried to cut a way for himself from the Crimea through the Ukraine to the Don.

We can already say that the Tsarist baron's scheme has failed to come off. The general's bands did not succeed in raising revolt either in the Kuban or in the Don country. The White detachments of Von Wrangel find themselves surrounded. Although their commanders are trying in some places to break through the ring formed by our forces, in the main they think only of how to head for home. The expeditionary force is apparently preparing to get back aboard ship and return to the Crimea.

Red warriors of the 9th Army! It would be a very great shame if we were to allow the White serpent to slip away. On the Crimean front our infantry, cavalry and artillery are waging a courageous struggle against Wrangel's forces and dealing them stout blows. If the expeditionary force were to slip through our clutches and return to the Crimea, it would strengthen the Tsarist baron's forces there. Then the Red warriors on the Crimean front would have to do the work which you, warriors of the 9th Army, had failed to do. But this will not happen. Wrangel's expedition must be crushed - and you will do this.

You, Red warriors of the 9th Army, are incomparably more numerous than the White Guards who have landed. Large reserves are concentrated behind you.

I have sent tried military and political workers to your army. All conditions for complete victory are present. Winning this victory depends on you.

Of the commanders and commissars I demand *the highest offensive vigour*. All indecision, slowness, procrastination will be punished as grave crimes against the socialist fatherland.

The task is clear and simple: *not to let the enemy slip away, to catch him, smash him, wipe him off the face of the earth.*

Forward, you bravest! Show the way to the others! Punish self-seekers!
Death to deserters! Glory to the valiant! Forward!

Endnotes

1. During the summer of 1920 stubborn fighting continued on the Crimean sector of the South-Western front, with varying success. Wrangel failed in all his attempts to escape from the sack in which his forces found themselves, surrounded on three sides, and resolved to distract our forces by launching landing operations. On August 9, 1920 a small enemy detachment landed at Krivaya Kosa [Krivaya Kosa is about 70 km. west of Taganrog.] and broke through northward to the Don, but there, halted by our units, they were partly destroyed and partly forced to flee (see map No. 7). A second landing on a larger scale and with broader tasks, was effected on August 14 on the Caucasian coast, south of Yeysk, while at the same time small forces were put ashore on the Taman Peninsula and at Anapa. After three weeks of stubborn fighting, Wrangel's forces had to leave our Caucasian coast. Thus, both of these expeditions failed both militarily and politically. The Don and Kuban Cossacks refrained from supporting Wrangel, and his reckoning on a rebellion proved to be quite groundless. After the liquidation of the landings the centre of gravity of the fight against Wrangel moved back to the shores of the Crimea (see maps nos.7 and 8).

The Southern Front and The Fight Against Wrangel

The Kuban Has Not Risen

* * *

Baron Wrangel feels cramped in his Crimean bottle. He has already been hailed by the usurers of the Paris stock exchange as 'master of the Russian land', but it is difficult to rule Russia from the Crimea. Baron Wrangel pushed out northward, towards Kherson and Yekaterinoslav, but there, too, his successes were short-lived. The heartiest reception the German-Russian baron met with was from the kulaks in the German colonies. [1] But that was not enough. The Red forces of the Southern front have been pressing the Baron hard during the last week, thrusting him back into the Crimean bottle.

The Baron stretched out his hand to the East, to the shores of the Don and the Kuban, trying his luck once again among the Cossacks. The Kuban is rich and populous. The kulaks are still strong there. Many thousands of Denikin's officers are still in that area. To raise revolt in the Kuban, to draw the Don and the Terek in its wake, to seize Baku, would mean getting one's hands on soldiers, grain and oil. That would be worth a lot more than the Crimea.

General Wrangel put a large expeditionary force ashore on the coast of the Sea of Azov, at Akhtari [The landing-place is now called Primorsko-Akhtarsk.], and also two smaller ones, on the Taman Peninsula and near Novorossiisk. A few thousand Wrangelite bayonets and sabres are, of course, not enough to conquer North Caucasia. But Wrangel hoped that his landing force would immediately be increased in size through the adhesion of rebel Cossacks, so that each regiment would become a division. The landing force was saturated with officers, so that there would be no shortage of commanders. The main force was equally richly supplied with stocks of arms and clothing. Meanwhile, Wrangel's agents, who penetrated deeply into the Kuban, carried on their work there. But it was no use. The Kuban did not rise.

In the Kuban there are still a lot of counter-revolutionary vermin, and there is much ignorance and superstition. But the kulak of the Kuban has already understood that the Soviet power is a power, and that it does not permit anyone to play with fire.

The Kuban remembered the example of the Don. Kaledin, Krasnov, Alekseyev, Denikin – they all raised the Don against the Soviet power. They were all defeated. And, each time, the rank-and-file Don Cossacks suffered severely from the civil war got up by the counter-revolutionaries. The Don was depopulated, impoverished, weakened. If the Kuban had decided to follow the Don road, that is, the road of repeated rebellion, it would have suffered the same fate. In every large *stanitsa*, of course, there are individual sworn enemies of workers' and peasants' Russia, who are ready to join the German baron, or the Japanese Mikado. But the mass, rank-and-file Kuban Cossacks understood that one does not play with fire – Wrangel's landing met with no response. The Red troops cut the landing-force off from the shore of the Sea

of Azov and captured its base – up to 50 truck-loads of arms, clothing and medical supplies. The landing-force has already been badly battered, and it is being invested ever more closely by the Red regiments. Whether it risks an advance towards Yekaterinodar or whether it decides to move into the Kuban hills, or into the Taman Peninsula, it will inevitably be destroyed. It is already essentially lost, because the Kuban has not risen. The Kuban has turned its back on the German baron. His sole *place d'armes is still, as before, the Crimea*.

But Wrangel's failure in the Kuban must immediately weaken his position in the Crimea, too, for now even his supporters will realise that there is no way out.

The 13th Army and the 2nd Mounted Army must finish the job, putting an end to the German hireling of the French usurers, by means of a powerful blow from the North when he sticks his head out.

The Kuban did not rise to greet Wrangel. It is time to clear him out of the Crimea, too.

August 28,
1920 Rostov,
En Route, No.920

Endnotes

1. Towards the end of the 18th century German farmers were invited by the Tsarist Government to colonise some of the empty territory of 'New Russia', then recently conquered. There were at the time of the civil war numerous settlements in this area with German names, inhabited by descendants of the colonists.

The Southern Front and The Fight Against Wrangel

Order No.239

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the 13th Army and the 2nd Mounted Army, August 30, 1920, No.239, Aleksandrovsk

* * *

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

Comrade Red Army men, commanders, commissars!

Having arrived on your front from Caucasia, I bring you fraternal greetings from the Red fighters on the Caucasian front, who have just dealt a mortal blow to the substantial forces which Baron Wrangel had landed on the coast of the Kuban. Wrangel's attempt to raise the Kuban and the Don against workers' and peasants' Russia ended in collapse. It now depends on you to strike a mortal blow on the Crimean front as well, at the German baron in the service of French capital. Your two armies, the 13th Army and the 2nd Mounted Army, are operating with ever increasing success. The workers' and peasants' country watches you with an attentive eye. It is supplying you with plentiful reinforcements and necessary resources. It confidently expects that this time the matter will be carried to a finish, and the Soviet Crimea will be joined forever to the Soviet Ukraine and Soviet Russia.

Fraternal greetings to the brave fighters of the 13th Army and the 2nd Mounted Army!

The Southern Front and The Fight Against Wrangel

A Splendid Blow

* * *

Wrangel's expeditionary force which landed on the coast of the Kuban has been dealt a crushing blow. Practically speaking, it no longer exists. The wretched remnants of it are hiding in the reeds. This is a very great success, on which not only the Caucasian front can congratulate itself, but also the 13th Army and the 2nd Mounted Army of the Southern front, and, with them, all Soviet Russia.

Wrangel's expeditionary force landed at Akhtari and pushed quickly inland, seizing Timoshevskaya railway junction and from there threatening Yekaterinodar. At the same time, the landing-force did not lose contact with the sea. Its base remained at Akhtari, on the coast, where much war material was unloaded from ships. This was intended for the Kuban Cossacks, whom Wrangel was aiming to raise in revolt against the Soviet power.

But that did not happen. The troops of the 9th Army of the Caucasian front, after some initial setbacks, struck some stout blows at the landing-force, and then cut it off from its seaside base, capturing about 50 truckloads of war material. The White detachment moved southward and concentrated its headquarters in Novonizhnestebliyevskaya *stanitsa*, on the river Protoka, which links the Kuban with the Sea of Azov. While units of the 9th Army were surrounding Wrangel's landing-force ever more closely, the idea was conceived in Yekaterinodar of sending a Red expeditionary force by water into the enemy's rear, along the river Kuban and then along the Protoka to Novonizhestebliyevskaya, so as to take the enemy by surprise. The enemy did not expect a blow from that side, and the chief condition for success consisted in maintaining absolute secrecy about the whole enterprise. This was achieved, to perfection. Command of the detachment was entrusted to Comrade Kovtyukh, the commandant of Yekaterinodar, with Comrade Furmanov as Commissar. The detachment was small but select. As has been mentioned, the enterprise met with complete success. Today I received the following despatch:

'This is to report that on August 28 the expeditionary force entrusted to my command disembarked under cover of darkness at a point two versts from Novonizhestebliyevskaya *stanitsa*, which it attacked at dawn. After stubborn street fighting, the *stanitsa* was taken, Ulagai's principal headquarters being destroyed. Several headquarters staffs were taken prisoner, a large number of officers: three generals were killed: over 1,000 men were taken prisoner, together with many weapons and much war material: an armoured lorry was destroyed: technical *materiel* and much other booty was captured, the quantity of which is being checked. When the figures are available, I will send a supplementary report. Our losses in killed and wounded do not exceed 20 men, whereas several hundred of the enemy were cut down. Commandant of Yekaterinodar fortified area and commander of the expeditionary force Kovtyukh: military commissar Furmanov.'

At the same time as this I received the following despatch from 9th Army

Headquarters:

'As ordered by you, I report that Comrade Kovtyukh has today taken Novonizhnestebliyevskaya. According to a despatch from the commander of the 22nd Cavalry Brigade the enemy force has been smashed, and its miserable remnants are hiding in the river flats.

Ninth Army Chief of Staff Chernyshev, Military Commissar Ter.'

This is a most valuable victory. Wrangel's expeditionary force has been done for. Wrangel's hopes of raising revolt in the Kuban, and after that in all Northern Caucasia, have been buried. If Wrangel were to decide to make another attempt of the same sort, it would end even more lamentably, for, after what has happened, not a single Kuban Cossack, even the most Black-Hundred-minded, would have confidence in the success of the Crimean baron's 'expeditions'. The front against Wrangel has now been reduced to the limits of the Crimean sector. The successful development of operations by the 13th Army and the 2nd Mounted Army gives us every right to expect that we shall soon have finished with Wrangel – provided that the rear hastens to bring up help. March, reinforcement squad-rons and battalions! March, volunteers! March, Communists!

August 30, 1920
Aleksandrovsk
En Route, No.121

The Southern Front and The Fight Against Wrangel

Comrade Railwaymen!

* * *

The complete failure of Wrangel's expedition was to a large extent facilitated by the work of the railways. The necessary forces from the Caucasian front were concentrated with extraordinary speed. The first echelons covered about 350 **versts** in 24 hours, and the last of them even so much as 700 **versts**. The more quickly we transfer our Red units, the more certainly shall we ensure victory.

Comrade railwaymen, remember that victory begins in the factory and the railway workshop, makes its way along the rails, and culminates in a bayonet-thrust.

August 30 (1920)
Aleksandrovsk

The Southern Front and The Fight Against Wrangel

Wrangel's Landing

Talk with a Representative of the Soviet Press

* * *

There is no need to explain to you the reports in the foreign press of Wrangel's capture of Yekaterinodar and Novorossiisk, of the rallying of the Don and Kuban Cossacks to him, and of the evacuation of Baku by Soviet units – all of that is so much invention, from beginning to end. But this does not prevent me from mentioning that the stupidity of this invention is capable of causing amazement even among us, people who are familiar enough with the maliciously senseless mendacity of the organs of bourgeois public opinion. It is, after all, quite obvious that, a day or two sooner or later, readers in Europe and America will learn that Wrangel has suffered a very serious fiasco in Caucasia. Wrangel really did hope that the Kuban and Don Cossacks would rally to him, and he sent sufficient military stores there to equip the formations he expected. These stores filled no fewer than 50 trucks. I can speak with some precision about this matter, because we succeeded in removing those stores from the coast at Akhtari, in trucks, after we had captured the expedition's base. Neither the Kuban nor the Don Cossacks rallied to the landing-force. By means of a well-conceived and excellently performed manoeuvre a mortal blow was struck at it, while we suffered hardly any casualties. Soviet power is rooted ever more deeply in the Kuban, the Soviet apparatus is becoming ever stronger, grain-procurement is being carried out ever more systematically. As regards Azerbaijan, Soviet power there is distinguished by unshakable stability. The report about the evacuation of Baku was evidently based on the vigorous export of oil from Baku to Soviet Russia. In fact, about 150,000,000 *poods* of oil have already been despatched from Baku, yet stocks held in that city have not decreased, because production is going ahead at full blast. The oilfields are quite satisfactorily supplied with food. Work in the Grozny oilfields is also developing absolutely normally. We have in Grozny, besides other products, about ten million *poods* of excellent benzine. Production can be considerably increased, and will be increased when trade is functioning in the Black Sea ports.

In short, if the Wrangel landing has shown anything, then it is precisely the unshakability of our position in North Caucasia. Thereby, Wrangel's empire has been reduced to the confines of a part of the former Khanate of the Crimea. But we confidently reckon that Monsieur Millerand will soon have to renounce his dream of having in the Crimea a Russo-German Khan as his vassal.

September 1, 1920

The Southern Front and The Fight Against Wrangel

Memorandum of the Red Army Man on the Southern Front

* * *

1.

I am a Red Army man, a warrior of the workers' and peasants' army who has been sent here, to the Southern front, to fight against Baron Wrangel.

2.

Baron Wrangel is a monarchist. He stood and he stands for restoring the rule of the Tsar. Baron Wrangel is a nobleman, an aristocrat. He stands for restoring the domination of the blue-blooded nobility. Baron Wrangel is a general. He fights to restore the former oppression by the generals. Baron Wrangel is a former rich landlord. He fights to restore the land to the landlords.

3.

I, a warrior of the workers' and peasants' army, am striving to bring about peaceful, harmonious labour by the workers and peasants, for the common good. I cannot permit a restoration of the power of the Tsar, the Princes, Counts and Barons, the landlords, capitalists and generals. That is why I am fighting against Baron Wrangel and all who follow him.

4.

Over two years ago, Baron Wrangel sought help from the German Kaiser Wilhelm against the Soviet power. After the revolution had taken place in Germany, Baron Wrangel allied himself with the French and British capitalists, who aided him with money and arms. The oppressors, exploiters and hangmen of all countries support each other against the working people. Our Red Army is defending the working people against attack by the hangmen of all countries.

5.

Baron Wrangel made a deal with the Polish gentry. When the Polish gentry launched their offensive against the Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Great-Russian and Lithuanian workers and peasants, Baron Wrangel helped the White-Polish offensive with all his might. Their aim was one and the same – to give back the land to the landlords, Polish, Russian and Ukrainian, and restore power to the nobles and to capital.

6.

The French capitalists, striving to enslave the Ukraine and Russia, are preparing to strike a blow from the sea at Odessa, Nikolayev, Novorossiisk and other points. French admirals are acting in collusion with Baron Wrangel. In order to wrest the cities of the Ukraine and Russia from the workers and peasants, Wrangel is handing over these cities into the bloody hands of the French admirals and capitalists. Their aim is one and the same: to force the Russian people to work not for themselves but for the rich.

7.

The Polish landlords' government would not have dared to attack us if it had not expected help from Baron Wrangel. We should not have had to fight fierce battles and suffer losses on a huge front – almost from the Baltic to the Black Sea – but for Baron Wrangel.

8

The Red forces answered the attack by the Polish gentry with a stout counter-blow, and, going over to the offensive, they reached the walls of Warsaw and Lvov. Our Red Army would have achieved complete victory over the Polish gentry and bourgeoisie, and would have helped the Polish working people to free themselves from oppression, if we had not had Baron Wrangel at our back, diverting our armed forces and resources from the Polish front. Baron Wrangel and all the Wrangelites are landlords and hirelings of the Polish gentry, traitors and mortal enemies of workers' and peasants' Russia.

9.

We are agreeing to a burdensome treaty of peace with the bourgeois government of Poland. We have been obliged to abandon, in Galicia, the Western part of the Ukraine, Byelorussia and Lithuania, many millions of Ukrainian, Russian, Byelorussian and Lithuanian workers and peasants, leaving them under the yoke of the Polish gentry. Let all of them know that the guilt for their captivity lies with Baron Wrangel and his White-Guard host!

10.

Baron Wrangel is trying to break through to the East and seize the Donets Basin. The coal of the Donets is needed by the whole country. If we increase the output of Donets coal, our works and factories will spring to life, together with our railways and ships, and our villages will receive from our industry clothes, footwear, nails, glass, tea and sugar – everything that a peasant family needs in order to live and to cultivate its holding. Wrangel is trying to devastate the Donets Basin. If he were to succeed in this he would do frightful harm to the workers' and peasants' Ukraine and Russia.

11.

A little while ago, Baron Wrangel landed his troops on the Caucasian coast. He

is trying to cut off the Don, the Kuban and all of North Caucasia from Soviet Russia. If he were to succeed in this, our country would be left without the grain of the Kuban and the oil of Baku. Factories and railways would come to a standstill and in the towns hunger would intensify.

Baron Wrangel wants to bring the nobility and the Tsarist bureaucracy to power over the corpses of working men and women, old men and children.

12.

The former landlords, capitalists, generals, exploiters and oppressors, usurers and stock-exchange speculators of Russia and the Ukraine, and the imperialists and vultures of all countries look to General Wrangel with hope. They still expect him to triumph over the working people. But for that hope, the bourgeois governments of Britain, America and other countries would long since have made peace with us and entered into commercial relations. We should have received from abroad agricultural implements, medical supplies, locomotives and other products we have need of. This will not happen so long as Baron Wrangel's army exists.

13.

The workers' and peasants' republic needs peace. We need the harmonious, creative labour of all the workers and peasants. Through peaceful labour we should have revived both agriculture and industry in a short time, and gathered in our Soviet storehouses large reserves of all needful commodities. Everyone in our country would be clothed, shod and well-fed. Schools, people's universities and theatres would have flourished. All this has been prevented by the war. It is Wrangel, the hireling of the world's bourgeoisie, who has imposed war upon us. In order to win peace we must exterminate the White-Guard host of Baron Wrangel.

14.

I, a Red Army man of the southern front, have been sent here by the workers' and peasants' power so that I may take part in the routing and extermination of Baron Wrangel's army. I recognise and understand my sacred duty to the workers and peasants' republic.

The weapon which has been entrusted to me I shall wield with a sure hand, to strike a stout blow. My comrades and brothers will do as I do. *By a unanimous onslaught we shall sweep away, overthrow and destroy the enemy.*

We shall act steadily and without respite until we have attained our aim. We shall not allow the Wrangelites to slip away and shut themselves up in the Crimea. We shall not stop until we have cleansed the workers' and peasants' country of them, to the last inch. *We shall accomplish this task during the autumn, so as not to let matters drag into a winter campaign.*

I, a Red warrior of the Southern front, promise this to the working people of all countries, and my word is firm!

The Southern Front and The Fight Against Wrangel

What is the Meaning of Makhno's Coming Over to the Side of the Soviet Power?

* * *

Makhno has offered his services to the Red Army command for joint struggle against Wrangel. This event has amazed many people. And, indeed, Makhno's troop has for a long time been waging tireless and fierce struggle against the workers' and peasants' Red Army: the Makhnovites have disrupted our rear, damaged the railway lines, cut down telegraph poles, set fire to storehouses, blown up bridges, derailed trains and hanged Communists. Naturally the Soviet power has not failed to respond to all this, either. Makhno's troop has been fiercely pursued, and has received many a hard blow. Makhno himself, apparently, has been wounded more than once, and has still not recovered from his wounds.

How has it happened that Makhno has suddenly swung round? It is admissible for us to make an agreement with the Makhnovites? Would this not be risky?

To answer these two questions, one must understand clearly what the Makhno movement is, what its roots and causes are.

The Ukraine has lagged behind Great Russia in political development. The revolution in the Ukraine was interrupted by the German invasion. The subsequent succession of regimes introduced frightful political confusion in both town and country, and held up the central process of the Soviet revolution, namely, the unification of the working people against the exploiters, the poor against the rich, the poor peasants against the kulaks.

The confusion of regimes in the Ukraine had especially serious consequences in the countryside. The broad masses of the working peasantry feared to lay their hands well and truly upon the land and the implements of cultivation, not to mention power, because they saw how often one government was replaced by another. The poorer peasants *did not dare to trust* in the revolution, fearing that, in the end, the landlord would triumph and bring down merciless punishment on their heads. Consequently, the many millions of peasants hid behind the kulaks, seeing in them intermediaries between themselves and the previously ruling classes. The Ukrainian peasants took part in the revolution only to the extent that they were allowed to by the kulaks – or, as they are called in Ukrainian, the *←kurkuls'*.

Needless to say, the kulaks took full advantage of the opportunities offered by this situation. The *←kurkuls'* seized the best part of the former landlords' land and implements, and armed themselves well. In this way the Ukrainian kulak got the Ukrainian countryside into his clutches.

Naturally, the kulak did not want the landlord to come back, since the best

part of the landlords' land had fallen, at first, into the kulaks' possession. But he feared still more the rule of the workers and the poor peasants. The return of the landlord threatened the kulak with the loss of part of his new wealth, but the establishment of the rule of the working people would threaten him with the loss of all his privileges. That was why the kulaks incited the peasants to fight against Skoropadsky and Denikin, but as soon as the working class came to power, the kulaks were ready to join not just Wrangel but the devil himself in order to safeguard their domination of the countryside.

Exploiting the backwardness of the rural lower orders, their lack of confidence in the revolution, the kulak took the leadership of the countryside and counterposed it to the town. It seemed as if the entire mass of the peasantry was unanimous in its enmity to the proletariat and the Communist Party. All the Ukrainian petty-bourgeois-kulak parties were formed on this basis. This was the basis on which both Petlyura's movement and Makhno's grew up. Petlyura regards himself as a statesman, has dealings with the Pope of Rome and with the French Freemasons, whereas Makhno regards himself as an Anarchist. But they both try to find support in a united countryside, raising this in revolt against the advanced proletariat. The kulaks also united the countryside. Consequently both the Petlyura movement and the Makhno movement relied directly upon the kulak upper stratum in the rural areas. Petlyura did this consciously – Makhno, without thinking.

But during recent months a tremendous shift has taken place in the life of the Ukrainian countryside. The Ukrainian peasantry, that is, the poor lower section thereof, has drawn nearer to the revolution and acquired confidence in it. From the experience of nearly four years it has become convinced that, although many regimes have come and gone in the Ukraine, the Soviet power has returned each time more highly organised and stronger than before. The poor peasants have understood that the «*kurkul*' has been stealing the revolution for himself, and they have demanded to have their share. The October revolution has made its way into the Ukrainian countryside with a delay of more than two years. The rapidly growing and strengthening Committees of the Poor signify the revolutionary organisation of that section of the Ukrainian peasantry which is friendly to the town workers and hostile to the kulaks. Whereas previously the movement for Ukrainian independence, the Petlyura movement, and soon, seemed to enjoy the backing of the entire countryside, now, when the countryside has split into two camps, it has become quite clear that Petlyura is the military leader of the kulaks in their fight against the rural poor and the town workers.

The horizontal splitting of the Ukrainian countryside has created a new and very difficult situation for the Makhnovites. Civil war has taken very acute forms in the Ukrainian countryside. The kulak is armed and he does not want to give up without a fight the land he has stolen and the implements he has seized. However, the poor peasant, too, is demanding his share, arms in hand. There are peasants of all categories in Makhno's forces: «*kurkuls*', middle peasants and poor peasants. So long as the countryside still kept its unity under the leadership of the kulaks, Makhno's forces moved freely from one place to another, meeting sympathy and support. But, now, every large village in the Ukraine has split into two camps. A choice has to be made between these camps – one must either be with the kulaks or with the poor. The kulaks, as Petlyura's example shows, are helping to the best of their ability both Wrangel and the Polish gentry, but the poor peasants are only now becoming a

firm support for the Soviet power.

The Makhnovites feel ill-at-ease in the Ukrainian countryside. They even tried to quit the Ukraine and move into the Don country. But nothing came of this, for the Don, taught by the bitter experience of three years, has no desire to support a revolt against the Soviet power. Finally, inside Makhno's troop itself, the split between the poor peasants and the *kurkuls'* is bound to have had an effect. Faced with the necessity of choosing at once between the kulaks, Petlyura, the Polish gentry and Wrangel, on the one hand, and, on the other, the poor peasants, the workers, the Communists and the Soviet power, the majority of the Makhnovites have opted to go over to the side of the Red Army.

We, of course, can only welcome the fact that the Makhnovites wish henceforth not to fight against us but with us, against Wrangel. But our pact with the Makhnovites must certainly not be temporary in character. The working class of the Ukraine can never, and especially not in conditions of tremendous military danger, allow particular units sometimes to fight in our ranks and sometimes to stab us in the back. Waging war against the world's exploiters, the workers' and peasants' Red Army says: 'Who is not with me is against me, and whoever is with me is to remain in my ranks and not leave them till the end.'

The Makhnovites and their sympathisers must draw all the conclusions from past experience and it is necessary, above all, that the Makhnovites themselves purge their troop of kulak bandit *elements*, quite a lot of which have hitherto remained from the past period. Furthermore, the Makhnovites, who have hitherto lived in isolation, must henceforth get acquainted with all the activities of the Soviet power, with its tasks and aims, with the structure and spirit of the Red Army. Only thus shall we make real friends of the best of the Makhnovites. Finally, there is no need to exaggerate Makhno's forces, as philistines are doing. Actually, the Makhnovites constitute a very small troop. But in its struggle against innumerable foes, the working class treasures even a little help. All that is required is that the ally who offers this help shall be a truly honest and reliable ally.

October 10, 1920,
Slavyansk

The Southern Front and The Fight Against Wrangel

Order No.246

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the Armies of the Southern Front, October 13, 1920, No.246, Kharkov

* * *

Peace has been signed with Poland. The Red Army obtained this peace at a high price in blood. If there were no Wrangel in the South, the Soviet republic would now be free from wars. The larger part of the army could be demobilised. The workers and peasants could have gone back to peaceful labour. The strength, energy and devotion that you have shown in battle, you would have directed into peaceful labour, and in one or two years we should have achieved great progress in all spheres of economic life.

By stubborn combined labour we should have won prosperity for our country in a short time. If we had been free from wars, the Soviet Republic, in which there are no landlords, capitalists or exploiters, would have become within a decade a very rich and happy country.

Soldiers of the Red Army! Who is preventing this? Wrangel. Who bars the road to peace? Wrangel. The noble-kulak bands of Wrangel helped the Polish offensive and are now continuing to ravage and devastate our country. Nor is that all – the Wrangelites are trying to bring in French troops to support them, turning the Ukraine into a French colony.

We need peace and labour. The road to peace and labour is blocked by Wrangel's bands.

Soldiers of the Red Army! Annihilate Wrangel! Wipe his bands off the face of the earth!

The Southern Front and The Fight Against Wrangel

Makhno and Wrangel

From the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs

* * *

As is known, the French press has had much to say about the alliance between Wrangel and Makhno. The Soviet press has also, in its time, published documents testifying to a formal alliance established between Makhno and Wrangel. The incorrectness of this information has now become clear. Undoubtedly, Makhno did render *de facto* help to Wrangel, as also to the Polish gentry, in so far as he fought the Red Army at the same time as they did. But there was no formal alliance between them. All the documents about a formal alliance were forged by Wrangel. Some Crimean bandit calling himself Ataman Volodin pretended, under the direction of Wrangel's headquarters, to be an ataman subordinate to Makhno. Actually, there was no connection between them. The whole swindle was got up for the purpose of deceiving Makhno's [sic] [The sense would seem to require 'Wrangel's' rather than 'Makhno's' here.] protectors, the French and other imperialists.

A few weeks ago, Wrangel really did try to enter into direct relations with the Makhnovites, and sent two emissaries to Makhno's headquarters in order to negotiate. As delegates from the Revolutionary War Council of the Southern front were able to assure themselves, the Makhnovites not merely refused to negotiate with Wrangel's emissaries, but hanged them publicly soon after their arrival at Makhno's headquarters. This very fact – Wrangel's direct attempt to make a deal with the Makhnovites – showed plainly to the latter the full disastrousness of their fight against the Soviet power. It was not long after this that they approached the Southern command regarding joint struggle against Wrangel. This proposal was accepted, on certain conditions.

At the present time the Makhnovite troop is carrying out military assignments under the immediate direction of the commander of the Southern front, Comrade Frunze.

October 14, 1920

The Southern Front and The Fight Against Wrangel

Order No.247

To the War Department and the People's Commissariat of Transport, October 14, No.247, Kharkov

* * *

While the majority of the railway workers of the Ukraine are honestly doing their duty to the republic of the working people and helping the Red Army in its fight against the last enemy, Baron Wrangel, a counter-revolutionary minority of railway workers are helping in every way the enemies of the working class – Wrangel, Petlyura and the numerous Ukrainian bandits.

Extermination of the bandits is a necessary condition for the survival, development and economic advance of the Ukrainian Republic. This task would have been accomplished long ago if the bandits had not had their agents among the railwaymen, who maintain communication between them, give them warning of danger, notify them of trains carrying army supplies, and help them to destroy the permanent way and blow up bridges.

Now, when the majority of the peasant population of the Ukraine is rallying under the banner of the Soviet power, against the kulaks and bandits, the time has come to purge the railways of Petlyurist agents.

I hereby order that:

1. All unreliable stretches of the railways are to be put under the control of railway military units.
2. All railway workers found guilty of giving direct or indirect help to bandits, of committing acts adverse to the safeguarding of railway property, or of failing to warn neighbouring stations and defence organs, are to be punished like bandits, in accordance with martial law.
3. Those railwaymen who, although they have not committed actual crimes, are nevertheless conspicuous for their general lack of discipline and of concern for the needs of the Red Army, and for the contemptuous attitude to their responsibilities towards public property, are to be transferred from the Ukrainian lines to the Murmansk and Northern lines and to those in the Urals and Siberia, and their places taken by disciplined and conscious transport workers.
4. All organs and institutions of the Transport Commissariat and the War Department are to work hand in hand with the local soviet, trade-union and Party organisations to combat disruptors of transport among the railway workers themselves.

The ulcer of treason must be cauterised with a red-hot iron.

The Southern Front and The Fight Against Wrangel

How Is Makhno's Troop Organised?

* * *

As is well known, the Makhnovites do not recognise the regulations of the Red Army and have created their own organisation, allegedly based on 'free' anarchist principles. It is of very great interest and importance for not only every Red Army man but also every worker and conscious peasant to learn what these 'free' anarchist principles look like in practice.

It is now possible for us to get to know them close up. The Revolutionary War Council of the Southern front despatched some responsible workers to the headquarters of Makhno's troop, and, when they had familiarised themselves with the situation on the spot, they reported on it in detail to the Front Command. We extract the most important sections of this report.

In principle – that is, in words – organisation of Makhno's troops is based on *electivity of commanders*, on *volunteering* by all the fighters, and on the strictest 'self-discipline'. Let us examine these principles, one by one.

1. The principle of election exists only in words, that is, as an outward ritual. Commanders are selected by Makhno himself and his closest collaborators. True, commanders (from platoon to regimental level) are presented for approval by their units. But this is an empty formality. If there is any disagreement, the last word lies with the senior commander, who actually appoints whoever he considers necessary. To this we must add that commanding cadres are very few in numbers, and so it is natural that the fighters have to accept the commanders given them by Makhno.
2. The voluntary principle. Makhno does not carry out any general mobilisations, nor would he be able to do this, given his complete lack of the apparatus needed. But the guerrillas who join his troops are not at all 'free' to leave it. Anyone who voluntarily leaves the troop is regarded as a traitor and is *threatened with a bloody settlement of accounts, especially if he joins a Red Army unit. Consequently, the 'volunteers' feel that they are held in an iron grip, and cannot leave the troop.*

To this it must be added that the troop includes some non-volunteers, for example, a choir of Estonian musicians, the medical personnel and others, who were taken prisoner and carry out their duties under compulsion.

3. As for the anarchist 'self-discipline', this is on the same footing as 'electivity' and 'voluntariness', and perhaps even exceeds them in the brutal forms it takes. According to anarchist theory, self-discipline must be maintained by the rebels themselves, without any compulsion from above. But there is no question of this being the case in the troop. The commanders, especially the highest of them, actually enjoy unlimited powers. It is enough to mention that the custom of striking men 'in the mug' (as this is described in the language of freedom and brotherhood) is widely practised. Shooting without trial, 'on the spot', is also widely

practised – not only during battle but also in peaceful situations. The methods of striking 'in the mug' and shooting 'on the spot' are employed by 'Daddy Makhno' himself.

The commanders have batmen and drivers, who are responsible for the care and maintenance of the commanders' horses and equipment. The commanders have five or six horses each, the very best available, and also carriages and *tachanki*. [\[1\]](#)

For his own protection Makhno has a 'Black Squadron' in which, as the Makhnovites put it, discipline is 'diabolical'. Makhno's quarters are guarded by a strong squad of between five and seven sentries. Strangers are not allowed to approach Makhno without being disarmed.

He has his own Cheka, called 'Counter-Intelligence'.

The army possesses gold, diamonds and other jewels, valuable furs and other clothing, all this being, to a noticeable extent, mostly held by the commanders.

That is how the anarchist principles appear in practice. An army cannot, of course, be built upon principles of freedom and independence, for each and everyone, like, for example, a literary club. But it is quite obvious that in our regular Red Army there is incomparably more freedom and more respect for the Red Army man's personality than prevails in Makhno's 'anarchist' troop.

When, not long ago, in one of our armies a responsible and meritorious comrade, while in a state of extreme nervous excitement, struck a Red Army man, this worthy comrade, who held a post of responsibility, was at once relieved, taken away and punished. Meanwhile, in Makhno's troop blows in the face are considered a means of 'self-discipline'.

Every Red Army man must be made aware of the actual methods used in the Makhnovite organisation: he will then appreciate more highly the regime of our Red Army, which is increasingly filled with consciousness and the Communist spirit, and in which free devotion to duty is increasingly replacing compulsion and coercion.

October 15, 1920

Endnotes

[1.](#) The *tachanka* was a light, sprung cart drawn by two horses (used by Ukrainian peasants), on which Makhno mounted a machine-gun, with two men to work it, plus the driver. His extensive use of these *tachanki* gave Makhno a powerful combination of mobility with fire-power, and the device was copied by the Red Army. See Babel, *Discourse on the Tachanka*, in his **Collected Stories** (1955).

The Southern Front and The Fight Against Wrangel

The Southern Front and a Winter Campaign

* * *

A communiqué from Comrade Gusev has appeared in the press, reporting the first major successes won on the front against Wrangel. These successes prove that we can defeat Wrangel, and can do this in a relatively short time. However, as yet we have not merely not routed Wrangel, we have not, in the main, even got down to trying to do this. Wrangel's army embodies all the experience acquired by the counter-revolution on all the fronts of the civil war. The most irreconcilable elements of the armies of Kolchak, Denikin, Yudenich and other, minor White-Guard leaders have gathered and are still gathering in Wrangel's camp. These men bring with them great experience, great initiative, great hardness. The rich Cossacks of the Don and the Kuban have undergone substantial training in the armies of Denikin and Wrangel, and developed extraordinary striking power. The enemy has organised his intelligence work through agents with very great care, and it must frankly be said that, in many cases, he operates with great sureness. His supplies are inexhaustible, for the various 'surpluses' of American war supplies, together with the British, French and other supplies that have been given to Wrangel as advance payment in exchange for Russia, would alone suffice to keep him fighting for many years. However inconvenient it may be for him to have his base located in the Crimean trap, he has a fleet at his disposal, so that he is not really trapped.

After we signed the preliminary peace with Poland, France was still unwilling to renounce military intervention. On the contrary, there is much reason to believe that France is preparing to strike a more decisive blow, hoping thereby to disrupt our peace with Poland. Petlyura's bands have been reorganised with the help of Polish and French officers, and are adequately supplied. Millerand's task remains what it was – with the help of Wrangel, Petlyura and the Senegalese to wrest the Ukraine from Russia and turn it into a French colony.

All this, taken together, shows that we face a large-scale military task in the South. Our first successes are certainly very gratifying. But they are only a small advance-payment of our victory to come. Victory on the Black Sea coast will still require many weeks, and, even if it does not demand a full winter campaign, it will cut deeply into the winter. Consequently, the question of central importance is that of *supplies*.

We have plenty of supplies for the army. Food is being procured in the Ukraine: adequately, on the whole. There are big difficulties in the sphere of transport, as a result of the acute shortage of fuel and of the extreme intensification of bandit activity (especially in the Kremenchug area) and the help given to it by Petlyurist and Wrangelite railway workers. However, by the resolute measures we have taken we hope to get the better of our transport difficulties in the near future. In the Donets area, cartage service is being performed with the co-operation of the Revolutionary War Council of the front. In Right-bank Ukraine the loading and stockpiling of timber is being intensified

by using the forces of the South-Western front. Hundreds of Communists and specialists from the central provinces have been rushed to the railways of the Ukraine, led by Comrades Yemshanov and Rudoy. The results of these measures will not be long in showing themselves. Thus, where food and military stores are concerned, the Southern front gives no cause for alarm.

There remains the question of clothing: overcoats, boots, caps, warm underwear, underclothes generally, warm foot-cloths. In this matter the situation of the armies of the Southern front is still very difficult. There is no need to point out that if we do not satisfy the requirements of the Southern front in respect of winter kit, all our other efforts will prove vain, for cold and epidemics will disrupt the front.

Never before has our victory depended on the tailor's needle and the cobbler's awl so much as it does now.

Collection of warm underwear cannot, of course, completely meet the needs of the Red Army men. But it can, if carried through with the necessary energy, satisfy their most acute needs and fill the first yawning gaps. What is most important, though, is to increase the production of underclothes, uniforms and footwear, not leaving unutilised even the most modest possibilities for this.

All the country's institutions must use to the full the time that remains for equipping the front.

What you do, do quickly!

What you do, do doubly!

October 17, 1920

The Southern Front and The Fight Against Wrangel

Let This Be The Last!

* * *

Our train is again bound for the front. This is a hard front, where the fate of the Soviet Republic must be decided, and with it the fate of the Russian people. A hard front, a hard fight!

Many of the warriors of our train were before the walls of Kazan in those grave weeks of 1918 when we were fighting for the Volga. That fight ended long ago. The Eastern front has advanced far beyond Baikal. Chita is in the hands of the Siberian workers and peasants. The Soviet power is approaching the Pacific Ocean.

The warriors of our train fought gallantly before the walls of Petrograd, when the first capital of the workers' revolution was threatened by Yudenich. Petrograd is intact, and has since been visited by many representatives of the world proletariat.

Our train went more than once to the Western front. A preliminary peace has now been signed with Poland. There can be no doubt that the Polish bourgeoisie could not renew the war even if they wanted to. The Polish army does not want that, and the working people of Poland would not allow it.

Many of the warriors of our train were in the Don steppes when Krasnov and, later, Denikin, advanced against Soviet Russia from the South. The days of Krasnov and Denikin are long since past. Nearly the whole of the South is in the hands of the Soviet power.

Nearly all the South, but nevertheless not the whole of it. There remains the Crimea, which the French Government has turned into its fortress. The White-Guard garrison of this French fortress is under the command of a hired German-Russian general, Baron Wrangel. The decisive days in the life of the Southern front are near. If we crush Wrangel we win peace for ourselves. Peace will mean for us harmonious and intense labour. Labour will mean for us all-round raising of living conditions, improvement of the economy, transport and food-supplies. The economic advance will entail improvement in the health situation, growth of educational work, development of schools, flourishing of science and art. Peace will mean labour, and labour will mean freedom and happiness.

The friendly family of our train is starting on a new campaign. Let this campaign be the last!

October 27, 1920
Moscow-Kharkov
En Route, No.135

The Southern Front and The Fight Against Wrangel

Don't Let Them Get Away!

* * *

The first serious blows have been struck at Wrangel. [1] Prisoners have been taken, guns and other trophies captured. The offensive by Wrangel's forces has been broken, and they have now been forced to fall back all along the front. Furthermore, all the signs indicate that the White-Guard command is endeavouring to avoid battle at all costs, to take refuge behind Perekop and there to wait for better days.

Wrangel's soldiers, especially those from the Don and the Kuban, do not at all want to return to the Crimea. They had hoped by advancing to break through to their homes in the Don and the Kuban, to their *stanitsas* and their families. That hope proved false. The White command is ordering them to retreat, so as once more to hide behind the fortifications of the Isthmus of Perekop. The Don and Kuban men are discontented, for return to the Crimea means for them both hunger and an end to the hope of getting back to their families.

This is the decisive moment! If Wrangel were to succeed in withdrawing his forces into the peninsula, the successes we have achieved in recent weeks would be almost nullified. Behind the Perekop fortifications Wrangel would restore his forces, with the help of Britain and France, would strengthen them with fresh reinforcements, and then, choosing the right moment, would again launch an offensive towards the North. Even without advancing, Wrangel would inflict very great harm on the Workers' and Peasants' Republic, because he would compel it to keep a substantial army in readiness. There could be no question of demobilisation.

The task of the Red regiments of the Southern front is clear and simple: not to allow Wrangel to get away, not to let him out of their grip. He must at all costs be crushed before he reaches the gates of Perekop.

In the Crimea itself Wrangel has hardly any forces. He has thrown all his units that are capable of fighting on to the mainland side of the Isthmus. The Don and Kuban Cossacks, the Kornilov, Markov and Drozdovsky divisions – all are enclosed within the semicircle held by the Red Armies of the Southern front. The Wrangelites can seek shelter in only one direction – through the Perekop neck of the Crimean bottle. They must absolutely not be allowed to do this. They must be overtaken on the way, struck at from North, East and West, gripped in a steel vice, cut off from Perekop, overthrown, disarmed, annihilated. As soon as the enemy's main forces on this side of the Isthmus have been smashed, the gates of Perekop will open almost by themselves, because the enemy will be unable to find sufficient manpower to defend them.

If we were to let Wrangel escape, he could bar the narrow passage of Perekop with a small force. We should then have to throw in regiment after

regiment, division after division, so as to break into the Crimea. Thousands and thousands of fighting men would perish in order to realise this aim.

The simplest and shortest solution is this – to crush Wrangel's fighting force now. He is retreating, but we must not let him. He hopes to find shelter, but we must surround and destroy him.

Only speed of advance and vigour of attack can bring decisive success. Every needless halt, every delay, every minute lost is a grave crime for which great sacrifices will have to be paid when we reach Perekop.

The next few days will decide the fate of Wrangel and his army.

Do not let the enemy get away, pursue him tirelessly, make every effort – such is now the duty of the warriors of the Southern front. Red Army men, do your duty to the end!

En Route
October 27, 1920

Endnotes

1. After October 15, 1920 the initiative in action on the front against Wrangel finally shifted to us. The armistice with Poland enabled us to begin reinforcing our troops on the Southern front and advancing towards its complete liquidation. Starting on October 26 our units, moving in from three sides at once, tried to cut off Wrangel's lines of retreat to the Crimea. After seven days of fighting, in which he lost hundreds of guns and large stores of *materiel*, and 20,000 of his men were taken prisoner, Wrangel succeeded in withdrawing the bulk of his forces behind the fortifications of the Isthmus of Perekop. Our forces, not allowing the enemy time to prepare a stubborn defence, broke through these fortifications in a valiant attack, and by November 10 the whole of the Crimea was in the hands of the Soviet Republic. Wrangel's principal cadres managed to get away by sea to Turkey. (See maps Nos.8 and 9, and the chronology.)

Various Subjects

A Memorandum for Certain Newly-Fledged Anglophils

* * *

An old Russian writer gave a hateful description of the international policy of the British, which, in his words, found expression in a saying by one of the British statesmen: *Tout prendre, rien rendre, toujours prétendre* (i.e., grab everything, give back nothing, always put in a claim). That means acting exactly in the manner of Nozdrev [Nozdrev is a grasping, bullying serfowner and landlord in Gogol's **Dead Souls**.]: what's on this side of the wood is mine, and what's on the other side of it is mine, too. It is not possible to go further in this greed for grasping, and it is the first sign of decadence.

Our writer describes the rulers of Britain with some most expressive strokes:

"Thus, in a nation in which trade constitutes the predominant motive for activity, the government will always be oligarchical, the army always mercenary. Freedom for the upper and middle estates of society, ruthless exploitation for the one below – but all on a basis of loudly-proclaimed freedom, which, however, amounts, so far as the latter estate is concerned, to freedom to die of starvation.

"What are the distinguishing features of this mentality? Profiteering, bribery, fraud: money can buy anything. There is no perfidy from which the British would shrink, and they constantly strive to get others to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them. That last trait was graphically revealed all through the period of the Napoleonic wars.

'Another feature of the mentality of the British (i.e., of their ruling classes) is all-round pharisaism and hypocrisy. Whatever they may undertake, unjustly and sometimes quite shamefully, with a view to making money, they always do it in the name of civilisation, in the name of the interests of humanity. They loudly proclaim the rights of man, speak out against all oppression, and yet there is no oppression crueller, more ruthless and more ruinous than that under which Ireland and India are groaning.

"They are fighting the Boers, too, in the name of the alleged interests of humanity, progress and civilisation, but these interests come down to the conquest of gold-bearing deposits. They even set up their notorious concentration camps for the Boers' families on the grounds that in these camps the families would live more comfortably, and their death-rate would be lower, than if they stayed at home on their farms. And so it is with everything they do.'

Absolutely true: so it is with everything they do. Having now launched a brigand campaign against workers' and peasants' Russia, the British pharisees are swearing by the interests of civilisation and humanity. And there are "enlightened" Russians who believe this.

But who is this author whom we quoted, above, on the subject of bourgeois Britain? He is no Bolshevik, no Communist, no Marxist, no revolutionary, but old Dragomirov, a general in the Tsarist army. [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#)

It would be no bad idea to inscribe his description of the pharisaical greed of the British ruling classes on the forehead of Dragomirov Junior, who has sold his "sword", and the blood of the soldiers and officers duped by him, to Anglo-French imperialism.

January 3, 1919
Isv.V.Ts.I.K., No.4

Endnotes

[1.](#) The reference is to an article by M.I. Dragomirov entitled : *The decline in the political power of Britain*, which was included in a collection of articles, some original and others translated, by M.I. Dragomirov entitled, **Eleven Years, 1895-1905** Vol.I, St. Petersburg 1909.

[2.](#) General M.I. Dragomirov had fought in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878, when Disraeli's Government backed the Turks and obstructed the Russian advance towards Constantinople, and he shared the anti-British sentiments that were common among Tsarist officers of his generation. His son, A.M. Dragomirov, served in the White Army.

Various Subjects

Order No.74

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, January 9, 1919, No.74, *Valuiki*

* * *

It was reported to me that the military censorship prevented the press from reporting at the time the fact that we had lost Perm to the White-Guard gangs. On checking, this report, which had seemed quite improbable, proved to be correct.

I consider it necessary to reprimand the military censorship for a gross and impermissible blunder. The military censorship exists for the purpose of preventing publication in the press of information which, being in the nature of military secrets, might be used against us if it got into enemy hands. The fall of Perm cannot constitute a secret to be kept from our enemies: when they took Perm they shouted about it for the whole world to hear. The French minister Pichon boasted before the French parliament about the capture of Perm. Consequently, what the military censorship was trying to do was to conceal from the Russian people something that the enemy knew. That was the method followed by the old regime. There is no point in concealing our isolated setbacks. To suppose that news of them could break the spirit of the worker masses means not to understand the significance and nature of our war and the mood of the revolutionary masses. Isolated failures and defeats merely compel Soviet Russia to pull itself together, because the fortuitous loss of one town cannot in any way discourage the army which, in the course of a single month, has restored to the Soviet family Pskov, Narva, Riga, Dvinsk, Vilna, Ufa and a number of other, less important towns.

Various Subjects

Order No.78

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Nikolayev Division, January 27, 1919, No. 78, Pokrovsk, Saratov Province.

* * *

To be read to all companies, batteries and squadrons

Soldiers of the Nikolayev Division! Traitors and enemies of the working people have deceived you. Paid agents of Krasnov and Dutov have urged you on to the path of open mutiny. You have revolted against the Soviet power, elected by millions of workers and peasants. You have driven out and killed the commissars and commanders appointed by the Soviet power. You are not obeying the military orders issued by the Soviet power. Your ringleaders, bribed by Dutov and Kolchak, are entering into relations with enemies of the working class.

I have come to your front in order to put an end to your shameful, dishonourable mutiny.

Firm, valiant and honourable Red regiments have been moved up by me from Saratov, Moscow, Uralsk, Orenburg, Astrakhan and Kamyshin for the purpose of surrounding and ruthlessly crushing you.

I have instructed the Soviet authorities to place your families under temporary arrest and to seal all your property in villages and towns.

On behalf of the Council of People's Commissars I order that all instigators, agents of Dutov and Krasnov, traitors and selfseekers are to be crushed, shot, wiped off the face of the earth. There is to be no quarter for anyone. When the regiments of the Volsk Division mutinied, not a trace was left of them. So shall it be with you. The Soviet Republic admits of no mercy for traitors and scoundrels.

Only those will save their lives who immediately lay down their arms and present themselves as penitents before the Soviet power. Only that regiment will be preserved which itself arrests all traitors and hands them over to the Soviet authorities. Whoever remains in the ranks of the mutineers twelve hours after the publication of this order will meet with ruin and death.

Various Subjects

To The Cossacks!

* * *

Cossacks! Krasnov's army has been smashed. Not so long ago it was threatening Voronezh and Balashov, but now it has been thrown back beyond the Don. Liski, Bobrov, Talovaya, Paylovsk, Boguchar, Novokhopersk, Borisoglebsk, Povorino, Uryupinskaya, Valuiki, Kupyansk, Starobyelsk, Lugansk – all these important places have passed into the hands of the Soviet forces. A great deal of military booty was left for the Red regiments by the defeated Krasnovite bands. More and more fresh Soviet forces are being concentrated on the Don front. After a week or two have gone by, the Soviet regiments will enter Novocherkassk and Rostov.

On other fronts, too, the workers' and peasants' government is vanquishing its foes. In the West the Red forces have recovered Pskov, Riga, Ust-Dvinsk, Mitau, Dvinsk, Polotsk, Minsk, Gomel and many other towns.

In the Ukraine the Soviet Ukrainian forces have taken Kharkov, Poltava, Chernigov and Konotop, and are still advancing.

In the East our Red regiments have in recent weeks captured Ufa and Orenburg. Dutov, Krasnov's ally, has been defeated.

There is no salvation for Krasnov. The time has come for you, working Cossacks, to realise that fact – and for you, too, junior officers deceived by Krasnov. It is time for you to lay down your arms, time to cease your senseless resistance. If you surrender your weapons and disperse quietly to your homes, you will be pardoned for all the crimes you have committed against the people while in Krasnov's service, If you continue to resist, merciless punishment will descend upon you.

Working Cossacks! Get together, discuss your situation, send envoys to the Red regiments. Hand over your arms, come under the Red banners of the Soviet power.

Death to the traitors and hangmen of the people! Down with Krasnov!

Long live the brotherhood of the workers, peasants and working Cossacks!

This telegram has just been received:

'Uralsk has been taken by units of the First Army after stubborn fighting. The enemy has been completely smashed and scattered along the whole Orenburg-Uralsk front.'

The Ural Cossacks have ended their senseless resistance. It is time for you, Cossacks of the Don, to follow their example.

Various Subjects

A Letter to the Middle Peasants

From the People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs

* * *

An agitation is being carried on among the peasants and in the Red Army, against the Soviet power and its policy in respect of food and of military affairs. This is quite natural, because the Soviet power has deprived all exploiters and, in particular, the village kulaks, of their former extensive privileges. It is also not surprising if counter-revolutionary agitators resort to all sorts of tricks and stratagems, trying to confuse the more backward, less informed peasants and Red Army men. Recently, counterrevolutionary agitators have widely circulated among the masses a rumour to the effect that there are very big disagreements among the central Soviet authorities: Comrade Lenin, they say, is for the middle peasants, whereas Trotsky, according to this story, is an irreconcilable enemy of the middle peasants, and even incites the army against them! Any worker who is at all serious-minded and politically experienced, any thinking peasant, cannot but realise that this rumour is a monstrous lie.

Comrade peasants! I belong to that same Communist Party whose leader Comrade Lenin is. We are both members of the Central Committee of this party. All questions relating to food supply, the army or any other sphere are always discussed in the Central Committee, under whose guidance work is carried on in all departments of the Soviet Republic.

I have no differences with Comrade Lenin where the middle peasants are concerned. Our Communist Party is the party of the proletariat and the village labourers, the poor peasants. The rural kulaks are, for us, enemies just like the town bourgeoisie. The middle peasants stand between the rural proletariat, on the one side, and the kulaks, on the other. One wing of the middle peasants is close to the proletariat while the other one passes over imperceptibly into kulak status. Is the peasant of middling status our enemy or our friend? By virtue of his whole situation and all his interests, the middle peasant, provided he has not been duped by kulaks' lies, ought to be our friend. Only the Soviet power finally did away with the landlords' yoke and gave the land to the peasants, among whom middle peasants predominate. Only the Soviet power is conducting and will continue to conduct a war of extermination against the kulaks, who are trying to get into their clutches the land and the means of agricultural production, robbing the middle peasants and depriving them completely of their share.

The Soviet power stands for a Communist economy and it will consistently lead the peasant masses along that path, which is the only right one. But *the Soviet power does not compel and is not going to compel* the middle peasants

to go over to the Communist form of economy by force. The task of the Soviet power in this sphere consists in, first, proving in practice to the peasants the immense superiority of the social, Communist economy over the petty-peasant form, and, secondly, helping the peasant economy by disseminating agronomical knowledge and supplying the peasants with the technical forces and resources they need.

In the sphere of taxation policy, the task of the Soviet power consists in putting the tax burden mainly on the kulaks, while, as far as possible, lightening this burden for the middle peasants. In the sphere of state policy, the task of the Soviet power consists in supplying the middle peasants with cloth, metal articles, and so forth, on the most favourable terms possible.

It can, of course, be said that at the present time the Soviet power is able to do relatively little in any of the spheres mentioned. That is certainly the case. The impoverishment of the country and the disordered state of industry and transport bear heavily upon the rural population, including the middle peasants. Only with very great difficulty can a peasant acquire an *arshin* of calico, a nail, a horseshoe, and so on. But this unfortunate condition is common to us all. The country has been ruined by four years of imperialist war and by the brigand campaigns of the White-Guard bands, which have, all the time, kept us cut off from coal, iron ore and cotton. For the woes of the town workers and for those of the working peasants masses it is not the policy of the Soviet power that is responsible, but the policy of those classes which formerly ruled over us. Every conscious and honest peasant knows that very well. We need two or three years of intense work, in town and country, to heal the grave wounds our economy has suffered, restore production, bring transport to order and establish products-exchange between town and country – and then the middle peasants will at once appreciate the immense superiority of the Soviet order, and will sigh with relief.

Only fools or scoundrels can say that the Red Army has been formed to oppose the middle peasants. There is no place in the Red Army for counter-revolutionary bourgeois or kulaks. The mass of our army is made up of workers and peasants – poor peasants and middle peasants. It is the task of this army to protect those same working classes from which it has been formed. Every one of our Red Army men gives a solemn promise to fight for the interests of the working people. The Red Army is the only bulwark of the working masses, including the middle peasants.

True, a number of cases have occurred when soldiers with a low level of consciousness have given offence to the local population, including the working peasants. Not a few justified complaints on that score have been received from the countryside. But no honest and intelligent peasant will make the Soviet power responsible for such evildoings. What is to blame here is, on the one hand, hunger and the shortage of everything, and, on the other, ignorance – and also, often, counterrevolutionary kulak elements which have got into our army and incite the soldiers to play criminal and shameful tricks on the working population, so as to cause enmity between them and thereby to undermine the workers' and peasants' power. Acts of violence against the working peasantry can be combated only in one way – by educating the Red Army in a spirit of discipline and close solidarity with the working masses of our country. The Soviet power is doing just that, and every honest peasant will agree that, at the present time, outrages, acts of vandalism and violence on

the part of the Red Army against the peaceful working population are incomparably less frequent than a few months ago. The stronger and firmer the Red Army becomes, the more victories it wins, the better, the more solicitous, the friendlier becomes its attitude to the working population.

Such, then, is the attitude of the Soviet power to the middle peasants. There have been no differences on that score within the Soviet Government. But nothing is left to the counterrevolutionaries, whose affairs are going from bad to worse, except to deceive the working masses with talk of a struggle which is supposed to be rending the Council of People's Commissars. The open White-Guards have fled, or are hiding, their tails between their legs, squatting in nooks and crannies. Among the SRs and the Mensheviks, all the most honourable have seen, from experience, that the fight against the Soviet power now means giving direct help to the Anglo-French robbers and the Russian Black Hundreds. Being unready to appear with their true face, the White Guards, the enemies of the working people, have repainted themselves as Left SRs, or else they incite Left SR idiots and hysterical women against the Soviet power. The wretched clique of adventurers and political rogues who call themselves the Left SR party are now the principal centre from which come lies and slanders for duping the more backward sections of the population. It is mainly Left SR agitators who are spreading the false story about the Red Army being formed to fight the middle peasants.

Comrade peasants! Do not believe the slanders, and drive away the slanderers. The Soviet power is your power. You can have no other. The sins and blunders of the Soviet power are your sins and blunders. The more closely you, middle peasants, together with the village poor, link yourselves with the town workers, the sooner shall we by our joint effort get food supplies, industry and transport going again, and the sooner shall we emerge from the pit of hunger, ruin and epidemics.

Remember one thing: it is not a matter of individual persons appointed by you, but of you yourselves. At your congresses you can replace some deputies by others, worse ones by better. At the All-Russia Congress of Soviets you can always remove any People's Commissar, and put another in his place. But do not let dishonest tricksters undermine the Soviet power, for only the power of the proletarians and semi-proletarians of town and country, in close alliance with the middle peasants, will save Soviet Russia and make it an independent and prosperous country.

February 6, 1919
Isv. V. Ts. I. K., No.28

Various Subjects

Order No.81

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, March 2, 1919, No.81, Moscow

* * *

Concerning the Institution of the Order of the Red Banner

By decision of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, September 16, 1918, a decoration, the Order of the Red Banner was instituted for award to the most distinguished, self-sacrificing, valiant and heroic warriors of the Red Army. The significance of this decoration must be clear to every soldier, worker and peasant, to every citizen of the Soviet Republic. This order has nothing in common with the orders of the old Tsarist army or of the bourgeois armies of other countries. The Order of the Red Banner confers no rights or privileges, other than one right – to the respect of all honourable citizens of Soviet Russia and of socialist fighters in other countries. The soldiers of the Red Army do not fight for the sake of decorations but in the name of the lofty task of defending the Soviet Socialist Republic. But there is among the working citizens of the Soviet Republic a profound inner need to express their care and love for the bravest and most selfless of our fighting men. An outward symbol of this, a mark of recognition, is constituted by the Order of the Red Banner, which is awarded in the name of the highest body of the Soviet Republic. The order bears the inscription: "Workers of all lands, unite!" This inscription reminds us, better than anything else, that the Order serves not to contrast individual heroes with the mass of fighters but, on the contrary, to recall to the working people of all countries the need for united and selfless struggle for the cause of socialism.

February 6, 1919
Isv.V.Ts.I.K., No.28

Various Subjects

Order No.83

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, March 9, 1919, No.83, Moscow

* * *

Greetings from the Communist International

Early in March, representatives of the revolutionary workers of various countries of Europe and America came together in Moscow at a congress held in order to establish close revolutionary collaboration among the working people of all lands in the struggle against their oppressors. This congress founded the Communist International – that is, an international alliance of workers, soldiers and working peasants, for establishing a world-wide Soviet republic which will forever put an end to enmity and wars between the peoples.⁴³ At one of its sessions the Communist International adopted the following resolution of greeting to the Russian Workers' and Peasants' Red Army:

'The congress of the Communist International conveys to the Red Army of Soviet Russia its hearty greetings and all wishes for complete victory in the struggle against international imperialism.'

This fraternal greeting from the international proletariat must be made known to all the warriors of the Red Army and the Red Navy. I hereby order commissars to read it out to all companies, task-forces, squadrons and batteries and to all ships' crews. Every soldier of the Red Army, every sailor of the Red Army will hear with merited pride this message of greeting from the highest and most authoritative institution of the world working class. The Red Army and the Red Navy will not fail the expectations and hopes of the Communist International.

Under the banner of the working class of the world – forward!

Various Subjects

Ya.M. Sverdlov

Obituary

* * *

The death of Yakov Mikhailovich Sverdlov was one of those cruel, sly blows that fate so often delivers. As an unbending revolutionary, holding one of the most responsible positions in Soviet Russia, Sverdlov had every reason to expect a treacherous blow struck by a counter-revolutionary. But nobody expected that this man of unquenchable energy and will-power would fall victim to a week-long struggle with the exhausting disease for which helpless doctors have invented the epithet "Spanish". [\[1\]](#)

Today, the day after this most grievous loss we have suffered, it is not possible to give a biography of the late fighter, or any even more or less complete characterisation of him. His biography will be related to us, phase by phase, by comrades who observed him closely, knew him well in the pre-revolutionary period, worked side by side with him in the underground, and shared imprisonment and exile with him. The life of this remarkable man, in all its details, must become the possession of every thinking Russian worker and peasant, and not of Russians alone. Here, I will only say that Comrade Sverdlov came from a family of working people and was himself a worker in his youth. He made his way to enlightenment and knowledge, and to the most responsible posts in the workers' movement and in Soviet Russia, through stubborn work and intense will-power. Whereas almost all the other comrades who are now carrying out very responsible work at the head of the Soviet country spent long years in emigration, lived in Europe, took part in its political struggles and enriched themselves from its experience, Comrade Sverdlov lived and worked, without a break, inside Russia, during the most oppressive years of counter-revolution. In this sense he was the most "rooted in the soil" of our leading executives. Just because he did not emigrate, his name, shrouded by the conditions of clandestine work, remained completely unknown to wide circles before the revolution. But as soon as the chains of Tsardom had been smashed and the workers' movement had swollen into a broad river, Sverdlov at once, naturally and without effort, rose to the top and was seen by all as one of the most valuable and solid figures in our revolution.

It can be said that he knew the Party, its organisation, its personnel, better than anyone else. All the threads were concentrated in his hands. He kept records of all the Party workers. When he was put at the head of the Central Executive Committee he became its irreplaceable leader. He steadily combined his work as Party organiser with work as leader of the supreme institution of Soviet Russia.

Sverdlov's organisational abilities were truly unexampled. In particular *he*

knew the military apparatus in all its many ramifications better than any of the executives in the War Department. In all cases when it was necessary to find new executives or to transfer old ones, we applied to one and the same address – over the Kremlin telephone, to Comrade Sverdlov. He would offer the name of an individual who, in nine cases out of ten, proved to be the best candidate, the one most suitable to the circumstances of the job. He did not need to rummage among papers and lists, or to make inquiries – he drew it all from his amazing memory as an organiser and leader. When, in the work of some department or other, a hitch, a blockage occurred, some internal conflict or clash with another department, the inevitable telephone call rang out in Comrade Sverdlov's office. In a few words, Yakov Mikhailovich would sort out the situation and give his help. Having received the necessary shove, the machinery would start working again. Not many people saw this work being done. But it was Comrade Sverdlov's principal work, which the Party and the Soviet power will now be able to perform only through the intense collective efforts of a number of persons.

But even that lesser part of Mikhailovich's work which was visible to everyone was sufficient to make his name one of the most popular in the country. He was an excellent speaker – clear, calm, logical, with a powerful voice. That voice resounded with confidence and will-power. Confidence and will-power radiated from his whole person and his swarthy face. He was always true to himself. During the two years of the revolution, we have known both grave days of setbacks, partial defeats, and also days of great victories. Comrade Sverdlov always kept his spiritual balance, never getting intoxicated by successes or losing heart under the blows of defeat. I recall the July days of 1917, when the Party seemed to have been smashed. Lenin and Zinoviev were in hiding, frenzied White Terror reigned in the streets of Petrograd, the bourgeois press was depicting the Bolsheviks as an organisation of spies in the pay of the German Kaiser, and our press had been stifled. I recall the days of the October insurrection and the work of the Military Revolutionary Committee, in a little room on the second floor at Smolny. I recall the days when the Brest-Litovsk negotiations broke down – the German offensive, the fall of Dvinsk, Narva, Pskov ... The weeks and months of the White-Guard conspiracies, the Czechoslovak rising, the fall of the Volga towns, the murder of Uritsky, the attempt on Lenin's life. Yakov Mikhailovich always remained true to himself. In times of success this organiser consolidated victory, and in times of defeat he prepared for a comeback.

The gigantic work carried out by the Party in creating the Red Army, especially since August of last year, took place with his decisive participation. He mobilised Party workers, detached them from a variety of posts, finding them here, there and everywhere, and selected the right man for the right job – *to him unquestionably belongs the lion's share of merit for our military successes during the last six months.*

Delegations of workers and peasants came to Moscow from all corners of our impoverished, exhausted, ruined country and knocked on Comrade Sverdlov's door. This brought him again and again into touch with that soil from which he was cut off less than were others amongst us. By questioning delegates he checked on the work of the local authorities and the way in which Soviet legislation was being put into effect. Once more there would be telephone calls, now from Comrade Sverdlov's office to various departments: Yakov Mikhailovich would propose a number of practical measures, make corrections

to decrees which had been issued, or take the initiative in promoting new legislation.

A bourgeois newspaper gave a sort of description of Sverdby's appearance – his dark, inward-concentrated face, his leather clothing – and ended with words of half-unwilling respect: "It is like this, probably, that monuments in the new proletarian style will look."

Yes, Sverdlov, a man all of one piece, will find his eventual embodiment in art. The proletariat will construct from steel a monument to this leader made of steel.

March 17, 1919
Sasovo

Endnotes

1. Sverdlov fell victim to the pandemic of a type of influenza which spread across the world in 1918-1919 (allegedly starting in Spain – but now know to have originated in Kansas, US) and which is said to have caused more deaths than World War I.

Various Subjects

Order No.84

By the chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to Railway Workers, March 18, 1919, No.84, Ruzayevka station

* * *

Comrade railway workers!

There are still to be found in your ranks a number of enemies of the working class from among those Black-Hundred members whom Rukhlov [S.V. Rukhlov was the Tsar's Minister of Transport in 1909-1915.] selected, after the defeat of the revolutionary transport workers. Today, these counter-revolutionary railwaymen, represented mainly among the senior office workers, are making use of every opportunity to intensify the disorder of the railways. Members of the railway administration have been mixed up in all the White-Guard revolts, helping to transport the rebels, facilitating their choice of routes, and providing them with communications through the railway telegraph. I remind you that the Soviet Republic is an armed camp, surrounded by enemies. I remind you that the railways have been put under martial law. I remind you that enemies of the working class and the poor peasantry are subjected by the Soviet power to ruthless punishment, up to and including execution by shooting.

I order that security on the railways be redoubled in vigilance, responsibility being placed on the village and volost soviets in the railway zone for protection of the stretches of line adjoining their respective territories.

In the event of danger to the permanent way the most ruthless measures are to be taken.

Various Subjects

Order No.85

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Peasants, March 18, 1919, No.85, Ruzayevka station

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The enemies of workers" and peasants" Russia have long been preparing for a spring campaign against us. The British and French planned to advance from the north, from Archangel, toward Vologda and Moscow. Kolchak counted on advancing from Perm to Vyatka and Vologda, and from Ufa to Simbirsk and Samara. They were to be helped, from the South, by the old Tsarist general Denikin, and, from the West, by the Petlyurists – that is, the Ukrainian landlords and kulaks, the Polish gentry – that is, noble landlords, and also by the German White Guards who do not want to leave the Russian fortresses they hold.

Simultaneously with all this, the enemies of workers" and peasants" Russia intended to raise a revolt inside the country. The conspiracy was under preparation in a number of places. Acting as agents of Anglo-French and American capital among us, inside the country, were White Guards who now usually call themselves Left SRs. The revolt was fixed for March 12, that is, for the second anniversary of the revolution.

Numerous telegrams and other documents have come into the possession of the Soviet Government, from which the plan of the conspiracy emerges quite clearly. The revolt was to be launched at such important railway centres as Bryansk, Lgov, Liski, Rtishchevo, Syzran, Inza, Ruzayevka, etc. By means of these revolts it was intended to disrupt the most important stretches of railway-line, cutting Petrograd and Moscow off from supplies of grain and thereby condemning central Russia to perish from hunger and cold.

At the same time, foreign imperialists were to burst into the country through four gateways – in the North, East, South and West. In order to facilitate their irruption still better, the foreign imperialists ordered their agents and instruments inside the country to start mutinies in Red Army units.

This plan suffered shipwreck. The Red Army remained true to the working class and the working peasantry. Only some quite useless and numerically insignificant units mutinied, and these have already laid down their arms. The offensive by the foreign imperialists did not come off. In the South we are continuing to advance in all sectors, we have taken Nikolayev, Melitopol, Berdyansk and Mariupol, and we are approaching Novocherkassk and Rostov.

In the East, Kolchak's offensive has been halted. We are attacking in the North. We are advancing in Estonia. The kulak revolts have not come off. They broke out in two or three places, but proved to be quite insignificant, and have already been put down. The guilty have been shot.

Comrade working peasants! Your enemies, the landlords and capitalists, are trying to draw you, too, into revolt against the workers' and peasants' power. Be on your guard. Do not trust wolves in sheep's clothing!

The central government knows about the grave situation of the working peasantry. The war which we have been compelled to wage against the landlords who want to restore the authority of the Tsar and return the land to the nobles is demanding ever new sacrifices from the workers and peasants. Mobilisation of persons, mobilisation of horses, stable duty for the army, all bear heavily on the peasant economy. At the same time, ruined industry is not providing the peasants with the goods they need: cloth, agricultural implements, metal articles, and all the other things required for life and work. But every thinking and honest peasant must understand that it is not we, not the Soviet power, who are responsible for this war. It is the old oppressors of the people who want to recover the land, wealth and power. Where they have succeeded (in Siberia, in Archangel province, in the Crimea) the peasants' situation has worsened a hundredfold.

We need to bring the war to an end as quickly as possible, to drive out the Kolchaks, Krasnovs and Denikins, to re-establish peace and labour order. Senseless revolts and destruction of railway lines merely prolong the war, throw the country into confusion and cause ever new calamities for the working people, the peasants and workers.

Already the very same foreign bourgeois governments that are waging war against us have been obliged to recognise that Soviet Russia cannot be broken, and they are increasingly talking about the necessity of making peace with workers' and peasants' Russia. Our internal enemies, the landlords, White Guards and kulaks, are opposing this trend with all their might.

Comrade peasants, be on your guard! Do not let yourselves be deceived! Help the Red Army and the town workers to crush the counter-revolution for good and all. The Soviet power is your power. It is doing all it can to improve the position of the peasants, to revive industry, to alleviate the state of agriculture. As soon as we have disposed of the enemy, workers' and peasants' Russia will enjoy tranquillity and comfort.

Long live the honest working peasants!

Long live the fraternal alliance between the workers, the Red Army and the middle peasants!

Long live free workers' and peasants' Russia!

Various Subjects

Order No.86

By the chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Red Army, March 18, 1919, No.86, Inza station

* * *

Comrade soldiers! Complaints directed against the Red Army are sometimes heard coming from the peasantry. There actually have been instances when insufficiently conscious and disciplined units have caused offence to working peasants. This must not happen. The Red Army must put an end to it.

The Red Army serves to defend the workers and the working peasants. The peasants contribute to the army soldiers, horses and grain. The workers contribute to the army soldiers, rifles and clothing. Between these three groups there must be a close, fraternal alliance.

It is not we who have caused the war. The war was forced upon us by the landlords and capitalists, our own and foreign ones, who want to strangle us. War is a stern and grave matter. The peaceful population also suffer from the war, and the peasantry first and foremost. It is not possible to prevent this. The peasantry will recover when we have disposed of our enemies and given peace and tranquillity to the country. But even now, in wartime, it is impermissible to increase without restraint the burdens that fall upon the peasantry. The kulak is our enemy. But the middle peasant, the working cultivator, must be our friend and fellow. To cause him offence is to commit an unforgivable crime. Honourable, conscious soldiers must react against the slightest attempt on the part of ignorant and depraved soldiers to rob and coerce the working peasants: they must come to the defence of the working peasants and ruthlessly punish the bullies and violators.

Commissars and commanders! Take strict care to ensure that the working peasants are not offended by unconscious elements in the army. Do not permit any illegal requisitions and confiscations. Take care to see that the peasants are paid the established prices for everything that the Red Army takes from them.

Counter-revolutionary agitators who stir up the peasants against the Red soldiers must be exterminated, but close comradely relations must everywhere be maintained with the peasants themselves, the meaning of our war must be explained to them, and they must be drawn into conscious participation in joint Soviet work.

No mercy to marauders and predators who plunder and insult the working

peasants!

Ruthless punishment for all kulaks who stir up the peasants against the soldiers!

Long live the fraternal alliance between the Red Army and all the working peasants!

Various Subjects

The Counter-Revolution at Its Last Gasp

* * *

During the recent kulak revolts in the Volga area, the leaders put forward the slogan: "Down with the Communists, long live the Soviet power!"

What does this mean?

It means that the counter-revolution has finally had the ground cut from beneath its feet and has lost faith in itself. The counter-revolutionary plotters want to restore the monarchy, to put the Tsar back on his throne, to bring back the landlords. But they dare not say so openly, for they know that even ignorant peasants would drive them away with cudgels and pitchforks if they came with such slogans. The counterrevolutionaries began long since to conceal their true desires behind alluring words and attractive slogans. All the monarchists swore, during their revolts, by the slogan of the Constituent Assembly. But nowadays this slogan, too, has become finally played out. From the experience of Denikin and Kolchak everyone has been convinced that the Constituent Assembly serves merely as a temporary mask for the supporters of the noble and monarchical order. It is already impossible to catch even backward peasants with the slogan of the Constituent Assembly. Not only the proletarian, not only the village labourer, not only the landless poor peasant, but also the working middle peasant now knows, for he has been taught by experience, that only the Soviet power is sincerely and honestly striving to secure the interests of the working masses. Consequently, the peasants are giving firm support to the Soviet power – even that section of them who are discontented, rightly or wrongly, with the actions of the local authorities. The counter-revolutionary plotters are obliged to reckon with this fact, to imitate this outlook, and to inscribe on their banner: "Long live the Soviet power."

Fifty year ago, when the revolutionary movement was only beginning in Russia, the revolutionaries were only a tiny handful in this immense country. The peasantry still believed firmly in the monarchy and reacted with horror to the preaching of the revolutionaries. There were cases in those days when the revolutionaries resorted to issuing manifestos in the name of the Tsar. That was, of course, a wrong step to take, and it was soon condemned by the revolutionary party; but the fact that revolutionaries appealed to the peasantry allegedly in the name of the Tsar shows how strong monarchist prejudices were, in those days, among the peasant masses.

The revolution has left no trace of these prejudices surviving. Instead of belief in the monarchy, in the Tsar, the bourgeoisie tried to create a belief in an above-class Constituent Assembly. In the first months following the suppression of the Constituent Assembly the peasants responded to this slogan. Experiencing all sorts of adversities and hardships in a country which

had been exhausted by the war, by the Tsarist and bourgeois governments, the peasants sometimes took the bait and were ready to believe that the Constituent Assembly might ease their situation. But life has not left one stone of these prejudices upon another. And so, now, the sworn enemies of the working class and the working peasantry have been compelled to re-paint themselves in the guise of supporters of Soviet power. The banner of the Constituent Assembly has been cast aside by the kulaks and counter-revolutionaries like a useless rag. At the foot of their appeals we find signatures in the Soviet style, military leader So-and-so, military commissar Such-and-such. The counter-revolution has abandoned its last ideological positions and sees itself obliged to take its stand (hypocritically, of course) upon the ground of Soviet power. By so acting, the counter-revolution signs its own death warrant, because it testifies, over its own signatures, that there is no way out, no salvation for the people other than Soviet power.

True, the counter-revolution still has the possibility of agitating on the basis of the blunders, mistakes and even crimes committed by agents of the Soviet power. But the Soviet power itself wants to and will wage a struggle against them, with unremitting energy. In order that the apparatus of Soviet power may be improved it must be purged internally, and to this end what is needed above all is that a strict distinction be drawn between the rural bourgeoisie, the kulaks, and the working middle peasantry.

All Soviet executives at village, *uyezd*, *volost* and province level must make it central to their task to become closely associated in joint work with the middle peasants, while expelling the kulaks from the sphere of protection by Soviet laws and Soviet power.

Kulaks are not allowed into the Red Army. Kulaks must not be given military training. Watch out, in the strictest possible way, that, besides workers, only honest working peasants are mobilised.

Kulaks, together with the sons of the bourgeoisie, are to be sent *into the rear levies*: let them do the hardest kind of manual work, in the interests of the army and of defence of the Soviet land.

Kulaks must be ruthlessly expelled from the Soviets.

In the event of revolt, or of damage to railway lines and bridges, the kulaks of the nearest volosts are to be exterminated without mercy.

Where the deceived working middle peasants are concerned, we must proceed more by means of words, by persuasion, explaining to them that their salvation lies in ruthless struggle against the kulaks and close collaboration with the working class.

Like the snake in the fable, the kulak has changed his skin, he now swears by Soviet power, and he thinks that the working peasants do not recognise him. But the shrewd peasant answered the snake that had changed its skin: "Even though you are now in a new skin, your heart is still the same" – and he beat that neighbour of his to death.

That is just how the working peasant will act, along with the working class, towards the counter-revolutionary kulak. He has repainted himself red, he is making himself out to be for Soviet power, but we shall show him no mercy.

Workers and peasants, the time has come to beat the counter-revolutionary kulak to death. [\[1\]](#)

March 27
Kazan

Endnotes

[\[1\]](#) In this article Trotsky's imagery is taken from Krylov's fable of "the peasant and the snake". The snake creeps into the house of a peasant whom he addresses as "neighbour", saying that he has "absolutely changed", as may be seen from his new skin, so that he is no longer to be feared. However, the peasant replies that, though the snake may have a new skin, his heart is still the same – and then kills him.

Various Subjects

Order No.88

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, April 3, 1919, No.88, Moscow

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At the beginning of March an international congress of representatives of the revolutionary proletariat met in Moscow. This congress sent a fraternal greeting to the Red Army, which I passed on in my order No.83. Before they left, the foreign delegates presented to the Red Army, through the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, a banner inscribed: "From the foreign delegates of the Communist International, as a mark of respect for the Red Army", and, on the other side: "Workers of all lands, unite!"

This banner is now the highest and holiest of all the banners possessed by our army. It symbolises the high ideal of international solidarity of the working class, in the name of which the workers" and peasants" Red Army is fighting. On all ceremonial occasions in the life of the Red Army, the banner of the Communist International will wave above our revolutionary regiments.

Long live the Red Army!

Long live the Communist International!

Various Subjects

Which Government Is the More Stable?

* * *

The victor governments are heatedly discussing how to get hold of their booty, how to divide and how to safeguard this booty from the social revolution – not only their new booty but also their old booty, namely, their capital and profits. For this purpose Wilson put forward the idea of a “League of Nations”, that is, an alliance of capitalist governments to protect exploitation. However, this alliance has not so far got going, and among the victor governments a great mutual hostility is developing, which threatens to break out openly from one day to the next.

Nevertheless, there are still fools and dimwits who look to this League of Nations to establish peace and tranquillity on earth. Such are the Menshevik and SR apologies-for-socialists in every country. Representatives of the Berne Conference, that is, of the international assembly of SRs and Mensheviks, have addressed themselves to the British minister Cecil, and respectfully petitioned the British Government for Germany and Russia also to be included in the League of Nations – that is, for admission to the robbers’ alliance of those whom the robbers have already stripped of one skin and are preparing to strip of a second and a third. Lord Cecil [*sic*] [\[1\]](#) has replied that it is not possible to admit to League membership states which lack stable governments.

Thus, in the opinion of the noble lord, stable governments exist in Britain, France, Italy and America, but the Russian Government is not stable. The ministers of Wilhelm II and Franz Josef saw the matter in exactly the same light at the time of the Brest-Litovsk negotiations. They considered that their governments, their ancient monarchies, were very stable, whereas the government of the Russian workers and peasants would not last more than a few months. What actually happened was something different. The ancient monarchies of the Hohenzollerns and Habsburgs perished, but the Soviet Government became consolidated and extended its frontiers widely. Soviet power was established in Hungary. A struggle for Soviet power is going on in Germany, in Austria – almost throughout Europe – and is spreading to other parts of the world as well.

Now the compromisers are respectfully petitioning the predators to include Soviet Russia in the League of Nations. Futile and truly senseless dreams! The League of Nations must indeed consist of stable states – Lord Cecil is right about that. But in our epoch only a workers’ state can be stable. The robbers’ League of Nations will last not much longer than the peace of Brest-Litovsk did. Lord Cecil and all the other servants of Anglo-French imperialism will fall, just as Baron Kühlmann and Count Czernin have fallen. The working class will inevitably grow stronger in their countries. Only then will it become possible for a real League of Nations to be formed, that is, an alliance of workers’ states

which will transform Europe, abolish oppression and exploitation and establish the reign of socialism.

April 5, 1919
Syzran

Endnotes

1. Lord Robert Cecil, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs during the war, resigned at the end of 1918 and went to Paris to assist in the formation of the League of Nations.

Various Subjects

To the Foreign Soldiers in North Russia

* * *

Soldiers – British, American, French, Italians, Serbs! [\[1\]](#)

Your situation is becoming more and more difficult. The British and American press speaks openly about the hopeless situation that the Archangel expedition is in. Your governments have thrown you into the cold North and then halted in a state of indecision. Despite our open proposal of peace, your governments have, so far, not agreed to peace. But, at the same time, they have understood that it is not possible to dispose of Soviet Russia by armed force. You are the victims of this hesitation of theirs. Your resistance is fruitless.

They are frightening you by saying that, if captured, you will be dealt with severely.

Soldiers! This is a base lie! The Soviet Government knows that you are not to blame for the bandit raid on our North country. Your imperialists forced you into it. If you surrender, you will meet with a comradely welcome from us. None of you will suffer. The Soviet Government assures you, before the whole world, that not one hair will fall from the head of any foreign soldier or officer who becomes a prisoner.

Do not believe the lies and slanders of your venal newspaper hacks!

Believe the honest word of the Russian workers and peasants!

Cease your senseless resistance!

Down with this dishonourable slaughter in the interests of Anglo-French and American capital!

Long live the alliance of Russian, American, British, French and Italian workers!

April 6, 1919
Samara

Endnotes

[1.](#) The "Serbs" mentioned here were Yugoslav soldiers who had deserted from the Austro-Hungarian, army or had been taken prisoner by the Russians, during World War I, like many Czechoslovaks and Poles, and, like them, had joined the interventionists in the hope of contributing to the liberation of their homelands.

Various Subjects

A Creeping Revolution

* * *

The German revolution has clear features of similarity with the Russian, but no less instructive are its dissimilarities. At the beginning of October a "February" revolution took place in Germany. Two months later, the German proletariat was already going through its "July" days, that is, engaging in its first open clash with the bourgeois-compromiser imperialist forces on the new, "republican" foundation. *In Germany, as in our country, the July days were neither an organised uprising nor a decisive battle spontaneous in origin.* This was the first stormy *demonstration* of class struggle in pure form on the foundation which had been won by the revolution, and this demonstration was accompanied by skirmishes between the vanguard detachments. In our country the experience of the July days helped the proletariat to concentrate its forces further and prepare in an organised way for the decisive battle. In Germany, after the first open revolutionary demonstration by the Spartacists had been crushed, and their leaders murdered, no breathing-spell supervened, virtually not even for a single day. Strikes, revolts, open battles followed one after another in various parts of the country. No sooner had Scheidemann's government succeeded in establishing order in the suburbs of Berlin than the valiant guardsmen, inherited from Hohenzollern, had to rush to Stuttgart or Nuremberg. Essen, Dresden and Munich became, in turn, the arena of bloody civil war. Each fresh victory for Scheidemann is only the point of departure for a new revolt by the workers of Berlin. The revolution of the German proletariat has acquired a protracted, creeping character, and, at first sight, this might arouse fear lest the ruling scoundrels succeed in bleeding it white, section by section, in a series of innumerable skirmishes. At the same time, this question seems to pose itself: have not the leaders of the movement committed tactical mistakes which threaten to ruin the entire movement?

In order to understand the German workers' revolution, one must judge it not simply by analogy with Russia's October revolution but by taking the internal conditions of Germany's own evolution as one's starting-point.

History has so turned out that in the epoch of imperialist war the German Social-Democratic Party has proved – and this can now be stated with complete objectivity – to be the most counter-revolutionary factor in world history. The German Social-Democratic Party, however, is not an accident: it did not fall from the skies, but was created by the efforts of the German working class in the course of decades of uninterrupted construction and adaptation to the conditions of the capitalistJunker state. The party organisation and the trade unions connected therewith drew out from amidst the proletariat the most outstanding and vigorous elements, and moulded them psychologically and politically. When the war came, that is, when the moment of maximum historical testing arrived, it turned out that the official

organisation of the working class felt and acted not as the proletariat's organisation for combat against the class state, but as an auxiliary organ of that class state, serving to discipline the proletariat. The working class was paralysed, since bearing down upon it was not only the full weight of capitalist militarism but also the apparatus of its own party. The ordeals of the war, its victories and defeats, tore the German working class out of its paralysis, freed it from the discipline of the official party. The latter split asunder. But the German proletariat had no revolutionary fighting organisation. History once again exhibited to the world one of its dialectical contradictions: precisely because the German working class had expended most of its energy in the previous epoch upon self-sufficient organisational construction, occupying the first place in the Second International as regards both party and trade-union apparatus, it proved, in the new epoch, at the moment when it went over to open revolutionary struggle for power, to be organisationally quite defenceless.

The Russian working class which accomplished its October revolution had inherited from the preceding epoch a priceless legacy in the shape of a centralised revolutionary party. The pilgrimage of the Narodnik intelligentsia to the peasantry, the terrorist struggle of the Narodovoitsi, the underground agitation of the pioneer Marxists, the revolutionary demonstrations of the first years of the century, the October general strike and barricades of 1905, the revolutionary "parliamentarism" of the Stolypin period, very closely bound up with the underground movement – all this prepared a numerous body of revolutionary leaders, tempered in struggle and bound together by the unity of the programme for social revolution.

History bequeathed nothing like that to the German working class. It is compelled not only to fight for power but also to create its organisation and train its future leaders in the very course of this struggle. True, in the conditions of the revolutionary epoch this work of education is being carried through at feverish speed, but time is nevertheless needed for it to be accomplished. In the absence of a centralised revolutionary party with a fighting leadership whose authority is universally recognised by the worker masses, in the absence of leading combat nuclei and leaders, tested in action and proved through experience, in the separate centres and areas of the proletarian movement, when this movement broke out into the streets it became, of necessity, intermittent, chaotic, creeping in character. These strikes, insurrections and battles which flare up are at present the only form available for the task of openly mobilising the forces of the German proletariat, freed from the old party's yoke, and, at the same time they are the sole means of training new leaders and building the new party. It is quite obvious that such a road calls for enormous exertions and demands countless sacrifices. But there is no choice. This is the only road along which the class revolt of the German proletariat can develop until final victory.

Following Bloody Sunday, January 9, 1905, when the workers of Petrograd, and, after them, gradually, the workers of the whole country, came to understand the necessity of struggle, and, along with this, sensed how dispersed their forces were, there ensued a powerful but extremely chaotic strike movement. Wiseacres then arose who shed tears over the waste of energy by the Russian working class and foretold its exhaustion and the defeat of the revolution that would result therefrom. In reality, however, the spontaneous, creeping strikes of the spring and summer months of 1905 were the only possible form of revolutionary mobilisation and organisational

education. These strikes laid the groundwork for the great October strike and the building of the first Soviets.

There is a certain analogy between what is now happening in Germany and the period of the first Russian revolution which I have just mentioned. But the German revolutionary movement is, of course, developing on incomparably higher and more powerful foundations. While the old official party has suffered complete bankruptcy and has become converted into a tool of reaction, this, naturally does not mean that the work accomplished by that party in the preceding epoch has disappeared without trace. The political and cultural level of the German workers, their organisational habits and capabilities, are very high. Tens and hundreds of thousands of worker leaders who had been trained by the political and trade-union organisations in the previous epoch, and had seemingly been assimilated by it, in fact allowed its oppression to weigh upon their revolutionary consciousness only up to a certain point. Today, in the process of partial clashes, through the trials of this revolutionary mobilisation, in the harsh experience of this creeping revolution, tens of thousands of temporarily blinded, deceived and intimidated worker-leaders are awakening and rising to their full stature. The working class is finding them again, just as they are finding their place in the new struggle of the working class. While the historical assignment of the Independent Party of Kautsky and Haase consists in bringing vacillation into the ranks of the government party and providing a refuge for its frightened, desperate or indignant elements, on the other hand, the stormy movement in which our Spartacist brothers-in-arms are playing an heroic role will have as one of its consequences the steady demolition from the Left of this Independent Party, whose best, most self-sacrificing elements are being drawn into the Communist movement.

The difficulties, the partial defeats and the great sacrifices of the German proletariat should not dishearten us for one moment. History does not offer the proletariat a choice of roads. The stubborn, unabating, again and again flaring up, creeping revolution is clearly approaching the critical moment when, having gathered together all its previously mobilised and trained forces for battle, this revolution will deal the class enemy the final mortal blow.

April 17, 1919
Simbirsk-Moscow
Pravda, No.85

Various Subjects

To the Comrade Print-Workers

From the Front

* * *

The printed word is the most important means for welding our army together, for effecting its political education. However, the trouble is that this *printed word* not only reaches the front too irregularly and in too small a quantity but, when it does reach the front, it *all too often proves to be illegible*.

Comrade print-workers, our typographical technique is terrible. Whole pages of type are so badly smudged that it is not possible to make out a single line. The numbers of literals and misplaced lines is beyond counting. A person who has been used for decades to reading newspapers, and grasping the sense of a sentence from a couple of words, finds it hard, sometimes impossible, to decipher the meaning of articles in our newspapers. What about the young Red Army man, who is often not very literate? He has no time to get to the bottom of these mysterious dirty marks on newsprint. It is difficult to conceive the natural and justified irritation that comes over a reader, especially a soldier reader at the front, cut off from the life of the country, when, having in his hands a long-awaited newspaper, he finds he cannot make sense of anything in it. The newspapers **Kommunar**, **Byednota**, **Golos Trudovogo Krestyanstva** [**The Communard**, **The Poor**, **The Voice of the Working Peasantry**], that is, precisely those which are intended, first and foremost, for the broad masses, are distinguished by quite unacceptable typographical technique.

Of course, our technical resources are scanty, but experience shows that it is not merely a question of technical resources, but also of the actual way the work is organised, and of the attitude towards it of the comrade print-workers. In those cases when the comrade print-workers have made it their business to improve the typographical technique of a newspaper, to render it really available for reading by workers, soldiers and peasants, success has always been achieved.

A mobilisation of forces to support our front is now under way. The place of the revolutionary print-workers in this mobilisation is not the one of least importance. Make it your first task, comrade print-workers to provide the front with a newspaper that can be read – with clear and distinct print, without repulsive ink-smudges, without murderous corruptions and literals. Make it your task to achieve this result, at any cost, in the shortest possible time!

Comrade print-workers! Give the front a newspaper!

April 19, 1919
Moscow-Yaroslavl

Various Subjects

Order No.89

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Forces of the Northern Front, April 20, 1919, No.89, Vologda

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Comrade soldiers, commanders, commissars!

Your meritorious army is protecting the Northern limits of the Republic from the encroachments of the foreign imperialists. The Russian White Guards are too insignificant and miserable, too much cut off from the masses, to be able to stand on their own feet. The workers' and peasants' power has been established by its own strength and survives by its own strength. The bourgeois bands are upheld only by the force of foreign bay nets.

The Soviet Government wants peace with all peoples. It has openly proposed peace to the British, French, Italian and American governments and to all their allies. Up to now, this offer has not been accepted. We are therefore obliged to defend, sword in hand, the property, freedom and independence of the workers' and peasants' country, against foreign aggression.

Kolchak' partial successes on the Eastern front have again awakened 'all the hearts of the imperialist robbers the hope of defeating the Russian workers and peasants. That shall not be. The workers' and peasants' government have taken all measures necessary to crush Kolchak's bands completely. You will receive now, in the next few weeks of a decisive change in the East and of our advance to the Urals.

Meanwhile, you will, as before, remain the loyal Northern sentinels of the Soviet Republic. The workers' and peasants' government is ready, as before, to put an end to the war fomented by our enemies. But, at the same time, the whole country is filled with readiness to carry on with the hard struggle, until Soviet territory has been completely cleared of counter-revolutionary forces. In the severe natural conditions of the North, in struggle against a richly-supplied enemy, you, soldiers of the Northern front, have already succeeded in covering your banners with glory. The love and warm support of the whole country accompany your fight.

Forward, to complete victory over the enemies of the working people!

I give you a fraternal greeting!

Various Subjects

The First Of May

* * *

On the First of May, the great day of proletarian celebration which links together in spirit the workers of the whole world, I greet all the fighters of the workers' and peasants' Red Army.

The First of May is the festival of international solidarity of the proletariat. We can show our loyalty to the world working class in one way only: by self-sacrificing struggle against the oppressors and aggressors.

May the First of May be the moment of a decisive turn all along the Eastern front!

Under the banner of the First of May – forward against the Kolchakite snake!

Various Subjects

The Red Army

* * *

The Red Army is the first armed state force in history which serves to defend the interests of the working people against the exploiters and oppressors.

The aim of the workers' and peasants' revolution of 1917 was and remains the creation of a peaceful society of labour. But the working masses, headed by the proletariat, can create such a society only if they can defend themselves and their rule against the frenzied onslaught of their bourgeois enemies. The creation of the Red Army was a sort of test for the working class: would it, or would it not, be able to create, in a short time, an armed force with which to defend itself and open the way to peaceful socialist construction? All the events of the past year testify that the Russian working class has passed this great historical test. The Red Army has been created. It had suffered many setbacks, but, by and large, it has coped victoriously with the enemy on our numerous fronts.

At the outset, the armed forces of the Soviet Republic consisted of Red Guard units of worker volunteers, together with units of insurgent peasants. At first, these were adequate to deal with the landlords and capitalists frightened and derailed by the revolution. But, as the bourgeois classes succeeded in building their armed forces in the borderlands, with direct assistance from foreign militarism, the Soviet power found itself obliged to go over from Red-Guard guerrilla units to a regularly organised army. At first, while the military apparatus of the Soviet state was still weakly developed, the army was built on the voluntary principle. But in the summer of last year the Soviet power went over to compulsory mobilisation of the workers and of those peasants who do not exploit the labour of others. Thus, the structure of our Red Army gives it a class character: it excludes parasites, exploiters and kulaks, relegating these to the fatigue-squads of the rear levies.

There can be no doubt that the creation of a large army and the conduct of a protracted war on gigantic fronts has imposed heavy sacrifices on the economic and cultural constructive work of Soviet Russia. On the other hand, however, the very fact that a mighty Red Army has been created in an exhausted country is proof of the great economic and cultural strength of the working class. Only the lofty idea of struggle for the complete emancipation of the working people from all forms of oppression was capable of inspiring the vanguard of the working masses and helping them to overcome all expressions of weariness, disintegration and anarchy.

From this standpoint, the Red Army was a great school of revolutionary discipline: faced with a terrible danger, the Red Army suppressed in its own ranks, and succeeded in suppressing in the country at large, all manifestations

of petty-bourgeois, kulak disorderliness, banditism, predatory cupidity and self-seeking.

In accordance with the entire course taken by our revolution, the leading role in the Red Army belongs to the advanced, tempered fighters, the Communist proletarians. As commissars, as members of Communist cells, and often as Red commanders, they guide the spiritual life of the Soviet regiments and make them what they should be - the fighting instrument of the Communist revolution.

Hand in hand with the hardened Communists work the new Red Commanders who have emerged from the mass of the Red Army men, or have passed through our numerous instructors' courses, which have contributed a new body of worker and peasant commanders to the army.

The formation of the Red Army on broad principles would, however, have been impossible if we had not enlisted many, many thousands of experienced officers of the former Tsarist army, who have done and are doing very great work in the Red Army of the workers and peasants.

Through stern, tense fighting, the Red Army has liberated tens of millions of working people from under the yoke of oppressors both native and foreign. Its work has not yet been completed. While, in the East, a serious blow has been struck at Kolchak, from which he will hardly be able to recover, in the South Denikin still rules over immense spaces, including the Donets basin and two such major working-class centres as Kharkov and Yekaterinoslav. All the attention and all the forces of the Red Army are now directed towards the South. The defeat of Denikin will signify a mortal blow to the counter-revolution which has surrounded the Soviet Republic with its robbers' ring.

There can be no doubt that the Red Army will cope with its task in the South during the next few months. Then, the huge forces and resources of the working masses of Russia will be released for free, unconstrained economic and cultural creative works. Russia will quickly heal her old wounds and will become a wealthy and a happy land, among the rest of the Soviet republics of Europe and the whole world.

July 28, 1919
Rtishchevo-Penza

Various Subjects

Order to the Red Army

August 7, 1919, No.140, Konotop

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While armoured train No.26 was standing in Konotop station it distinguished itself by the disgraceful foul language used by its crew. Unrestrained by the fact that civilians, women and children were present in the station, the soldiers of this armoured train poisoned the air with their disgusting curses, lacking sense or purpose. Train No.26 bears the lofty title of 'Bolshevik', which means 'fighter for the interests of the people'. I consider that a Red warrior, as a fighter for lofty aims, should behave on an armoured train as befits a place of lofty service, and not as though he is in a low tavern. Foul language degrades human dignity, causes a man to lose the habit of intelligent speech, to cease to think, and thereby weakens his will to fight. It is the duty of commanders and commissars to exclude from the life of the Red Army those disgraceful expressions which no other country possesses, and to employ all means to promote the establishment of proper forms of speech and comradely relations.

Various Subjects

The Supply Apparatus Needs Refreshing

(To Revolutionary War Councils)

* * *

The supply situation in the active armies continues to be extremely unsatisfactory. The cause lies not only in the shortage of articles of supply but also in the highly imperfect, often slovenly, and in places unscrupulous way that work is performed by the supply apparatus.

The registration of personnel, on the one hand, and on the other, of *matériel*, is extremely imprecise. The supply department's figures for personnel are grossly exaggerated. In the units there are, as often as not, unregistered stores of clothing and military supplies which are kept in the baggage-train and, when defeat occurs, are given up to the enemy.

On the other hand, articles of supply are moved from army bases up to the units which need them, and distributed among the soldiers in these units, with criminal slowness. Instead of making it their business to provide clothes and footwear for the soldiers, at any cost and in good time, so as to facilitate success in operations, the supply administrations often wait passively for lists of requirements to be submitted to them, and issue bureaucratic instructions as a result of which the supplies are moved, stage by stage, in the direction of the units concerned, which meanwhile change their location, become engaged in battle, and are deprived for a long time of the possibility of utilising the equipment they need.

It is quite obvious that we need to shake up and refresh the supply apparatus, from top to bottom.

As a general rule, commissars work alongside military specialists in the supply organisations. There have been a number of cases when the specialists have failed completely to take account of the conditions of the present war and have confined themselves to ensuring that the clerical work is done properly, while the commissars have often held aloof from the actual cares of the work, merely scribbling their signatures. Such a situation is quite unacceptable.

For this reason, it is proposed that the Revolutionary War Councils should, by means of special commissions, with the participation of the members of these Councils who have observed the work of supply, or by any other suitable means, examine the supply apparatus in its working at all levels.

In cases where the specialist is coping well with his work, he is to be given full responsibility, while the commissar receives an assignment appropriate to his abilities and knowledge.

In cases where the commissar is the one who actually leads the work, he is to be appointed commander, while the former commander, who has not shown the necessary vigour and practical ability, is to be assigned to a less responsible post.

Commander and commissar are to be kept together only in cases where they do in fact complement each other, and removal of either would have a harmful effect on the work.

In so far as by this means a certain number of competent executives will be released from their duties, they can usefully be employed to form special instruction and inspection commissions, to carry out at the lower levels of the supply apparatus the same work which it has been proposed should be undertaken at the top.

These proposals are aimed at bringing about *a gradual transition to a system of complete one-man management.*

For quite obvious reasons, such an organisational reform can most easily be begun in the supply apparatus. It is self-evident that the basic criterion for the re-shuffling of personnel indicated above must be a purely practical one: a post is to be filled by the man who is best able to do the work.

The stages through which this organisational reform is to be carried through on the spot are left to the discretion of the Revolutionary War Councils of the Armies, under the overall direction of the Revolutionary War Council of the front.

August 16, 1919

Various Subjects

Firing, Or Making A Noise?

* * *

Fire-discipline is still lacking in our units, especially the more backward ones. Firing takes place in a disordered, unsystematic and often aimless and senseless way. Men fire not because it is necessary to fire but because they have rifles in their hands and cartridges in their bandoliers. They fire not because they see the enemy but because they are afraid of him. This is not firing but senseless noise-making. Just as a frightened child, in the dark, shuts his eyes and stifles his fear with a scream, so a cowardly soldier tries by making a noise with his rifle to stifle his own cowardice.

This noise-making with rifles is supplemented by blazing away with artillery. Bad gunners, influenced by bad infantrymen, fire off shells in an unknown direction, at an unknown enemy. This is not firing but waste of shells. The enemy suffers no harm from it and it demonstrates to him the helplessness of the artillery unit which wastes shells in such a fashion.

This noise-making and waste of shells must be stopped, at all costs.

In the first place, we must conserve cartridges. One does not pick these up on the steppes, they have to be manufactured, by intense labour. The working class which has created our ammunition says to us: "Use these cartridges when you need to: don't waste them, don't expend public property in a senseless way."

Secondly, the infantryman guilty of noise-making is squandering not only ammunition but also his own powers. By fooling himself he becomes unable either to spot the real enemy, or to adapt himself to the lie of the ground, or to strike a blow.

Fire discipline is an extremely important component in military discipline as a whole. The soldier must control himself and his weapon, and fire sparingly but accurately. That is what fire-discipline means. It is the task of commanders to train their men in the self-control and skill needed for this. A commander who tolerates noise-making is a useless commander. He must be taught if he knows no better, and punished if he does not care.

Credentials records for commanders are now being introduced in the Red Army. Every commander will be listed, and a strict record kept of his work, and on the basis of these records commanders will be selected for more responsible posts, more serious assignments. When these credentials records are compiled, special attention must be given to a commander's fire-control. It is necessary that the entire commanding personnel, from top to bottom, make it their task to put an end to senseless shameful noise-making, which must be replaced by organised, intelligent and accurate firing.

When this task has been accomplished, no infantryman will ever find himself short of cartridges, and the Red Army will really become invincible.

September 10, 1919
Bryansk

Various Subjects

Draft of a Letter

To Party Members in Revolutionary War Councils of Armies and Fronts and Heads of Political Departments

* * *

Comrades! Recently, complaints from local Party organisations about Communist executives in the Army have become more frequent. What these complaints essentially amount to is that Revolutionary War Councils and Headquarters do not take account of the opinions and views of local organisations in all matters, starting with purely practical ones like the use of premises, and so on, and ending with such very important matters as the way military-political agitation is carried on, the use made of local forces and resources for defence purposes, etc.

The Central Committee is clearly aware that conflicts of this sort often arise from the difficult conditions of wartime, from the need to make use of local forces and resources and to cut down the staffs of local institutions in the interests of defence. But, at the same time, numerous cases are to be observed in which Party members in Revolutionary War Councils and responsible military workers generally, fail to show a sufficiently attentive attitude to Party organisations in the localities. In the Party's view, defence interests are now to be put in the forefront, and there is therefore no reason to fear that local comrades, when informed in broad terms of the requirements and proposals of the corresponding army institutions, would put up any opposition to them. On the contrary, in all cases where authoritative army workers have shown themselves able to present their problems in a party setting, in the localities, and to animate local Party work by their own direct participation, the army's interests have only gained from this.

The Central Committee proposes to Party members working in the active armies that, when a headquarters moves to a new location, they immediately make the closest contact with the local Party organisations, establish regular comradely relations with them, and strive to eliminate by Party means any conflicts that may arise.

It is self-evident that in all cases where the local organisations fail to show proper willingness to meet the needs of the army and its institutions, the Central Committee will find means of upholding the interests of the army.

October 14, 1919
Moscow

Various Subjects

Order No.1692

To Revolutionary War Councils and Political Departments of Armies and Fronts, October 14, 1919, No.1692

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In the great struggle which the Red Army is waging on all fronts, to ward off the attacks of the White Guards, many cases occur of personal heroism by individual Red Army men and commanders, and also of mass heroism by entire units'cases which often remain unknown, through insufficient attention on the part of Revolutionary War Councils and Political Departments. Yet making such facts public, speaking about the self-sacrifice, staunchness and revolutionary consciousness of the Red Army is not only a duty for us, out of respect to the memory of the fallen heroes and to the merits of those who are still alive, but also an irreplaceable means of building up the morale of the units.

The Revolutionary War Council of the Republic instructs all Revolutionary War Councils and their Political Departments henceforth to take measures to ensure that heroic actions and the names of rank-and-file Red Army men, commanders and commissars who have distinguished themselves in battle, together with the names of outstanding workers in the organisation of supplies to the Red Army, be regularly communicated by the political commissars and army commanders to the Revolutionary War Councils of the armies, so that they may be published both in army orders and in the press.

Revolutionary War Councils must pay the utmost attention to all such cases and award decorations in good time, arranging for the conferment of the Order of the Red Banner and presentation of military gifts [*Military gifts' took such forms as watches, binoculars, revolvers and swords of honour.*] in as ceremonial way as possible, and publishing all such cases in the organs of the Revolutionary War Councils.

All such cases are to be reported to the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and its political directorate, so that they may be published throughout the Soviet Republic.

Various Subjects

Concerning Two Documents to Revolutionary War Councils of Armies and Fronts

(The two documents referred to here are the letter of a member of the Revolutionary War Council of the Western front, Comrade Potyayev, and the 'theses' of the plenipotentiary of the Extraordinary Army Supply Commission with the Sixth Army, Comrade Luganovsky. In their time, both documents were published so as to help in the exchange of experience between armies and to prepare, through exchange of views between them and the centre, material for statewide organisational and legislative measures. – L.T.)

* * *

One of the most important problems in our constructive work in the military sphere is that of a supply organisation which, while centralised, shall also be flexible and adapted to local conditions. The fundamental condition for this organisation must, of course, be that it corresponds completely with the whole system of the Soviet economy. But whereas the Soviet economic system is only being built – and, moreover, under very difficult conditions – army supply work does not permit of interruption, and the supply apparatus needs to be allowed sufficient freedom of action, opportunity to show initiative, departure when necessary from fixed patterns, and so on, in order that, within the framework of the general economic plan, it may make use, as it goes along, of all such local resources as may serve to meet the army's needs.

However, no plan and no system will safeguard our forces unless a system of order and the strictest accounting is introduced in the units themselves. Matters in this respect are as bad as they can be. There is no regulation of supplies within companies and regiments. Individual records of equipment issued are kept in a slipshod way, or not at all. The Red Army man's service-book is being issued with extraordinary delay. This absence of orderly procedures in the army's basic economic cell creates opportunities for exceptional waste of materiel and for actual embezzlement. Red Army equipment has become the object of most unbridled speculation. The fight against this evil, which is undermining the work of the army's central supply organs, is the responsibility, in the first place, of the Central Commission for Combating Desertion. If the fight is to succeed, however, it must be carried on simultaneously from every quarter, and, first and foremost, it must start at company and regimental level, under the unflagging supervision and pressure of the Revolutionary War Councils of the Armies and Fronts.

December 17, 1919

Various Subjects

Order No.183

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the Red Army and the Red Navy, December 17, 1919, No.183, Moscow

* * *

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

The Seventh All-Russia Congress of Workers, Peasants', Red Army Men's and Working Cossacks' Deputies referred in terms of high praise to the heroic fight of the Red Army and the Red Navy and expressed its gratitude on behalf of the Socialist Fatherland.

At the same time, the All-Russia Congress addressed an open proposal of peace to all the bourgeois governments which are waging a cruel and dishonourable war against the Russian working people. As yet there has been no reply to this proposal. The extreme imperialists of Britain, France, Italy, Japan, America and a number of small countries have not yet finally renounced the idea and the hope of strangling workers' and peasants' Russia. There is wavering and dissension among the bourgeois classes. It is at present impossible to say what the immediate reply will be to the peace proposal of the Congress of Soviets. But one thing is clear: each new military success we achieve undermines the hopes of the extreme imperialists and tips the scale in favour of all those forces and parties in Europe which have understood the need to make peace.

Consequently, we have only one way forward to wage our struggle to the end. While Soviet diplomacy proposes an immediate conclusion of peace to the peoples and governments of all countries, the Red Army and the Red Navy must rout and finish off the enemies of workers' and peasants' Russia on all fronts.

Comrade Red Army men, commanders, commissars! Our country, all its working people, of both sexes, need peace. We shall win that peace for ourselves, at any cost. Arms in hand, we shall wrest it from our enemies. In the East we have taken Novonikolayevsk: in the South we have taken Kharkov, Poltava and Kiev. We are advancing on all fronts. Let us double and treble our efforts. Let us carry through the task to the end. May our victories prove to be the shortest and surest road to peace.

Long live the Red Army and the Red Navy!

Long live the victory of the workers' and peasants' arms! Long live peace and

brotherhood between all peoples!

Various Subjects

Cossacks, Form Up in a Soviet Column!

(In connection with the forthcoming Cossack congress)

* * *

The hour has come for the Cossacks themselves to decide their own fate for a long time to come. Up to now they have for too long let others think and act for them. Korniov, Kaledin, Krasnov, Dutov, Kolchak, Denikin took decisions for the Cossacks and forced the mass of the Cossacks to carry out these decisions. Today all these counter-revolutionary war-lords by the grace of the landowners and capitalists have been defeated. Their attempts to enslave Russia with the aid of the Cossacks they deceived have come to naught. Nothing is left of Kolchak's army. Of Denikin's only wretched fragments remain. But Soviet Russia exists, and the many-millioned masses of working Cossacks exist. No, after everything that has happened, after all the deceptions perpetrated by the counter-revolutionary Tsarist generals, after the rivers of blood that have been shed because of them, after the ruining and devastation of the Cossacks' *stanitsas*, their districts and regions, the last, the twelfth hour has struck for the Cossacks: they must think hard and make a firm choice of the road they mean to take.

The workers' and peasants' Soviet power has shown the whole world its strength. But, though it is strong, the Soviet power has no thought of abusing its strength. The mass of the Cossacks are working people. Although there is also much ignorance among them, and many wrong views, it is possible for an ignorant working man to be enlightened, and for one who has been deceived to learn the truth.

There is no salvation to be found for the Cossacks along the road of further armed struggle against the Soviet power. The Soviet power is too strong, with the strength of the armed millions of workers and peasants. Salvation for the working Cossacks lies in complete and honest reconciliation with the Soviet power. This road is fully open to the Cossacks.

Our country now wants peace more than anything else, so as to devote all its strength to intense economic work. Anyone who continues to prevent the peasant from returning to the field and the worker to the lathe will draw upon himself the sharpest hatred of all the working people. If any group of Cossacks now rejects the outstretched hand of the Soviet power, this group will be ground to dust.

Through its Cossack Department, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee is convening an All-Russia Congress of Working Cossacks. [March 1-4, 1920] This is a great event, a great thing. The Soviet power is opening a wide gateway before the Cossacks, and saying: 'Whatever you may have done in the past, if

you have now realised that you are the brothers of the workers and peasants, then welcome – Cossacks!’ All the preparation for this congress must proceed under that sign: complete reconciliation, fraternal unity between the working Cossacks and the working class and peasantry of all Russia.

It is the responsibility of the advanced workers in the Cossack regions and, in the first place, of the conscious Cossacks, to develop extensive agitational and organisational work, so as to draw into the Cossack congress the real lower ranks of the Cossacks, freeing them from the spiritual oppression of the counter-revolutionary Cossack officers and kulaks.

On the Don, on the Kuban, on the Terek, in the steppes of Astrakhan, on the Ural, in the steppes of Orenburg and in Siberia, everywhere the honest working Cossack must be drawn into electing representatives to attend the Cossack congress. Through all *stanitsas* and farmsteads the new command must ring out: ‘Cossacks, form up in a Soviet column!’

Various Subjects

What is a Good Regiment and What is a Bad One?

* * *

One sometimes hears, comrades, that a certain regiment is bad, that no reliance can be placed upon it. It does not obey military orders. What does this mean? After all, in a regiment there are several thousand men. Does it mean that the entire regiment consists of bad, depraved workers and peasants, who want to betray the working masses to the capitalists and the landlords? No, this cannot be true. We allow into the army only workers and working peasants who do not exploit the labour of others. There is no place in our army for capitalists, landlords and kulaks. There can therefore be no question of the mass of the soldiers wanting again to put their necks submissively under the yoke of the bourgeois or Tsarist monarchy. In that case why does a regiment turn out to be bad? Why does it not obey military orders?

In my view, comrades, the reason is this: in every regiment, in every unit generally, there are three sorts of soldier. There is a tiny section of bad, spoiled soldiers, corrupted by bourgeois noble ways, who have lost their moral ties with the working class. These are self-seekers, whose principal concern is only for themselves: to them it does not matter whether the worker is a slave or the master of his country. Such self-seekers and traitors constitute an insignificant minority. On the other hand, there are also in the regiment some more conscious, revolutionary soldiers who, even earlier, before the revolution, fought against Tsarist and bourgeois tyranny, who are fully and consciously prepared to give their lives for the cause of the working people. Such courageous, selfless fighters are still, as yet, a minority. Between these, the best, most conscious soldiers, and the self-seeking traitors there are present in every company, in every regiment, a large number of average soldiers. These are, in character, honest working people from the country or the town, but they are not yet sufficiently conscious, they have not yet managed to grasp the meaning of the revolution and the tasks of the Soviet power. These average soldiers sometimes fall under the influence of the self-seekers, but more frequently they respond to that of the good, conscious soldiers. In cases when the best soldiers in the regiment are in disorder, not meeting together and uniting their forces, it may happen that the self-seekers, the bawlers, come to the top and confuse the ignorant, not-very-conscious average soldiers. It is then that the regiment fails to do its duty to the working class, and that people say of this regiment that it is a bad, unreliable regiment. But it is enough for the best soldiers to unite closely and to appeal to the consciousness and conscience of the whole regiment for the overwhelming majority of soldiers, even though still without much consciousness, to unite around their vanguard detachment, and 99 out of 100 of them prove to be splendid, honourable fighters for the revolution. Realising that a different spirit reigns in the regiment, the self-seekers hold their tongues, the bawlers fall silent, and those kulaks who have accidentally got into the regiment take cover. I have observed

changes like this in a regiment on more than one occasion. In the course of a week or two, a regiment that had been accounted bad becomes regenerated all of a sudden. This means that the advanced workers and the revolutionary peasants in the regiment have come together in a closely united group, as the mind and heart of the regiment, and the mass of the regiment has immediately fallen into line with them, throwing over the worst, corrupted elements.

That is why, when people tell me that such-and-such a regiment is bad, I reply: I do not believe it, it cannot be so: that regiment can and must become a good one. Conscious soldiers, advanced workers, revolutionary peasants, forward! Rally closely round the commanders and commissars, raise your voices in appeal to the conscience of your regiment, explain to all the soldiers the sacred task of the Red Army, establish inviolable, firm revolutionary discipline. Commanders, seek support among the best soldiers in the regiment. Trust the intelligence and conscience of the armed workers and peasants, show energy and will-power, and you will find support among all the soldiers – and the Soviet Republic will have one more excellent regiment.

Moscow

Various Subjects

The Sacred Task of the Red Army

* * *

Comrade soldiers of the Red Army! On March 8, this year an old Tatar named Kurmayev, born in Samara province, came to see me at the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs. He had come to Moscow at the desire of his fellow-villagers, Tatar working peasants, and, with tears in his eyes, he thanked the Soviet power for liberating Samara province from Dutov's bands.

This is what he told me.

'When the Cossacks were stationed in our village we suffered many misfortunes. The Cossack officers not only took from us horses, cattle and grain without paying anything, especially where poor peasants were concerned, but, worse still, they mocked us, persecuted us, beat and shot at us. We Tatars had it worse than anyone else. We heard that the Red Army was advancing into Samara province, but we didn't know whether that would mean better times for us, or worse. When the Cossacks had left our village and the Red Army men came in, we saw at once that these were a different sort of people. We were not insulted any more. The soldiers talked with us in a brotherly way, and order was established in the village and all around. We breathed freely, and blessed the Red Army.'

That is what I was told by the old Tatar, father of a numerous family. And when, comrade soldiers, I heard these words. I felt proud of our workers' and peasants' Red Army. In this little example the true character of the revolutionary forces was revealed, together with the significance of this war which we have been forced to wage. On the one hand, the bourgeois-landlord troops restore in practice, everywhere that they go, the black injustice that prevailed under the Tsars, the oppression of the poor, especially of all those who speak a different language or belong to a different nation or religion. In Avdat village the inhabitants are Moslems, so – at them, chase them, crush them, rob them and cut them up! That is the principle of action of the dishonourable counter-revolutionary bands. The conscious revolutionary Red forces are not like that. They know that the working people, whatever nation they belong to, *are their brothers*. They know that people must be divided not by nation but by class. All honest working people form one family, whatever language they may speak and in whatever place of worship their fathers may have prayed. All oppressors, exploiters, parasites, aggressors, regardless of nationality, are enemies of the working people. The task of the soldiers of the Red Army, their sacred task, is to defend the poor against the rich. This is what distinguishes our army from all other armies in the world. But not everyone understands this as yet. There are quite a lot of backward, ignorant, downtrodden people who do not know what the Red Army is and for what purpose it exists. Your task, comrade soldiers, is to explain this to all and sundry, and, what is most important, to prove it in practice. Every poor peasant, every working man, every downtrodden mother of a family, every

homeless old man or helpless orphan must see the Red Army as their defender. Woe to the soldier who does not understand what he has been appointed to do, and uses his power against his oppressed brothers and sisters.

But to the true soldier of the Red Army, who bravely and honourably defends the rights and interests of the poor – honour and glory, and the gratitude of the working masses.

March 10, 1920
Moscow

Various Subjects

Proletarians of All Lands, Comrade Workers! [\[1\]](#)

* * *

The telegraph, the wireless, the press, those mighty instruments of capitalist deception, have frequently informed you in recent weeks about the militarisation of labour in Soviet Russia. The lackeys of imperialism seek to derive a double benefit from this fact – to slander socialist Russia and to justify their own coercion of the working people.

We, over a thousand delegates, representing at the 3rd All-Russia Congress of Trade Unions more than three million workers organised in production, consider it our duty to give you a fraternal warning against both the praise and the curses of bourgeois public opinion, directed at Soviet methods of organising labour.

Our economy has been ruined and exhausted by the imperialist slaughter, followed by the blockade and the ceaseless attacks of the hired bands of Churchill and Clemenceau. We need to make the greatest exertions in order to rescue our country as quickly as possible from its grave condition of poverty and privation. This task requires from every working person in Soviet Russia the maximum effort and the maximum self-sacrifice. Just as a conscious Red soldier is ready at any moment to lay down his life for the cause of the working people, so every honourable working man and woman must be ready to devote all his or her strength, in the months that lie ahead, to the economic salvation of the socialist republic. We can have no other task, no other thought or work, except intense productive labour for the common good. This we call militarisation. No kings reign over us, with their dignitaries, no bourgeois deputies with their ministers, or capitalists with their agents, no bourgeois generals and judges with their hangmen. Our methods of militarising labour have not been dictated to us from above by predatory exploiters and their robber state. We, the working people, by our own will, are taking upon ourselves the stern labour obligations required by our duty to the revolution and to posterity. The fruits of our intense work will not be transformed into profits for parasites, but will serve to ease the lives of the masses worn out by want. We, the working people of Russia, are our own lawmakers, and, after instituting the militarisation of labour, we are putting it into effect with our own hands.

Proletarians of all lands! From the midst of our very intense struggle and labour we send you a fraternal greeting. We confidently await the hour, which will soon strike, when the workers of the whole capitalist world will cast down their oppressors, eradicate the heritage of centuries-old oppression, insult and torment, and transform our earth into the flourishing possession of emancipated mankind.

Long live the world union of labour!

April 9, 1920

Endnotes

[1.](#) The appeal to 'Proletarians of all lands' was adopted by the Third All-Russia Congress of Trade Unions after hearing Comrade Lenin's fundamental report.

Various Subjects

Labour, The Basis Of Life

* * *

Russia is disordered, plundered, weakened and exhausted. The world's predators think, or want to think, that Russia lies at death's door. But this is not so. We, the working people, will lift her up, strengthen her, restore her to health, through our stubborn, intense, concerted labour – the basis of human life. Now, when the land and the factories belong to the people, the labour of each one of us no longer enriches individual parasites, as it did before, but contributes to the common welfare of all the working people.

Let us keep this in mind: labour is the basis of life. And the poorer our life is today, the more transport is disorganised, the more meagre are our rations, the worse the neglect, filth and disease – the greater the intensity and conscientiousness that must distinguish our labour. The careless, conscienceless worker is now the worst enemy of socialist society – he is like the idle servant in the Gospel who buried his talent in the ground. [*Matthew 25:14-30. This 'unprofitable servant' was to be 'cast into outer darkness'.*] Whoever falls to come to work on time, or who wastes his time when in the workshop, or occupies himself there with work 'on the side' [*In this period many workers in engineering works used their time and materials making small articles, such as cigarette-lighters, which could fetch a good price on the private market.*], or simply stays away on a workday, is an enemy of socialist Russia who is undermining her future.

Workers and peasants! Let your precept in these difficult times be – stern, uncompromising struggle against self-seeking, slovenliness, imprecision and absenteeism, against these forms of desertion from labour. Let us, jointly and tirelessly, with our millions of hands, forge a happier destiny for the coming generation.

Long live labour – the liberator, the basis of life!

April 29, 1920

Various Subjects

Labour and War

* * *

From the time when the May Day celebration was instituted, the proletariat has sought to make it a general strike and an international demonstration directed primarily against militarism and war. Our May Day celebration this year bears, at first sight, an absolutely opposite character. We shall celebrate May Day with intense labour, and our principal slogan will be: *to the front* against White Poland.

Not a general strike, but a general festival of labour. Not a demonstration against militarism, but a strengthening of our army. That is the spectacle that the First of May presents this year in Soviet Russia.

What is this? A violation of the fundamental idea of the proletarian celebration, a retreat from international solidarity? Not at all. On the contrary, we have come not to destroy the law but to fulfil it. [Matthew 5:17] If, to outward view, the First of May seems to have been turned upside down in our country, that is only because the Russian proletariat has overturned the bourgeoisie and taken the helm itself.

The May Day strike was instituted as a sharp protest against capitalist exploitation and a reminder of the coming order of socialist solidarity and lofty humanity. We have overthrown capitalist exploitation. We can achieve the new order only through intense labour. The workers of Europe declare a strike on this day, a strike against their bourgeoisie, in the name of socialism. By our voluntary work on rest-days we are laying the foundation of the socialist building. Behind the difference of form lies unity of thought and endeavour.

The proletarians of the whole world demonstrate on this day against militarism and war, because in all bourgeois countries militarism is the basest instrument of class oppression, and war is state-organised plundering and mass murder for the sake of profit.

The army of socialist Russia is an organisation for armed defence of the working people against international aggressors and thugs. Our war is a defence of our conquests, defence of a happy future for our children and grandchildren.

The international proletariat protests on the First of May against capitalist militarism because it is the worst enemy of the working people. On the First of May the Russian proletariat strains every nerve to support the Red Army, because this is its own instrument, its own bulwark and defence.

Above the difference in external forms, a difference due to the fact that *there* the bourgeoisie is in power, whereas *here* the proletariat is in power,

one and the same spirit reigns, the spirit of revolutionary struggle against class enslavement.

Blow your bugles louder, proletarians of Russia. Let your hammers resound more loudly on May Day. Aim more accurately on this day, Red soldier. Work more firmly with your bayonet, know that the blows you strike, whether on the anvil or on the enemy's body, are true service to the cause of the world proletariat, and the highest expression of the idea of May Day.

April 29, 1920

Various Subjects

Order No.229

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the Red Army and the Red Navy, June 15, 1920, No.229, Moscow [\[1\]](#)

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The Revolutionary War Council of the Persian Red Army, which is now fighting against foreign and domestic oppression, has sent the following message of greeting to our Red Army.

'The Revolutionary War Council of the Persian Republic, organised by decision of Persia's Council of People's Commissars, sends heartfelt greetings to the Red Army and the Red Navy. With great difficulty and enduring all manner of privations we have succeeded in defeating the internal counterrevolution, which was nothing more nor less than the hireling of international capitalism. By the will of the working people, Soviet power has been organised in Persia, and this has set about creating a Persian Red Army on the lines on which Russia's Red Army was formed, in order to destroy the enslavers of the Persian people.

'Long live the fraternal alliance of the Russian Red Army with the young Persian army.

'Long live the alliance of the working people of the whole world – the Third International.

'Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council, Mirza Kuchuk.

'Commander of the Armed Forces, Eskhanulla.

'Member of the Revolutionary War Council, MuzafferZade.'

I have sent the following reply on behalf of the Red Army:

'The news of the formation of the Persian Red Army has filled our hearts with joy. During the last fifteen years the Persian working people have fought stubbornly for their freedom. By so doing they have proved their right to it, in the eyes of the whole world. In the name of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army of Russia I express firm confidence that, under the leadership of your Revolutionary War Council, Persia will conquer her right to freedom, independence and fraternal labour.

'Long live the free working people of Persia, in the family of free peoples of Asia, Europe and the whole world.'

Bringing this exchange of fraternal greetings to the notice of all Red fighting men, I express my confidence that the bond between the revolutionary armies of Persia and Russia will strengthen and grow, to the great benefit of the working people.

Endnotes

1. An anti-imperialist movement of Persian nationalists, led by Kuchuk, had begun in the forests of Gilan province, on the Caspian Sea, during World War I. In 1920 Kuchuk made contact with the Bolsheviks in Baku, and after Soviet troops had landed at Enzeli he proclaimed a Soviet Republic, which did not, however, extend its authority far inland, and was beset by internal disputes. In August Moscow informed the Teheran Government that a new Russo-Persian Treaty was a possibility. On 22 October the recently-formed Communist Party of Persia adopted a resolution stating that their country must first go through the stage of a bourgeois revolution before Soviet power could be established, and on 25 October an envoy from the Tehran Government arrived in Moscow. In February 1921 a treaty between Soviet Russia and Persia was signed. In September the last Soviet troops left Persian soil. Troops of the Teheran Government entered Gilan and suppressed what remained of the 'Persian Soviet Republic'. Kuchuk's head was sent to Teheran.

Various Subjects

Interview Given to the British Correspondent Mr Farbman

(An abridged version of this interview appeared in the *Manchester Guardian*, September 27, 1920.)

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Our military situation in mid-August was not so triumphant as leading circles in the bourgeois states supposed. At the present time our military situation is far from being so lamentable as is supposed by these same circles. In our present war, which is being carried on over an immense territory, involving a number of soldiers which is small in relation to this territory, even very considerable changes in the line of the front can have no decisive significance. During our July offensive we did not destroy the enemy's fighting force but merely inflicted serious losses upon it and gained a large amount of territory. During their August and September counter-offensive the Polish army did not succeed in destroying our fighting force, but merely inflicted serious losses upon it and recovered part of the area mentioned. The Polish army still exists, and retains its fighting capacity. But our army also still exists, and is fully capable of fighting. Its forces are steadily increasing.

We went into the war with Poland from a period in which the army and industry were being demobilised. We were trying to devote all our forces to the country's economic revival. We had achieved notable successes in this direction, especially in the sphere of transport, which was, last winter, in the opinion of many observers, in a hopeless condition, but greatly improved during the spring and summer, and continues to improve.

We were compelled to fight, despite the very big concessions that we offered to the Polish government before war broke out. We tried to attain peace through a decisive offensive. This attempt did not fully succeed. We showed White Poland our strength, but we did not destroy the forces of White Poland.

Furthermore, we were compelled to retreat. Workers' and Peasants' Russia does not become intoxicated in time of victory and does not lose her head in time of reverses. Now, just as when we stood before the gates of Warsaw, our object remains the attainment of peace, and we are again offering Poland very favourable conditions, such as, probably, none of the leading powers of the Entente expected. Blind and stupid persons are to be found who will interpret our peace conditions as evidence of our weakness. As a matter of fact, it is precisely the generosity of the concessions we offer that will double and treble the willingness to fight of all the working people of Russia, for if White Poland refuses peace on *these* foundations, then it will be clear to the most backward and ignorant peasant in the remotest *uyezd* of the most benighted

province that it is not possible to make peace with White Poland without a fight to the finish.

Will our offer bring peace? I do not know. I am much afraid that they don't know in Warsaw, either. Over there, instructions from Paris and London are awaited. In Paris they know very well what they want, namely, to ruin, bleed and destroy Russia and turn her into a colony. I am much afraid, though, that in London they do not know what they want – least of all, Mr Lloyd George.

If they give us peace, the coming winter will again be a period of intense economic labour. The principal forces of the War Department will be switched to work for improving our transport system, for ensuring that industry gets the fuel and raw material it needs. If they do not give us peace, we shall fight, and I have no doubt that we shall win.

You ask me about the relation between our military operations, our diplomatic activity and the development of the revolution in Europe and throughout the world. This is an extremely complex question. We Marxists regard the coming of the revolution as inevitable, owing to the whole structure of society. The pace at which the revolution will develop cannot be predicted. It is, of course, no secret from anyone that we are interested in seeing the working class come to power in all countries. Nevertheless, if Mr Churchill and his like consider that the Soviet power is nothing other than an organisation for international revolutionary conspiracy, that is to be explained by their political illiteracy. We do not at all consider that history has imposed on workers' and peasants' Russia the duty to carry out the revolution in all countries. More precisely, we think that workers' and peasants' Russia can at present render its greatest service to the world working class by concentrating all its efforts upon intensive economic and cultural work. It is just this intensive work of economic rehabilitation and cultural expansion that will, better than anything else, demonstrate to all mankind the enormous potentialities inherent in the working class, and convince them that communism is not so much a destructive as a creative force. That is why, without inconsistency and without either cherishing any illusions as to the attitude of the bourgeoisie towards us or trying to deceive them as to our real physiognomy, we can honestly pledge ourselves not to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, provided that they leave us in peace, for we have such great confidence in the logic of historical development, on the one hand, and on the other, in our own capacity for internal economic work.

September 24, 1920

Various Subjects

Interview Given to the American Correspondent Comrade Reed

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(1) In connection with your question about the peace proposals of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, I can say this:

Our aim in the conflict with Poland was peace. On the eve of the war with Poland we were wholly absorbed in tasks of peaceful labour. I was in the Urals, in the capacity of chairman of the Council of the First Labour Army. Never in the whole period of my Soviet work have I felt such satisfaction as during that month and a half of economic work in the Urals. The war with Poland forced us out of a situation in which we were devoting all our attention and all our strength to economic tasks.

It was our endeavour to secure peace at any cost. How? We offered very big concessions to the Polish government. They rejected them. We took the offensive, so as to force them to give us peace. This offensive did not produce all the desired results, and the All-Russia Central Executive Committee is once more offering very extensive – I dare not say excessive – concessions, with a view to attaining peace and ensuring the transition to economic labour. The peace terms, as they are set out in the resolution of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, are not only broad but also extremely demonstrative. While genuinely providing a real basis for peace, at the same time they possess great educational power. They ought to show and they do in fact show to the whole world, the Polish people included, that peace is genuinely our aim, an aim for which we are prepared to pay a high price. At the same time, these conditions are an expression of the consciousness of the worker and peasant masses of Russia, who want peace, are ready to make concessions, and are offering these concessions, and who, if this peace is denied them, will, aware of their unshakable rightness, know how to attain peace through victory.

(2) As regards the policy of America towards us, I can give you a brief statement of my ideas, which, of course, Comrade Chicherin would develop more fully and with more information. You know that in our world policy we are not guided by national passions and chauvinistic sympathies or antipathies. We have no prejudices against a yellow skin, nor have we any blind sympathy with the white race. In consequence, we watch attentively the development of world antagonisms, including that very big antagonism which is developing around the Pacific Ocean. We have declared more than once, and shown in practice, that we can not only coexist with bourgeois states but can also work together with them, and can do this within very wide limits. It is quite clear that our attitude to the Pacific Ocean antagonisms will be determined entirely by the attitude taken up towards the Soviet Republic by Japan and by the United States respectively. From this serious standpoint, I venture to think that

Mr. Wilson's policy is not the wisest policy that the great trans-Atlantic republic has ever pursued.

(3) As regards the Red Army, its strength and the potentialities contained within it, I will permit myself to say that it is destined, in the future as in the past, to give not a few surprises to those who look at it from outside. Superficial observers were amazed by our successes and could not account for them. Our retreat from Warsaw drove them to the opposite extreme. I tell you frankly that one of the sources of our strength in the international struggle is the fact that capitalist diplomats and capitalist military men do not understand either the sources of our strength or the causes of our weakness.

We built and are building the Red Army at the fronts, in a process of uninterrupted battle. We studied the enemy and adapted ourselves to him in a period of uninterrupted war, improvising new formations and tempering them in action. The conditions of our struggle in the North, the East, the South and the West were profoundly different. On each of our fronts we retreated a long way at least once, after initial successes. One may see in this lack of sufficient power of endurance. Actually, however, this fact resulted from the circumstance that we were creating the army in the process of struggle, while the millions of working people were becoming convinced that there was no other way. We hurled our divisions forward, and they got as far as Warsaw. Behind them we were and are carrying on uninterrupted work to create forces that will far exceed in strength our first contingents, which retreated from Warsaw. We have been obliged to mobilise all our industry again. The country once more knows no tasks other than the tasks of war.

From Kolchak we retreated west of the Volga. From Denikin we retreated to Orel. From Yudenich we fell back almost to the walls of Petrograd. All these enemies of ours were wiped out and destroyed by our second wave.

If White Poland refuses to give us peace, we have no doubt that our second campaign along the road to Warsaw, which we have come to know well, will be more successful and decisive than the first.

September 24, 1920

Various Subjects

Speech at a Parade in Honour of the Red Commanders

Red Square, October 2, 1920

* * *

Comrade Red commanders, cadets, representatives of the garrison of Moscow!

We have assembled here to mark, in this Red Square, our joy at the fact that we are sending to the front of struggle against the enemies of the working masses several hundred new, young, but already spiritually tempered Red commanders, and I begin my speech to you by calling upon you all, with one voice, to hail our brothers, the new Red commanders, in a concerted Red Army 'Hurrah!'

Comrade young Red commanders! You are joining the fighting ranks of our active army at a difficult time. During the last few weeks we have suffered setbacks on the front of struggle against the Polish gentry. Red commanders! Remember the first precept of the Red Army: do not take fright at setbacks, do not conceal them, do not deceive yourselves or others concerning them! In victory do not lose your heads from joy, in defeat do not lose your heads from anxiety! In this lies our strength: through this we shall remain strong until we win complete victory over our enemies.

This is a difficult moment, because our principal foe, bourgeois France, the most predatory of all countries, has realised that it is now or never for her to deal us a hard blow. Wrangel and Poland are merely the two wings of French imperialism, our principal foe.

If you look back, over all the wars we have fought, you will see that, in every case, behind our immediate enemy stood the predatory, bloodthirsty and base usurers and stock-exchange speculators of France. Our first serious fight began on the Volga – against the Czechoslovak Corps, which was nothing but a hired detachment in the service of the French Government. Do you remember the revolt in Yaroslavl? An old, historic town, with its splendid buildings, was senselessly destroyed and, what was even graver, working people, women and children, perished beneath the rubble of those ancient buildings. Who organised that criminal revolt? The French ambassador Noulens, the French general Niessel, with money from the French stock-exchange. Remember the long story of our struggle in the East against Kolchak, in the North against General Miller, in the South against Denikin, in the North-West against Yudenich. Who armed them? Who backed them? Who directed them against us? The imperialists of the whole world, of course – but, first and foremost,

the French stock-exchange. And now, in the final months of our war with Poland, is it not obvious to all of us, and to the whole world, that behind White-Guard, bourgeois-gentry Poland stands the French stock-exchange, which will not let the Polish Government make peace with us? More than that, the French President Millerand, that wretched, dishonest renegade and traitor – for, in the past, he called himself a socialist and a representative of the workers – that politician in the paid service of the French stock-exchange, lacking conscience and honour, together with the band that backs him, has now made it his task to strike us a hard blow in the South.

Comrades! Here, in this square, I warn you frankly, Red commanders, and you, Red soldiers, that *the French militarists are preparing to strike a blow at us at Odessa, Novorossiisk, Nikolayev and Kherson*, at our southern ports on the coast of the Black Sea. The French naval command has already several times sought a pretext, an outward reason for attacking Odessa and Novorossiisk. Hitherto they have not succeeded in this. All the information we have indicates that now, hurrying to help Wrangel, Millerand is getting ready, on one pretext or another, or else without any pretext at all, to bombard Odessa and Novorossiisk, perhaps to land an expeditionary force, or to help Wrangel seize these towns from the landward side. We expose in advance this dishonourable, bloody plot by the French stock-exchange. This exposure will be heard by the working masses of the whole of Europe and the world, and, above all, of France. Millerand will not succeed in deceiving the French workers with the story that we have compelled the French Government to attack us, For we say now to the workers of France: 'Be on the alert! Know that your President is preparing behind your backs to strike a base blow at our Red Soviet ports!'

At the same time we appeal to the workers of Poland, and also to the workers and peasants of Romania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, because in all these countries Millerand's agents are hatching plots against us, trying to get them to move against workers' and peasants' Russia. We say to the working people of South-Eastern Europe: 'Beware of our common enemies, the French imperialists!' We say to the working people of Poland: 'You need peace no less than we do. Cast off the criminal hand of the French bourgeoisie, which grasps you by the throat.' We say to the working people of France: 'How long are you going to allow a government of dishonest stock-exchange hangmen to rule over you? It is time, high time, workers of France, to overthrow the base gang which hates everything that is honest anywhere in the world. There has never been and is not a government baser than the present government of France. Hundreds of millions of people in all parts of the world hate it and curse it. It is time, high time, to make France a workers' and peasants' Soviet republic!'

So long as this has not been done, so long as danger threatens the workers' and peasants' country, we shall defend it honourably and courageously, to our last drop of blood. Here, in Red Square, beside the tombs of our warriors who are dear to us, we swear that the new conspiracy of world capital, under the leadership of the French stock-exchange, shall not conquer and break our country. Yes, our country is poor, our workers' and peasants' country is exhausted, but it has the will to fight, to defend its future, the free family of workers and peasants which will arise and will raise up our economy, which will make this Moscow and our whole country rich, happy, educated, and proud that it has shown to all the peoples the road to real freedom and real

brotherhood.

Red commanders and Red soldiers! Let us raise our hands to swear an oath that we promise, before the working people of the whole world, to fight against the bourgeoisie of the whole world, for the well-being of the working masses! Death and destruction to French imperialism! Long live the world working class! Long live the Red Army and its Red commanders! Hurrah!

Various Subjects

Our Task In The Fourth Year

* * *

The third anniversary finds the Red Army, as before, in the thick of battle. We have created, amid flame and smoke, a centralised apparatus of military administration, trained substantial cadres of new commanding personnel, and become more experienced, sounder and stronger. But the Red Army is still far from being what it must become.

Up to now we have developed mainly in breadth, but henceforth we must develop in depth. Up to now we have required, in the main, quantity, but henceforth we must learn to require quality. The fourth year must bring us into a new period of army-building. We must reduce the 'tail' and increase the number of fighting men at the expense of the number of auxiliaries. The infantry, the principal mass of the army must be raised to a higher level. Every infantryman must undergo instruction, in a training unit at the very least. The holding brigades must become exemplary schools of military education and training. Work on the command courses must be developed and deepened. They must give us Red commanders who have been prepared theoretically and practically. Our masses of cavalry must be subjected to careful selection and education. The army's technical units must be brought into line with the latest conclusions of military science.

The proletarian revolution has still not won final victory throughout the world. There will therefore be much work for the Red Army to do in the future. Developing in depth, improving in quality, rising to a higher level – that is the programme for the fourth year!

October 15, 1920
Slavyansk

Various Subjects

Communication to Representatives of the Soviet Press

November 29, 1920

* * *

(1) To the question about the situation at the front I must reply that, at the present time, we have no active fronts. Wrangel has been liquidated in the South, Petlyura and Balakhovich [\[1\]](#) in the West, and the remains of Semyonov's forces have been destroyed in the Far East. This is, perhaps, the first moment of military quiet in the three years that the Soviet power has existed. No fighting is going on. Operational reports from the front speak only of organisational work in the newly-cleared regions, and of the counting of trophies. [\[2\]](#)

(2) How long will this period last? On that point you should seek information beyond the bounds of the Soviet republic – in those chancelleries and headquarters where all the conspiracies, attacks and campaigns against Soviet Russia are fabricated. We want a protracted and stable peace, just as we wanted this before the Polish offensive, when we offered big concessions, and just as we offered an amnesty to the Wrangelites, in view of the utter hopelessness of their enterprise. In Paris and London they did not want peace. The result was that, after bitter conflict and countless losses, Poland obtained less than we had offered on the eve of her attack upon us. Then Wrangel's adventure absorbed several tens of thousands of lives and several milliard francs. And the result was that the Wrangelites were destroyed – without any amnesty, of course.

(3) What do I see as the main task of the moment? Tasks in the sphere of the economy. Not long ago, as perhaps you know, I returned from the Donets Basin, where, with a commission from the Council of People's Commissars, I inspected the situation of the coal and metallurgical industries. I became convinced that now, when nobody threatens the Donets Basin, either from the Crimean or from the Caucasian direction, it is completely possible to increase twofold or threefold the output of coal, during the next few months. I consider that the measures which the Government has taken will ensure this result. We shall set the mighty iron and steel works of the South in motion. Railway transport will recover. The country's entire attention is being switched from problems of politics and war to problems of economic construction. We are greatly interested in international trade, but we are even more interested in being left in peace. On that condition we can undertake not to unsheath our sword.

(4) What are our purely military tasks? These consist in effecting a substantial

réduction in the size of the army while at the same time increasing its combat capacity. The capitalist press has told its readers that the Red Army is breaking up, that Comrade Budyonny has betrayed us, and so on. It may be that there are still to be found in Europe or in America boneheads that continue to believe such cock-and-bull stories. In reality, in the operations against Wrangel, the Red Army rose to a new height, both in strategy and tactics and in the heroism of the fighting men. Our infantry was particularly successful. We have to pay close attention to military technology. Among the numerous trophies taken by us on the Polish and Wrangel fronts we found nothing that we did not ourselves possess.

5) You ask about Caucasia and the Near East. Our policy on the Caucasian frontier is the same as on the Dniester and the Narova. It is a policy of peace. The statesmen of the capitalist countries, despite all their (a thousand pardons) obtuseness where questions of revolution and socialism are concerned, ought to understand that our profound interests (political, economic and cultural) demand of us a policy of peace and intense labour.

(6) You have reminded me that Lloyd George expressed confidence that the Soviet regime would soon fall, since 'such a crazy regime cannot last long'. Allow me, first of all, to note the persistence with which certain statesmen practise the trade of being bad prophets. As for our 'crazy regime', it is really very difficult to say anything in its defence. It is the case that our state is not beaded by an hereditary monarch, such as you find in well-ordered countries. Consequently, we lack court life, with its ennobling influence on the people. We have no princes, marshals, viscounts, peers, generals or high-placed scoundrels in judges' ceremonial robes. We have no House of Lords – those lords whom Mr Lloyd George described in 1908 as the parasitic descendants of idlers and parasites, but who nevertheless continue even today to adorn certain civilised states. We have no bankers, capitalists, or usurers, such as, in accordance with all the rules of rational and moral civilisation, profiteer feverishly in wartime. We do not even have any professional parliamentarians, who, every five years, oblige the exploited masses to vote for one or other of the existing bourgeois electoral machines. Here, all the legislative and executive organs of the republic are subordinate to the congress of soviets which is meeting this month, with its one thousand worker-and-peasant members. Our task is to improve the well-being and the enlightenment of our country on the basis of equality and solidarity between all members of society as regards both labour and enjoyment. We want peace, and we defend ourselves when we are attacked. It is quite understandable that our order of things seems to some people to be a 'crazy regime'.

Endnotes

[1.](#) Bulak-Balakhovich was an officer who joined the Red Army in 1918 but later went over to the Whites. He took part in Yudenich's attack on Petrograd in the summer of 1919, but quarrelled with Yudenich and went to Poland. There he took command of a Russian force formed on Polish soil by Savinkov, which participated in the Soviet-Polish war and fought on after the armistice, but was beaten in November 1920.

[2.](#) By the end of 1920 all the active fronts of the civil war had been liquidated. Only in the Far East did the young units of the Revolutionary People's Army carry on through 1921-1922 continual skirmishes with counter-revolutionary detachments organised with Japanese aid. It was not until October 25, 1922, after Japan had evacuated the Maritime province,

that Vladivostok was occupied by units of the Far Eastern Republic's army. In South Russia, in the Tambov region, along the Western frontier, and in Turkestan, the year 1921 saw only bandit revolts (for more details of which, see Vol.IV). The Civil War with the regular forces of the White Guards on Russian territory ended with the defeat of Wrangel in November 1920.

Various Subjects

Take Care of the Wounded and Sick Soldiers!

* * *

The army medical service is functioning as badly as ever. Wounded and sick Red Army men fail to receive even one-tenth of the attention they have a right to. The reasons for this are numerous.

Among the doctors, only a few are working from conscience. Often, the doctors' sympathies lie on the other side of the firing line.

Among the lower medical personnel there are not a few self-seekers and even simply criminal elements. Embezzlement of food, drugs, alcohol and ether flourishes. The paramedics and orderlies frequently do not perform their simplest duties towards the sick and wounded, counting on enjoyment of complete immunity for their conduct. Very many of the so-called nurses busy themselves with anything but care of the sick soldiers.

It must, however, be said that *the local soviet authorities, Party groups and cells, too, fail to pay the necessary attention to the conditions under which wounded soldiers are moved about and looked after. Often the comrade soldier who has been disabled feels as if the whole world has forgotten him. That arouses in the wounded man's heart a natural sense of injury, and then of bitterness. Here is one of the reasons why Red Army men who have recovered from their wounds sometimes try to avoid returning to the army.*

This state of affairs must be ended.

First and foremost, it is necessary to awaken concern among wide circles of the working class and conscious peasantry regarding the lot of the wounded and sick soldiers. Special committees for fraternal aid to the wounded must be formed. Communist working women must take the initiative in establishing such bodies. The War Department will help them with all its resources. A merely 'official' apparatus without the attentive, loving participation of working women, mother, sisters and wives, will not enable us to ease and brighten the life of the wounded warrior.

Given the bad state of the army medical apparatus – especially under the conditions of a retreat, such as is happening on the Southern front – initiative on the part of local soviet institutions and Party organisations is enormously important. They have no right to rely on the work of the army medical administration, which, as harsh experience has shown, when lacking supervision, criticism and support from wide Soviet circles, has proved impotent to cope with its task, and is, in the end, starting to concern itself merely with keeping up an outward show of activity.

At the same time, all the executives in the army medical department must

be reminded of the responsibility that is theirs under conditions of very grievous war.

A doctor who has not shown all proper care for the wounded must, like a commander who has failed to take all measures needed to carry out a military order, answer for it with his head, for in both cases dozens and hundreds of soldiers pay with their lives for the slovenliness of the commander and the negligence of the doctor alike.

A ruthless purge must be carried out among the paramedics, orderlies and nurses. Dozens of cases have been observed when orderlies and nurses have left the sick without a drop of water to drink, have failed to clean up filth, or have simply abandoned wounded men to the mercy of fate, leaving the echelon to go into the town on their own business. Scoundrels of this sort are to be shot, like deserters quitting their posts. At the same time, courageous and honourable executives, both men and women, in the army medical department must be promoted, encouraged and rewarded in every way.

As large as possible a number of Communist women devoted to the Red Army must be recruited to serve as nurses: they will bring a warm heart to their work of caring for the wounded.

In view of the immense importance of this task, I call on all *Party organisations to place on their agenda the question of aid to wounded and sick Red Army men*. This item must not be struck from the agenda until we have brought about, by combined efforts, the necessary improvements in this matter. The shameful conduct which, we observe today must be eradicated. A wounded or sick warrior of the Red Army must feel at every moment the caring hand of the Soviet power and the loving concern of the working masses.

None of the officials of Soviet Russia will dare to excuse himself on the grounds that care of the wounded does not come within the range of his responsibilities. Aid to the wounded Red Army man, in word and deed, is the duty of every Soviet office-worker, regardless of what his other official responsibilities may be.

Comrade working women! Conscious peasant women! Help the wounded and sick fighters for the cause of the working people!

July 8, 1919

Various Subjects

More Concern for the Red Soldiers

* * *

It must be said, frankly, that the Soviet power in the localities does not always pay the necessary attention to the state of the comrade Red Army men. The inevitable burdens of military service are accompanied by accidental, secondary inconveniences which do not get eliminated for the simple reason that nobody gives proper thought to them.

The way the Red Army men are housed is sometimes as bad as it could be. Often the barrack buildings are filthy. In many of the huts used in summer-time the roofs leak, there is no glass in the windows and the doors do not shut. Frequently there is not sufficient firewood for boiling water. The bunks or beds are without mattresses or mats. Why all this? Through inattention, through lack of the necessary care.

There are, of course, many comforts which our disordered country, after several years of war, is not at present able to offer to its fighting men. But intelligent and honest Red Army men do not ask for anything extraordinary. Some modest comforts ought, however, to be provided, whatever the cost. And this is quite feasible. Repairing the roof so that it does not leak, putting bunks in order, making straw mats, arranging latrines properly, making it possible for the Red Army men to wash themselves, if only once a week, with hot water and soap – all this is perfectly possible. All that is needed is for the local authority – not just the military authority, but the local Soviet authority as a whole – to make it their task to create tolerable conditions of human existence for Red Army units.

When he is in the firing-line, the revolutionary warrior has to suffer all sorts of adversities – going for whole days and nights without food, getting soaked to the skin by rain, carrying out difficult marches, and so on. But, out there, all these burdens arise from the very fact of war, and it is of no use to grumble about them – one can only redouble one's efforts to crush the bourgeoisie as soon as possible and bring the war to an end. It is another matter in the rear, where the Red Army units are formed and trained. Here it is both possible and necessary to provide more amenities and ensure greater comfort. This is a task for the local Soviet authorities.

It is the duty of the chairman of the executive Committee in every city, in every *uyezd*, to inspect from time to time, along with the military commissar, the places where troops are quartered, so as to see for himself whether the lives of the Red warriors could not be made easier and brighter.

Grumbling is sometimes heard in the barracks, and discontent makes itself felt. Some people, perhaps, think that the Red soldiers are dissatisfied with

Soviet power in general and want to set up some other sort of power. But this is not so. The overwhelming majority of the comrade soldiers know that the present ruling power is the power of the workers and peasants. Individual representatives of this power, in the localities or at the centre, may make mistakes. They can be replaced. But the working people cannot want for themselves any power other than that of the workers and peasants. If grumbling is heard, if there is discontent, this is directed against individual representatives of the ruling power who perform their duties inattentively, slackly and negligently and who, in particular, fail to show the necessary care for the Red Army men.

This is exploited by various White-Guard rogues in order to try and cause confusion and clashes, with the spilling of workers' and peasants' blood.

White-Guard rogues must, of course, be exterminated. But for the Red Army men there must be more attention, more concern, more love!

July 22, 1920
Kremenchug

Various Subjects

The Day of the Wounded

* * *

The proletariat of Kremenchug is devoting this day to the wounded and sick Red soldier. Let us hope that the Kremenchug workers have started a ball rolling in this matter of care and concern for Red soldiers who have been temporarily disabled, and that their initiative will spread all over the Ukraine and throughout the Russian Federation.

The state of affairs in the army medical department is still extremely poor. The wounded, who need the greatest care, suffer, in fact, the greatest privations. Wide initiative by the Soviet public is needed if their lot is to be eased.

It is necessary to organise permanent *committees for aid to the wounded and sick Red warriors*.

Communist working women must be brought in among the nurses, so as to establish in that quarter a serious, conscientious and attentive attitude to their duties.

The day of the wounded and sick Red hero, organised by the Kremenchug Soviet under the leadership of its chairman Comrade Bogus lavsky, is the beginning of a great task which still lies ahead of us.

Let us send, on this day, a fraternal greeting to the wounded and sick warriors wherever they may be – on the battlefield, lying in a rattling farm-cart, at a dressing-station, on the floor of a heated goods-wagon, or in a field hospital.

July 23, 1919
Kremenchug

Various Subjects

To The Aid Of The Sick And Wounded Red Army Man

Letter to the Committee for Aid to Sick and Wounded Red Army Men

* * *

Discipline plays a big role in our army. But the basis of the Red Army, its driving force, is not discipline but solidarity. The Red Army would never have coped with its mighty enemies if the feeling and consciousness of revolutionary solidarity had not bound it together, from top to bottom. It is only on a foundation of solidarity that a strong revolutionary discipline, the necessary condition for victory, can be built.

Strengthening the feeling of Communist solidarity in the army means uniting it more closely, hardening it and making it invincible. This solidarity must extend far beyond the limits of the army itself. It must embrace the working masses as a whole, all Soviet Russia, so as then to spread to the entirety of working mankind.

When does our Red warrior feel most vividly and acutely the cordial atmosphere of revolutionary solidarity? When he is wounded, when he is sick, when he is disabled, whether temporarily or permanently. If, when he is in that condition, he feels half-abandoned and half-forgotten, his soul becomes filled with dark doubts. Where is that fraternity for which he shed his blood? From the field hospitals, the casualty clearing stations and the groups of convalescents these doubts then spread to the active units, weakening their internal bones and their fighting strength. Woe to that army whose sick and wounded are left neglected and without shelter!

This is why the work of the Committee for Aid to Sick and Wounded Red Army Men is of immense importance. This is not the philanthropy, not the charity of the property-owners, the well-to-do, the well-fed, towards those they have condemned to poverty. No, this is a manifestation of the unbroken bond between the working people, this is attentive and sympathetic care on the part of the worker and the peasant, and especially the woman worker and the peasant woman, for their brother who has been disabled.

The work of bringing aid to the sick and wounded Red Army men is truly revolutionary Communist work. The more extensively it is developed in the rear, the more confidently will the hearts of our fighters beat, and the more accurately will they strike down the enemies of working people's Russia.

Various Subjects

The Woman Worker and the War

* * *

The hardships of the war bear more heavily in many respects upon the woman worker than upon the workingman. As a soldier, the proletarian fighter for a great cause, he suffers grave privations, but he knows the immediate thrill of success, of victory won. The woman worker stands further off. The war brings her only privations – the departure of her husband, brother, son. Want and hunger are the lot of the family. A Red Army man is killed in action – and in the rear an old mother or a widow is left to carry on. The war affects the womenfolk of the working people more severely than the men.

It is therefore the more important and necessary for all of us that the working woman should understand the meaning of this war and should learn not just to endure and to suffer but also to participate with her own personal strength in the great struggle for the emancipation of the working class.

The working woman passionately wants peace, the return of the man who is close to her, the restoration of economic life, so that the family may no longer be a prey to accursed, nagging cold and hunger. It is necessary that the working woman, even the most ignorant and backward, should know and understand that peace will not be given us by the embittered, callous enemies of the working people – the former landlords, capitalists, dignitaries and Tsarist generals, and the foreign predators who have set this whole pack upon us. We can achieve a calm, peaceful existence only if we force our enemies to understand that we are invincible, that we cannot be crushed, that we shall not willingly put our neck in the noose. Only by routing Denikin's bands, which have mercilessly slaughtered workers, both men and women, shall we win for ourselves the possibility of calm, peaceful and harmonious labour.

The more we rally our forces, the firmer our will-power the sooner shall we finish the task, to the end, to victory, peace and freedom.

Although the majority of women do not participate in military activities, they exercise an immense influence upon them. If his mother or his sister understands the great importance of the present struggle, the morale of the warrior will be twice as strong. And, in the long run, it is the army with the stronger morale that wins in war.

In this connection the first precept for the woman worker is this: understand that this war is being fought for the sake of a happier future for your children, strengthen your heart, and sustain the proletarian warrior in his struggle.

The support, spiritual and material, of women is especially needed by the warrior who has been disabled, through wounds or sickness. Our army medical organisation is too feeble. There are a multitude of gaps and shortcomings in

it. The sick or wounded Red Army man often falls into very hard circumstances. A considerable section of the professional nurses are women with a petty-bourgeois cast of mind, indifferent to the revolution, the Red Army and the wounded soldier. We need to increase the number of conscious nurses who will treat the Red Army men with real care and sincere love. We must surround our wounded and sick warriors with the same attention as that with which the bourgeoisie surrounded their sick officers. We must set up voluntary proletarian committees for aid to wounded and sick Red Army men, and the first place in these organisations must be occupied by conscious women workers.

Finally, a very great role falls to women in the sphere of supplies for the army. We shall bring our fight to speedy victory only if our Red Army men are clothed and shod and supplied with the ammunition that they need. In the factories working for the war, the productivity of labour must be raised to the highest level. The woman worker does not fight: so let her manufacture underwear, uniforms, cartridges and shells for the fighting man. In all war-industry enterprises we must have groups of devoted and self-sacrificing women workers who are able by their words and their example to stir all the workers in the enterprise to the highest intensity of labour. All for the Red Army, because the Red Army is all for the defence of the working people.

How long will this accursed war go on? It is hard to give an exact answer to that question. But, in all countries, the imperialists are getting weaker and weaker. Of our internal enemies, only Denikin still constitutes a danger. We can deal with him in three or four months if all the forces of the working people are concentrated on that task. Let the woman worker, together with the conscious male proletarian, inscribe on their banner: all for the Red Army, because the Red Army is all for the defence of the working people.

September 30, 1919
Moscow

Various Subjects

Prepare For Front Week!

* * *

Front Week begins on January 21. Front Week must be carried out all over the country with all the energy that corresponds to the great importance of this work. Our front is victorious throughout its length of several thousand *versts*. Our victories have been won through the countless efforts of individual Red Army men. Each morning the Soviet country receives news of enemy regiments defeated, trophies captured, cities taken. This means that armed workers and peasants have shed their blood again and again, and laid down their lives for the cause of socialism, while those who have survived have, with great efforts and privations, overcome the resistance put up by the enemy and by nature.

The coldest time of the year has come. The layer of snow grows thicker and thicker. Things get harder and harder for the infantryman, the cavalryman and the gunner. In various sectors of the front, epidemic diseases have spread from the enemy camp into our ranks. Yet, despite everything, the Red front keeps its staunchness, advances, beats the enemy and conquers.

We did not succeed in finishing our military work before the onset of winter. We must exert every effort to finish it off before spring comes, before the thaw and the time when the roads become impassable. For this purpose we need to support, strengthen and reinforce the front. Front Week is a week of mobilisation of the whole rear for active aid to our fighters. Our first thought and first concern must be for the wounded and the sick. They must be given priority in help and kindness. However poor our country, it will find and collect a great deal in order to ease the position of the soldiers disabled from active service with the Red Army. Warm underwear, books, newspapers – to the field hospitals, to the casualty clearing stations, to the front. The most important, most valuable gift to the front will be fresh reinforcements. It is on this matter that not only the local military commissariats but also all Soviet authorities must now concentrate their whole attention. Those accepted at the test call-up must nowhere be held back even for a single hour. All must be sent forward into the holding units. Work in the holding units must be doubled and trebled. Model reinforcement companies must be drawn from those units, and during Front Week these companies must flow in a broad stream into the army's depleted ranks.

Preparations for Front Week must intensify the fight against those who have left the front. The commission for combating desertion, helped by all Soviet institutions, must before January 21 winkle out the self-seekers from every place where they have hidden, and concentrate them in punishment units.

Preparation for Front Week is not a matter for the War Department alone.

No, the entire working class, the entire conscious peasantry must lend a hand in this work. Not a single Soviet institution must hold aloof, neither in Moscow, nor in Petrograd, nor in the remotest volost. The Communist Party organisations will be in the forefront of this work. The trade unions and the co-operatives will do their duty. The woman worker will take an active part in the work for the wounded and sick warriors. The Young Communist League organisations will show that they do not forget their elder brothers who are fighting, even for a single hour.

May the month that remains be a time of intense, tireless, all-sided and combined preparation for Front Week.

There must be not one honest citizen, man or woman, in the Soviet Republic, who holds aloof from this work!

At the sessions of all our institutions, at all assemblies and meetings, the chairman must remind those present of the coming Front Week, which is to prepare and ensure complete victory before the onset of spring!

Working men and working women, peasants and peasant women, prepare for Front Week!

December 22, 1919
Petrograd

Various Subjects

To Women Workers Concerning Front Week

* * *

In order that Front Week – that is, the week of universal intense work by the rear for the front, and care for the front – may be a success, the woman worker must play a part in it. The first task of Front Week is to bring about increased attention to the wounded and sick. It is not possible to cope, in this sphere, by means of a merely 'official' Soviet apparatus. Here we need *personal* participation, *personal* attention to an individual, to a wounded or sick Red Army man. And from whom can the army expect warmer concern for its disabled soldiers than from the woman worker?

Front Week has as its wider task to strengthen the morale of our Red regiments, by showing them that they have behind them a firm and reliable rear. We are close to victory, but we still have to wage a stern struggle during these difficult winter months. During Front Week the woman worker will show the Red fighters with particular force and energy that their material and spiritual interests are near and dear to her heart..

Among the many, many hundreds of thousands of workers and peasants whom the Soviet Republic has put under arms there are, of course, some ignorant, self-seeking, corrupt elements. It is from this group that deserters come. The woman worker must use her influence to sustain in the working class contempt and hatred for the violators of military solidarity, the self-seekers and runaways. Front Week will become, with the help of the woman worker, the week when the last vestiges of desertion are swept away.

Not many weeks are left before January 21. Intense work is needed. All organisations of women workers must put the question of Front Week on the agenda at their meetings. Not a single conscious woman worker must remain aloof.

The front is fighting, the front is straining every nerve to win complete and rapid victory. Sister woman worker, help the front!

December 27, 1919
Moscow

Chronology

Of the Most Important Military Events in 1920

January

3 Tsaritsyn taken by units of the South-Western front. Dvinsk [Dvinsk (Daugavpils) was taken by a combined operation of Polish and Lettish forces. Its loss cut Soviet Russia off from direct contact with Lithuania.] taken by the Poles.

5 Guryevt taken by units of the 4th Army of the Turkestan front [Guryev was a stronghold of the Cossacks of the Yaik, or River Ural, where the reiver enters the Caspian Sea.].

7 Krasnoyarsk taken by units of the 5th Army.

8 Rostov-on-Don taken by Comrade Budyonny's First Mounted Army.

15 Kansk taken by units of the 5th Army. [× Kansk is on the Trans-Siberian line, about 180km. east of Krasnoyarsk. Not to be confused with Kainsk, also on the Trans-Siberian, but further west, between Omsk and Novo-Nikolayevsk (now Novosibirsk).]

16 Decree of the Supreme Soviet on the lifting of the blockade of the Soviet Republic.

22 Under pressure from the White Poles and Letts, Drissa and Rechitsa abandoned by Red Army units.

30 Armistice agreement concluded with Latvia.

February

2 Peace signed with Estonia.

5 Beginning of the operation by the 6th Army of the Northern front to liquidate the Whites.

6 Odessa taken by units of the 12th Army.

7 General [sic] Kolchak [Kolchak was, of course, not a General but an Admiral.] shot by decision of the Irkutsk Revolutionary Committee.

12 Agreement concluded between Litvinov and O'Grady for exchange of prisoners-of-war.

17 The remnants of Denikin's Ukraine group liquidated by units of the Southern front.

21 Archangel taken by units of the 6th Army.

23 Rostov-on-Don taken a second time by units of the 13th Army and the counter-offensive of Denikin's Don Corps liquidated.

24 Khiva taken by Red units of the 1st Army of the Turkestan front.

25 Onega taken by units of the 6th Army.

March

6 Mozyr, Kalinkovichi and Ovruch taken by the Poles, renewing their active operations on our Western front. [Mozyr was of particular importance strategically, as possession of it gave control of all traffic through Polesia into Russia and also of the transverse line connecting Vitebsk with Zhitomir – and linking the two Soviet armies of the Western front. Kalinkovichi is about 20km. north of Mozyr, on the railway from Brest-Litovsk to Gomel.]

7 Irkutsk taken by units of the Red Army.

8 Yeysk and Tikhoretskaya taken by units of the Caucasian front.

12 Beginning of General [sic] Kapp's revolt in Germany. [x Kapp was not a military man but a civil servant. The General associated with him in his *putsch* was named Luttwitz. This outburst of German nationalism, and the Communist revolt in the Ruhr which followed it, may have influenced Pilsudski's decision to push the Red Army further back from Germany, owing to the Polish fear of a possible alliance between Soviet Russia and a Germany that had revolted against the Versailles Treaty.]

13 Murmansk taken by units of the Red Army.

17 Yekaterinodar taken by units of the 9th Army. Twenty thousand prisoners and a large quantity of *materiel* captured.

23 Pechenga [Pechenga (in Finnish, Petsamo) is on the Barents Sea.] taken by our units. Liquidation of the White-Guard front in the North concluded.

24 Grozny taken by units of the 10th Army.

26 Baron Wrangel appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of South Russia.

27 Novorossiisk taken by units of the 9th Army.

30 Vladikavkaz and Petrovsk taken by our forces. [Vladikavkaz is now called Ordzhonikidze, and Petrovsk Makhachkala.]

April

6 Fort Aleksandrovsk taken by a landing-party of Red sailors. [Fort Aleksandrovsk (now Fort Shevchenko) is on the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea.]

16 Peace conference between Russia and Latvia opens in Moscow.

25 The Poles begin an offensive against Right-bank Ukraine.

27 Baku taken by units of the 11th Red Army.

29 Armistice with the Japanese occupation forces in the Far East.

May

2 Creation of the Special Advisory Board for the struggle against Poland, with

participation by Brusiov, Polivanov and other prominent workers, both military and political.

6 Kiev taken by Polish forces.

9 Russo-Lithuanian negotiations begin in Moscow.

14 Offensive on the Western front begins. Units of the 15th Army break through Polish positions in the Polotsk area.

15 Formation of the Far-Eastern Republic.

18 Enzeli taken by our fleet. [Enzeli (later Bandar Pahlavi, now Enzei again) is on the Persian shore of the Caspian Sea. Some White naval vessels had taken refuge there after the capture of their bases on the Russian shores of the Caspian, and a small British-Indian force was stationed there.]

25 Our units take Borisov.

26 Beginning of the First Mounted Army's offensive on the South-Western front.

June

6 General Wrangel's units land on the coast of the Sea of Azov. Beginning of General Wrangel's first offensive.

8 Berdichev and Zhitomir taken by units of the First Mounted Army.

12 Kiev taken by units of the 12th Army. Russo-Finnish negotiations begin at Yuriyev. [Yuriyev is the Russian name of the town called by the Germans and Swedes Dorpat and by the Estonians Tartu.]

July

11 Minsk and Molodechno taken by units of our Western front. I Kamenets-Podoisk taken by our units.

14 Gay's cavalry corps takes Vilna.

17 Lida taken by units of the 3rd Army.

19 Baranovichi taken by units of the Mozyr group. Grodno taken by units of Gay's cavalry corps. Wrangel's forces land in the Kuban.

20 The British Government demands that we cease advancing further against Poland.

20-21 Stubborn fighting by the armies of the Western front for the crossings over the rivers Niemen and Shchara. [The river Shchara runs north-west into the Niemen, north-east of Volkovysk.]

26 Tarnopol taken by our units.

27 The fortress of Osowiec taken by units of our cavalry. [Osowiec is about 50km. north-north-west of Bialystok, where the railway crosses the river Biebrza. The Red Army

had crossed the 'Curzon line' and entered 'ethnic' Poland on July 24, at Nowy Dwór, between Grodno and Bialystok.]

31 Formation of the Revolutionary Committee of the Polish Republic. [This committee was set up in the first large town, Bialystok, which the Red Army captured in 'ethnic' Poland.]

August

1 Brest-Litovsk taken by our units.

2 Formation of the Revolutionary Committee of Soviet Galicia.

3 Lomza and Kovel taken by our forces.

8 Crossing of the Western Bug forced by units of the Western Front.

9 Wrangel's forces land on the coast of the Sea of Azov.

11 Peace signed with Latvia. Hrubieszow taken by units of the 12th Army.

13 Soldau (in East Prussia) taken by our units. [Soldau (in Polish, Dzialdowo), 20km. north-west of Miawa, had been ceded to Poland by the Treaty of Versailles.]

14 Wrangel's forces land in Caucasia, south of Yeysk.

15 The Polish Army goes over to the counter-offensive. Under Polish pressure, Ciechanow abandoned by our units. [Ciechanow is on the railway between Warsaw and Mlawa.]

16 Units of Gay's cavalry corps, after forcing a crossing of the Vistula, take Wloclawek. [Wloclawek is on the Vistula, below Plock, about 130km. West-north-west of Warsaw.]

17 Stubborn fighting before Warsaw. Russo-Polish negotiations begin in Minsk. Siedice taken by the Poles.

18 Strassburg taken by units of the 4th Army. [This 'Strassburg' is Strasburg (now Brodnica), a town in West Prussia which had been ceded to Poland under the Treaty of Versailles. It lies about 30 miles west of Soldau (Dzialdowo).]

20 Brest-Litovsk abandoned by our units. Hasty withdrawal eastward begun by our forces.

22 Lomza taken by the Poles.

September

1 Old Bukhara taken by units of the 1st Army of the Turkestan front. Revolution in Bukhara, overthrow and flight of the Amir.

5 Liquidation of Wrangel's landing on the coast of the Sea of Azov completed.

12 Kovel taken by the Poles.

14 Wrangel's units take the offensive in the sector Bolshoy Tokmak-Nelgovka Station (Wrangel's second offensive). [Bolshoy Tokmak is 50km. north-east of

Melitopol: Nelgovka is 50km. south-southeast of Bolshoy Tokmak, on the line from Berdyansk. (Berdyansk was renamed Osipenko in 1939, but reverted to its original name in 1958.)]

18 Rovno taken by Polish units.

19 Aleksandrovsk taken by Wrangel's units.

21 Russo-Polish negotiations begin in Riga.

23 Sinelnikovo taken by Wrangel's units. [Sinelnikovo is about 30km. south-east of Yekaterinoslav (now Dnyepetrovsk).]

25 Grodno abandoned by our forces.

26 General retreat continues on the Western front. Volkovysk taken by the Poles.

October

2 Our retreating units abandon Luninets.

12 Preliminary peace treaty signed with Poland.

14 Peace treaty signed with Finland. Fighting with Wrangel's units in the Kakhovka bridgehead.

20 Beginning of an offensive by the armies of the Southern front, to liquidate Wrangel.

21 Chita taken by the People's Revolutionary Army of the Far Eastern Republic.

30 Perekop taken by our units

November

2 Genichesk taken by our units. Wrangel's army withdraws into the Crimean Peninsula.

9 The Isthmus of Perekop forced by troops of the Southern Front.

14 Simferopol and Feodosiya taken by units of the Southern Front

15 Sevastopol taken by our units. Kerch taken and Wrangel completely liquidated.

16 Kamenets-Podolsk taken by Red units.

17 Work resumed at the Russo-Polish peace conference in Riga,

21 Liquidation of the Petlyurist movement and of Bulak-Bulakhovich completed.

26 Makhno's revolt in the Crimea liquidated.

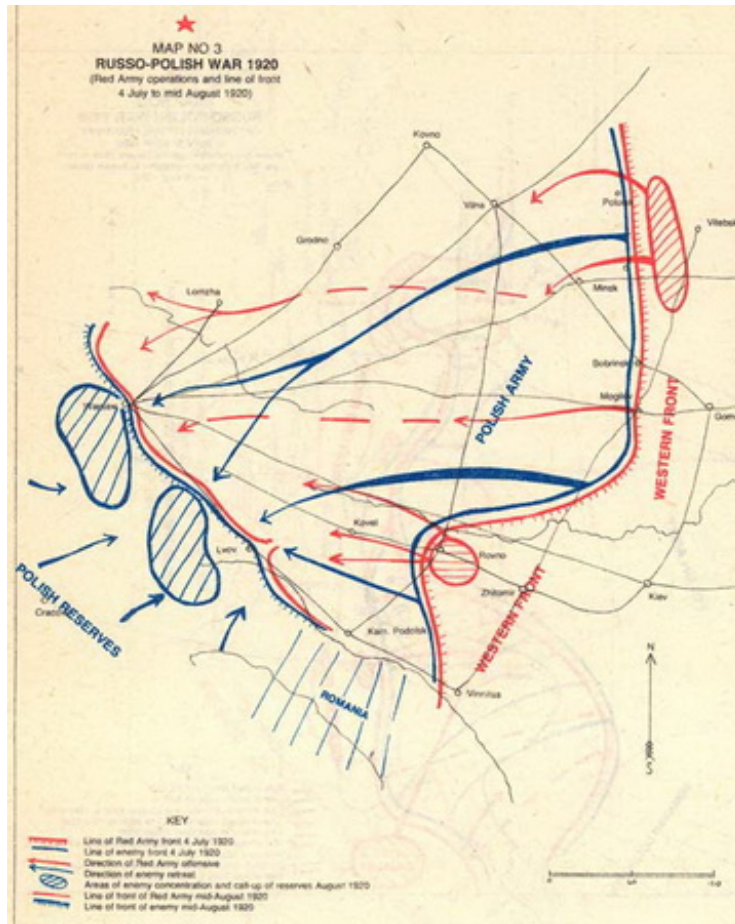
Map 1

General Military Situation of RSFSR



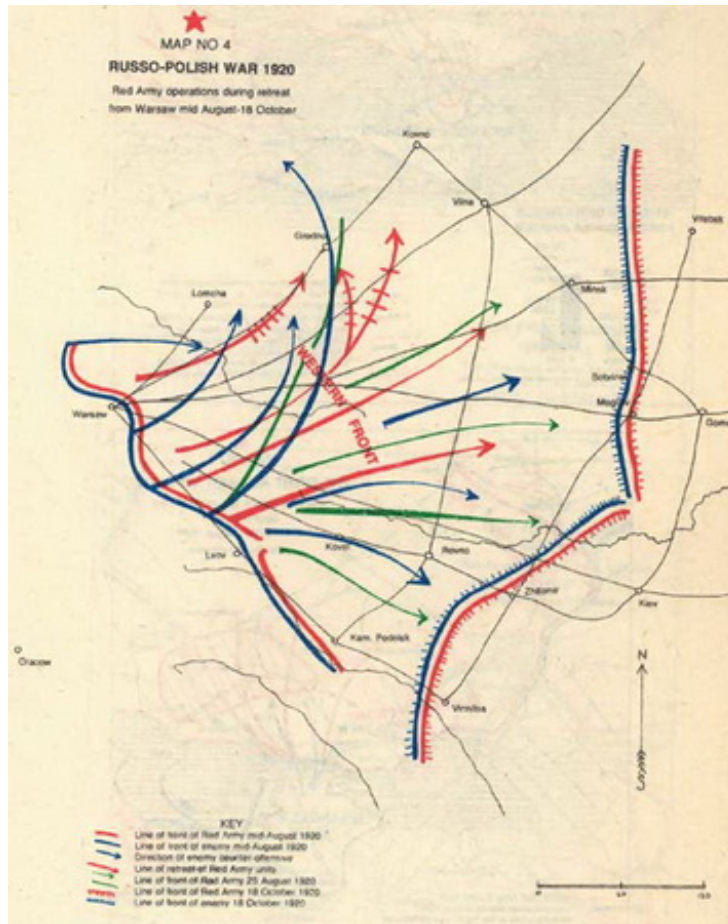
Map 3

Russo-Polish War 1920



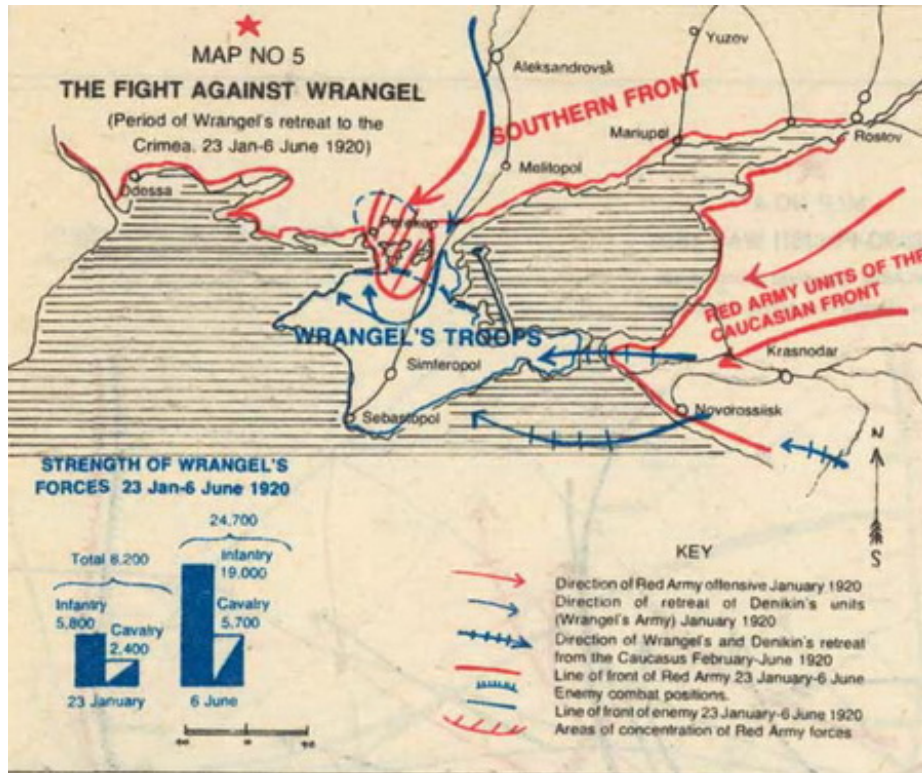
Map 4

Russo-Polish War 1920



Map 5

The Fight against Wrangel



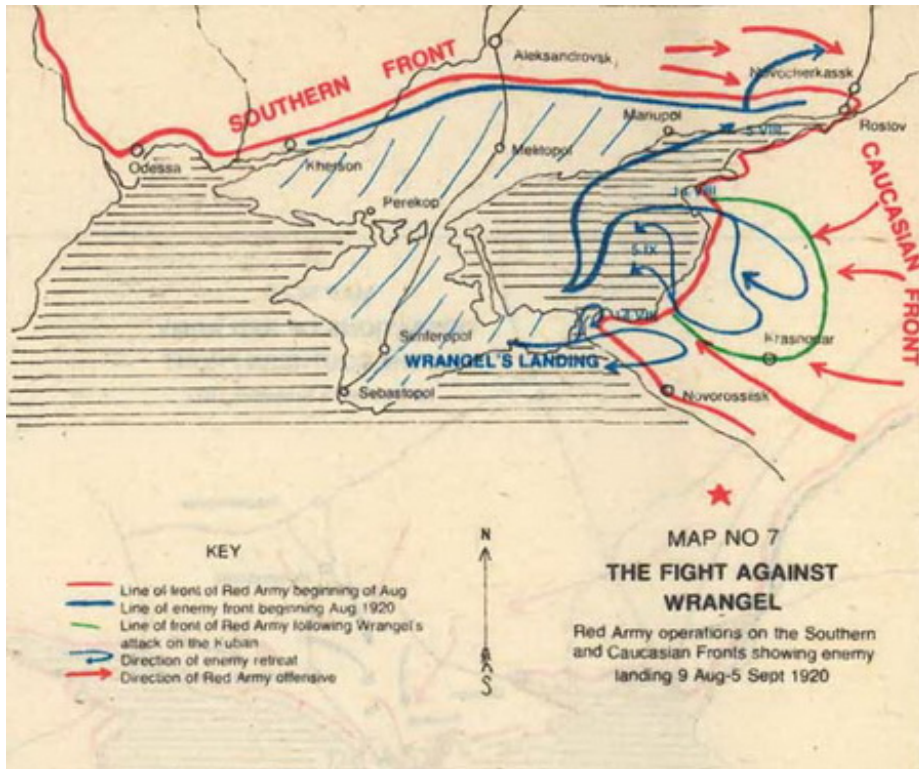
Map 6

The Fight against Wrangel



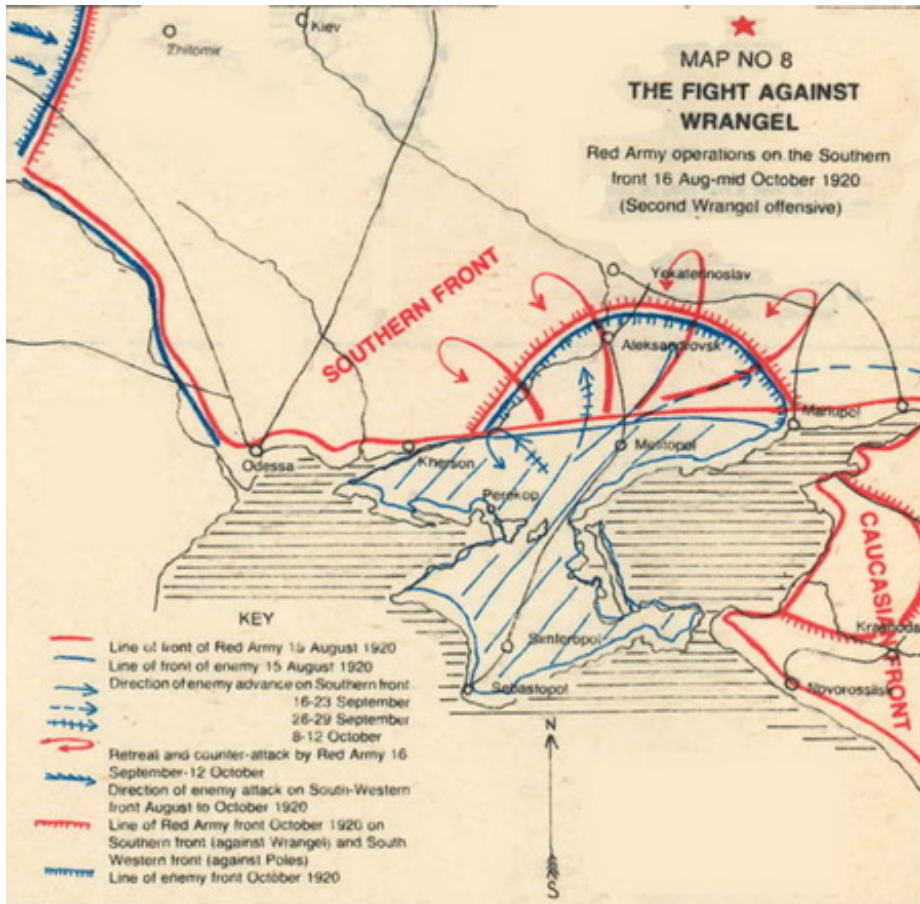
Map 7

The Fight against Wrangel



Map 8

The Fight against Wrangel



Map 9

Operations of Red Army on the Southern Front

