

Soviet Russia in the years 1921-1923 saw the ending of the civil war fighting. As the Red Army moved on to a peace footing, its leader, Leon Trotsky, fought to prepare it for new tasks, in a period in which the destiny of the Russian Revolution was closely bound up with the development of the working class internationally. It was a time for study, for training and for drawing the lessons of the Army's first years. In these years, Trotsky says, the history of the Red Army was in large part the history of the working class itself. The analysis he makes in this, the fourth of the five-volume series, is a major contribution to present-day knowledge of the Russian Revolution. Suppressed for decades in the Soviet Union, Trotsky's military writings and speeches are here published in English for the first time.

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Foreword

In the last two volumes of the Military Writings, Trotsky draws out the lessons of the civil war years and the construction of the Red Army.

The years 1921-1923 were punctuated by the Kronstadt rising, by bandit incursions and by the continuing war threat from the west. They were nevertheless years in which the most immediate danger to the Soviet frontiers had been overcome and the interventionist forces pushed back.

The problems of Soviet Russia's international situation and of its internal economic development now occupied the attention of the Bolshevik leadership. Trotsky recognised that with international capital unable to crush the October Revolution as it had wished, a more prolonged, bitter period of class warfare was on the agenda throughout Europe. This meant that while the Red Army moved over to a 'peace footing', its leadership faced the task of training and preparing it against renewed dangers.

Within Russia itself, the turn was made in 1921 to the New Economic Policy – described by Trotsky as neither a victory nor a defeat, but a strategic retreat. Openings were made for small and medium enterprise and to concessionaires in order to get the war-shattered economy moving.

On the military front, the emphasis was on education, study and training. Here Trotsky squarely confronted the problems of Russian backwardness and the difficulties of training the peasant masses who formed a large proportion of the Red soldiers. As he says (p.73) 'the working-man hero will much sooner and more readily die on horseback for the Soviet Republic than he will take care to see that his horse is groomed as and when he should be.' It was for this reason that Trotsky insisted on the highest standards of training and fought for organised, systematic construction in opposition to the old ways of managing 'somehow'. He calls repeatedly for precision, accuracy and 'attention to trifles'. His speeches to students at the military schools and on command courses repeatedly attack slipshod methods and fight to instil pride in the record and traditions of the Red Army units.

To carry through this struggle required a high level of political work by the Communist Party members within the Red Army. At the same time there re-emerged the question of non-Party military specialists which had been raised at the outset of the building of the Red Army. When some elements in the Party proposed restricting access to the higher military academies to Party members only, Trotsky vigorously opposed them. Rejecting all narrow and doctrinaire conceptions of 'Marxism', he reiterated the need to utilise all those military specialists who were prepared to put themselves at the service of the workers' and peasants' state. Marxism is not a set of formulae for all spheres of human activity, and the socialist revolution had to learn to make use of all knowledge and skills developed under the previous order, for its own ends. In the final volume these lessons are further elaborated in the discussion on Marxism and military affairs.

The Bolsheviks' policy in relation to the Red Army in this period followed the policy laid down by the Third Congress of the Communist International in 1921. In opposition to the European ultra-lefts who called for a 'revolutionary

offensive' everywhere, the Congress affirmed that it was a period of political preparation for the offensive. The task for the Red Army was not to march on Berlin but to subordinate itself to the political struggle to build the leadership for the world revolution and continue the task of training and educating the worker and peasant masses who entered its ranks. Hence the drive against illiteracy, effectively eradicated from the Red Army during these years. At the same time relations between the Party and the Army were put on a more correct footing: to guard against the danger of careerism and opportunism, a purge was carried out of Red Army commanders who had no real place within the Communist Party. They were deprived of their Party membership, but continued in their Army posts. The links between the masses and the Army were meanwhile strengthened by the practice of adoption of army units by local soviets. In the case of the Red Navy, there were particular problems: at the time of the October Revolution it was a bastion of Bolshevism, due in large part to its high proletarian composition. Of secondary importance to the Army in the Civil War struggle, it had been necessarily deprived of resources and cadres in the intervening years, and then suffered the blow of the Kronstadt revolt within its own ranks. It was strengthened by its adoption by the Young Communist League and a new intake of Communist youth.

The work of these years gives the lie to those who depict the subsequent Stalinist course, and the reduction of the Red Army to an instrument of the bureaucracy, as inevitable. Under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, there was an unceasing fight to raise the political level of the Red Army and to make it the conscious instrument of the workers' and peasants' state.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

Communication to the 8th Congress of Soviets

On Reducing the Size of the Army, December 29, 1920 [\[1\]](#)

* * *

Comrades, on the instructions of the Council of Labour and Defence, and consequently of the Council of People's Commissars, of which the Council of Labour and Defence is an organ, I have to inform the 8th Congress of Soviets about the scale and procedure of the forthcoming partial and gradual demobilisation of our army.

I will first of all set forth the propositions which the Government has worked out regarding this matter and transmitted to the leaderships of the War Department and the other departments directly affected:

On Reducing The Size Of The Army

'Assuming the task of effecting an all-round lightening of the military burden borne by the Workers' and Peasants' Republic, by reducing so far as possible the numbers of the army and returning to the economy as large an amount of labour-power and resources as possible, while at the same time maintaining fully the Soviet Republic's capacity for defence (because its enemies have not yet laid down their arms), the Council of Labour and Defence has projected a series of measures for reducing the numbers of the army and enhancing its fighting qualities.

'Proceeding from the actually prevailing conditions of transport and from the amount of armed forces which are needed for sound defence of the Republic, the Council of Labour and Defence hopes, beginning now with the discharge of the older age-groups on indefinite leave, to reduce the army to approximately half its present size by midsummer 1921.

'In accordance with this, already on December 11 of this year an order was issued by the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to discharge on indefinite leave, in the course of December, all the Red Army and Navy men of the army and navy born in 1885 or earlier, and to detach from the army and embody in special labour units the following three age-groups, namely, those men born in 1886, 1887 and 1888, with a view to their being next in turn to be discharged on indefinite leave, after conveyance of the first batch has been completed. It is proposed that, simultaneously with the beginning of the discharge of men born in 1886, 1887 and 1888, those born in 1889, 1890 and 1891 shall be detached into special labour units, so as to be ready for discharge on indefinite leave if, when conveyance of the preceding three age-groups has been completed, the military situation permits of a further reduction in the size of the army.

'By carrying out these measures the Council of Labour and Defence hopes, if transport conditions and the political situation permit, to discharge during the next four or five months - that is, if possible, in time for the spring work-

season – the age-groups enumerated above. Then – that is, in the spring of 1921 – the Soviet power will take up the question of further discharges, namely, of the classes of 1892 and 1893, and, in all probability, of 1894 and 1895 as well, the decision on which will depend on the international situation which exists when that time comes.

‘Given favourable political and transport conditions, the Council of Labour and Defence proposes to complete the discharge of these four age-groups, as has already been said, by midsummer 1921.

‘The procedure of discharge on indefinite leave mentioned above affects Red Army men only. As regards members of the commanding, administrative, supply, medical and veterinary personnel, special regulations will be promulgated concerning their discharge, having in mind that, in order that the army’s readiness for war may be kept at the proper level, they will have to be retained in the army in accordance with different norms and for a longer period.

‘Similarly, discharge from the Navy, except for the discharge, already carried out, of the oldest age-groups, that is, those born in 1895 and earlier, will be effected in accordance with special regulations, in view of the particular conditions governing the service and replenishment of the Navy.

‘All the work involved in the discharge of men on indefinite leave will be carried out in a strictly planned way by the organs of the military authority. Anyone leaving the forces on his own initiative will, as before, be liable to the severest punishment, as a deserter.

‘Those persons liable for military service who have up to now avoided reporting for call-up, or who have deserted from military service, are required, as before, to present themselves at the nearest military commissariat, to fulfil their duty to the Republic of workers and peasants. Only complete and unconditional reporting for service by the younger age-groups will make possible discharge of the older ones.

‘Those persons liable for military service who belong to the older age-groups which are now being discharged and who had avoided call-up before the publication of the first order of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic concerning discharge on indefinite leave, that is, before December 11, 1920, or who had deserted from military service before that date, must expiate their guilt before that date, must expiate their guilt before the Workers’ and Peasants’ Republic by voluntarily presenting themselves within a definite period and subsequently performing work on the labour front.

‘It has therefore seemed necessary to issue a decree by force of which the categories of people above-mentioned are to be enlisted first and foremost for labour service, so as thereby to create labour-privileges for those workers who have been discharged from the army on indefinite leave, and also to ensure the provision of economic assistance to the Red Army men who remain with the colours.

‘Those of the persons referred to who report punctually to the labour front are to be relieved of criminal responsibility for their evasion of military service or desertion therefrom.

‘Persons who evade military service or desert after the date given above (December 11, 1920), whatever age-group they belong to, are, as before, to be punished with the full severity of the law.

‘In undertaking a reduction in the size of the army, the Government considers it necessary at the same time to take all measures to ensure that the Red Army is fully guaranteed all the material resources it needs for its existence, training and education, and that its military training and political education are carried out with the necessary energy and without hindrance.

‘It is the responsibility of the local organs of Soviet power to take measures to

ensure that the families of Red Army men remaining with the colours receive proper assistance.'

This, comrades, is the Government's statement which, if you approve it, as we hope you will, is to be published today by all the means available to us for making known important Government measures. [2] We have here, comrades, a measure of exceptional importance: the army expects from us a clear and precise statement regarding its future fate.

An extremely serious, critical, responsible and difficult period is now approaching, for the army and for the War Department which serves this army. For, while at first glance it may seem that reducing the army means lightening their task, this is true only from one angle. From another angle, the reduction and reconstruction of the army means a fresh task and a new concern of exceptional difficulty. We have to reduce the size of the army, and we hope to reduce it by half before midsummer, if no unfavourable circumstances supervene. We are going to reduce it without weakening it. Not weakening the army while we reduce it means enhancing its quality, increasing the specific weight of every individual soldier. This can be achieved only by improving military training and general revolutionary-political education. And this in turn can be achieved by increasing the quantity and quality of our new commanders who have come from the ranks of the workers and peasants. Consequently, while reducing the army, we are at the same time, within the framework of this reduction, extending and developing the command courses, deepening the educational work they perform.

At the same time, while disbanding our army cautiously and in a planned way, we do not in the least intend to allow this reduced army to be left without the availability of substantial reserves in the country. And we need, while reducing the army, to go over to a new system of army organisation. We shall make this transition, comrades, with all caution, relying on the experience that we accumulated during three years of harsh fighting, defeats and victories. We are not at present in a position to demobilise the entire army. We must retain a safeguard against possible enemies. And this safeguard must be sufficiently strong to withstand the first blow which may be struck at us suddenly, in the hope of catching us unawares. This safeguard must be sufficiently strong to enable us to bring up weighty reserves, drawing these from among the workers and peasants who have undergone the necessary training in the militia, with cadres available for them, and correlation between our field units and our young militia units of the future. How is this correlation between them, this proportionality, to be determined? We all know the answer. The proportions will be determined by the extent to which we are safeguarded from our enemies, from the danger of a direct, perfidious and predatory blow. And the stronger the Soviet Republic's position in the world, and that of the international working class, the less need we shall have of a safeguard in the form of field units, and the more boldly and firmly we shall proceed with demobilising our age-groups. We speak of this in the conditional tense. We say that, if the situation permits, we shall do this and that. There is an element of indefiniteness here, but it is dictated not by any indecision on our part but by the indefiniteness of the world situation – and it is our duty, if you confirm this (and especially your duty, delegates from the Navy and the Army), to explain to every backward Red Army man what the Government's declaration means, when we say that we cannot demobilise if the world situation changes in a way unfavourable to us. Let every Red Army man follow attentively, along with the

centre, the course of world politics, and let everyone of us study the clouds on our horizon, as they concentrate or disperse.

We want to carry out demobilisation as widely and fully and as methodically as possible. We are undertaking this task now, and we are doing it in awareness of the high inner moral strength of the country which has created a victorious army. This country is Workers' and Peasants' Russia, which is represented here at the 8th All-Russia Congress of Soviets.

- *Long live the 8th Congress of Soviets!*

Stenographic report of
the 8th Congress of
Soviets

Endnotes

[1.](#) The Eighth All-Russia Congress of Soviets was held between December 22 and 29, 1920. Comrade Lenin gave the report on foreign and domestic policy. The agenda included problems of electrification (report by Comrade Krzhizhanovsky); the state of industry and measures for its restoration (report by Comrade Rykov); and transport (report by Comrade Trotsky).

[2.](#) The communication on the reduction in the size of the army was approved by the Eighth Congress.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

From a Speech

At a General Meeting of Members of the Russian Communist Party in Zamoskvoretsk District, January 4, 1921

* * *

It remains for me to mention the reduction in the size of the army, which is a matter of great importance. There were many preliminary discussions about it in the Central Committee of the party, in the commission attached to the CC. This question was made complicated through being cut across by a number of other questions. The army had to be disbanded to the greatest extent possible, that was clear, but on the other hand the army had to be kept in being, and in a size such that it could be sustained.

What came up here, first and foremost, was the question of releasing those elements which belong neither to the army nor to the labour army. Their subsequent fate was to be determined by whichever one of the economic departments selected from among them those that it needed. For example, those elements would be selected for work in the coal-mines who had already been engaged in that occupation, and the rest let go.

Then comes the question of reducing the size of the army, and, after that, of reducing headquarters, with their administrations and institutions. We do, of course, talk very often about bureaucratism in our army administration, but it must not be forgotten that we moved from the stage of guerrilla units to a situation in which we had four fronts: one near Transbaikalia, one before Archangel, one in the West, and one in the South. We had to administer these four fronts from Moscow in such a way that we could follow the movements, if not of every company, then, at least, of every regiment, so that we could arm and supply them in accordance with a plan – and that was hard to attain in our very difficult situation, without the necessary means and forces, without available transport. Given our backwardness, our lack of culture, every task became complicated, and it was necessary to construct a great nerve running from the centre to the front, so that, in response to commands from Moscow, Balakhovich could be combated, forces sent against the rebellion in Daghestan, help given to the guerrillas in Transbaikalia to enable them to crush Semyonov, and so on. It was necessary to build a colossal and competent apparatus, before which we workers in the War Department stood in horror. When we set about reducing this apparatus, the fear arose: isn't it too early to cut it down, may we not still have to transfer armed forces from one point to another, and then we shan't be able to do that in nine?

We now find ourselves in a more favourable situation as regards reducing headquarters staffs. If this work is not going full steam ahead, it is only

because we cannot move our units fast enough. In order to cut down the number of divisions, we need, in many places, to withdraw field divisions to the rear and replace them with the internal-service divisions which are being formed and expanded, and to do this we need means of transport for which we lack coal. The slow pace at which reduction is proceeding is thus a result of our poverty, but, broadly speaking, as you know, our plan for reducing the size of the army consists in halving it by June. We tried to lay down a programme of reducing the army's size to a greater extent, so as to disband all the institutions which serve the labour armies and live at the expense of the army's resources, but the chief difficulty was, again, the absence of means of transport for moving the men who would be released.

First for release will be the men born in 1885, 1886 and 1887, then those born in 1888, 1889, 1890 and 1891. After that will come the turn of those born in 1892, 1893, 1894 and 1895. All that will be left to us then will be the men born in 1896, 1897, 1898, 1899, 1900 and 1901, that is we shall have six age-groups under arms. That will be the situation, provided no unforeseen circumstances arise. At the same time, it is proposed to set up schools in the most industrialised, proletarian areas, to prepare militia units, so that in these areas we may gradually form a militia-type army.

The units that we keep under arms must be sufficiently numerous to be capable of withstanding an enemy's initial blow, while we are carrying out extensive work in the rear to assemble our reserves. At the same time, our programme for reducing the size of the army involves retaining some of our cadets who are following command courses, doubling or trebling their programme of study, and raising the level of the commanding personnel by providing the army with the best proletarian forces. Broadly speaking, this measure was approved by the Congress of Soviets and it has now been passed to the appropriate authority.

I should like to say, in conclusion, a few words about the army. It is true, of course, that our enormous military machine is a sore burden upon everyone, and especially upon the workers and peasants. While, on the one hand, everyone praises the heroic Red Army, on the other, everyone dreams of reducing it to the minimum. This is clear, because the army does not produce anything, but only consumes and spends, just because it is an army. The idea of making a move on to the road of economic work is linked with an impatient desire to cut down the size of the army as soon and as much as possible. But there is also another aspect to the matter – this spiritual demobilisation which is observable in the Party, and which filters through into the army. The opinion is widespread that the army has completed its historical task and can be relegated to the archives. There is a widespread urge to leave the army. A communist considers that he became a soldier, a commissar or a commander only because that was what was required at the given moment, but what he wants to do now is to build, to develop a cultured workers' state. I should like to give warning that this view of the army as something secondary contains a very dangerous element. We are still surrounded on every side by capitalist foes – none of our major foes, none even of the minor ones, is as yet extinct. France, Japan, America are still imperialist countries. Poland and Romania are ready, as before, to launch a new onslaught upon us. We may hope that history will let this cup of another war pass from us, but there is no guarantee that it will be so. If the liquidationist mood were to develop, it would lead to the moral disintegration of those divisions and units which it is necessary to

retain as our safeguard against possible attacks. The peasant soldier submitted to the leadership of the worker, the peasant soldier marched against the landlord alongside the worker, when Wrangel confronted him, but today no landlord is to be seen in any direction on the horizon of the Soviet Republic, and the peasant's range of interests is narrow and his memory short, because he was oppressed and exploited for centuries, for thousands of years, until the worker tried to bring him under his leadership. The peasant forgets the blows of the past and submits his neck to the yoke once more. When divisions are stationary, in waiting, the peasant starts to scratch his head – why are we standing about here, wouldn't it be better to go home? And if our Party's work in the army were to weaken, if our military workers were to slacken off in their activity in the regiments and companies, the army would start to break up, like a living fabric.

It is not possible to keep the entire army in being: during the winter, by the coming of spring, we must reduce it by half; but how are we to do this? This must be done by means of the advanced workers whom we have always taken from the factories, the party organisations and the trade unions. Consequently, they must be kept in the army, because the Communists maintain a certain regime in the army, they keep up its fighting spirit. The party organisations are now responsible for the main part of the political education of our army units. I am going to submit to the Central Committee and the Moscow Committee of the Party a memorandum on the theme that, in the course of the winter, we must uphold and brace the army, raise its qualitative level. If the Party organisations do not get down to it and carry through this work before the spring comes, we may be heading for a military catastrophe and breakdown in the army. I think that the Party organisations will safeguard the army's spirit. They will curse military bureaucratism, but at the same time they will say that it is absolutely necessary to have the army. We must establish model courses with a longer period of study, so as to prepare qualified commanding personnel. As a

general thesis, this has been approved by the Congress of Soviets, and it is to be passed to the Party Congress. The results of the last Congress of Soviets can be formulated like this: expansion and improvement of the economy, contraction and improvement of the army. On the basis of this improvement and contraction we shall wage a struggle against bureaucratism, which now means a struggle against laxity, ignorance and slackness in all spheres of our life. I think that by the time of the 9th Congress of Soviets we shall be stronger than we are now, provided that we follow the paths indicated by the 8th Congress of Soviets.

From the archives

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

Speech

At a Meeting of Military Workers in Yekaterinburg, on the Question of the Militia System, February 17, 1921 [\[1\]](#)

* * *

Comrades, many questions have been touched upon here, both in the report and in the debate on the militia system: questions of importance from the standpoint of general principle, practical questions, and even departmental, organisational ones. I shall not say anything about the questions of principle. I shall refer only to one factor which I should like to mention.

I consider that this question of the militia system is today hardly open to general reconsideration. Decisions about it have been adopted both by the Congress of Soviets and by the Party. I must merely say that the comrade rapporteur, when describing the positive aspects of the militia, alluded not quite correctly to Switzerland, where an ideal type of militia was alleged to exist. There is as yet no ideal type of militia. By its very nature, a militia can attain full development only in a socialist state which still has enemies.

There is the book by Jaurés. [\[2\]](#) The political part of it contains much that is wrong, but as regards military matters it is prophetic. What Jaures advocates is, precisely, the militia-type army. But his idea met with no success, because a militia-type army does not square with the suppression of the majority by a minority. A militia-type army presupposes universal military training and the arming of the whole people – so that it is the military organisation of a revolt by the masses of the people against the bourgeoisie. That is what a militia is, essentially. Consequently there can be no question of creating a militia-type army in a bourgeois state, especially not in a big one, with strong class antagonisms. In Switzerland, which has long been a petty-bourgeois country with well-to-do middle peasants and townsfolk, the militia was more feasible because big capital, on the one hand, and the proletariat, on the other, played no great role. Besides which, in Switzerland a considerable proportion of the proletarians are foreigners – there are many Italians, Germans, Slavs among them – who are exploited and without rights, and they have no part in the militia. The core of the militia is constituted by the petty-bourgeois class. In recent years the same development has been taking place in Switzerland as in other countries – that is, the two opposed classes have been getting continually stronger, while the intermediate element has been losing its importance. As a result, in Switzerland too the basis for a militia is disappearing, and there is a tendency to draw closer to the concept of a regular army.

The rapporteur was right when he said that the Swiss militia is well-trained, thanks to the high cultural level of the population and the country's wealth. The

Swiss are good sportsmen, good marksmen. All this, taken together, provides good soldiers for a war of defence. But what we have to do with here is not so much the militia system as the entire nature of the state in question. Switzerland is a neutral country, and by its very situation it is incapable of engaging in any conquering adventures. Thus, the Swiss militia is a petty-bourgeois militia, adapted to the defence of a small, neutral country. Big countries have not ventured to copy it, because to do so would mean suicide for the bourgeoisie. Consequently, a full-blown militia is feasible only in a socialist country in which there are no contradictions, where there are no grounds for fearing conflict between one part of the population and another. The Soviet republic is not yet a socialist country, it is in a state of transition from bourgeois to socialist conditions. For that reason there can be no question of our going over forthwith to the militia system. In general, what does going over to a militia mean? That is not entirely clear. The militia system is a particular form of military organisation of millions of people. It is not possible to go over to that all at once, any more than to go over all at once to socialism. One can only move gradually towards the goal. Consequently, the quickness or slowness of the transition has to correspond to the internal or external situation.

Here the comrade rapporteur examined some considerations affecting the militia system. Let us take the territorial principle.

This has both positive and negative aspects, but they have to be examined in relation to the given conditions. If, in our economic construction, we had attained a state of affairs in which the workers and peasants were well fed, the peasants had a sufficient quantity of nails, calico, and so on, the territorial principle would possess, for us, only its positive aspect. Thus, we know that, in the Urals, the Sysertsk factory fought heroically – what you had there was a group of people who had been welded together by all their previous experiences. The workers knew one another, they were bound together in unity by their work together, and this gave them a degree of cohesion not to be replaced by anything attained through the barracks. But if, in a given locality, there is antagonism, enmity, this cohesion may be turned against the Government. In the country districts, where revolts are taking place in which a considerable section of the peasants are involved, peasants who are suffering from want and deprivation, such cohesion may be turned against the military system – and not just against a militia system but against any other. We have to take all this into account. Consequently, the whole problem is, how are we to make the transition, what guarantees are needed to ensure that the economic aspects of our transition period do not ruin our work.

As for the point that, having regard to the international situation, a militia army cannot be mobilised with the necessary speed, this is again a purely practical question. Wherever we are threatened by maximum danger we must have some military safeguard available. It is perfectly true that we cannot be guaranteed against all our enemies everywhere, on every front. Therefore, we must have a sort of mobile reserve, which will have to be transferred from one place to another. For that to be possible we need railway and transport apparatuses. If these are poor, that will have its effect equally on militia troops and regulars. What the Chief of Staff said is all absolutely correct, but it is quite obvious that, in the transition period, we shall need to proceed with the greatest caution. We are surrounded by enemies on every side. Although there are many facts to show that our enemies are getting weaker, they may,

nevertheless, in their hour of death, launch a fierce attack against us.

The last blow of an expiring creature could be mortal for us. How the German bourgeoisie will end its career, whether it will try to fall upon us with French support, is something we do not know. What will happen with Poland? Peace is soon to be signed with her. But that does not rule out the possibility of war in the spring, especially if the revolutionary movement grows stronger, as this may impel Poland to go to war so as to find in national intoxication the means to combat the revolutionary movement inside the country. To anticipate these possibilities we need to have substantial forces in the West. The whole problem lies in the proportion in which we are to go over to the militia system. Shall we say that we will now disband 40 or 50 divisions, leaving 10 or 20; or, on the contrary, shall we keep 40 or 50 divisions while at the same time setting about the creation of five or three militia divisions? That is how the practical problem presents itself. I think that we should begin with the minimum – above all, so as to obtain some serious experience. The comrade rapporteur said, rightly, that our system of universal military training cannot provide such experience. It has been badly neglected. That was inevitable. So, then, shall we begin by creating three or five divisions? I think it would be more correct to start with three: in Petrograd, in Moscow, and in the Urals. To achieve this result, we need to form them out of good material. They must be based on well-trying field cadres. They must be brought up to strength through drafts from the other divisions, which are being disbanded. Good Communist cells must be organised in them. They must be provided with good commanders, the junior ranks being drawn from the local advanced workers.

Then, about their armament. This is a very complex question. In the transition period, when the civil war is not over, when revolt against us is being methodically prepared with the aid of France, which acts through the agency of Savinkov [\[3\]](#) (we possess all these facts, provided by our intelligence service), can we put weapons in the hands of the whole population? Obviously not. Consequently, this question will have to be studied. What correlation should there be between the cadres, the Communist advanced elements, and the peasants? How are the latter to be drawn in, and how is their education to be effected? We ought to take as our basis three areas, the most favourable ones, with the biggest percentage of workers. If the Urals were to starve, and the workers were to starve, then the militia experiment would break down. If our plenipotentiary commission can improve the food situation among the workers, that will be a tremendous help to the militia system. Consequently, one cannot say in the abstract which system is better, or settle this question as though it were a problem in mathematics. It is necessary to work it out as a political, social task, in accordance with prevailing circumstances. If it should turn out that, for economic reasons, we cannot, in 1921, give our attention to the Urals, the creation of a Urals division will have to be put off till next year. That is how, it seems to me, this question has to be approached.

When can the militia system be finally established? That depends on a very large number of factors. On the pace of revolutionary development in Western Europe and on economic development here in Russia. I think that if revolutionary development proceeds more rapidly in 1921, 1922 and 1923 than it has proceeded hitherto (it is indeed going ahead, though more slowly than we had counted on: the masses in Europe are more cultured, and they take every step with great prudence and sureness) – we shall make a great leap forward economically. Peasant revolts here will cease, and the food situation

will improve. In those conditions, a transition to the militia system will be natural and inevitable, and instead of three divisions we shall be able to form twenty. If the socialist order is established everywhere, we shall have no need of a militia. But it is not possible to assume that Europe, Asia and America will go over to a stable Soviet regime in the course of three to five years. There is Japan, there is China, and how they will develop, whether capital will migrate to those countries from the ones that go over to the Soviet regime, whether capitalist development will begin there, whether they will serve as places of refuge for imperialism – all that remains still unknown. Therefore, the danger to us may continue for a decade, or even for two or three decades. If we attain the level of economic development at which Russia stood before the war, then, with the new socialist regime, this will ensure a high degree of prosperity for the masses. Even if improvement only proceeds with the same intensity (very slight) as before 1914, then, with the new order of things, that will provide a very good basis for a militia. This we can attain in the course of three, four or five years. In the meantime there may still be wars in Europe, powerful bourgeois states may continue to exist, and we shall need to possess armed forces.

That is why the question of the militia needs to be appreciated in this historical perspective and not simply decided like some mathematical problem. I insist that we must carry out such an experiment. Three divisions is also a big experiment. But at the same time we must completely retain the previous form of organisation and its strong organism. For example, suppose we decide to keep 40 or 50 divisions. We discharge from them all the age-groups subject to demobilisation. We keep account of all the Communists who have to remain in the army, the commanders and so on. We must not lower the fighting quality of these divisions but raise it. The worst thing would be for the units of the standing army to feel not quite certain whether they are needed.

So, then, the militia will be a big and serious experiment. A definite number of divisions will remain, in the coming months, to defend the country. These divisions must be strengthened and improved. Every Red Army man must be put through roughly the same course of training that our Red commanders underwent at the beginning: his interest in military matters must be increased, he must be attracted into the sphere of military interests. We have brought him into political conferences, but not into military ones. And yet those conferences, too, are useful. The experience which the Red Army men and their commanders have where matters of suitable armament, supply, organisation, and so on, are concerned must be brought into conferences, summarised, its conclusions deduced, so that it may be applied in practice. We must bring about a situation in which every conscious Red Army man becomes a conscious builder of the Red Army. Only thus shall we be able to survive through this period of transition. Therefore, we must say clearly that we are going to carry out our experiment. Our positions of principle remain wholly unchanged. During the next six months and the next year we shall confine our task to the creation of three or five divisions, but we shall perform this experiment in an exemplary fashion as regards cadres, armaments and other factors.

And since we mean by a militia a regular army (a militia is a regular army constructed on certain territorial principles, and closely linked with labour), it is obvious that we cannot have two apparatuses, one of which is to maintain the regular army while the other is adapted to the creation of a new army.

Building in that way, with two stories, is beyond our means. It is also obvious that our universal military training system cannot serve as the apparatus for creating this army. It must remain the apparatus for pre-call-up preparation, in still closer connection than before with the local organisations. The militia divisions must unquestionably be built by the same apparatus which will deal with them subsequently, when they go over to a war footing. This will be a unified staff, in which we shall merge the All-Russia General Staff and the Field Staff – which in the event of a big war can easily be separated. [4] This, it seems to me, is, in broad outline, the schema of organisation for the period immediately ahead. And so, in the Urals we must form at least one militia division. I think it would be good if comrades from the Urals were to look into this matter, forming a commission drawn, perhaps, from those present at this meeting. By tackling the question in a practical way we shall the sooner arrive at a practical solution.

From the archives

Endnotes

1. The decision to go over to the militia system was taken by the Ninth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (see note 40 to Volume III of this edition), but was not put into effect because in spring 1920 the war with Poland began, and liquidation of the Southern Front was not completed until the end of 1920. The question of the militia system was raised afresh at the Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party. A discussion began on this question in which a number of prominent Party workers – Comrades Smilga, Frunze, Tukhachevsky and others – took part, presenting theses on the militia system. The Tenth Party Congress, which was held during the Kmnstadt events, recognised that going over to the militia system depended entirely on the international and internal situation – on the length of the breathing-space, the relations between town and country, and soon. It noted, also, that the agitation carried on by certain comrades in favour of actual dissolution of the existing Red Army and immediate going over to the militia system was incorrect, and dangerous at that time. The Congress considered that particular militia formations might be formed only in those areas which had the most firmly-united proletarian populations (Petrograd, Moscow, the Urals). The speech at the meeting in Yekaterinburg published here belongs to the period of the pre-Congress discussion.

2. Jean Jaurès, **L'Armée Nouvelle**

3. B.V. Savinkov headed the 'Russian Political Committee' in Warsaw which collaborated with Pilsudski during the Russo-Polish war in 1920. In 1921 he worked with Bulak-Balakhovich, sending bands of saboteurs into Soviet Byelorussia. His novel **The Black Horse** (English translation, 1924) is based on his experiences in this period. For his last years, see the epilogue by Joseph Shaplen to his translation of Savinkov's **Memoirs of a Terrorist** (New York, 1931). Churchill included Savinkov in the set of 21 short biographies which he published in 1937 under the title **Great Contemporaries**; the only other Russian included being *Leon Trotsky, alias Bronstein*.

4. The final shaping of the supreme organs of military command in the Republic took place at the end of 1918, when, after the establishment of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, there existed the Field Staff, serving as the operational organ which provided direct guidance for military operations, and the All-Russia Main Staff, which served the entire rear of the Red Army and united under its control all the military districts in the Republic. This system of organising the supreme apparatus for administering the army was retained until the end of the civil war, and only in December 1920 did the time come to consider unifying, reducing and simplifying the army's administrative apparatus. By Order No.33641, dated February 10, 1921, of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, the two staffs were merged, being reorganised into a single 'General Staff of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army'.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

Attention to Trifles!

* * *

The ruined economy must be restored. We must build, produce, repair, patch up. We are conducting the economy on new principles, which must ensure the well-being of all the working people. But production amounts essentially to the struggle of mankind against the hostile forces of nature, and the rational utilisation of natural wealth to serve mankind's own purposes. The general trend of policy, decrees and instructions can only regulate economic activity. The actual satisfaction of human needs can be attained only through producing material values, through systematic, persistent, stubborn labour. The economic process is made up of parts and particles, of details, particulars, trifles. Restoration of the economy is possible only by giving maximum attention to these trifles.

We do not give such attention, or, at best, we do it only to a terribly slight extent. The main task of economic education and self-education is to arouse, develop and enhance attention to these particular, small, everyday requirements of the economy. Let nothing slip by, take note of everything, do everything in good time, and demand that others do the same. This task stands squarely before us in all spheres of our governmental activity and economic construction.

Supplying the army with uniforms and boots is, under existing conditions in industry, no easy task. Our supply apparatus is frequently subject to long hold-ups. At the same time, we observe almost no careful and thorough concern for the preservation of uniforms and boots and their timely repair. Our boots are hardly ever greased. [\[1\]](#) When one asks why, one receives the most varied answers: sometimes there is no grease to be had, sometimes it was not delivered on time, sometimes the boots are yellow but the grease is black, and so on and so forth. But the main reason is the absence of a careful, thrifty attitude towards their kit on the part of either the Red Army men or the commanders and commissars. Ungreased boots, especially when they get wet, go dry and deteriorate within a few weeks. The production apparatus cannot keep up with demand, and starts to sew boots 'anyhow'. The new boots wear out quicker than ever. A vicious circle is created. And yet there is a way out, and it is a very simple one: boots should be greased regularly, and they should be properly laced up, or else they will get out of shape and crushed. We very often spoil a good American boot simply because we have no laces for it. It is possible to get them if you keep insisting: if there are no laces, this is because no one is paying attention to economic trifles. But it is of such trifles that the whole is made up.

The same applies, and to an even greater degree, to the rifle. It is a thing

hard to make but easy to ruin. A rifle should be cared for, cleaned and oiled. And this demands tireless and persistent attention. It calls for training and education.

Trifles, accumulating and combining, can constitute something great – or can destroy something great. Small damaged areas in a paved road, if not repaired in time, grow larger, and turn into deep ruts and pot-holes, hindering traffic, causing damage to carts, shaking cars and lorries to pieces and ruining tyres. A bad road causes ten times as much expense in resources and labour-power as would have been needed to repair it. It is precisely in this way, through trifles, that machinery, factory buildings and houses are destroyed. To maintain them requires tireless, day-to-day attention to trifles and details. We lack this active attention because we lack economic and cultural education. It is necessary to get quite clear about this, our chief shortcoming.

Attention to details and trifles is often confused here with bureaucratism. This is a very great delusion! Bureaucratism means attention to empty form at the expense of content, of the matter actually in hand. Bureaucratism wallows in formalities, in nonsensicalities, but does not concern itself at all with businesslike details. On the contrary, bureaucratism usually sidesteps the practical details of which the matter itself is composed, being concerned merely to ensure that everything adds up on paper.

The rule against spitting and dropping cigarette-ends on stairways and in corridors is a 'trifle', a petty requirement. Nevertheless, it possesses very great significance in connection with economic education. A person who spits on stairs or on the floor of a room is a sloven and a slob. We can never expect the likes of him to revive the economy. Such a man also fails to grease his boots, breaks glass through carelessness, and carries typhus lice on his person.

To some it may seem, I repeat, that persistent attention to such things as these is nagging and 'bureaucratism'. The slovens and sluggards love to hide themselves behind the struggle against bureaucratism. 'What does it matter', they say, 'if cigarette-ends are dropped on the stairs?' But this is so much rotten rubbish. Slovenly throwing down of cigarette-ends shows lack of respect for other people's work. And those who do not respect the work of others are not conscientious in their attitude to their own work. If we are to be able to develop communal forms of living, every man and woman in a house must show full attention to order and cleanliness, to the interests of the house as a whole. Otherwise one will end up (and this is what often happens) with a louse-ridden, spittlebespattered pit rather than a communal dwelling. We must wage a tireless, relentless struggle against this sort of slovenliness, lack of culture and sloppiness – a struggle by word and deed, by admonishing and demanding, by exhorting and by calling people to account. Those who silently ignore such things as spitting on the stairs or leaving the yard in a filthy state are bad citizens and are worthless as builders.

In the army all the features of the people's life, both positive and negative, are combined in a vivid way. This is fully confirmed in respect of the problem of training men to be economical. The army must, at all costs, improve its conduct in this matter, even if only to a small extent. This result can be attained through the combined efforts of all the leading elements in the army itself, from top to bottom, with co-operation from the best elements of the working class and the peasantry as a whole.

During the period when the Soviet state apparatus was only beginning to be formed, the army was suffused with the spirit and practices of guerrilla-ism. We waged a persistent and relentless struggle against guerrilla-ism, and this undoubtedly produced results. Not only was a centralised apparatus of leadership and administration created but, what was even more essential, the very spirit of guerrilla-ism was deeply discredited in the minds of the working people.

We have before us now a struggle no less serious: the struggle against all forms of slipshodness, negligence, indifference, imprecision, lack of assiduity, personal indiscipline, extravagance and wastefulness. All of these are varying degrees and shades of one and the same disease: at one extreme there is lack of care, at the other, conscious misbehaviour. This calls for a big campaign: day-by-day, persistent and tireless, bringing every method into play, just as was done in the struggle against guerrilla-ism – agitation, examples, exhortation, and punishment.

If there is no attention to particulars and details, the most magnificent of plans is mere superficiality. Of what value, for instance, is the very best of operational orders if, through negligence, it reaches its destination too late, or if it is copied with distortions, or if it is read carelessly? He who is true in little things will also be true in great ones.

In order to implement great plans, one must devote great attention to very small trifles! This is the watchword under which the Red Army goes forward in its new phase.

Pravda
September 11, 1921,
No.219

Endnotes

1. This 'grease' is evidently a form of dubbin – a special preparation of grease for softening leather and rendering it waterproof.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

Concluding Speech

* * *

At the Analysis of Manœuvres at Kotyuzhany [\[1\]](#), September 12, 1921 [\[2\]](#)

Before I let you go back to your units, comrades, allow me to sum up in a few words the general impression obtained from the manœuvres and the analysis which has been made of them.

The very level of the discussion, the very character of the analysis, testifies to the serious extent to which the Red Army has grown. A year to eighteen months ago, an analysis like this, with active participation not merely by the higher commanding personnel but also the middle-ranking commanders, could not have taken place. There is an unquestionable improvement shown here. We heard many criticisms, sometimes very severe and harsh ones, but it is just this critically demanding attitude that testifies to the raising of the army's level and, above all, the level of its commanding personnel. The army has matured, it is presenting itself with more complex tasks and subjecting itself to stricter demands.

But at the same time, in the light of these increased demands and of the more complex tasks with which the international situation confronts us, the manœuvres have revealed to us all the more clearly our dark, weak sides.

If one were to sum up everything that has been said here, one would have to say: the weakness of the manœuvres consisted in the lack of correspondence between conception and execution. The actual operational plan had, on both sides, an extremely clearcut, sharp and, so to speak, absolute character. But it was broken up in the process of execution because it was not corrected in accordance with the situation and the actions of the enemy, and consequently disappeared in the actual course of operations, which proved, in practice, to lack any unified leadership.

* * *

The idea of command in operations which predominates among us is principally based on breadth and boldness of the strategic conception, extreme mobility of the units, rapidity of marching and impetuosity in attack. Both objectively and subjectively, our present strategy of manœuvre contrasts with the positional strategy of the imperialist war. A tendency exists to draw a contrast on a basis of principle between this new or 'revolutionary' strategy and the strategy of the old militarism. Any such contrast calls, however, for substantial qualification.

The imperialist war was marked by the immobility of the front line, a high

degree of compactness of the masses involved, and an unprecedented massing of artillery and other technical resources. With such a structure of the front there was almost no room for unexpected strategical combinations. Each side sought to gnaw at the dense front presented by the other. The positional strategy about which people here sometimes speak contemptuously, required, however, a combination of high qualities in the sphere of leadership, accurate estimation of all the forces and resources possessed by the enemy, in their constant changes (growth or decline), very thorough intelligence work, very vigilant security, precise, careful, mosaic organisation of one's own forces and resources, maximum attention to all details, and ceaseless combination of all the forces and resources for struggle. We saw this especially on the French front. Our Russian front against the Germans was a great deal feebler, and, in comparison with the front in France was like, say, sacking as against good English cloth. In general, though, the same positional tendencies prevailed here as well.

Our civil war, with its manœuvring, was, in its methods and procedures, an extreme reaction from positional warfare. However, this manœuvring character of the civil war was not a manifestation of any absolute 'revolutionary spirit'. It came about, above all, as a result of the relatively small numbers of forces that were in action over enormous spaces. Compared with the armies of the imperialist war, both the Red Army and the counter-revolutionary armies were, especially in the initial period, small forces which, by the very nature of the situation, could accomplish their tasks only through carrying out highly mobile manœuvres. Military skill, as such, undoubtedly found here a wide field in which to manifest itself, despite the relative poverty of technical resources, and, often, the low level of training of the troops themselves. It was precisely these inadequacies that engendered the need to make up for all shortcomings by means of unexpectedness in combinations, boldness in grouping, daring in manœuvre. Interest in the strategy of manœuvre increased to a remarkable extent among the commanders. The most daring form of manœuvre is the cavalry raid. Enthusiasm for raids developed to a high level here.

It is perfectly obvious that such a degree of freedom to manœuvre is not at all to be found always and everywhere. The larger the forces participating in the conflict, the higher the level of technique, the better the means of transport and communication – the more restricted and limited must be the operational plan, but, at the same time, the greater are its prospects of being implemented

I recall how, in the initial period of the Red Army's creation, some comrades argued that, by virtue of the 'inner nature' of revolutionary warfare we had no need of higher formations of corps, divisions or even brigades. To a strategy of manœuvre, they claimed, there had to correspond a small independent unit, something in the nature of a composite regiment: two or three battalions of infantry, a little cavalry, some artillery. In those days quite a lot of debate took place among us on that subject. But very soon, as the army itself grew, and also its tasks, we arrived at higher formations. If we were now to obtain a lengthy breathing-spell that would enable us to strengthen ourselves in respect to the economy, transport and military technique, and if, after that, we were again to be involved in war – in the Western theatre, say – it is beyond doubt that our strategy would have to be based on larger masses, and would assume a more positional, more ponderous character.

I am not saying all this, of course, in order to denigrate the idea of bold manoeuvring, but to show the inner dependence between the operational plan and the nature and numbers of the fighting masses and the actual situation.

Yet, as emerged clearly during the analysis, the idea of strategical manoeuvring has acquired among us an absolute character, so to speak. Each of the commanders had a clear-cut strategical plan already at the beginning of the manoeuvres. This plan was, of course, broadly deduced from the fundamental facts of the grouping of forces at the outset and the general nature of the locality, and was wholly anterior to the development of the operation. The commander saw his task, in the words of one of our rapporteurs, as being to implement his plan from above downward, by imposing his sovereign will, and bringing the plan to victorious accomplishment. A clear-cut plan and a strong will on the part of the commander certainly constitute elements necessary for success, but, alas, they are not enough. The commander's will, pressing down from above, can in no case serve as a substitute for work in the sphere of communications, reconnaissance, security, reporting, supply and so on. Yet all these highly important aspects of an operation were not found to be in real accord with the boldness of the plan and the pressure of the guiding will. The bolder and more aggressive the plan on both sides, the more important was it for each of them to effect timely orientation during the course of the operation, so that corrections could be made in good time, precautionary measures taken, and soon. In actual fact, this did not happen. All the requirements of the field service regulations gave way to *impetuosity*. Consequently, the result obtained was directly opposite to that aimed at by the guiding will: from two impetuous movements, directed one against the other, but without sounding each other out, a situation was created, imperceptibly and bit by bit, such as neither side had foreseen, and in which both essentially lost their way. The entire strategical plan was at once broken up, when the clash took place, into a series of petty tactical tasks, in which no trace of the plan was left. An excess of guiding will on the part of the commanders led, at the decisive moment, to its utter paralysis. This, comrades, is the central conclusion to be drawn from the manoeuvres. We have revealed quite clearly and distinctly how inadequate is the tactical training of both Red Army men and commanders: no proper adaptation to local conditions, reconnaissance carried out in such forms as constitute merely fictitious observance of the regulations, while producing no serious military results; exactly the same situation where security is concerned; and also inadequate understanding of communications and ability to organise them. Very important orders are despatched in one copy only, by a technically unreliable route, and so on, and so forth. And behind all this stands the commander, with his mathematical plan and his masterful will. If, to the plan and the will-power flowing down from on high, there were to correspond a wave, arising from below, of all-sided information, accurate reports and summaries, and ideas derived from tactical initiatives at lower levels, the initial plan, after undergoing inevitable modifications in the process of being implemented, might have been an extremely important condition for ultimate success. But this did not happen. Failures piled up all along the line. From time to time it seemed as though, by an effort of will from above, these failures had been overcome, but later there was an inevitable collapse, when, from minor failures, mistakes, lack of information, absence of communication, lack of foresight, a situation was created in which nobody understood what was happening any more, and which inevitably must, in battle, result in panic.

There you have the radical defect of our manoeuvres: *lack of correspondence between conception and execution.*

What is the solution? One cannot invent a universal recipe for solving this problem. Persistent work in organisation and training is required: we have to raise the general military-tactical level of the army – both that of the junior commander and that of the rank-and-file soldier: without this, the higher command will inevitably get intoxicated with its own strategical creativeness and then, at the critical moment, will come up against the fact of complete non-fulfilment of its plan. It is necessary therefore, to study conditions on the spot – to study and study again.

I should like to direct your attention also to certain aspects of the matter. Everyone who took part in the manoeuvres testified to the excellent morale of the troops and their great offensive *élan*. We have already seen how this offensive *élan* was broken up into little splashes, because it was not taken in hand tactically and organised from below upward. Here we detect a slight whiff of that old attitude expressed in the phrase: 'Why worry, it's in the bag', merely translated into revolutionary language. It must further be added – and I want now to focus your attention on this point – that, by general admission, apparently, neither side knew how to utilise particular successes, to carry them to conclusion, and thereby to turn them, perhaps, into the beginning of strategic victory. This inability to exploit and develop successes has, in its turn, two causes: first, the inadequacy, already mentioned, of tactical training, and, secondly, a specific feature of the character of our workers' and peasants' commanders, namely, passivity and good nature.

Why did former revolutions suffer defeat? Because the masses of the people proved unable to develop their successes to completion, were easily satisfied with their initial victories, failed to consolidate them, did not destroy all the enemy's positions, did not disarm him completely, passed over easily from attack to passivity, lost time, and so on. And the old ruling class which had been momentarily weakened, and even overthrown, got back on to its feet, sounded out the weak sides of the momentary victor, and, seizing its opportunity, struck him very heavy blows. In our revolution we see, for the first time, in the person of the Communist Party, a leader that wants and is able to carry victories through to completion and to teach the working masses to do this: hence the successes won by our revolution, and in this lies a serious guarantee of our final victory ... It is this firm, never yielding will to achieve complete victory, to develop every partial victory, to disarm and destroy the enemy, that our new workers' and peasants' commanders have not yet entirely assimilated. They are, so to speak, too 'kind', too easily satisfied, too ready to soften and lose time. Where this matter is concerned we need to learn a great deal from our foes. Will-power, *élan*, are splendid things, but for victory one also needs persistence, attention, vigilance, endurance.

Comrades, we need to pay more attention to details, particulars, trifles, and to the minutiae of military affairs. Otherwise, enthusiasm for mere manoeuvring threatens to turn into superficiality. That is a very grave sin in any sphere, and all the more so in the military sphere. In military matters there are not and cannot be any details that are not worth attention. What is the use of the very best of orders if it fails to reach its addressee in time, or if it is copied with distortions, or if it is not read with care? There must be more attention to details. For a whole is composed of an accumulation of details.

Inattention to details, to particulars, is our basic fault. It is most glaringly evident in the sphere of supply. Someone said here, quite rightly, that not only are we now obliged to fight with very meagre technical resources at our disposal but this will continue to be the case in the period immediately ahead. Hence the need to observe maximum economy. But this is not done! It would be extremely instructive to analyse the manoeuvres from the standpoint of supply. We should undoubtedly become convinced that economy, attention and care in the treatment of army property are non-existent where the majority of Red Army men are concerned, and even among the commanders and commissars. Boots are not greased, rifles are not cleaned when they should be, horses are not properly looked after. The commanders and commissars exercise too little influence on the Red Army men in this connection, and are indeed themselves guilty parties. We are capable of dying heroically, but not of taking care of our rifles. We have learnt to manoeuvre, but not to grease our boots. And what is the use of manoeuvring without boots? If, when I visit, say, a divisional headquarters, I see a filthy stairway, all bespattered with spittle and dropped cigarette-ends, I say to myself: things are in a bad way here, this is a place where orders are certainly written out with mistakes in them, where proper records of equipment issued are not kept, and so on. He who is true in little things will also be true in great ones. [\[3\]](#) Attention has to be paid to details. I speak, of course, not of bureaucratic fussiness, but of attention to practical, material, factual details and particulars, those which, ultimately, decide the outcome of battles and wars, the fate of armies and states. By the attention it pays to these details and particulars one can measure the level at which an army stands, one can measure the cultural level of an entire people ... There is still too much barbarism among us, we need to lift ourselves up.

One of the comrades mentioned here that a disdainful attitude to the regulations is rather widespread among us: what good are the regulations to us, they say, they only cramp initiative. This attitude of not giving a damn for the regulations is profoundly harmful. Here is that same rottenness which is expressed in the phrase: 'Why worry, it's in the bag' [\[4\]](#) – though the bag is now a revolutionary one. The regulations condense an immense amount of military experience. If there are mistakes in the regulations, point them out, and we'll correct them together. If there are unnecessary things there, they must be deleted. But, above all, it is necessary to study. I think that the commanders assembled here will do a splendid job of education and self education if they will study attentively the relevant chapters of the regulations, on the basis of the experience gained in these manoeuvres. Much that to a young commander seemed a dead letter will become filled with living content: he will convince himself that we should get less confused and talk less nonsense if we observed the regulations more seriously.

I come back to the same conclusion with which I started: we have grown up, but it would be a crime to deceive ourselves and rest content with the successes we have achieved. We need to progress, to raise the level of the Red Army, in all respects. And this task we shall fulfil.

Endnotes

[1.](#) Kotyuzhany, on the line from Vinnitsa to Mogilev-Podolsky, is only about 40 miles from the river Dniester, then the *de facto* frontier with Romania.

[2.](#) In September 1921 manœuvres by the troops of the Kiev military district, took place in Right-bank Ukraine. The analysis of these manœuvres was held in the area of Kotyuzhani station, which is on the line between Zhmerinka and Mogilev-Podolsky. The speech given here was published as a separate pamphlet by the train of the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council.

[3.](#) Here Trotsky uses the Russian equivalent of the words of Jesus in Luke 16:10 – ‘He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much’.

[4.](#) The Russian expression is literally: ‘We’ll crush them beneath our caps’, and Trotsky’s comment is: ‘They are now revolutionary caps’.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

Speech

At the Second All-Russia Congress of Political Education Departments, October 20, 1921

* * *

Unfortunately, I did not hear Comrade Aronshtam's report [\[1\]](#), and it may happen that I shall sometimes repeat something that he already said. I apologise for this in advance. You had Comrade Lenin's report [\[2\]](#) on our economic situation and on the methods of economic construction in connection with the new period in international affairs, which finds internal expression in our development. Those same conditions which have determined the profound turn in our economic policy have, of course, a corresponding influence also upon our army.

What is the essence of our international situation? It is that, at the end of the fourth year after the October Revolution we are still encircled by capitalism. The proletarian revolution has not achieved any further direct, victorious progress. The bourgeoisie has stood its ground all over the world, in what was the most critical period for it, after the end of the imperialist war and the demobilisation of the armies. That was the period of least state stability of the bourgeoisie as a ruling class, the period of greatest immediate danger from the working masses who were disappointed by the war and its outcome, of the greatest spontaneous, mass-scale revolutionary upheavals, of the greatest panic among the ruling class. In that period it was possible for us, with some justification, to think that the bourgeoisie would fall before this spontaneous onslaught, and that the workers' and peasants' army which had been created in order to safeguard the rule of the working class in our country had completely exhausted its tasks within these national limits. The situation developed otherwise. We are, as before, surrounded by the bourgeoisie still in power. All the people's wealth and state power are in its hands. So, the hope that the first, elemental onslaught of the working people after the war would sweep the bourgeoisie away has not been fulfilled. The bourgeoisie has stood its ground. That is the most important fact in the international situation.

What is now happening before our eyes? A further accumulation of the revolutionary forces of the working class. This is already no longer that spontaneous flood that we saw at the end of 1918 and the beginning of 1919, although the spontaneous mass movement does still exist. Now, in every country, more systematic, stubborn work is being carried on to create a revolutionary party, to accumulate revolutionary experience, to prepare in a systematic way for the conquest of power by the working class. Now, in the epoch into which we have entered, there can no longer be any question of the working class taking the bourgeoisie by surprise and overthrowing it by means of one impetuous onslaught. Despite the fact that the economic soil beneath

the feet of the bourgeoisie is cracking up, it has nevertheless kept political control of itself and of its state apparatus, so that the struggle will be stubborn, systematic, protracted and ruthless. This is the basic feature of our international situation. We have, on the one hand, an accumulation of the forces of the working class, but, on the other, we see how, on our undermined and ever more disintegrating economic foundation of capitalism, the bourgeoisie is accumulating military and political forces. We see how it is restoring and strengthening the apparatus of its shaken state power, how it is hitting back and preparing to hit back at still greater length and still more ruthlessly.

What follows from this? The following. First, the bourgeoisie, having stood its ground through 1919, 1920 and 1921, now considers that Bolshevism does not constitute the immediate mortal danger to it that it supposed it did in 1918 and 1919, when it hoped to overthrow us by means of occupation troops. Consequently, it has become psychologically possible for the bourgeoisie to enter into economic relations with us.

Secondly, the bourgeoisie has survived for three years since the war and is preparing to go on living still longer. From this it follows that the bourgeoisie is getting ready for a long period of struggle to suppress the proletarian revolution.

While we are manœuvring, in our internal and international policies, in relation to the peasant masses and to the bourgeoisie (and since we have stood our ground, we are manœuvring not too badly), the bourgeoisie also in its turn is manœuvring. The time has come for it to utilise the natural wealth of Russia, and, to some extent, the Russian market, to heal the most gaping economic wounds, so as to strengthen its position and to be able to strangle the working class if it should rise up against the bourgeoisie.

What follows from this as regards prospects? What follows, as I have already said, is that the struggle of the working class for power will become protracted, intense and ever fiercer, not only on the European but on the world scale. In the course of this struggle there will be waves that rise and waves that sink. It is hard to forecast how long this will go on. But it is clear that it will affect our international situation in very varying ways. There will be periods when the ring of the blockade will be broken and there will be commercial relations between us and the bourgeoisie – and there will be periods of renewed intervention, fresh military inroads. And in this protracted epoch of struggle between the working class and the bourgeoisie into which we are entering, one of the fundamental forces of the world working class will still be, as before, our Red Army. That is the perspective in which we must look at the question of the Red Army, not only inside our Party but also among the broad masses of the working people.

We often say that we have passed from a war period into an economic period. This is true, of course, in the sense that we can now transfer a larger quantity of forces into economic work. But in so far as the less conscious element of the working class interprets this circumstance as meaning that the Red Army's historical role is somehow at an end, this liquidationist attitude towards the Red Army would, if the advanced elements did not fight against it, threaten us with the greatest danger. This urge to liquidate the army (as has often been said) has manifested itself sometimes, in a spontaneous way,

among Communist leading circles, in the form of a mass departure of Communists from the Red Army.

Although the plenum of the Party's Central Committee has now decided firmly to maintain a basic complement of Party workers in the army, this drift into economic work still continues. It is necessary that the Party military workers put up a determined resistance to this drift. Wherever Provincial Committees take military workers away from the army (most often this is done by voluntary agreement, despite the decision of the Party's CC), Party military workers must relentlessly combat these Provincial Committees. This struggle is necessary for the army's self-preservation. It is bound up with the profoundly critical period through which the Red Army is passing, and which is due, primarily, to the sharp turn from war to peace conditions.

Our Red Army was formed in the face of terrible danger, from the White Armies and White generals, under the pressure of concentratedly furious agitation by our Party. This was what gave the army its cohesion. Now, in the transition to a peace situation, the army's psychology has been disrupted. Above all, doubt has arisen as to whether it is necessary to remain in the army now that the most advanced and energetic elements have left it.

We have demobilised sixteen age groups. We are now approaching a situation in which only three age-groups will remain in our army, and then only two, the classes of 1900 and 1901. Along with this, the army's numbers are being reduced by more than a third. Discharge of the older age groups on indefinite leave is quite unavoidable: it will bring about a normalisation of the army, a levelling-out as regards agegroups, and that will be a big advantage. We hope to achieve this in the next few months, and to that end we have to take from economic activity about 400,000 men of these two agegroups who were not called up at the regular time. This call-up will also take place with a certain amount of resistance, internal and external, and here the task of agitation will be very great to explain the significance of the rejuvenation of the army and its levelling-out in terms of age. Difference in age gives rise to friction and protests. We need an army which will be a long-lived institution, which will continue in being all through the coming epoch, and whose role will increase in connection with changes in the international situation.

The departure of the older age-groups is a big gain, in that as a result the army will be refreshed, but at the same time it is a tremendous loss, in that the army will lose all that it had that was most experienced and tempered, that which constituted the spiritual beauty of the army and on which it was based. What percentage will remain of those who took part in the civil war, in certain districts and rear divisions? There are districts where those of them who are left will make up only ten per cent, all the rest of the troops being fresh raw material. If you look at these districts from the outside, everything seems to be as it was before. Division number such-and-such, morale as it should be, commissars in post, commanders present, training being carried on, uniforms better even than before, the food situation also better: it seems as though a step forward has been taken. However, if you dig deeper, it turns out that this is only an old outline which has been filled in with quite a new element, with new people, young peasants who are like unbaked bricks – give a good shove with your shoulder, and everything collapses. The outward form is good, because the heritage is good – it was created in the preceding epoch. But if we are negligent in this critical period, it may turn out that into the old wineskins –

which, to be sure, are not bad wineskins, having been fashioned out of our experience – new wine is being poured which may prove to be not wine at all, but water. [3] Thus, the most immediate danger is this, that if, in this transitional period, there is a too rapid exodus of Communists from the army, if adequate attention is not given to the army as a whole, if no practical, systematic agitation is carried on, then what we shall get, under the outward envelope of the Red Army, is just a blank space.

I speak about this not in order to frighten you, but in order to show you the danger that faces us. That agitation has slackened to an extreme degree is an undoubted fact. I think that this applies generally to the Provincial Political Departments. I asked the commander of the troops in the Volga Military District about their work and (let me say this without meaning to give offence) he replied that the Provincial Political Departments do not carry on any work in the army and, in general, the army cannot see what help they are. It may be that he exaggerated a little but, by and large, I think that the Party and the Provincial Political Departments are not sufficiently aware what a critical period the army is going through, and how much support it needs. The old methods of agitation – drop into a barracks, make a speech, and that's that – will not do now, because to the new Red Army man, a boy of 19 or 20 who did not serve in the war, these general phrases about imperialism which meant something to the older Red Army men are completely alien. What is needed here is systematic education. He does not feel the presence of the enemy, and abstract arguments – presented, moreover, in very clumsy language – have little effect on him. Consequently, he needs, first and foremost, to be made acquainted with what exists in the world, starting with Romania, Poland and so on. It is necessary to create, at all costs, in place of the stereotyped, barrel-organ agitation about imperialism in general, a series of explanatory pamphlets about our neighbours. In these pamphlets the Red Army man must be taught what Romania is like, for instance, what the position of the peasant is in Romania, what Poland is like, and so on. Perhaps these pamphlets should be produced on a two-story basis, with some more weighty publications for the political workers, the commissars, and so forth, and others, absolutely simple ones, for the rank-and-file peasant. We must, of course, get down to this work without delay, so that it does not happen that war begins when we have only just started to teach the Red Army man.

Under the Tsar, under the Tsarist regime, the peasant's attitude to war was elemental, with national feeling playing a part. You remember how Uspensky's hero, the old soldier Kudinych spoke about how he had fought, saying: 'We beat the Circassians, a good people, we beat countless numbers of them.' We must not and cannot build our army on that basis. Our Kudinych must know against whom he is fighting and why, he must be taught that, and the commanders as well. Do all the company and platoon commanders know what they ought to know? By no means. True, they curse Poland, they curse Romania, but they do this in wholesale fashion, unconsciously, without any understanding of the situation. For all these reasons we need textbooks adapted to the Red Army. And the creation of such textbooks is a task of political education for the organs of the Political Education Departments.

In the active army the Red Army man is, above all, taken up with war, with fighting. But the Red Army man who lives in an epoch of respite, so to speak, is mainly concerned to look at what is going on around him in the barracks and camps. The peacetime Red Army man pays more attention to trifles. In war,

as the French saying has it, things happen 'as in war'. [4] In war, if the Red Army man hasn't anything to eat, he steals something from a peasant, and if there isn't anything for him to steal, well, he goes hungry and just shrugs his shoulders, because he considers that there is nothing to be done about it- it's war. But in peacetime it is quite a different matter. In peacetime he demands that everything in barracks should be all right, that the barracks should have windows, that these should have glass in them, that the barracks should have a door and a stove. He is much more demanding, and disposed to complain if something does not satisfy him - not to mention those cases when he becomes aware of a bad attitude towards himself and his needs. On the other hand, the people around him are also more demanding, in peacetime, in relation to the Red Army, than they were in wartime. In wartime, if the Red Army man breaks up a door because he has no firewood for his camp-fire, even the peasant whose door he has broken up looks tolerantly on what the soldier has done, because he realises what war means.

Thus, in peacetime, we see greater demands made by the Red Army man upon the state and, contrariwise, by the state upon the Red Army man. In peacetime, the Red Army man demands more order - which is precisely what, we must admit, is lacking both in the army and in other spheres. Here, too, we need to carry out careful work in educating the Red Army man. We have to direct his attention to those trifles which go to make up life.

A distinctive feature of our Communist Party as a group is that we were educated in the past through revolutionary struggle. Against us stood a regime which had been shaped in the course of decades, centuries and millenia. It had created culture and technique and had achieved great things in many spheres. We had to overthrow the old master in order to take power. And in that struggle we did not worry about whether we broke glass or set fire to houses. It was a fight with the bourgeoisie for state power, a struggle which could not have the effect of educating us in attention to trifles and details. On the contrary, we scorned those trifles, and when philistines said to us that the revolution was destroying culture, and so on and so forth, we brushed them aside. After we took power came the epoch of civil war: when you chop wood, chips fly. [5] And many Russian chips flew. It must be admitted that in some places only chips are left.

And now we are proceeding to build, and we have to reeducate the masses, since one cannot build with chips. The work now calls for new methods. An epoch of war, of civil war, could not educate people in attention to trifles and details, yet it is precisely attention to trifles and details that constitutes the necessary condition for economic and cultural progress. When you receive a report that in some division, or regiment, or brigade, the horses are well shod, kept clean, and so on, then, even though this is a small thing, it cheers you up. But, in most cases, you receive reports of a different sort: the horses are in a bad state, they are not groomed, are badly shod, and so on. All attention must now be focused on educating the Red Army. Whereas in the past period it was educated through mass revolutionary upsurge, external danger from the Whites, nowadays this process, which compressed the Red Army into a single, united whole, is absent. There can be no question of the mass of the peasants grasping the basis of this new education theoretically. The inner cohesion of the Red Army can be ensured only by careful attention to the needs of the Red Army man, on the one hand, and, on the other, by teaching the Red Army man to give his attention to all the details of the country's economic life. This is

a very great educational task that confronts us and that we must carry out at all costs. It is a hard task, because it means individual re-education both of the leading workers and of the Red Army masses as a whole.

Of immense importance is the education of the commanders. We can educate them only if we pay attention to their material needs. The commanders are in a very poor situation. Attempts to improve it come up against objections from those who consider that commanders ought not to be put in a privileged situation relative to Red Army men. I direct your particular attention to this matter. It is radically wrong to treat the situation of the commander and that of the Red Army man as though they were identical. The Red Army man has to spend only two years in the army, and that constitutes his military service to the state. But, for the commander, military service is not the performance of some temporary obligation, it is his profession. He has to stay in the army all his life long (this applies especially to the senior ranks) and to maintain his family from what he receives in his capacity as a commander. Here we have to compare the situation of the commander and his family not with that of the Red Army man but with that of a highly-skilled worker, or specialist. If abuses occur in this matter, they must be stopped and punished, but, essentially, our attitude to the question must be clear and distinct, and must not include any concessions to the cheap demagoguery which is encountered in this connection.

The mass of Red Army men will always understand when one says to them, frankly: 'If you want to have a good commander, who won't be replaced every three months, who will work systematically at his job, and who can guarantee that, in a battle situation, he will not lead the Red Army men to the slaughter, it will be necessary to provide this specialist with favourable conditions of existence.' Otherwise, we shall not recruit commanders. This applies both to commanders drawn from the workers and peasants and to a large number of the old commanders, whom we are not going to get rid of, because they are useful to us.

We need to pay attention to the old commanders, to know how to approach them and to win them over ideologically. This can be done: we possess some material propitious for this purpose. Our newspapers have written about the book **Smena Vekh (A Change of Waymarks)** [\[6\]](#), which has been published abroad, in Prague, the authors being former White-Guardists (one of them was a minister in Kolchak's government, another ran the agitation department in Kolchak's army, a third headed the same department in Denikin's army): Klyuchnikov, Potekhin, Bobrishchev-Pushkin. They are all Octobrists, right-wing Cadets and, it may be, former Black-Hundredists, they are all arch-patriots in the reactionary bourgeois-noble sense of the word. And now, proceeding from considerations of patriotism, they have arrived at the conclusion that Russia's salvation lies in the Soviet power, that, in present historical conditions, no power but the Soviet power is capable of preserving the unity and independence of the Russian people against aggression from without. They are, of course, infinitely remote from communism; but it is not to communism that they have drawn nearer, but to the Soviet power, through the gateway of patriotism. If you read this book you can see that its authors are not some sort of mercenary creatures who want to get pieces of silver from the Soviet power and are ingratiating themselves with it with that aim in view. They have effected a certain ideological change in themselves, working from the standpoint of patriotism. They have halted half-way – but half-way along the

road that leads to us. Some of them will go further along this road, and it is the road by which the best elements among the old commanders are drawing closer to us.

It is necessary that there be at least one copy of this book **Smena Vekh**, in every province. I think that this book will not remain unique. What is indicated here is a turn in thinking of the patriotic émigré intelligentsia which is due to the fact that we have stood our ground, that Russia is now personified by the Soviet power. This is a splendid gift to us for re-educating the commanders of the old school, a gift which we must be able to utilise in the localities. We must set to work, using quotations from the book, to explain to them, to show how people who took the patriotic point of view have sensed, after passing through the ruinous experience of the intervention and suffering the disappointment that has been the lot of all elements among the émigrés, that the only government capable of ensuring the economic and cultural development of the Russian people is the Soviet power.

This work can be carried out, in the main, within the army. I do not indulge myself in the illusion that the Provincial Political Education Departments can do it all by themselves. Each of them has general tasks in relation to the province as a whole: but they can greatly help in this task, by bringing into their work elements of these ideas from the book **Smena Vekh** about which I have been speaking.

I want especially to stress that the work of re-educating the Red Army's commanders can be carried out only in barracks, in military units, and so on. It is not to be supposed that we can do all this work of political education of the army, or the main part of it, through the Political Education Departments and their organs. We created the army through the Provincial Military Commissariats. Everything was in their hands: they trained, educated, agitated, purged, formed and also commanded. The provincial military commissariat held the army in its hands. Now, however, the methods of work of our provincial military commissariats have completely changed. Their functions have been reduced to registration and mobilisation. The actual administration of the army is carried on through the hierarchy of command: the high command, the district, the division, the brigade, the regiment. The army's education is also carried on through these channels. The previous structure of the army, under which leadership was concentrated in the provincial military commissariats, as departments of the Executive Committees, had its justification, of course, and brought good results, but general state and general military considerations have obliged us to make this reform. That is why, while the provincial military commissariat cannot claim to exercise complete military-administrative authority in the army within the boundaries of a province, neither can the provincial political education department, owing to its form of organisation, which does not harmonise with the organisation of command, concentrate in its own hands the work of educating the army. But that does not mean that its role is thereby reduced. In the first place, the political education departments are still in a position to support, ideologically and materially, the agitation carried on in the units, and, something which I think is very important, they have the responsibility of creating around the units an atmosphere conducive to educating the army in a spirit of socialist citizenship, and attracting the workers and peasants towards it.

Meanwhile, as I have said, we observe a decline in political work in the army.

This is due to the fact that the transfer of all functions from the Political Directorate of the Revolutionary War Council to the Political Education Departments coincided with the drift of political workers out of the army generally, with demobilisation of the army, with the decline in the attention paid to it. Nearly all our new organisations have yet to prove themselves. The main task, that of uniting army-education work in a province with general education work, can still only be carried out by the Political Education Departments.

For this work to be successful we must retain the maximum number of political workers who are now serving in the army. The replacement of Communist workers which is now taking place in all organisations, especially the cultural and educational ones, is fatal. Not long ago I read in **Pravda** an excellent article by Comrade Skabeyev in which he speaks of the diabolical fluidity of the political-education staff in the army. Heads of sections, secretaries and all the rest – some are transferred, others mobilised, a third group sent off on missions, and a fourth group leave on their own initiative. This state of affairs leads to the worst consequences, for, I repeat, just dropping into a barracks, making a speech, and then running off does not constitute educational work. One has to get to know the barracks from within, to acquire experience in observing what goes on, to learn what to say and when to say it. It is for this reason that we must keep political workers in the army for a longer period, and why the War Department, and myself in particular, are going to be very difficult in relation to every case of a political worker leaving to go to other work.

Educational work must now be closely linked with increasing the Red Army man's qualifications as a soldier. His interest in all sorts of things has to be increased: in him we have to educate the socialist citizen and to engender the ambitious soldier. All this calls for the employment of very complex methods. Today I received the report of the inspectorate regarding the state of a certain unit at Kostroma, in which mention is made of a very interesting method of agitation. I will read you an extract from it. [*Reads*]

Here I must interrupt myself. When I spoke of creating a minimum of human conditions of existence for the commanders, I forgot to say to you that this can be achieved only if attention is given to securing co-operation from the local Soviet organs. We have introduced various reforms and issued authorisations through the Council of People's Commissars and the Council of Labour and Defence, but these reforms and authorisations have found expression, in the main, in terms of our Soviet roubles, that is, in reality, they have not found expression at all. Obviously, if material improvement is to be achieved, something different is needed: co-operation by the organs that wield power in the localities is called for. We have made an attempt to attach certain divisions to the bigger, more influential soviets – thus, the 51st and 56th Divisions have been attached to the Moscow Soviet, and they do not complain about that, because, as a result, something comes their way from the Moscow Soviet, both materially and spiritually.

We in the Revolutionary War Council have come to the conclusion that we absolutely must arouse throughout the country this sort of emulation between soviets and Executive Committees in the matter of having military units attached to them. Of course, not every soviet can take on two divisions. To an uyezd soviet we shall attach a half-division, or a battery; to a provincial Soviet

we'll give a brigade; and whoever is able to can take on a division. This attachment has become possible now, thanks to the more stationary disposition of units, which in the period immediately ahead will be living a more settled life. Then the local soviet will be able to do a great deal to make up for what has been left undone by the centre, and to improve both the spiritual level and the material condition of units. For example, in the Volga region the needs of the units have been three-quarters satisfied, exclusively thanks to the local soviet and Party organs, for the centre provided very little. This has been attested by the same commander of the troops in the Volga region who complained about the failing-off in educational work. Personally, I think that a lot more can be done in this direction. Let each town which is the seat of the most authoritative organ of power in the given uyezd take steps, through agreement with the district commander, to attach some army units to itself: this will benefit both the units and the local soviet.

I will now continue reading the report about the new method of agitation. 'Here, political-agitational influence in the most dramatic form was combined with manœuvres, with tactical and strategical training of the Red Army men, which has a very much more powerful effect than any agitational speech, and which can be carried out with the participation of the local Party and trade-union organisation.'

In this connection I will say a few words about the manœuvres which I watched in the Kiev region of Right-bank Ukraine. Both the strong and the weak sides of the Red Army were observable. When Romania stirred, and there seemed to be a threat from Poland, it was decided to hold manœuvres in the Kiev region of Right-bank Ukraine. The units in that area were good, there were a lot of training courses, they had cavalry, morale was excellent. When the two forces came to grips with each other, both sides, which imagined that we were on the brink of war with Romania, were seized with such warlike fervour that it proved hardly possible to separate them. These manœuvres, in which young forces took part almost exclusively, testified to a great increase in military spirit and to tremendous stamina, for colossal marches had to be carried out, by day and by night. On the other hand, however, we were found to be very much weaker in the matter of attention to detail. After all, it is not enough to have a plan of genius: in order to put it into practice one has to pay attention to a whole series of details, to establish communications, carry out reconnaissance, see to security, and adapt the plan to the local situation. Without attention to detail the very best of plans is often transformed into a mere nothing.

Here is an example for you. One unit made use of the local inhabitants' carts, although this practice had been forbidden. When asked why they had taken the carts, the unit replied that they had not read the order forbidding this, because two orders had been received at the same time, and one of them had not been read. There was doubt at this point as to whether they did not want to carry out this order, or genuinely had omitted to read it, through inattention. But what is the use of the very best operational order if it is not read in time? A whole operation may fall apart if the clerks make mistakes when they copy out the order. Yet in all the reports we received there were enormous typing errors, and such errors can decide the outcome of a battle. If Napoleon had been served by careless clerks he would have lost half his battles.

In our case, what often happens is this. When an order has been copied out, with or without mistakes, it is despatched to the appropriate headquarters – by motor-cycle, for example. The motor-cycle travels two versts, breaks down, and goes no further. And at the moment when, in the commander's mind, the unit concerned is marching off to take the enemy on the flank, it actually does not even know what his plans are. What is the use of a splendid order if it does not reach its destination? It is obvious that when one sends off an order it is necessary to provide several safeguards to ensure that it gets delivered without fail, through sending it by a messenger on horseback, by car or by other means.

This is what is meant by attention to the details which go to make up military matters, this is what is meant by attention to the regulations. There is noticeable in our army, it must be acknowledged, a whiff of that tendency which is expressed in the phrase: 'Why worry, it's in the bag.' There is a contemptuous attitude to the regulations, yet the regulations are a condensation of military experience: they are a textbook on how to fight, based on past wars. Many people say that the regulations are a dead letter which constrains revolutionary freedom. That is nonsense; one must not talk like that.

The regulations are a most important item in political-educational work and it is necessary to combat relentlessly opinions which can be described only as superficiality, that attitude of: 'Why worry, it's in the bag,' all those so-called revolutionary methods which permit the scorning of orders, regulations and so on. Studying the regulations is just as fundamental a part of educational work as cleaning buttons, uniforms, ammunition and soon. And now the best warriors, the Communist warriors have got down to studying the regulations – they are swotting at the regulations, on the basis of their battle-experience, and, after that, they will apply their minds to exposing deficiencies.

I want to say a few words about the navy. The navy is in a difficult situation. To begin with, it was tied up owing to Britain's domination of the seas. It was reduced to a minimum, and then it finished itself off through the Kronstadt mutiny. We have noticed how the word 'Kronstadt' has come no longer to signify, in literature, in the press and the newspapers, the fortress and the place where Soviet power was born, but is now used as a synonym for the counter-revolutionary element of petty-bourgeois struggle. The Kronstadt sailors read this every day. It is not done, of course, out of ill-will, but, on the other hand, it cannot serve to raise morale. The fortress of Kronstadt is the sailors' stronghold and, at the same time, the banner of revolt against the Soviet power. This, of course, is a hindrance to us in restoring the navy: but I think that, nevertheless, we have no reason to abandon the idea of restoring it.

I spoke of the road that history is taking in the period that lies ahead. In this period we must expect to see a fierce struggle between the working class and the bourgeoisie not only in Russia but throughout the world. And it is very hard to say whether this struggle will be confined to land forces only. We cannot undertake to create a navy for offensive action. We cannot beat British imperialism on the seas and the oceans (we will beat it on the continent of Asia), but must rather think about defending our coasts. Our navy, consequently, must be defensive in character. But that is not enough. We must have the nucleus of a navy made up of the best sailors. And, in this sphere,

skill plays a much bigger part than in the army. It is incomparably more difficult to obtain a good sailor than to obtain a good infantryman, gunner or cavalryman. What a sailor has to know is highly complicated. This is why we need to retain the nucleus of a navy, which later on we shall be able to expand. Those organs of the Chief Political Education Department which have local contact with the navy must pay particularly serious attention to this.

In conclusion I will say a couple of words about the prospects of development before our army. Our programme [7] speaks of an intention to create an army of the militia type, that is, an army which retains in readiness only its cadres, and trains a changing body of men without taking them away from their work, so that, should the need arise, they can be brought within the framework provided by the cadres and hurled against the enemy. On what does the tempo of our transition to the militia-type army depend? It depends on many factors, the most important being the mutual relations between the working class and the peasantry and the state of the productive forces – in particular, of transport. In order to transform the army into a militia we need to be in a position, after the variable element has been mobilised, to hurl part of it quickly against the enemy. If transport is in a weak state, we shall have to keep more units with the colours than otherwise we should need to.

Our army, like the state as a whole, is led in an organised way by the working class and the peasantry. The social basis for a militia exists where there is no friction between the workingclass and the peasantry. In so far as the peasantry, for certain economic reasons, has provided, especially in the recent period, the soil for anti-Soviet agitation, and this not only among the upper elements but also among the middle ones, to that extent organising the army as a militia has been politically dangerous, and we have had to keep it in being as a field army, subject to close influence by our party and the advanced workers. Consequently, the rapidity with which we go over to a militia-type army, the rapidity with which we continue to cut down the size of the army, reducing it to its cadres, will be determined by our economic successes. If, before the bourgeoisie falls, we succeed in reviving our transport system, and if, on the other hand, the process of revival in agriculture, which has undoubtedly begun, continues on its way, despite the horrors of the Volga famine, and if mutual relations between the working class and the peasantry become more harmonious, more correct – then the conditions will be created for the army to be reduced still further without reducing the country's defensive capacity. Until then, however, while we are still in our present difficult economic position, we can pursue the reduction of the army only up to a certain point.

An army, which is an artificial organisation, created not by nature but through protracted work of formation, re-formation and so on, is created gradually and has to be constantly supported. If the Party and the Soviet power do not watch out, the army may disintegrate more quickly than it was built. But, with all the artificiality of the methods of its militaristic organisation, an army wholly reflects the country, the society, the people from which it has emerged, with all their weak and their strong sides. The army has been obliged to devour too great a share of our national income, because our national income is too small, and we cannot allow ourselves the luxury of having a small army consisting of cadres. That is a luxury we shall grant ourselves when we become richer. This idea may, from outside, seem paradoxical, contradictory, but actually it contains a real truth. By its structure

our army reflects the milieu around it, with this difference (as I heard it put by the previous rapporteur), that by virtue of its very artificiality it offers favourable conditions for exercising ideological influence upon the young peasant of 19 or 20, separating him as it does from the conditions of peasant life. If we were to take him away from those conditions between the ages of 10 and 15, that would mean de-classing and demoralising him, but by bringing the peasant into close association with Communist workers for two years – and we are moving towards a two-year period of service – we create the most favourable setting for the exercise of Communist influence.

And that is why the War Department is going to insist that military service shall be really universal. We are going to call-up the classes of 1900 and 1901. The barracks must become for the young generation a real school, not only of military but also of political training and education. Exemptions must therefore be kept to the minimum, even in the case of those who are studying or about to study, at institutions of higher education. If they are still at the lower stage of their studies, with a long way yet to go – let them be so good as to come into the Red Army for a couple of years. We must ensure that service in the Red Army is not looked upon as an imposition. This can be achieved by improving the barracks themselves, by cleaning up the internal atmosphere, and by seeing to it that the more advantaged, more educated youngsters do not enjoy any privileges. And in this respect your help with the call-up of the classes of 1900-1901 will be absolutely necessary for us.

Once again we are going through a critical time where the army is concerned. From the general political standpoint we went through a critical time in February and March of this year, during the revolts at Kronstadt and in Tambov province [\[8\]](#) and the change in our legislation. It can now be said that the most dangerous, critical period, from the general political standpoint, has been left behind us. But the army is a copy of society, and the dangers of the turn will be reflected in the army, with a certain delay. We are only now going through the critical period for the army. The morale prevailing in the army is good, and it is possible to consolidate this morale, but that will not happen by itself. If the process that has been going on for some months continues – the drift of forces out of the army and the waning in attention given to the army – then the army may disintegrate, for an army is not an aggregation of individuals, it does not consist of establishments, it is not a certain number of guns, machine-guns and bayonets, it is an ideological, moral bond between living men. This specific, particular military bond is created through experience, through struggle, through sacrifices and trials, through education and example, and so on, endlessly. This is accumulated capital. To accumulate it is ten times, a hundred times harder than to squander it. I ask you to help us in our work of preserving the ideological capital of our Red Army.

From the archives

Endnotes

[1.](#) L.M. Aronshtam, at this time head of the military section of the Chief Political Education Department, later held other high posts in the Red Army. He was arrested in 1937 and died in prison: posthumously rehabilitated.

[2.](#) Lenin's report to this Congress on the New Economic Policy is in **Collected Works**,

3. 'Neither do men put new wine into old bottles [i.e, wineskins]: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out ...' (Matthew 9:17).

4. *À la guerre comme à la guerre.*

5. This Russian expression is roughly equivalent to: 'You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs.'

6. The title is sometimes translated as **Changing Landmarks**. However, the allusion is to the marks placed across a tract of country to show a route to be followed: cf. Jeremiah, 31:21 – 'Set thee up waymarks ...' For Lenin's observations on **Smena Vekh** at the 11th Party Congress (1922), see **Collected Works**, Vol.33, pp.285-287.

7. The reference here is evidently to the resolution of the Eighth Party Congress *On the Military Question*: see **Resolutions and Decisions of the CPSU**, Vol.2, ed. R. Gregor, University of Toronto Press, 1974, pp.23-83. For the discussions in 1921 about the transformation of the army into a militia, see John Erickson, **The Soviet High Command**, Chapter 5.

8. On the Kronstadt mutiny, see below, note 40. The Tambov revolt was one of the attempts made by SR and Cadet groups to subvert the Soviet power from within. The bandit movement in the Tambov area was headed by a member of the SR Party named Antonov, who in 1918 had been head of the militia in Kirsanovsk uyezd. This movement began in August 1920, with the bandits operating in several groups each of 150-200 men. They rebelled with slogans for a Constituent Assembly, the formation of a union of the working peasantry, extermination of the Communists, and soon. Until the end of 1920 Soviet power was completely wiped out in the three southern *uyezds* of Tambov province, and unions of the working peasantry were organised everywhere. At the beginning of 1921 the bandit formations had grown so strong (they then numbered 25,000 men) that they were able to attack large villages (Razskazovo, etc.) with impunity, plunder state farms and destroy means of transport and communication, while our poorly-organised units were unable to wage active struggle against them. Only from April 1921 onward did the Soviet Government and the Supreme Command devote sufficient attention to the fight against banditry in the Tambov region. Vigorous political work, establishment of revolutionary committees, and the struggle to divide the peasantry were all combined with resolute measures for suppressing the bandit forces. In mid-June a decisive blow was struck at Antonov, and the peasantry who had been mobilised by the bandits started to come over to us. By the end of 1921 banditry had been liquidated (see Map No.1).

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

The Tasks of the Red Army

Address to the Commanders and Political Workers of the Moscow Militaiy District, in the Zimin Theatre, October 25, 1921

* * *

Comrades! We all sense and are aware that the internal life of our country is entering some kind of new phase in its development, that tomorrow will not be like yesterday – or, at least, will be far from like it in every respect. We say, and our newspapers write, that we have passed from a war period to a period of economic construction. And this is true, by and large; that is, it is true in the sense that today we have no serious war-fronts. The country's forces are being concentrated to an ever-increasing extent on economic work.

But does this mean that our army is doomed in the next few months, or, at least, in the next few years, to be gradually reduced to nothing? I don't think so, and neither do you – because, unfortunately, the world situation does not yet provide grounds for such a forecast. There are still a lot of international, world-wide, social and class knots that will have to be cut by the sword. And in this world struggle between different social forces, which will go on for many years yet, the Red Army is destined – we are all sure of this – to play a part which will be very active and worthy of its steel. And we need, comrades, on the threshold of this coming epoch, to take a look at ourselves, at the situation around us, and, in particular, at the Red Army, and to formulate as clearly and distinctly as possible our current tasks and duties.

The international situation of the Soviet country – and it is on this that depends the role and significance of the army (the question with which we, the workers in the War Department, are most closely concerned) – is today incomparably better than it was three years, two years or one year ago. This is a fact which is not now open to doubt by anyone. And it is best and most sharply confirmed by a small but very striking development which has occurred, namely, the split among the Russian émigrés.

You know that history has proceeded in such a way as to form two Russias. There is the one that lives within the Soviet borders, fights, builds, suffers want, goes hungry, makes mistakes, and corrects them: and there is the one which has left our borders with hatred in its heart, and gnashing its teeth, the one which has, all through these years, been fighting without success against us, together with the forces of European and world imperialism.

And when, even a short time ago, you picked up European bourgeois newspapers, regardless of whether these were British, French or German, and read about Russia, you could make out only from the final conclusion of an

article which Russia was meant: the Russia which is in Constantinople, in Paris, in Serbia, Yugoslavia, or the Russia which is in Russia.

The émigrés have a definite social composition. Their nucleus is constituted by landlords and bourgeois, but they have drawn in their wake a huge mass of educated Russian intellectuals who are connected by birth, kinship and the character of their education with the previous ruling classes. The White émigrés include an especially large number of officers of the old army. The civil war as a major conflict between two forces, between the working people and their former masters, is over, broadly speaking, if we disregard small isolated episodes. Today the émigrés, including the officer element among them, are sitting beside the broken trough of their former hopes, drawing conclusions, adding up the pluses and minuses, and trying to determine what tomorrow will bring: there are many Russian newspapers published abroad, and until recently they all wrote, in the openly monarchist language that is current in Europe, exactly the same sort of articles, in a tone of unrelenting hatred for Soviet, workers' and peasants' Russia. As was understandable, not a single voice was raised in the pages of these newspapers in defence of our creative efforts, of our attempts and endeavours to correct the mistakes we have committed. But now, during recent months, a clear and distinct split has appeared among the White-Guard émigrés, including their officer wing. A clearly-defined group of persons have emerged, bearing names of weight in the White-Guard world -scholars and politicians - who are beginning to recognise that the epoch when two Russias existed came to an end with the period of civil war, with the conclusive victory of *this* Russia, a victory due, to a considerable extent, to the Red Army, which is, flesh and blood, part of this workers' and peasants' Russia.

I have in my hand here a book which was published in Prague under the title **Smena Vekh (A Change of Waymarks)** - *vekhi* (waymarks) are placed along a route so as to define the direction it is to take. The authors of this book say that a period has arrived when it is necessary to change waymarks and to orient oneself on Soviet Russia. Here is the list of the authors - it speaks for itself. The former head of Kolchak's Osvag (the department of information and agitation, which combined the functions of our political departments and special sections), a lecturer at Moscow University, Ustryalov [\[1\]](#); the former head of Denikin's Osvag, at Rostov, the lecturer Chakhotin; the former head of Kolchak's ministry of foreign affairs, Professor Klyuchnikov [\[2\]](#); the former barrister and writer for the White newspapers, and earlier for Suvorin's **Novoye Vremya**, the Octobrist Bobrishchev-Pushkin; a teacher at the Russian lycée in Paris, Lukyanov; and Potekhin. That is the striking, very colourful list of the six authors who have brought out in Prague this book, **Smena Vekh**. This is an extremely significant symptom.

First of all, let me quote the description that they give of the émigrés and their attitude to Russia - and here I ask you to remember that the speakers are former Octobrists, supporters of Kolchak, Cadets at best. This is what Potekhin says: 'It is hard to love the Russia of today, a Russia of famine, blood, filth and sickness. But it was too easy to love the Russia of yesterday, when it had the best white flour in the world, the sweetest and whitest sugar, the cleanest, strongest and headiest vodka - too easy for those who had as much as they wanted of all that. They were so used to living fatly, sweetly and tipsily in this stricken Russia, that, when the flour, sugar and vodka suddenly disappeared, it seemed to them that Russia itself had disappeared. It seems

so still to many people.' [3]

One cannot conceive a more merciless satire on the landlord, bourgeois and White-Guard officer and intellectual émigrés.

This same author describes further on the attitude of these émigrés to our Volga famine. This is what he writes: 'On hospitable Slavonic countries, in the smart lobbies of the Hotel Majestic in Paris Russians savour the news of cholera and famine in Russia, voluptuously chew over the figures of millions of victims, and lovingly add to the horrible facts their own even more horrible inventions. One serious newspaper reports that, in Moscow, people are breaking into the cemeteries to steal corpses, and "it has been established" that these corpses are fed to the pigs, while a respected professor calculates that in 17 years' time only a few hundred thousand people will be left alive in Russia ... It is frightening to think of these lost souls.' [4] There you have a social, class and political portrait of that section of the émigrés who do not want to be reconciled with us.

Let me quote the estimation of Soviet power, the Red Army and our internal situation given by Bobrshchev-Pushkin, the former writer for **Novoye Vremya**, and Octobrist of yesterday. He fled from Soviet Russia to join Denikin. About that he writes here: 'My first impression, when I crossed the front, and was ready to pray for the Volunteers and their tricolour flag, was of the tales told by the officers who boasted of the tortures they had inflicted on prisoners and the numbers they had hanged.' [5]

He is far from agreeing with everything to do with Soviet power, and criticises it. He rejects the terror; but he recognises that terror, red terror, was to a considerable extent forced upon the Soviet power by the course of the struggle against the former ruling classes who refused to give up their material privileges. And so this Bobrshchev-Pushkin, the former Octobrist who went over to the Whites and prayed for the Volunteers and the tricolour, has arrived at recognition of Soviet Russia, of Soviet power, by the road of patriotism'. He gives detailed descriptions of the former ministers – there are a lot of them abroad – and he quotes stories to illustrate the contempt felt in Europe for these cadging 'former people' in Europe – when someone was given a beating (in Paris, unless I'm mistaken), it was said: 'Sorry, the police thought that he was a Russian minister.' [6] He describes their humble, miserable situation, the perpetual hat-in-hand posture in which they beg for a new intervention, another onslaught on Soviet Russia. He says, further on: 'Compare with this the attitude of the Soviet Government to Britain, how it has defended the honour and dignity of Russia, how it has made Britain adopt a proper tone towards Russia, but on a basis of equality.' Furthermore, he is a patriot, and I must say a few words about that.

The patriotism of the property-owning classes is a superstructure erected over their material interests. The landlord wants to keep his estate, the manufacturer wants to keep his factory. These estates and factories are inside the country's borders, and those borders are defended by the army, and so the landlord is for the army, for the government. He is a patriot so long as the army and the government protect his interests as a landlord. The kernel of patriotism is concern for property, and patriotism itself is the shell that protects the kernel of private property. As soon as that kernel ceases to belong to the capitalist or the landlord, he smashes the state 'shell', which has become, so far

is he is concerned, an empty thing, of no use to him, and he summons aid from outside.

But a certain section of the intelligentsia, including the former officers, who by virtue of their past, their education, were connected with the bourgeois and landlord class, have learnt to distinguish between this kernel of property-ownership and its pseudo-patriotic shell, and have realised that the country's true interests are being defended and upheld by the workers' and peasants' power alone. Moreover, Bobrishchev-Pushkin and the other authors declare, quite rightly, that never in history has the name of Russia been held in such esteem and wielded such influence among many millions of people, and even in royal and ministerial circles, as is now the case. I will read you Bobrishchev-Pushkin's actual words: 'Russia, exhausted and starving enjoys now, in the consciousness of the mass of the people throughout the world, unprecedented standing. Previously a bogey for the peoples, the bastion of all reaction, the international gendarme, it is now looked to by all the masses as a liberator. This is an undoubted fact which cannot be denied by any conscientious observer of the moods of the masses in any European country.' [7] Then, later: 'They all feel this way: if, in Russia, people just like us could overthrow the power of capitalism, then we too can do it. In what respect are we inferior to the Russians? It is said that they have made mistakes, committed crimes, brought things to ruin. That's not to be wondered at: what they are doing is something new. But one must learn from the experience of others, then it will be possible to avoid making mistakes.' [8] That is the attitude of many millions of people, as noted by the former Octobrist. He even speaks about the Red Army, and I could quote passages from every article, but that would take up too much time, so I shall confine myself to the minimum.

The Red Army is the factor that more than any other impresses and influences the thinking of the best, most honourable section of the patriotically-inclined elements among the émigrés, especially the military men, who know that an army is not built by waving a wand, that an army reflects the feelings and the capacities of the broad masses of the people. They appreciate that the army which is being created and perfected here, the workers' and peasants' army of Russia is the highest proof of the deep roots possessed by the workers' and peasants' government. 'The Soviet power,' says Bobrishchev-Pushkin, 'protects Russia, and to provide this protection it is creating an army of three million men. I am profoundly grateful,' he writes, 'to the military specialists of **Obshcheye Dyelo**' (**The Common Cause**) – **Obshcheye Dyelo** is the newspaper that hates us most; it is published in Paris, by Burtsev – 'who, by their informative articles have helped me to understand Russia's position: they have brilliantly shown how foolhardy it would be to try to overthrow a government capable of managing military affairs like this, establishing such discipline and recruiting so many former specialists.' [9] Addressing the Whites with whom he fled from Russia, he says: 'You cannot do what they are doing, for your army consisted of officers alone, with all the rest serving only because they were forced to.' [10] Further on, he speaks with irony of the ministries and governments of Europe: 'Whether or not they recognise the Soviet Government, an army of three million men is something which no power in Europe possesses, and which has to be recognised.' [11] As you know, we are now reducing the size of the army, and we shall talk about that later. But we are doing and will do everything in our power to ensure that the reduction in its numbers is accompanied by an increase in its fighting capacity.

The question arises: Is a counter-revolution, a coup d'état, possible in our country? Could the Soviet power be overthrown? To this question our author, Bobrishchev-Pushkin, replies that a counter-revolutionary coup would be a very great calamity (this is the general view held by Ustryalov and Klyuchnikov, too). It would mean chaos, breakdown, the transformation of the country, as an independent country, an independent people, into a corpse to be torn to pieces by the predators of world imperialism. But there is no force capable of effecting this counter-revolutionary coup. True, armed uprisings do occur (the book was written after the Kronstadt revolt and during the Tambov revolt, which is a particularly noteworthy fact – it came out in July of this year.) [12] But this is what the author says: 'The people, while often sharply criticising the Soviet power and manifesting their discontent with it, nevertheless look upon it as their own, and they swept away all those who campaigned against it.' [13] He writes about the Soviet power as a man standing outside it, one who criticises and exposes, speaking of tyranny and oppression, but nevertheless he recognises that the people look upon this power as their power: a poor thing, but their own. [14] 'The people distinguish between the actual institution of Soviet power and its bad representatives. They have a common language with it – a comradeship, if you like. The people's discontent, local uprisings, all these disputes with the Soviet power, are all "within the family". In a family, after all, people do sometimes throw furniture and crockery at each other. But the people will not allow any other power to take the place of the Soviet power in Russia.' [15] That is the conclusion drawn by this former Octobrist, a conclusion which, I repeat, is not confined to him alone, but has been drawn by a large and ever growing group among the émigrés, the best, most idealistic section of them.

Here is another quotation, from the article by another of the authors, Potekhin: 'The Russian revolution drew such a sharp line across the whole history of mankind that the chronology of a new era will come to be reckoned from its date, just as happened with the appearance of Christianity or the discovery of America. After the Russian revolution the peoples came forward into the arena of world history, for the first time. For the first time there emerged in a world-historical role the 100million-strong Russian people, so rich spiritually and infinitely powerful physically, this people who have only now, in the storm of revolution, been born as a nation.' [16]

He gives one really striking example, something to which we have accorded insufficient attention. 'It is enough to point to the fact, little considered up to now, of the existence in 1918-1919 of the Soviet Republic of Turkestan. Completely cut off from Moscow, surrounded on all sides by the armies of Kolchak, Dutov and Denikin and the British occupation forces, deprived of transport, fuel and bread, the Bolsheviks of Turkestan were able to hold out, keeping power in their hands, for a period of eighteen months.' [17]

These patriots are approaching the Soviet power through the gateway of patriotism. There are no Communists among them: they are, I repeat, idealistic patriots who have taken the trouble to think about what the morrow holds. It is a fact of extremely profound, symptomatic significance, for our Red Army, too, because in this army, to which one of the authors, Bobrishchev-Pushkin, draws attention, a big place is occupied by former officers of the old army. Some of these officers came to serve in our army at the very outset, from ideological conviction: others remained at its disposition automatically, without thinking; while a third group only failed by accident to get away, did

not manage to escape, were caught up in the cogs of the Soviet army and so stayed with it.

But the moment has now come to sum things up and define one's ideological attitude to the Soviet power and the Red Army. This book – we have, alas, not enough copies of it – should be read by every old regular officer, and, in general, by every officer of the old army. It would undoubtedly help a great deal in the matter of ideological self-determination, because, as I said at the beginning, we have entered a new epoch. This epoch will put heavier ideological demands upon each of us. Amid the turmoil of the civil war and the attempts at foreign occupation made by the exploiters, to which we had to reply, we did not have to define precisely our mutual relations within the army, and many put off till another day the question of their ideological attitude to the army, while some waited to see who would come out on top in the bitter struggle.

We are now advancing from this ideological bivouac, this way of living 'somehow', this state of improvisation, into more settled conditions, organisational, economic and ideological. We are now beginning to build and to establish ourselves. I know, comrades, that everything here is still too weak, too poor. In this new building-site of ours there are more chips and rubble than newly-raised walls. We have not yet reached the point when we can put a roof on this new house: but we shall reach it! Those who fought fiercely against us, but who have learned to reflect, recognise this, and we need to understand that there are now no longer two Russias, one in Russia and the other abroad. Today, as these authors bear witness, hopes for intervention, for military interference in our country, have been abandoned even by the majority of the émigrés, and today this new Russia, despite its poverty, hunger and cold, is a very big factor in world development. And in this new factor the Red Army occupies an exceptionally big place.

I must say that the authors of the book even exaggerate the gains and advantages of our international position. They speak, without qualification, of the absolute impossibility of any struggle being waged against Soviet Russia from outside. They point to the enthusiastic attitude of the worker masses towards us, which hinders the governments of Europe from advancing their armies against us. The attitude of the workers and peasants towards us, especially that of the worker masses of Europe and America, is certainly such as to hinder an attack on us, but it is impossible to assert that they will always be able to prevent it.

We were recently almost on the brink of war with White Poland. [\[18\]](#) The critical moment passed, but does this mean that we have an absolute guarantee that it will never return? Of course, with a Poland headed by the working class we could never find ourselves at war, just as there can be no war between us and Soviet Georgia or Soviet Azerbaidjan. But with a Poland headed by a military-chauvinist clique which wants war we may find ourselves at war through no fault of our own. In the first place, the very growth of the revolutionary movement may impel a falling ruling class along the road of brutal adventure – there have been examples of that more than once in history – and, of course, if they attack us, we shall fight. And then let us assume a second variant – that the working class takes power in Poland (and the revolutionary, Communist, Soviet movement has been advancing there recently in seven-league boots), and Romania and Hungary attack this Soviet

Poland (an attempt at a counter-revolutionary monarchist coup is under way precisely in Hungary, as today's newspapers tell us). [\[19\]](#) [\[20\]](#)

What then, shall we maintain a calm, waiting attitude towards such a development? There can be no question of that: we have indissoluble duties towards the working class of all countries, who are now preventing their governments from attacking us. Consequently, we may be compelled to wage war when we are attacked, or when our friends and brothers are attacked, whom it is our duty to aid.

And how long will this situation be preserved? Many of us reckoned, three or two years ago, that revolution was rushing across Europe like a mighty, swift, triumphant tornado, which would sweep the old governments away within a few months or a year – but that did not happen. This does not mean that our estimate of the situation has changed radically: the development of the revolutionary movement has turned out to be slower than we wanted and expected. Now, too, we see, with absolute, methodical clarity, that the downfall of world capitalism and imperialism is inevitable. These authors speak of it – men who are not Communists or Socialists, but yesterday's Cadets and Octobrists. Observing life in Europe, they speak of the inevitability of social revolution. I am not going to weary your attention with quotations, but only to express once more the desire that this book may find its way into the hands of as many commanders and commissars as possible.

The pace of development of the world revolution has proved to be very much slower. That means that the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the working class, in all countries, will be intense, prolonged and bitter. It may last not for just a year or two but, if we take the whole world arena, for entire decades, with fresh attempts to seize power, with intensification of civil war, with periods of lull, and with renewed upsurge of fierce struggle. This prospect is, of course, a very hard one, but, comrades, it is not for any of us to change the laws of human development and regulate history. We must know how to wait: to find our way among the objective causes of historical phenomena, and draw the corresponding conclusions.

What is the significance of this fact, that the struggle between the working class, the working people, and the exploiters throughout the world will still go on for years and decades? It means that our international situation will change: that, after a period of commercial relations and even, perhaps, after recognition of the Soviet power, there will be attempts by the convulsively raging bourgeoisie to crush us. On the other hand, there will be moments when we shall have to cast our sword into the scales for world revolution on our own initiative. The writers whom I quoted say, speaking from a standpoint which is not ours, not that of the Communists, but that of Russian patriotism, that for the development of Russia's might, what is most beneficial is the development of the world revolution, whereas victory for the counter-revolution means the strangling, plundering and dismemberment of Russia. That is a fact; and never have the most elementary basic interests of a people, a country, a nation fused so completely with the interests of a revolution as today in our Soviet Russia. And since our international situation, and therefore our internal situation, is inseparably bound up with the development and course of the class struggle and war on a world scale: since this world-wide struggle and war will go on for many years more, passing from a covert state of affairs to a period of acute open war, this means that the Red Army is even

more necessary to us, for our struggle. Tomorrow – I speak, of course, in the historical sense – that is, in the period immediately ahead, we shall have to fight, arms in hand, and not against hastily improvised Kolchakite or Denikinite forces, not against Polish noble-and-bourgeois armies hastily created and armed by French imperialism. No, every day of delay that passes means that we shall have to fight with armies that are properly organised, trained and armed according to the last word of European technique. Our economic policy and our military policy are wholly based upon this estimate of the situation, this forecast.

In the economic field – let me say a few words about this,

because it is closely connected with the tasks of army-building – in the economic field we have made a sharp turn away from the grain monopoly and requisitioning to the tax in kind and free trade surpluses. [21] We have opened the gates to small-scale trade and concession-holders, we have gone over to abandonment by the state of a considerable section not only of smallscale but also of medium industry. The state as proprietor, as industrialist, has concentrated its forces on a much narrower bridgehead. What does this mean? Our enemies, of course, have interpreted it as a failure, a surrender, a repudiation of our programme. It would, certainly, be unworthy of the workers' and peasants' government to depict it as a victory. It is a retreat. In itself, it is neither a defeat nor a victory. A retreat after a rout is, of course, only the outward expression of that rout. But a retreat can bear the character of a strategical step, included in the concept of a big, complex manoeuvre. And our economic retreat is a retreat of a strategical character. As military men, we can understand that better than anyone else.

It is undoubtedly true that we did not calculate our forces in the sphere of economic organisation, and we did not do so because we did not expect to have to face three-and-a-half years of uninterrupted civil war, and because we did count on a more rapid course of development of the world revolution in Europe, on receiving help from German technology – which is taking longer than we hoped it would to pass into the hands of the German working class. And so, reckoning on a more rapid progress of the world revolution, on being able to devote nine-tenths of our forces, the forces of the workers' and peasants' state, to the economy, the workers' and peasants' government laid its hand on the whole of the country's industry. It was unable to cope with it, it found it had conquered too large a piece of former enemy territory. This had to be occupied, organised, defended against external attack. And we are saying: no, we need to pull out, to abandon a considerable part of this territory, so as to preserve and concentrate our forces.

We are handing over part of industry to the bourgeoisie, namely, the small-scale and medium enterprises, and restricting our own tasks to the organisation of very large-scale industry. We have kept in our hands, however, that which is of major importance, both military and economic – the railways and transport. We have kept control over the economy as a whole, and we shall subsequently draw into the sphere of the state, that is, of socialist economy, those enterprises which are private or semi-private, in proportion as we consolidate our bridgehead in large-scale industry. That is the fundamental idea.

We are opening the door to concessionaires. With what aim in view? So that,

through their experience, we may learn to organise that part of large-scale industry which has remained in our hands. Out of a group of large-scale enterprises we are keeping three, four or five out of six in the hands of the state. Into the rest we shall attract foreign capital, which will bring with it new technology, new methods and labour-practices, and so will enable us to learn to organise and improve our technology.

This is not a surrender, but it is not a victory, either. In a struggle there are always factors which it is important to take into account, pencil in hand, ahead of events. Military men know this. If such pre-calculations were possible there would be no wars. One side would merely present a claim to the other. But this does not happen, for such pre-calculation is impossible. In war a colossal part is played by changing factors in the relation of forces, the morale of the army, its élan, the mutual relations between commanders and soldiers, and so on. What can be said of the economy? The economy is a hundred times more complex than war. We are carrying on an uninterrupted duel with world capital, which, whether sword in hand or with trade, or with concessions, with offers of philanthropic aid to the famine-stricken, is always before us, clutching behind its back a lasso which it would not be averse to casting about our neck and drawing tight. In this struggle we have to send out reconnaissance parties, and these sometimes penetrate too far. The nationalisation of all industrial enterprises was a gigantic reconnaissance of that sort, based on the calculation that, if the world revolution developed quickly, we should take over and

organise the economy. It turned out that our vanguard had pressed too far ahead. Our heavy reserves, the peasants, proved to be ill-prepared. They needed to be raised to a higher cultural level, freed from illiteracy. And so the vanguard had to be pulled back. This is a retreat of a strategic character, which forms part of a large operational plan and which will be fulfilled over a period of years and decades – while we are building a socialist Russia.

It follows from this that, with such a prospect before us, we need to give practical consideration to the building of the Red Army. For good or ill, we have been allowed an historical breathing-spell. This is due, above all, to the victories won by the arms of the Red Army – your victories, comrades. How long will the breathing-spell last? We do not know. We have been carrying out for nearly a year now a systematic reduction of the size of the army. It is now, or will be in the near future, only one-third as large as it was a little over a year ago. This reduction is due to our economic situation as a whole. There can be no question of our being able to maintain an army of three million men in peacetime. Consequently, a reduction is inevitable.

What also follows from this is the need to improve the Red Army's qualitative composition. In the Red Army, as in the army of any country, all the weak and strong aspects of our people and our state intersect and are refracted. In the question of the commanding personnel, in that of the equipment and education of the Red Army man, in that of the maintenance of our army's horses, in the smallest of questions, our negative and positive aspects are reflected as in a drop of water.

What is our fundamental misfortune? It must be said, frankly, that it is the inadequate level of culture among the broad masses of the people. The whole of our past history has meant that over an undifferentiated mass of peasants, crushed to the earth, hung the heavy black cloud of the autocracy. This did not

fall from heaven but grew up historically. It was the inevitable form of self-defence by a backward people, scattered over an immense plain and surrounded by enemies. Later, history brought forward new demands. The old state forms came into contradiction with the people's development. But the lack of differentiation, the absence of individual, personal will, constituted the chief and basic misfortune of the Russian peasant.

This will was first manifested by the urban workers in their struggle against Tsardom. They raised up the peasants in their wake. Of course, when the peasants burned down landlords' property, destroyed farm implements and cattle, 'set the red cock' [\[22\]](#) on the more cultured farmsteads, that was very brutal, destructive and anti-cultural activity. But, at the same time, it signified, despite the barbarous forms which it assumed, the awakening of the individual will, the personal initiative and consciousness of the masses. At that moment the people ceased to be just so much black earth, so much manure, and came to birth as an independent factor in affairs of state. The authors of **Smena Vekh** are right when they say that the great Russian revolution brought the Russian people to birth as a nation. Previously it was the privileged classes, the nobles, the landlords, the higher bureaucrats who spoke in the name of the nation, while the people were just historical manure, from which the working class gradually emerged. The revolution dealt a heavy blow at the country's economic development, but this was only the birthpangs of a new society. Out of the revolution came a new people, with an awakened personality. Upon this personality we can build everything, including the new army.

But this does not mean that the old characteristics and habits are doomed to die out, that we have completely freed ourselves from them. No. You all remember how, from the revolutionary struggle against the numbing discipline of the Tsar, the nobility and the old officers there grew guerrilla-ism, Makhnovism. That was the offspring of independent individuality, which assumed, in the initial period, a form destructive of all discipline and of any form of society. But, soon, the people's instinct told them that things could not go on like that, and from this grew the joint struggle which we waged against guerrilla-ism, against 'home-made' methods in all spheres, and above all in the military sphere. This struggle succeeded precisely because the instinct of the working people supported us – and upon the basis of that instinct we can build the army. It has already been built, but only in rough. We have a sound foundation, but the framework has been erected only 'anyhow' upon that foundation. And now this new epoch of economic, organisational and ideological construction demands that we go over to more accurate methods, and to improving what we have built.

The grave consequences of our lack of culture weigh upon us in every sphere. I will quote here one feature which seems to me to be characteristic. Our commanders are always complaining that our people are unable to exploit a partial success, no matter who has achieved this – a regiment, a division or a whole army. The exploitation of a success which has been achieved is the skill that we need more than any other, and which it is most difficult to acquire. This is due, of course, to a number of reasons. Inadequacies in tactical training and operational inadequacies both play a part here. But what lies behind everything is a certain psychological feature. Undoubtedly, our new commanders, who have come and will continue to come from the ranks of the peasants and workers, have not yet developed that intense will-power which does not tire in pursuit of its goal. If we take, let us say, commanders of the

German type, those of the old Germany, who no longer exist and will never reappear (Hindenburg is a finished example of the type, but over there they have Hindenburgs also at junior levels, right down to platoon-commanders), we see that they are all imbued with singleness of spirit, persistence in pursuit of their goal: they carry success through to a conclusion, to the complete destruction and rout of the enemy. This will to victory does not fall from heaven. It is said that it is to be explained by national character; but, if that is so, why is it only the German officers, the Junkers, who have this character, and not the workers and peasants? That means that it is a class characteristic, not a national one. In our country it showed itself to a much smaller degree. Our nobles were weaker and more despicable. But, nevertheless, in Russia too, among the old officers, the majority of whom were of noble origin, a certain group emerged who possessed that quality, which is absolutely indispensable in war.

But when the working man achieves some small success (and this is our misfortune), it seems to him that he has already achieved everything. The working class has not been able to create a body of commanders who realise that in a struggle there can be no halts, that every success has to be carried through to a conclusion, to complete destruction of the enemy – not his physical destruction, but destruction of him as an active enemy. In civil war the working class triumphs over the enemy, who makes a temporary surrender, the people celebrate their victory, slacken their energy – and the enemy meanwhile assembles his forces, studies the weak points of his adversary, organises, and strikes hard blows at the people, causing amazement among those who had been victorious the day before. The people retreat, and their leaders are again driven underground.

This is the outward pattern of every revolution. It is due, I repeat, to the fact that, though the oppressed working masses possess the spirit of rebellion, they lack the instinct and the steeled will to power, to destruction of the enemy, and are disposed to be satisfied too easily with results achieved. The working man is 'good-natured' in a struggle, that is his misfortune. Good-natured-ness in a struggle is the greatest of crimes, bringing, as it does, unnecessary sacrifices, because a struggle that has not been carried to completion necessitates the waging of a fresh struggle. Just as a forest that has not been thoroughly cut down will grow again, so an enemy who has not been finished off will revive and have to be fought once more. Ruthlessness and inexorability in struggle is the highest degree of humanity, if it can be put like that, because it means that the struggle is thereby made as short as possible.

And so I say that our commanders' inability to exploit every partial and fragmentary success to the utmost limit is due precisely to this quality of being too easily satisfied with their successes. The commanders have a very great task, that of training and educating our Red Army. It is said that our heritage of lack of culture very often restricts us in cruel ways, and we see with particular clarity that this is so at this moment of change, when we are going over from a war to a peace situation. I have spoken more than once recently about the extent to which our past has left us ill-prepared for detailed constructive work. Previously it was the upper classes who built the state, while the lower classes worked under the lash. The lower classes have now risen up and cast off the upper classes. This upsurge, this revolt of the lower classes, had, of course, no detailed finish about it, but was work carried out in sweeping fashion; the most delicate instrument used was the cudgel with which

the peasant hunted down and killed the landlord. That was the necessary premise for the new epoch. The entire past compelled the peasant to burn out the landlord, exterminate him and wage civil war. When you chop wood, chips fly. All this could not provide the sort of education which is needed for systematic construction, and we now have to make a sharp, abrupt turn.

And here, comrades, we face no broad, general task such as can be accomplished by a single sweep or upsurge. When the enemy struck us, we issued the slogan: 'Proletarians, to horse!' And we created a force of cavalry which, though it has many shortcomings, won victory and smashed the enemy. That work was carried out under the terrible pressure of iron necessity. But we are now passing from tasks such as that to tasks of a more prosaic nature.

It is here that we come up against the greatest difficulties, for all our past has led to this result, that the working-man hero – and this is true not only of the rank-and-file soldier but very often the commander, too – will much sooner and more readily die on horseback for the Soviet Republic than he will take care to see that his horse is groomed as and when he should be. This, comrades, is an indubitable fact, in which that same lack of individual, personal education finds expression: we have not learnt to carry out petty, everyday, detailed tasks and chores. Yet everything is built from these.

We might have smashed the Whites before Warsaw when we raided that far, but, instead, we were obliged to retreat. It is very easy to go too far when the basis is ill-prepared. Improvisation is inevitable in war – but in what sense? In the sense that one needs to study the given situation, to consider quickly the relationship of forces, and to modify one's plan when this proves necessary. But there must be no improvisation in the sphere of everyday matters of supply within each unit, in the sphere of training for elementary duties, for taking the measures laid down in our regulations regarding communications, security, reconnaissance and so on. These school matters, school tasks, which are nothing but a condensation of all previous military experience, must enter into the flesh and blood of every single soldier and commander. This is not the case at present, comrades; no, it is not yet the case to the extent it needs to be.

It is precisely our past – we had to improvise an army, to knock it together in haste – that has led to methods in which we count mostly upon enthusiasm, upon morale. I say this, of course, not meaning that we have no need of high morale – that is always necessary, armies do not win victories without the moral factor playing its part – but beneath that morale there must be a sound, serious basis of detailed, petty work, of detailed, attentive demandingness towards others so that the task may be accomplished. In military matters there are no trifles: in military matters, as indeed in all serious matters, every trifle plays a very big role. After all, an entire machine is made up of little screws. The biggest, most colossal house is built with little bricks, and if the bricks have not been properly fired, if the beams are not sound, the entire structure is good for nothing. If the building collapses, it may bury a great number of persons, and if an army collapses, it will bury its people. What follows from that is that attention to details is a sacred duty.

This was seen with particular clarity after the manoeuvres.

All our *materiel* was excellent, the army's plan was correct, morale was

better than ever, the commanders were in fighting mood, at the highest pitch – they were only waiting impatiently to throw the enemy into the Dniester. [23] We did not and do not want war. But when an army is ready to fight, that is fine, for an army that does not want to fight is no army at all. And it is no secret that there were good reasons for us to fight somebody. All the necessary elements were present, but along with them a huge number of petty defects, such as may bring fatal, ruinous consequences. The very best operational plan, a Napoleonic concept, is worthless if it does not reach the right subordinate commander in the form of an order. For it to reach him, measures have to be taken – it has to be despatched in time, and not in the way that happened with one order, which was sent off by motor-cycle, but the motor-cycle got bogged down two or three versts from its destination; and this order had not been sent by any other means of conveyance. Does the commander, having written an order, then have to bother about some motor-cycle or other? His job is writing orders and interpreting them, and then they 'somehow' get sent off. They get sent off 'somehow' – and then he discovers that they did not arrive. The whole operation is brought to naught. Or else this happens. An excellent order is composed, by which the artillery are to arrive at a certain point at 2 o'clock; but the clerk copies it badly and instead of 2 o'clock puts 12 o'clock. This is a mere trifle, left unchecked and uncorrected, but the operation suffers grievous damage from it. Or else the clerk garbles a placename and it is not checked. The order reaches its destination – and there they scratch their heads. The place and the time mentioned do not make sense, and so, at the subordinate headquarters, they start to try to think out what this order is supposed to mean, and from the bits and pieces they construct their own plan. That is what happens because of a typing error, or of a faulty motor-cycle which is not supplemented by other means of conveyance. A well-thought-out plan fails. The order should have been checked after transcription, sealed, and despatched by two or three different means, taking into account the conditions, so as fully to ensure that it could be checked whether the order had reached its addressee. In our country, owing to the manoeuvring character of the war, which was determined not only by our aims but by the fact that we were fighting over huge expanses of territory, and owing to the fact that the thinking of our commanders is distinguished by great boldness and impetuosity, the urge to carry out raids has become to some extent epidemic. Between the plan and its actual execution dozens of intermediate links are sometimes missing: these have to be created, to be established, the wire has to be stretched out and fastened with a proper, firm knot – otherwise, everything will fall to pieces. There is among us, comrades, a little of that old attitude which is expressed in the saying: 'Why, worry, it's in the bag.' Nowadays, people say: 'it's in our red revolutionary bag'. But it's just the same, comrades, only the colour is different, essentially there is no change. This is the outcome of lack of accuracy, self-satisfaction, lack of the habit of closely studying the actual situation, drawing conclusions and implementing them conclusively.

Our commanders, especially the young ones, as a result of the civil war, have cultivated a contemptuous attitude towards the regulations. When we set about composing our regulations, we did not, you know, make them up out of our heads. War had taught us something. In the previous regulations there was a lot of junk: but let us not brag, our work in compiling our new regulations consisted mainly in a mere re-working of the old ones.

It may be that there is something unnecessary in the regulations: they

should be revised on the basis of fresh experience. But nobody in his senses will say that regulations are not needed. It is necessary in our work to take account of everything that experience has already established and after every set-back to look at the relevant chapter of the field service

regulations and ponder on 'what happened to me, and what is said about it here', so that the regulations do not remain just dead paragraphs, and so that one's own experience finds reflection in them, as in a mirror. This must be done, come what may.

In my reports and speeches on these matters it has been my practice to begin with a subject which is elementary for every soldier: boots. When visiting a unit I have asked, dozens and hundreds of times: 'When were your boots greased?' And nowhere have I received a single satisfactory reply. If our intelligence service were to report that in the Romanian army they never grease their boots, I should say that such an army would never reach Kiev or Kharkov: all their boot-soles would fall off. Only that army can easily reach its goal which greases its boots when it should. If a future historian undertakes to study the defeat suffered by our army before Warsaw, he will discover many circumstances which brought this about, but I do not doubt that one of the causes he will point to will be failure to grease boots, which, owing to the rapidity of the advance, fell to pieces at a distance of 300 versts from Warsaw. All this cannot but have an effect on the soldier's morale. This petty task, learning to grease one's boots, has now become a matter of exceptional importance. I must say that I have strongly emphasised this aspect, and when the order was issued stating that failure to grease boots would be punished, I asked in a certain unit: 'How often do they grease their boots here?' 'As often as you like: every day, even.' 'And have you plenty of grease?' 'Oh, as much as you could wish.' From excess of zeal he will squander that grease in a short time, and then he will march in ungreased boots. It is not, of course, a matter of carrying out this task just once in a while – whether it be sewing on buttons, cleaning rifles, tidying up barracks or greasing boots. The art of education consists precisely in ensuring that, without any strain, in all circumstances, people feel concern about these trifles and that such concern becomes a habit. And in order that it may become a habit, we have to have orders, threats, propaganda – whatever is needed. This will be felt at first as something imposed by an external will, but subsequently it will come to be performed automatically, and in this way a cultured habit will be consolidated.

Let me offer another little example. You arrive at a divisional headquarters. The treads of the stairway are covered with spittle and befouled with cigarette ends, and the scene is the same in the divisional commander's office. But on the wall hangs a splendid chart showing the disposition of the troops; you couldn't ask for anything better – they probably borrowed a draughtsman from somewhere. In such cases I am inclined to judge the state of the unit not by the splendid chart but by the spittle-covered, filthy stairway: for, of course, even though this is a trifle, everything, you know, is made up of trifles.

Somebody said at a meeting that we need to act towards the backward peasant masses as Peter acted towards the noble service-class. Having returned from abroad and taken up residence in the Foreign Quarter, he ordered that beards be shaved off. The boyars were greatly offended, and the clergy wrote that he was committing a 'cur-like outrage'. But he wanted cleanliness and order. [\[24\]](#) Our task is a colossal one – to bring cultural

education to masses who have been used to living in the most frightful conditions, in an utterly down-trodden state, and who, though they have already straightened their backs, have not yet learned to build.

In this work the commanders and commissars must and will play a very big part. This presumes, of course, self-education by the commanders, tireless self-education, checking on themselves in new conditions, on the basis of new experience, tireless day-by-day work on themselves, and the development of a military press and of military agitation and propaganda. The task is to arouse interest in military matters not only in the upper ranks but also at the lowest levels of the army. These questions must be debated, meetings must be held, articles, pamphlets and books written.

We are assuming, of course, that there will be a general material advance where the army is concerned – in particular, and above all, an improvement in its material situation. This is one of the most difficult, painful and acute questions. It is closely bound up with the overall economic situation of the country. Anyone with eyes to see will agree that, despite the famine, we have made a turn for the better: the year 1922 will be more prosperous than the year 1921. The creation of elementary conditions of material security for man must, of course, lead to improvement in his way of life in all respects, for socialism or communism does not mean community of poverty, but only community of prosperity, all-round security. We are still a long way from communism; years must pass before we attain communism, which presupposes a high level of economic development. But I think we are not a long way from attaining elementary well-being.

We must now create conditions for the commanders in which they can live and work to improve themselves. When this question is raised, we sometimes come up against the objection that, by doing this, we shall separate the commanders from the Red Army men. That is not true; it is not a question of privileges. The point is that the rank-and-file Red Army man is in the army only for a time, performing his military service – for a year or two, let's say. (You know, comrades, that a decree is now being issued on the period of service, and we shall have to lay down a two-year period of service for the immediate future.) But, as for the commander, military service is his speciality, his profession: in many cases his vocation, even, but, in any case, his profession. A skilled worker spends only a small part of his life as a Red Army man. But the commander lives all his life long under the conditions of existence of a commander: therefore, he must be seen as a skilled force which is of great value to the state. I am sometimes told that the Red Army men are hostile to this idea. That is not true, my experience does not confirm it, although it is fully possible to engage in demagogy on this matter. The sound sense of the Red Army says that, until conditions are created for satisfying everyone, it is to the interest of the rank-and-file Red Army man to see that the commander who is called upon to lead him into battle is placed in conditions such that his mind is freed to concentrate on the work for which he is responsible.

There is one other important task which, given the active co-operation of the local authorities, can produce an improvement in the situation of the commanders. The idea has been put to the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic that every unit should have its patron, in the shape of the local soviet: for example, the 51st and 56th Divisions have been attached to the Moscow Soviet. The Soviet is obliged to look after the commanders and the rank-and-

file of its units. Experience shows that such attachments produce small but material, real results in the matter of accommodation and of the supply of food, clothing and so on. But we shall not get out of our difficult material situation without reducing what we spend on the army. And that presupposes, on the one hand, a reduction in the army's size, and, on the other, a reduction in its expenditure. Some improvement in this respect can be attained by thrift and economy. Our army is, you know, one of the most extravagant armies in the world. In that sense, we need to learn to act with greater efficiency, thrift and economy.

We are now in a period of change in the structure and development of our army. A rejuvenation of the army is now taking place. This is a critical moment. On the one hand we are doing away with the motley intermingling of age-groups, but, on the other, youthful elements with little experience are being poured into the army, which means that the military experience of the army as a whole will be lowered. But we are retaining the old cadres, who concentrate in themselves the experience of the past. We have to improve the situation of the commanders and we have to make use of the present period of change to bring in the best volunteer elements. But what is most important is the educational and organisational work of the commanders and commissars – and especially their independent work. This work cannot possess the heroic character of the work done on the fighting fronts during the epoch of the civil war. It is exhausting and burdensome work. It is much easier to perform an heroic deed in battle than to inspect, day after day, a spittlecovered stairway, to require that it be constantly cleaned, to require that the Red Army man should clean his boots, to write out an order properly and to see that it is copied carefully, is despatched as it should be, arrives where it is intended to arrive, and is carried out fully and as meant. We have to achieve a situation in which everyone behaves when he is not under observation exactly as when he is. This can be brought about through developing the sense of responsibility, which calls for a lot of work. The elevation and education of the commanders themselves signifies at the same time the education of a new type of man. We have been put in a position where the army has to act as educator for all Russia. The most backward masses will pass through the army, and be subjected to education and training. I know and am very clearly aware how hard, how difficult this work is, under the conditions of our unrepaired barracks, with inadequate rations and badly-organised domestic economy. It is very hard. Therefore, maintaining in oneself, day after day, this unyielding will to victory in relation to trifles and details is the highest form of heroism – higher than that which is shown in battle. And this heroism will come.

If we did not hope that the year ahead of us would be, from the economic standpoint, better than this one, it would, of course, be senseless and hopeless to call upon you to demand of yourselves and of others this systematic intensification of your will to educate the Red Army. But gleams of better things can be observed. The reduction in the size of the army and the transfer of a number of workers to economic activity will give an even greater impulse to the country's economic development. The discipline of our army is also reflected in the discipline of our economy. After our tragic four-year experience, none of us is going to expect miracles. But I think that every one of us will say to himself that tomorrow will be better, will be easier, than that dark, heavy and dreadful yesterday. This does not mean that we are not going to face hard trials. We are now playing a great game, the scale of which will increase continually. Not long ago, the struggle was being waged before Tula

and at Kazan, and more than once we were reduced to the dimensions of the Tsardom of Muscovy, and on foreign maps this Soviet Republic of Muscovy was depicted in the shape of a skull; it seemed that it would be narrowed still further, and that Moscow, the heart of Russia, would be crushed by the White Guard's grip. We have spread ourselves and are beginning to build. But the struggle is not over, and the radius of this struggle will get longer and longer. Our march on Warsaw was in the nature of a reconnaissance. Europe and the world will not leave us in peace, and neither shall we leave our adversaries in peace, in Europe or throughout the world.

The Red Army is confronted by tasks such as have never confronted any other army in the whole of man's history. The Great French Revolution, which was a revolution of a people numbering 25 millions, created an army that marched all across Europe, and, though it later returned within its own frontiers, changed the face of Europe. [25] The bourgeoisie of today reckons its chronology from the Great French Revolution. Our revolution is on an incomparably larger scale in its scope, in the expanse of territory covered and the number of people in revolt. Its friends are incomparably more numerous and the soil for the exercise of its influence in Europe is better prepared. Our movement will meet with more support the further it advances, and backward Asia, which is fighting for its national independence against imperialism, is now nine-tenths for us.

I am sure that, after the experience of the great imperialist slaughter, none of us, including the old commanders, has any thought of conquest, of imperialist aggression. The Red Army's role is not to enslave other peoples but to liberate them, and to conquer them spiritually. And when I talk with visiting Turkish officers who have come here as our guests, and with revolutionary officers from other Asian countries [26], and I observe from their speeches and conversation the love that they have for revolutionary Russia and the Red Army, in which they see their liberator, I always feel, once more, that this army is a great historical miracle, created by the working masses. And it is necessary for us now, precisely because our army is being looked at from the West and from the East, to display that supreme heroism of which I spoke: we need heroically intense attention to trifles and details – to those little bricks from which a house is built, so that at the moment when circumstances demand, and an appeal from our friends compels, we may say to our brothers in the West and in the East 'the Red Army has been built, educated, organised and trained, and, if you need our help, it is here, it is ready to fight for the cause of world liberation'.

From the archives

Endnotes

1. N.V. Ustryalov worked as professor at Harbin University, in Manchuria, from 1920 to 1934, then returned to Russia. In 1937 he was arrested, and died in prison the following year.

2. Yu. V. Klyuchnikov acted in 1922 as adviser on questions of international law to the Soviet delegation at the Genoa Conference. He returned to Russia in 1923, was arrested in 1937, and died in prison the following year.

3. Quoted from **Smena Vekh**, p.167

[4.](#) Quoted from **Smena Vekh**, pp. 169-170

[5.](#) Quoted from **Smena Vekh**, p.119.

[6.](#) **Smena Vekh**, p.133. Bobrshchev-Pushkin wrote that 'recently, in a certain friendly country, the police apologised to some tourists who had been beaten up, saying that they had beaten them because they thought they were Russians'.

[7.](#) Quoted from **Smena Vekh**, p.134

[8.](#) Quoted from **Smena Vekh**, p.232.

[9.](#) Quoted from **Smena Vekh**, p.141

[10.](#) Bobrshchev-Pushkin wrote (**Smena Vekh**, p.141): 'The White Armies, which the officers but not the peasants joined willingly, and in which always, despite the bloody conscriptions carried out, there were too few soldiers ...'

[11.](#) Quoted from **Smena Vekh**, p.144.

[12.](#) Bobrshchev-Pushkin wrote in **Smena Vekh** (p.97) that no hope was to be placed in 'Kronstadt', because those rebels were not to the Right but to the Left of the Bolsheviks: 'Whoever finds Bolshevism hateful ought to find anarchy still more hateful'.

[13.](#) Quoted from **Smena Vekh**, p.128.

[14.](#) 'An ill-favoured thing, sir, but mine own' (Touchstone, on his mistress Audrey, in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*)

[15.](#) Quoted from **Smena Vekh**, p.128.

[16.](#) Quoted from **Smena Vekh**, p.173.

[17.](#) Quoted from **Smena Vekh**, p.175. Potekhin goes on to say that this refutes the idea that it would suffice to capture Moscow, because Bolshevism would then be finished.

[18.](#) On September 18, 1921 Poland presented the RSFSR with an ultimatum which contained a number of demands concerning fulfilment of the Treaty of Riga – return of prisoners-of-war, release of hostages, payment of contributions, and so on – with the threat that, if these demands were not met by October 1, 1921, the Polish representative would be recalled from Moscow.

[19.](#) On October 22 the former Emperor of Austria-Hungary, Charles, arrived in Hungary and advanced on Budapest with his supporters, with the aim of carrying out a monarchist coup d'état. His attempt proved unsuccessful. After a few days' fighting with the Hungarian Government's troops outside Budapest, Charles's followers were defeated and he was taken prisoner.

[20.](#) After the overthrow of Bela Kun's Government, the monarchy was formally restored in Hungary. However, the Allied Powers would not allow any member of the Habsburg family to occupy the throne, and so the leader of the counter-revolution, Admiral Horthy, was proclaimed Regent. When Charles, who had succeeded Franz-Joseph as Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary in 1916, tried in 1921 to assert by force his claim to occupy the Hungarian throne, he was rebuffed by Horthy and deported by the Allies.

[21.](#) The New Economic Policy was agreed on in principle at the Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party, at which, following a report by Comrade Lenin, the decision was taken, on March 15, 1921, to replace the system of compulsory deliveries by a tax in kind.

[22.](#) To 'set the red cock' on a building means to set fire to it.

[23.](#) The 'enemy' in question being the Romanians, who had taken advantage of the Russian civil war to occupy Bessarabia, establishing a *de facto* frontier on the river Dniester.

[24.](#) In pre-Petrine Russia the lay people were divided into the 'service class', which meant the nobles, and the 'tax-paying class', which meant everybody else. When Peter returned

from his travels in Western Europe he took up residence in the Foreign Quarter of Moscow (literally, 'the German Liberty'), which he preferred to the Kremlin, with its mediaeval associations. The Patriarch Filaret had described an attempt by an earlier Tsar to make the nobles shave off their beards, so as to look more 'European', as 'cur-like foolishness'. Peter had his way, and until the accession of Alexander III all public officials were obliged to be beardless. Only after 1875 were officers and soldiers in the army (except the Imperial Guard) allowed to grow beards.

[25.](#) The French Revolution of 1789 caused the states adjacent to France, which feared the spread of revolution in Europe, to come together for military action against revolutionary France. On April 20, 1792 war began between France and Austria which was joined by Prussia and later by other German states, Spain, Sardinia and Naples. As a result of these wars, from which France emerged victorious, by 1789 France had formed a number of republics which, though independent, were under her influence – the Batavian (Holland), the Cisalpine (Lombardy), the Roman, the Parthenopean (Naples), the Ligurian (Genoa) and the Helvetian (Switzerland).

[26.](#) Soviet Russia and the Soviet Ukraine were at this time helping the Turkish nationalists led by Kemal in their 'war of independence' against Greece.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

Speech

At a Meeting of Cadets of the 1st Unified Military School Named After the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, November 2, 1921

* * *

Comrade cadets! I should like, today, when we have entered a new period, to share with you some general thoughts regarding the fundamental tasks of this new period. I am speaking to you as future commanders of the workers' and peasants' Red Army. Comrades, the title of Red officer, the title of commander, is truly the most responsible title imaginable. At present we have no fronts, but, by virtue of its very purpose, the army exists for war, and therefore everything that you learn in peacetime is intended for use in wartime.

You are studying so as to have the right to command and to give orders. War is a stern business. We are striving, comrades, to put an end to war, but that time will not come today, or tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow. We shall have to go on fighting for a long time yet. More than one month, perhaps several years, will have to pass before we have won, for our country and also for the workers of other countries, for all Europe, for the whole world, the possibility of free and unhindered development towards communism. We shall be obliged to go on fighting for a long time yet. And for that reason we must learn to fight properly.

I said, cadets, that your studies will bring you the right to command and give orders, and I added that war is a stern business. In wartime one cannot argue, persuade, or explain. In wartime all that is to be heard is a sharp command, followed by its precise and unconditional execution. An army in which men do not know how to command, or to execute commands, is a worthless army, an army that is done for. But commanding is a stern and hard business. It is very hard because in order to command one has not only to be self-sacrificing and heroic but also to be able to answer within oneself for the lives of the tens, then hundreds, and later thousands of men, who in wartime find themselves under a commander's orders. (Please do not expectorate so much, you will infect others thereby. This is also an aspect of personal discipline. In a well-disciplined meeting only those expectorate who really are suffering from a cold, but in an undisciplined meeting everybody does it, infecting each other and distracting attention.) I am giving a strictly practical report, concerned with your direct, immediate responsibilities, and I therefore require your full attention. Each one of you who is going to command will have, in very responsible and serious circumstances, to demand that attention be paid to what he is saying. You will give commands to your platoon, company, battalion or regiment, and upon the words that you utter hereafter

will depend the outcome of a small skirmish, then a big clash, then a whole battle, then a protracted conflict, and, finally, the fate of thousands of men. That is why, although an engineer or a doctor holds a responsible position, the mistakes that may be made by an engineer or a doctor do not result at once in such fatal consequences as those that a commander may make.

However, I have frequently observed that Red Army men are able to understand and forgive mistakes made by their commander, even when the price of these has been heavy losses, provided that the commander himself is able to appreciate that he has made a mistake, provided that he does not try to excuse himself, but goes on studying and pressing onward. But, naturally, in order to reduce these future mistakes to a minimum, we need to concentrate our attention on the preparations which you are now receiving. And here, in order to appreciate the tasks of the new period into which we have entered, we need to look at the two great periods which are now behind us.

The majority of you are youngsters, most of you have been only a few months in the Red Army, and only a minority took part in the civil war, but all of you must be aware that our army was formed in haste, out of guerrilla units that were hurriedly put together under fire. It was formed from Red Guard units of Petrograd and Moscow workers. In those units the commanders were distinguished from the rank-and-file only by the fact that they were, perhaps, more enterprising, politically more developed, braver than the rest, but often they were lacking in even the most basic military knowledge.

There developed in that period a theory, so to speak, of revolutionary guerrilla-ism, especially in the borderlands, where the level of political and general development in the guerrilla units was lower. A view developed according to which, in a revolutionary country in a revolutionary epoch, we do not need protracted training, drill, system, we do not need regulations – a view that all that is needed is revolutionary solidarity, willingness to fight and die, and with our small, closely-welded units we shall march all across the country and, if necessary, beyond its borders into other countries, everywhere conquering our foes. In the first period this theory seemed to be confirmed by experience. But why? Because our first adversaries were White-Guard bands, because our enemy was also weak and unorganised, his troops consisting of small units. True, from the military standpoint, those units were better than ours. Their commanders were a coherent body of officers of the old army, consisting, moreover, of their elite, those who were most courageous in the fight for the cause of the capitalists and landlords, for the cause of the old regime – but, on the other hand, they had few rank-and-file soldiers. They formed officers' battalions, but these lacked a mass of rankers, private soldiers, that is, peasants and workers, ready to follow them. Our units had more cohesion, there was stronger solidarity between our weak commanders and their rank-and-file, and so we were victorious. This gave some comrades the impression that guerrilla units were the last word in the revolutionary art of war.

But as soon as our foes were able to form stronger units and to consolidate these into regular formations, into brigades, divisions and corps, in the South and in the East, it at once became apparent that loose, shaky, unstable and amorphous guerrilla units were incapable of coping with the task before us; and we waged a persistent, tireless struggle, we – I speak of the War Department and of the Communist Party, which guides the work of all

departments including ours – we waged a persistent struggle to establish a regular structure for the Red Army, to replace the scattered guerrillas by a regular, centralised system of administration and command for the fighting forces of the workers' and peasants' Republic.

We had to pass through a long period in 1918 and 1919 before the ideas and slogans of guerrilla-ism were finally overcome in the minds of the revolutionary workers and peasants, until, at last, everyone understood that our task was to create a regular, systematically organised army, in which each battalion, each regiment has its establishment and its regular system of administration. From regiments a brigade is formed, from brigades a division, and in time of war these are formed into armies, and the armies united into fronts. Central command was exercised by the Field Staff, while supreme command was, and is, in the hands of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic. This centralised system was our salvation. Without this centralised system, in which everything was concentrated in one directing and commanding centre, we should have perished, for the fronts formed one continuous ring around us. There were fronts in the East, in the North, in the West and in the South. Our forces gradually increased. If we had not been able to decide, from the centre, which front was the most dangerous at any given moment, if we had not been able at each given moment to say that we would neglect for the time being the Ukrainian front, or the Northern front, leaving only a small screen of troops there, while transferring all our main forces and technical resources upon the Eastern front today, against Kolchak or tomorrow against Denikin – if, I say, we had not been able, acting from the centre, to concentrate our forces in the direction of maximum danger, we should have been beaten ten times over during the three- and-a-half years of the civil war.

Centralisation alone saved the Soviet Republic. But centralisation is not just a plan drawn on paper. The plan showed the direction to be followed by work at the fronts or in the districts, by the commanders of the armies, divisions, brigades, corps and so on. It is easy to sketch out such a plan, such a procedure.

But it was necessary to get it into men's heads, to ensure that regimental commanders understood that they had to subordinate themselves to brigade commanders, and at first they did not accept this. It seemed to the commander of a regiment, or of some guerrilla units of the first period which had been formed into a regiment, that he himself, on the spot, understood the military situation best, for the importance of intelligence on a wider scale, the importance of reports concentrated in the hands of a superior commander, the importance of strategy, of an operational plan with a wider scope, for the sector held by the army or even by the division – all that was not yet understood by our first, hastily-assembled units and their commanders. And it was only gradually, step by step, that the idea of genuine discipline, to be obeyed not from fear but from conscience, entered into the minds of the Red Army men. Everyone understands this now, nobody would venture to oppose it, everyone has realised that, while heroism is a necessary quality, it brings victory only if combined with discipline. Heroism without discipline means criminal squandering of forces and of people's lives.

From this period of guerrilla-ism we passed into the period of centralised building of the army and centralised conduct of the war. It was this, as I have said, that ensured our victory. But does this mean that we have now spoken

the last word on that score? Does it mean that the Red Army is now everything that it ought to be?

We conquered our enemies, but we did this at the price of very great losses. We took too long over every struggle, every war, every campaign. On every front we advanced, chased the enemy and fell upon him; then he struck a return blow and we fell back, often retreating beyond the line from which our original offensive had been launched. Then a continual stream of fresh forces came to our aid: we resorted to using our cadets, we mobilised thousands upon thousands of Communist workers; and once more, with these fresh forces, we fell upon the enemy. Twice we struck at him and pressed forward, but it happened that we again had to retreat, and then to advance a third time. The army did not always show the necessary inner steadiness. There was plenty of heroism, increasing as the war went on. The overall operational plan was often good, excellently conceived, and yet, nevertheless, an operation would miscarry at the very moment when it seemed as though it must ensure complete victory.

To what were these set-backs due? Insufficient preparation of each and every rank-and-file soldier, and especially of the junior commanders. This fault, this misfortune, namely, the inadequate preparation of our junior commanders, is still today the chief misfortune of the Red Army. And since you, when you leave this school, will at first occupy posts as junior commanders, later rising to more responsible tasks, we, the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, hope that your preparation, your self-preparation, will provide us with more experienced, more self-confident commanders.

War, like every other activity, comrades, is made up of small and very small elements. Look at a very large and beautiful building, even if it be only Vasily Blazhenny. [\[1\]](#) A beautiful building, beautiful colours – it might seem that the whole thing flowed out all at once from the artist's brain, just from his concept alone. But in actual fact this building is made up of small and very small pieces. Somebody had to assemble the materials, saw them, plane them and paint them. And so it is with everything. A machine which works without breaking down seems as though it were alive. Actually, every nut, lever and screw in this machine was calculated by someone, pencil in hand, and if there should be something amiss in some little lever, the machine cannot function. An army is a complex building, or a complex animated machine, made up of small and very small pieces. If the pieces do not fit together, if the calculations have been made wrongly, then the result is that the machine gives a frightful kick, and, at the decisive moment, the army recoils. Why? We have tens and hundreds of examples of this. Because the platoon commanders, the company commanders, the battalion commanders did not know, or forgot at the decisive moment, the simplest rules laid down in the regulations which they had studied – they forgot their duty to report, and that led to catastrophe. If the commander of a small unit had reported in good time what he saw, and if he had taken care to ensure that his report reached its destination, a catastrophe involving a larger unit – a brigade or a regiment – might have been avoided. And because a brigade was taken unawares, a whole army was brought to ruin.

Lack of organisation and failure to report ran through the entire history of our war. I will quote you an example from peacetime. We held manœuvres in Right-bank Ukraine. The purpose of these manœuvres was to test the army,

and certain units in particular, under peace conditions, but in such a way as to try and simulate war conditions as closely as possible. There were two forces involved – one called Red Force and the other Blue Force. They fought each other, but both of them consisted of Red Army units, including cadets. When the commander of one of the forces had worked out his strategic concept, his plan of campaign for smashing the enemy, and he had issued and distributed to the various subordinate commanders the orders in which he embodied this plan, it turned out that one of these orders, and the most important of them at that, was not received by one of the subordinate commanders. Why was it not received? It was despatched by motorcycle. The motorcycle was in bad condition; after going two or three versts it stopped somewhere, in the mud, and the order was not delivered. And so, comrades, it happened that the staff had worked out a plan, and the units were supposed to know the particular points to which they were to march in order that a decisive blow against the enemy might be prepared – but the whole operation came to a standstill because an order which had been composed and written out failed to reach its addressee. Why? A motor-cycle turned out to be unserviceable. Perhaps this was because the motor-cycle, like all army property, was falling to pieces, or else because the motor-cyclist was careless – perhaps they gave him the wrong sort of fuel, and he accepted it without checking. A hundred causes could be at work here: but the fact was that the order did not arrive, the subordinates were left without guidance and the whole operation miscarried.

And that's not all. How many orders have I seen which have been carefully composed, but then spoiled through mistakes in transcription. Where 1400 hours should have been put, the clerk has typed 0400 hours. A big difference. And, as a result, complete confusion in the operation. When the commander receives this order, he realises, after working out the time available, that it is not possible for him to get to the point indicated by 0400 hours. He starts to consider. The period of time must be a lengthy one: he could indeed get there by 1400 hours: but what is written in the order is 0400 hours: and he concludes that what must have been meant is 0400 hours next day. He decides that there is a mistake in the order, namely, that 0400 hours, December 2, should be read as 0400 hours, December 3. He has to assume something. He delays his departure, and appears at the point indicated on the following day. The whole operation has miscarried. Why? Because of a mistake made by the typist in copying the order, and because the staff, the commander himself, did not check every figure in the typescript.

Is it possible to avoid such accidents? Certainly it is. The regulations state that orders, especially important ones, must be despatched in several different ways – where possible, by different routes and different means of conveyance, so that they reach their destination. Owing to insufficient habits of accuracy, to inadequate education of the commanders, the ABC of military work is transgressed among us. Accuracy is the virtue in shortest supply in our country. We saw a small example of this today. It was arranged that today's meeting should begin at 9 o'clock. When I arrived, your ranks were only just approaching the doors. I asked why. I was told that you had been having supper. Supper is not some unexpected earthquake. Supper is an event which can be calculated, watch in hand; it could have been allowed for, and the meeting fixed for 9.15. We miscalculated a little here, by fifteen or ten minutes. In peacetime, under completely peaceful conditions, the distance from the Kremlin to this hall was not taken into consideration. But what about what happens under war conditions, when an unexpected shower occurs,

something that was not foreseen in an order, and all the roads are turned into one complete bog, a mass of mud in which the guns get stuck and out of which they have to be dragged? In such cases the calculations sometimes get muddled, one has to be on the alert, or a mistake may be made which will be a matter not just of a few minutes, but of several hours, even days, and as a result an operation may miscarry and collapse.

There was another case during the manœuvres. Both forces were forbidden to make use of the local inhabitants' carts for transporting their men. Why? So as not to burden the peasants unnecessarily. In wartime the army makes use of all the means that come to hand. But during manœuvres, on a training exercise, there is no reason to impose an unnecessary burden on the peasants. That was why the army was ordered to get about on foot, without using the local people's vehicles. When the units were being moved, however, it was found that one of them had covered 50 versts in 24 hours, and that this had been achieved by conveying the men in carts belonging to the local peasantry. When the manœuvres were being analysed, I asked why they had done that, seeing that an order had been issued forbidding use of the local inhabitants' vehicles. The commander concerned scratched his head and said: 'We received that order along with some others, and didn't get round to reading it.' In war conditions (and on manœuvres one should behave as though in war conditions), they receive an order and sign for it, but then forget to do one more little thing – open the envelope, take out the order, and read it. But again I ask you, comrades, what is the use of having the very best plan of campaign, the very best weapons, enormous expenditure by our country on training, armaments and transport costs, if at the decisive moment, though the commander writes an order, his subordinate commanders don't read it?

What is all this due to? To the absence of that accuracy without which military work is doomed to destruction. Of course, in so far as we were opposed by White Guards of various sorts, we coped successfully with them – but, suppose we had to fight the French army, what then? True, they lack the enthusiasm that we possess, but they have greater accuracy and precision, their orders reach their destination, their orders are received and carried out in good time. That does not happen with us. The principal difficulty, comrades, lies with the junior commanders – their inadequate preparation, their insufficient habituation to their work, to their responsibilities, the fact that they have not been educated enough in the spirit of accuracy, precision, assiduity. A good commander, a good soldier, is made up of heroism, discipline and accuracy. We possess heroism; we possess discipline, in the sense that we appreciate the need for it, and that deliberate disobedience is rare, being a crime which the army's public opinion regards with indignation; but accuracy, precision, attentiveness, vigilance we do not possess. And so long as we are without these qualities, the Red Army will still be in its infancy. To boast that we are stronger than anybody, and can beat anybody, is, until we have mastered the most elementary rules and their fulfilment, so much lightmindedness and superficiality.

Yesterday a meeting was held which was attended by senior commanders, students at the Red General Staff Academy, at which questions of military doctrine were discussed – those scientific rules which should determine the structure of our army and the methods with which it fights. [\[2\]](#) Some comrades from among our young commanders who were at the fronts of the civil war – splendid, trustworthy, courageous men, decorated with the Order of the Red

Banner – put forward this view: since we are a revolutionary army, we must, above all, attack. The law for our army, they said, should be: resolute offensive action. Is this right? In that form, it is not right. The law for our army should be to conquer, to beat the enemy, and, if he does not surrender, to destroy him utterly. That is the law. Whether to advance or to retreat, to stand one's ground, to charge forward, or to pull back – will be dictated by circumstances and conditions. He who always rushes forward may be a hero, but as regards tactics and strategy he is a ram, not a commander. A ram rushes forward – but he has a stout forehead, and he puts only his own forehead at risk, whereas a commander is answerable for the foreheads of the soldiers under him; and the art of war, the art of command, consists in achieving results with a minimum of losses, with little bloodshed. That is what calls for study, that is why military schools have been set up.

I have received a letter from a group of cadets in Yekaterinoslay. They ask why it is that they have to learn arms drill, which takes up a lot of time. One needs to know one's rifle, to be able to take it apart and put it together again, to fire it – and that's enough: arms drill is a waste of time. Is that true? No, it is not true. We have here a survival from old attitudes.

An army is not just one individual who knows his rifle and is able to fire it; an army is a connected, homogeneous, uniformly-acting whole. In an army it is necessary to ensure that a series of movements and actions are carried out quite automatically, because in battle, one has to know how to react in circumstances that are unexpected, such as one has never seen before, never experienced, so that one always needs to know what to do without having to think it out, and for this reason one's handling of one's rifle has to be automatic, mechanical. Only after that has been achieved is it possible to adapt one's conduct to the local circumstances. And confidence in movement is attained through automatism. That is the first, most elementary task, without which one will get nowhere.

Naturally, in this matter as in others it is possible to overdo things, and to turn drill into a sort of dandyism, as did happen in the old army. It is indeed very agreeable to watch a unit that marches well and all of whose movements are as neat as though governed by a chronometer or a stop-watch. That is a beautiful spectacle, but we are not rich enough to merge the army more or less with the ballet – though I think that would be no bad thing, and when we are richer, and the Soviet country organises national festivals and war-games, the army will attain greater perfection in this respect, so that it will be a pleasure to watch. After all, you do watch ballet. There's nothing wrong with the idea, but we haven't reached that stage yet. Of course we need drill only in so far as this ensures success in battle.

By automatising them we make habitual and unconscious those elementary movements on which tactics and strategy can be based. As commanders you need to master this automatism at all costs, for the soldier senses very well, from his commander's voice, whether he is sure of himself or not. Big books have been written about how a commander should give commands, how he should speak. The soldier, the Red Army man, will execute a command precisely and sharply if the commander's voice is clear and distinct, if the commander feels within himself that he can give orders. If he is not sure of himself, if he gets confused, and his word of command sounds more like a request, or a proposal, the whole unit senses that the commander lacks self-

confidence. Woe to that unit, and woe to that commander – it would be better that a millstone were hanged about his neck, as Scripture puts it, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea [Matthew 18:6.], than that he should take upon himself the role of commander.

You are going to have to command, and for that you will need to know the regulations. At the start of the revolution much was said about this matter. People said that the old regulations were a dead letter, and that we, as a revolutionary army, based upon consciousness, upon political, revolutionary *élan*, had no need of regulations. This was a most profound and gross delusion. The commander needs the regulations in the same way that a builder needs arithmetic. A builder may be a talented man, but if he fails to measure some section of the structure he is putting up he will not succeed in building anything. Arithmetic is a result of the past work of mankind, and there is no need for us to create it afresh. In arithmetic we find the rules for adding and subtracting, multiplying and dividing, which were thought out before our time, and we have only to apply them. Similarly, in military matters there are a number of rules which are derived from past experience, and which are written down in the regulations. How many times has one observed young commanders who have graduated from our schools in the capital (or from other schools in which the period of training was much shorter) and who did not want to study the regulations, regarding that as boring and a waste of effort. But when they were engaged in battle, and found themselves up against it, because no sentries had been posted, because there was no march discipline, because no reconnaissance had been carried out or reports sent in, and because orders did not reach them from headquarters -then the paragraphs of the regulations flashed through their minds: they had heard something, read something, if only they could remember what it was, that would tell them what to do. Only after such an experience did those commanders acquire a very active interest in the dead letter of the regulations. Of course, the task of the teacher consists in filling the paragraphs of the regulations with living content, but that aim can be attained only if each of you remembers, every day and every hour, that he is being prepared to apply these regulations in relation not only to particular local conditions but also to the bodies of tens and hundreds of his comrades-in-arms, the worker and peasant Red Army men.

Here I must turn to certain matters which are in an extremely bad way with us, matters closely bound up with accuracy, with attention to particular details. I mean the question of our army property, starting with boots and ending with horses and rifles. Everything is in a frightful state, and this testifies to the army's extreme immaturity, its backwardness and lack of military culture. A few weeks ago I asked our supply organs and the inspectorate attached to the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to give me data on the most crying cases of careless, thriftless and neglectful treatment of greatcoats, barrack buildings, horses and rifles. Some of my informants sent me a whole pile of such cases, while others replied that there were so many of them that they were hard to enumerate.

Rifles are expended very freely in wartime. Both in the imperialist war and in our civil war, over 80 per cent of all rifles were expended in the course of one year – that is, nearly the entire quantity in the hands of the active army. During the year each of them was replaced once, either because it had been lost on the battlefield or because it was worn out. In peacetime, before the

imperialist war, this expenditure came to 3 per cent per year – that is, of 100 rifles, three were replaced in the course of a year, or 3,000 out of 100,000 or 15,000 out of 500,000. Thus, during one year the army had to find 15,000 new rifles altogether. We expend 80 per cent of our rifles in wartime, but there can be no doubt that our expenditure now, in peacetime, is higher than 3 per cent. Why? Because we do not know how to look after our rifles, we don't clean them, there is no habit of attention, no accuracy. This is the major fault against which we must fight with word and deed, with orders and penalties, because our exhausted country cannot, in peacetime, replace 20 per cent, 30 per cent and even more of its rifles every year. We must get back to the old pre-war percentage, that is, an annual wastage of no more than 3 per cent of our rifles.

And what about boots and greatcoats? Our army had a huge percentage of barefoot and ill-clad men on every front, and we lost whole battles and campaigns through shortage of greatcoats and boots. At the time, I reported to the Government that we failed to win complete victory in the Polish campaign because there were not enough greatcoats or boots for the winter months. If, in August of last year, we had had a sufficient number of greatcoats and boots on the Western front, we could have trained without hindrance the tens of thousands of young Red Army men whom we sent there. But we were not able to do that, because the rain and cold weather came and our men were barefoot and without greatcoats. At the same time, comrades, there is no other army where there has been such frantic expenditure of boots and greatcoats as in ours, in our exhausted, almost poverty-stricken workers' and peasants' country. I tell you, future commanders, this is no joking matter.

What has brought all this about? Lack of accounting, lack of attention. Individual equipment records, Red Army men's service books, in which everything issued to them is recorded, are being distributed very slowly. Why? For many reasons, illiteracy, insufficient attention on the part of the junior commanders, the platoon, company and battalion commanders, who do not keep an eye, a persistent master's eye, on this matter. If things go on in this way, twice as many greatcoats and boots will disappear, and when the time comes to fight, the Red Army man will be both barefoot and naked. These are facts shown by the experience of our war.

I will take an example which illustrates this fact especially well. In a certain division there are two regiments. In one of these there are a good commander and a good commissar. They hand over some army property to a platoon commander who has come from this Kremlin school, or from some other school, and they inspire him with an economical, business-like, attentive attitude to his responsibilities. Alongside this regiment there is another, in which the commander, though he may be a hero, is an unbusinesslike, disorderly sort of man: his subordinate commanders get no good example, no education, from him. And so you have two regiments in one and the same division, who receive exactly the same equipment and so on, but the difference between them is colossal. In one regiment they have almost everything they need, and there is even a little store of stuff put by for a rainy day. If forage is lacking, they take steps to procure some from the woods; they look ahead to the difficult time that may come. (There is a commander like this here in Moscow: he used to command the 36th Infantry Division, which has now been disbanded.) But in the other regiment everything is in utter disorder.

In the Moscow Military District a commission carried out a check on the state of the army's horses in the area round Moscow. I once looked through an order concerning this matter issued by Muralov, the commander of the troops of this district, and I was amazed: the 316th, 317th and 320th Regiments all receive the same, yet the difference between them is colossal. In the 316th Regiment, care of horses is unsatisfactory, and the horses have mange. In the 317th the situation is good: cleanliness and order in the stables. In the 320th they have brushes and curry-combs, but the mucking-out is not done well. Concerning the divisional school, which ought to be a model, a seed-bed of order, I read: mucking-out and maintenance bad, tails and manes cut irregularly, horses rarely groomed, although there is no shortage of brushes and curry-combs, fatigue squads not detailed for work, roster compiled improperly, procedure for exercise not known, no inspection or veterinary supervision undertaken. The entire body of commanders and commissars show indifference to the instructions of the inspectorate. And where is this? In the divisional school. Two or three weeks ago I sent out a new inspecting commission, composed of very responsible and experienced persons, in order to see whether there had been any change. It turned out that there had not. Those who were good had become still better, but those who were bad had not improved in the slightest.

You often hear, these days, and afterwards you experience the fact, that we are very poor, that we lack not only forage but also brushes and curry-combs. In this school, even though you too experience some hardships, comrade Kremlin cadets, you have nevertheless been placed in very favourable conditions compared with those existing in all the other schools. People say – how can we clean our boots if we have no grease, or how can we groom our horses when we are without brushes? But I have quoted an example of how things are in one and the same division. What an immense difference: under one commander, cleanliness, exemplary order – under the other, the opposite. And this depends, above all, on the commanders.

We have passed through a phase in which there was barbarous destruction of all the commercial premises that were turned into barracks. Never can there have been such a dreadfully wasteful, wanton treatment of buildings as we saw here in the past period. Last week! asked for some data on this. I was given so many that it is impossible for me to quote details. People smashed everything up, tore out fittings when they left, knocked out windows, blocked up latrines – you know what I mean, they chucked anything and everything into them, starting with their old footcloths. The pipes froze and then burst, and lakes were formed on the ground floors. Many buildings which were occupied by the Red Army men were in this condition, and cadets were no better than others in this respect. If a unit is stationary, the men remember that they are going to have to spend the winter in that same building, and if they break the windows they will freeze. During the war, when units frequently moved from place to place, one unit would leave the next with a heritage of smashed-up premises. This became a regular epidemic. There was not the simplest civic education, no sense that the building in question was public property. The old attitude of the slave towards what belongs to the state, to the Tsar, to the government, continued to prevail; and when commanders omit to pay attention to this, it is a very grave fault on their part.

For the Kremlin school cadets, comrades, an effort has been made to create here in the Kremlin a certain minimum of comfort, both for study and for

personal life. This is very modest comfort, but you have been put in a more privileged situation than other schools, and we hope that you will maintain such order that we may bring other people here and show how to live in cleanliness – no graffiti on the walls, no cigarette ends on the floor, no spitting about the place. That sort of half-thoughtless, half-joking wantonness easily seizes hold of entire units – one man chops a bit off here, another adds his contribution, and, in the end, behold, the entire place is in a mess within a few weeks.

You know that we have a building squad. They have reported that, owing to our lack of materials, they will not only be unable to do a more complete repair job but will not manage even to put right the damage that is done every day. For this reason, the commander of the squad says that if you were to look after the building, that would be more to our advantage than if construction work or repairs were called for. While repairs are under way, more damage is being done than can be repaired. There have been dozens of such reports.

I asked the Chief Administration of Horsebreeding how our commanders treat our horses, and received the answer that, from what they had seen, the treatment is harsh, inhuman. Not everyone behaves like that, of course, as I know perfectly well, but such cases do exist. Careless treatment of horses is inadmissible, for we have only half as many horses as before the war, and this situation is getting worse, not only through our poverty, that is, through shortage of fodder, but also through careless treatment of those horses that we have. I can say, rather, that our poverty has resulted from our carelessness: as I have already mentioned, in our army greatcoats and boots are used up faster than in any other army in the world. This can also be said of the rest of army property. Of what use is an operational plan and excellent morale if, when we advance, our boot-soles come off? The boots are sewn together, of course, from material which is not of the best quality, but why is that? Because twice as many have to be made, owing to our lack of punctiliousness, owing to failure to grease boots when they should be greased.

At the meeting of commanders of the Moscow garrison I said that we failed to get to Warsaw because the soldiers' boot-soles fell off, because they did not grease their boots, had not learnt to treat them with care, used up too many of them – and at the most crucial moment, when Warsaw was in sight, when we had only to reach out our hand to take the place, we couldn't manage it. Our strength was insufficient, because an army which is barefoot and ragged has to expend twice as much energy. The army's baggage-wagons could not keep up with the advance, and the reason why they could not was that the horses were sick with mange, and they were sick because they were not fed or groomed as they should have been. One factor combined with another, and the result was defeat, the failure of the operation, retreat, and the destruction of hundreds, of tens of thousands of men.

It is just as though you were to take the best, strongest fabric and with the finest of needles prick this fabric: you withdraw the needle, and you see it has left no trace, has done no damage to the fabric. But if you sit a hundred men down and put needles in their hands, and they keep sticking the needles into the fabric for 24 hours, all that will be left of your fabric will be threads, it will all have come unravelled. A small failure in accuracy, a slight lack of assiduity is just such a prick with a fine needle. Each person says: what harm does it do if I drop a cigarette-end, or spit? But sometimes a consumptive spits, and

somebody else catches the infection from this – and a cigarette-end can set fire to the floor. We nearly had a fire in the Kremlin, which could have caused us great difficulties. Or, when a door won't open, men try to open it with a bayonet. What is the result? The door is damaged and the bayonet bent. Two little bits of damage; but, just see, within a short time you won't recognise the building, it's been so badly spoiled.

If a man finds himself in an untidy, sloppy atmosphere, he is in no mood to work. Take a factory, a workshop. If there is rubbish on the workshop floor, the wind blows through the windows, and rain comes in through the ceiling, the workers will work badly, they won't feel like it. But if the workshop is clean, with everything as it should be, the men will work twice as well. It is the same with any army unit: in a filthy, spittlecovered place you won't find a good unit.

If, in the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, I notice a gob of spittle on the floor, I hasten to find who it was that spat. It may be that some will say: what sort of free republic is this if we're not allowed to spit freely? We cannot permit this sort of interpretation of freedom. Whoever spits on the floor, spits on someone else's labour – after all, somebody has got to clean it up, sweep it away. The person who behaves like that has a careless attitude to labour, and he is a slob. And we have no need, comrades, of slobs, in the Soviet Republic and in the Soviet army. We must get rid of slovenliness, at all costs.

In the first period we had heroism and to spare. Now, that period is behind us: we need heroism, but this heroism needs to be given a lining of concern for accuracy. Heroism with a lining of concern for accuracy is the finest quality that we have need of. If every one of you provides himself with that lining, we shall get very good commanders. Without it, no readiness for self-sacrifice is going to help us against the new armies with which we shall have to fight. Poland and Romania are our nearest neighbours. If we have to fight them, we shall find that they will be richer in armaments than we are. We have an intelligence service, there is an intelligence directorate where they collect information about the Romanian, Polish, German and French armies, and from this we see that our nearest neighbours are making tremendous efforts to organise their armies and bring them up to a higher level.

We also need to pay greater attention to past experience. The Kremlin training courses possess their own experience. Kremlin cadets fought on various fronts and furnished a considerable number of commanders. I do not know to what extent this experience has been studied. Do your cadets know their past? If not, it is time they began to learn it. You used to have a periodical. I don't know if it still appears. You must collect material, facts, the circumstances of military actions in which Kremlin cadets took part. If there are commanders in certain units who were formerly cadets at the Kremlin school, you should send messengers to them, to take down what they can tell you about how they coped with their role as commander in their first battle, what they found lacking in themselves, how their teeth chattered – not from fear, because fortunately, there are few cowards among us – but because the situation was a complicated one, in which they could not orientate themselves. An order ought to be given, and the commander looks towards headquarters, expecting to receive one from there, but nobody sends him any orders. In that situation a man has to act on his own initiative, at his own discretion. Let them tell what they found was lacking, what their school had not given them, what

they had not obtained from it, through ignorance or carelessness. Many Kremlin cadets have been killed in action. I don't know whether all such cases have been recorded. I suppose they haven't. Information needs to be collected about how they died, what the circumstances were. That will serve as a monument to the fallen and as an instruction for others. Perhaps they died, not because the situation required it, but because they were not adequately prepared for their task. That will be the best sort of training and education. An army is strong when its experience is passed on, when each unit firmly preserves its fighting tradition, cherishes the military glory of its regiment, its school, its division. We have entered a period when this pride in one's achievements has to be fostered. We are all sons of the workers' and peasants' Red Army and the workers' and peasants' Republic, and in this sense the merits of every regiment are very dear to all of us, but the army can be raised to a higher level when each of you has in his heart and his mind the history of *his own* unit, *his own* school, and remembers its merits and its shortcomings. The merits must be increased and the shortcomings eliminated.

While the military calling is, in general, a very hard and responsible one, the calling of the military commander is ten times as hard and responsible as the ranker's. Since the revolution and the working class need the Red Army – and they do need it – the Red Army must be able to fulfil its role in all respects. We need not just a commander, but a skilled commander. The army is being reduced. It has now been reduced to one-third of its size last year. It has lost in quantity but it must gain in quality. Every commander, every soldier must perform the military work that previously was done by three or five men, because previously we filled up gaps by means of massive numbers. We suffered heavy losses, throwing in two or three divisions where the task could have been accomplished by one division, and this we did through lack of skill, inadequate training. A period has arrived when we have to replace quantity with quality.

The Kremlin school has been provided with comparatively favourable conditions, given our difficult situation, our poverty.

The War Department is doing all it can to ensure that this position does not get any worse: in the future, when we have become richer, we shall improve it. Without exaggeration, the eyes of the world are on the Kremlin school – it is seen as representing the workers' and peasants' Red Army. Why? Because when foreigners – friends or foes – visit the Kremlin, they see, first of all, the Kremlin cadets. At the parades and reviews that we hold on Red Square in honour of the International, where foreign diplomats are present, among whom are men of high military education and with a keen, soldier's eye, these people again see, first of all, the Kremlin cadets, and they say to themselves: if the Kremlin cadets' horses are in a poor condition, what must the others be like? Or, contrariwise, if the Kremlin cadets look good, that gives the impression that the entire army is good. In the eyes of the whole world, the Kremlin cadets are a model of the Red Army. Our task is to ensure that the Kremlin school becomes a model in every respect: as regards its spirit – revolutionary solidarity, revolutionary morale; as regards drill, administration, tactics; as regards accuracy, assiduity, conscientiousness; in short, in all respects. For that reason the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, and I in particular, will frequently look in on you. Both through a commission and directly we shall inspect these premises. I give you warning of that. It may be that, on the quiet, since discipline does not allow it to be done aloud,

somebody will sometimes curse us for being so demanding – for taking you to task today, for instance, because you were 15 minutes late and because you expectorated so much. But, comrades, unless we are so demanding, so insistent, we shall not raise ourselves up; and that we must do, at all costs.

We have the habit of relying on the saying: 'Somehow, anyhow, perhaps, probably.' [\[3\]](#) That is a very big defect, which is especially highly developed in the Russian peasant. They pressed down on him from above, nowhere could he straighten his back, and he got used to that situation, and kept saying: 'Perhaps, probably.' That was a very great vice produced by slavery, comrades, and even today it affects the revolutionary element. We need to raise ourselves up, to educate ourselves, and for this we need firm discipline, so that a man may be aware of himself, from his little toe to the brain in his head, may remember what he must do and what he must not do, where to throw a cigarette-end, what to say, what command to give – he must be able to control himself, to have command of himself. That is a great art, which has to be learnt. Before a commander receives the right to command others, he must learn to command himself, to feel that he is in control of himself, answerable for himself. The Kremlin cadets must be educated in this high art.

The Revolutionary War Council of the Republic will keep the Kremlin school under its own observation. There must be cleanliness and complete order everywhere, because that is the setting for work. If somebody sometimes gets into a temper and curses, he should remember, nevertheless, that this demandingness of ours is not malicious fault-finding, it is due not to malevolence towards you, but to a desire to help you – sometimes, it may be, by strong measures – to become real commanders, real revolutionary fighters, who have the right to give orders to others, to demand unquestioning obedience, even to the point of death, under the conditions of war. May the Kremlin school progress and grow stronger, may your care and love for it increase; may each one of you say, in a difficult moment of military responsibility – this habit of command and power to command was given to me by the Kremlin school. And I call on you to shout with me, in honour of the Red Kremlin school, all together: 'Hurrah!'

From the archives

Endnotes

[1.](#) The Pokrovsky Sobor (Cathedral of the Intercession), the many-domed church which stands in Red Square, was built in the 1550s by Ivan the Terrible, to commemorate the conquest of Kazan. The people nicknamed the church Vasily Blazhenny ('Basil the Blessed') after a 'holy man' who had persuaded the Tsar to build it.

[2.](#) On November 1 a discussion concerning the unified military doctrine was held at the General Staff Academy. Comrade Trotsky's speech in this discussion is given in Volume V of this edition, in the section: *Questions of military theory*.

[3.](#) The allusion is to a Russian phrase which implies the assumption that some enterprise will 'come out all right' even if one has not taken much care to ensure that it will. Cf. the English: 'We'll muddle through somehow'.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

Tula is Still the Great Smithy of the Red Army

* * *

When Denikin was pressing towards Tula, we did everything we could to defend it, and we saved it. Other towns we temporarily surrendered to the enemy, to recover them later. But we did not dare to give up Tula even for one hour – because on the anvils of Tula the weapons of the workers' and peasants' army are forged.

Since those terrible days in September 1919, many weeks and months have passed which have seen very serious struggles, very great sufferings and sacrifices, but also glorious victories. Armed with Tula-made rifles and Tula-made bayonets, with Tula-made cartridges in their cartridge-belts, the workers and peasants defeated the enemy on all fronts. Now, towards the end of 1921, we have no fighting fronts. We are directing our thoughts, our will-power, our strength, towards the economy. And the workers in the Tula factories are already experiencing an improvement in their lot as workers. The food situation has got better. Things must get better in other directions as well. And they will get better, if we want them to – as we all do.

But does that mean that the rifle and the cartridge, the machine-gun and the revolver, are no longer needed by the workers' and peasants' republic?

No, it does not. Though our enemies have become quieter, they have in no sense become reconciled to us. The republic of labour, with no Tsar and, what matters most, with no landlords and capitalists, remains for them, as before, a mortal danger. Except in Russia, power is still, throughout the world, in the hands of the rich classes, the exploiters. And until the working people have wrested that power from them, Soviet Russia will continue to be threatened by new onslaughts.

In neighbouring Poland, two bourgeois parties are fighting each other fiercely: one of them wants to trade with us, the other wants to fight us. We purchased peace with Poland at the price of immense concessions. Many Russian workers and peasants said to themselves that the peace concluded with Poland was unjust, that Poland had received too much. But all agreed, at the same time, that it was preferable to go even so far as making those concessions than to bleed and ravage our country further by prolonging the war. Yet even this peace, extremely advantageous to the Polish bourgeoisie, does not satisfy it. Urged on by the French stock-exchange speculators, part of the Polish bourgeoisie, especially the military section, is striving with all its might to draw us into a new war. We are doing everything necessary to maintain peaceful relations. But the matter does not depend on our will alone, but on who comes out on top in Poland: the party which supports peace, or Pilsudski, who is trying to bring about war at any cost.

Which of these two Polish bourgeois parties will win? It is not possible to foresee and forecast the answer to that. If we are weak, the warmongers will win in Poland: if we are strong, the most cautious and prudent of the bourgeois parties will gain ascendancy. When, at the beginning of the autumn, there was a serious harvest-failure in the Volga region, the bourgeoisie, almost throughout the world, began to look forward to the fall of the Soviet power. In Poland the party of Pilsudski at once grew stronger and peace between Russia and Poland hung literally by a thread. When, however, it became clear that the Soviet Government was coping with the famine, that it was firmly-based and was leading the country on to the road of economic advance, the Polish bourgeoisie started to beat retreat, and the peace party again became dominant. However, Pilsudski has not given up. Even now he is still throwing on to our territory the bands of his hireling Petlyura. This is, of course, a violation of the treaty, and nothing less than a dishonourable provocation. But we are not picking up this challenge. We want peace. And we count confidently on the working people of Poland to put a strait-jacket on the violators of peace.

At the same time we must firmly grasp our rifle, and to do that we need to have a rifle, that is, we need to make one. If the stock of rifles and cartridges in our magazines were to dry up, Pilsudski would at once fall upon us, and the entire Polish bourgeoisie, tempted by the prospect of easy victory, would undoubtedly back him. If, however, our magazines are full of rifles and cartridges, the Polish bourgeoisie will think ten times over before allowing Pilsudski to attack us. We have several times the number of trained men that Poland has. We have many trustworthy, steeled commanders. Consequently, given adequate reserves of weapons, we can at once put a huge army in the field. An attack on us would, in that case, prove fatal to the attacker. So long as we are surrounded by foes, we must be ready to rebuff them, and that means that the red smithy of Tula must work with might and main.

In the years since the revolution, the arms-makers and cartridge-makers of Tula have known not a few dark hours. They have had to undergo grave hardships. Sometimes agents of the bourgeoisie, Mensheviks, have exploited these difficulties in order to create discord among the workers and disrupt production. But all that is past, and we are all sure that it will not return. Economic development is now on the upgrade: it moves slowly and-heavily, but upwards nevertheless. The situation of the working people must improve step by step along with this process. The Soviet Republic must show care for its Tula armaments workers, just as the latter must firmly and honestly serve the needs of the workers' and peasants' republic.

This winter will be a winter of intense, stubborn and systematic labour. Tula is still the smithy of the Red Army.

November 18, 1921
Tula
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The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

The Tula Soviet's Division

* * *

The 2nd Infantry Division has now received the title of 'Tula Division'. It has been adopted by the Tula Soviet of workers', peasants' and Red Army men's deputies. Thereby a close, intimate, unbreakable bond has been established between the 2nd Infantry Division and the working people of Tula Province.

In the Tsarist army military units had their patrons, that is, their 'honorary' commanders and protectors. These patrons were members of the Romanov family, Grand Dukes and Duchesses, and their foreign 'kinsfolk' – Kings, Emperors, Queens. Between the Imperial patrons and the mass of the soldiers in their units there was the same bonds as between slave-holders and their slaves.

The workers' and peasants' army now also has its 'patrons'. [\[1\]](#) These are not individuals, however, but local organs of the workers' and peasants' power. Particular divisions, brigades and regiments are placed under the special care of particular local soviets. This measure has now become possible thanks to the fact that our army has – temporarily, until there is a new attack on us, that is, until another war begins – become more settled. Divisions occupy certain areas for a longer period than before. In this way a closer, more real, and not merely formal bond is actually being established between military units and the local organs of the workers' and peasants' power.

What does the attachment of divisions and regiments to soviets mean? It does not, of course, mean the dismemberment of the united Red Army into a series of local armies, such as we had in the very first period of Soviet power, in the period when the army was formed on guerrilla lines. No, the army is still a united, state-wide, strictly centralised whole. In that lies its strength, that is the guarantee of its further successes. By taking a certain unit of the army under their special care, the local soviets in no way sever the bond between this unit and the whole, that is, the bond with the army as a whole, but, on the contrary, they help to foster in every Red Army man the lofty consciousness that he is a citizen-soldier, a defender of the first republic of labour in the world, and thereby they strengthen the inner solidarity of all the units of the army and the solidarity of the army as a whole with all the working people. The bond between the local soviets and the divisions they adopt will, of course, be not formal but serious and practical in character. It is already like that, in fact. Even before the order was issued attaching the 2nd Infantry Division to the Tula Soviet, the latter had succeeded in giving serious, practical attention to it. The Soviet had already made available for the division's needs, out of its own meagre resources, a considerable number of articles of equipment. The care shown by the Tula Soviet for its division in respect of accommodation,

clothing and food will certainly not decline in the future. It is not possible, of course, to look for any miracles in this regard, for the economic position of the whole country, including Tula Province, is still extremely grave. But, to the extent that local forces and resources permit, the Tula Soviet will do all that it can to help the central government, so as to create for the Tula division more favourable conditions of existence both spiritual and material.

The division must, in its turn, show the greatest care for the local Soviet organs and for the conditions of living and the needs of Tula Province. In many cases the division can render very substantial aid to the local soviet organs, without encroaching upon its own current work in maintaining, training and educating the constituent units of the divisions.

The coming winter will be a time of intense, tireless work at the training and education of the division's units, at strengthening the apparatus, and at bringing order into the sphere of its material equipment. The commanders and commissars face the task of raising their own level, so as then, in their wake, to raise the level of the entire mass of Red Army men. The Tula Soviet will help the division in the performance of this intense work, supporting it and strengthening its spirit. Let us get down to work together!

- Long live the Tula Infantry Division!
- Long live the Tula Soviet of workers, peasants and Red Army deputies!

November 20, 1921
Tula
Pravda. No.264

Endnotes

1. With the end of the civil war and the settlement of the peacetime locations of the troops, the question arose of bringing about closer links between Red Army units and local soviet, Party and trade-union organisations. A number of towns and districts expressed at the end of 1920 their desire to assume direct care for divisions which were stationed in their respective areas, or which they specially singled out.

In this way the idea of 'patronage' arose. The Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, taking steps to meet this desire, ordered (Order No.2797559) that a number of divisions be attached to various towns and districts, being given the names of these places. The first such attachments were: the 7th Infantry Division to the town of Vladimir, the 46th Infantry Division to the town of Yekaterinoslav, the 52nd Infantry Division to the town of Yekaterinburg, the 26th Infantry Division to the town of Zlatoust, the 51st and 56th Infantry Divisions to Moscow, the 11th and 12th Infantry Divisions to Petrograd, etc. Confirmation of these attachments and formal establishment of the practice of 'patronage' was also given in the decree of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee on November 17, 1921. In a period when material conditions were particularly hard for the Red Army units, the 'patrons' did a great deal of valuable work for the army by repairing barracks and providing a certain minimum comfort for those living in them.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

Not One Week, but Fifty-Two Weeks!

* * *

The Week of the Red Army Man's Kit is now in progress in our country. [\[1\]](#) Telegrams inform us that in many places the Week is going on with concerted support by local soviets and party organisations: by joint efforts, barracks are being repaired and cleaned, and the Red Army men are being supplied with buttons, thread and so on. All these are extremely gratifying facts, which testify to the rebirth of active care for the army. It is to be hoped that the remaining soviets will follow the same path, even though belatedly.

But at the same time it must be decisively stressed that this sort of material aid to the Red Army by the workers' and peasants' organisations constitutes only one aspect of the Week, and, moreover, the less important one. The principal task of the Week is education and self-education of the army itself in a spirit of attentive, careful, conscientious treatment of the public property which has been entrusted to it. We are poor but we are extravagant. We are inaccurate, careless, sloppy. These faults have deep roots in the slavish past, and can be eradicated only gradually, through persistent propaganda by deed, example, demonstration – by thorough checking and unrelenting insistence. Those commanders and commissars whose attention is wholly focused on obtaining material help from outside risk missing the true significance of the Week of the Red Army Man's Kit. Proper accounting, proper attention to the Red Army men's service-books, cleaning and maintenance – that is what is now most important.

The need for Kit Week arose because for 51 weeks in the year we were as careless and negligent as could be. It is, obviously, no good if, after repenting somewhat for the space of one week, and meeting our most glaring deficiencies with help from outside, we return thereafter to the path of carelessness and extravagance amid poverty.

We need not just one week in the year, but precisely 52 weeks of businesslike vigilance!

December 10, 1921,
Izvestiya V.Ts.I.K.,
No.278

Endnotes

[1](#) See, on page 240, Order No.2252, October 11, 1921, by the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, on the week of care for the Red Army man's kit.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

It is Necessary to Learn to Write!

* * *

Far from all of our young propaganda-writers are able to write so as to be understood. It may be that this is because they have never had to cut their way through the primeval crust of ignorance and misunderstanding. They have come into Partyagitational literary work in a period when a certain set of ideas, words and expressions have become widely and durably familiar to fairly extensive strata of the working people. The danger of the Party losing touch with the non-Party masses in the sphere of agitation is expressed in the hermetic, exclusive character of the content and forms of agitation, in the creation of an almost conventional party language which is, as often as not, unintelligible to nine-tenths not only of the peasants but also of the workers. And yet life does not stand still for one hour: new generations are coming forward, one after another. Today the fate of the Soviet Republic is being decided, to a considerable degree, by those who, during the imperialist war and then during the March and October revolutions, were 15, 16 and 17 years old. This 'dominance' by the young people who are taking over from us will be felt more and more strongly as time goes by.

One cannot talk to these young people in these ready-made formulas, phrases, expressions and words which mean something to us, the 'old men', because they are derived from our past experience, but which for the young remain, in most cases, just empty sounds. It is necessary to learn to speak to them in their own language, that is, in the language *of their own experience*.

The struggle against Tsardom, the revolution of 1905, the imperialist war and the two revolutions of 1917 are for us personal experiences, memories, living facts from our own activity. We speak of them allusively, remembering and mentally supplementing that which we do not completely put into words. But what about the young people? They do not understand these allusions, because they do not know the facts; they did not experience them, and they cannot learn about them from books, from properly-written narratives, because there are none. Where an allusion suffices for the older generation, the young people need *a textbook*. The time has come to compile a series of such textbooks and manuals of revolutionary and political education for the young people.

I have come up against the question with particular sharpness in connection with our attempts to create a series of small handbooks and textbooks for our military educational institutions, on the subject of our neighbours. It is quite obvious that the Red commander, and with his aid also every Red Army man, must know, first and foremost, what sort of states surround us, since otherwise he will not be a conscious fighter.

A few days ago there appeared the first booklet of this kind, devoted to present-day Poland (Library of Political Handbooks: **Outlines of Present-Day Poland**, Book!. Supreme Military Publishing Council, Moscow 1921.) After reading the first few pages I felt quite horrified. Can our agitators and propagandists, our popularisers, have such a poor sense of their reader, so slight a notion of what he needs?

This is how the booklet opens: 'The imperialist war began at a time when Poland, which had been torn into three parts 150 years before, was becoming more and more closely knit together organically with the three different state organisations.' Try reading that sentence to a company of soldiers, and then ask those who understood to raise their hands. I am afraid that not a single hand would go up: unless, by chance, the company commander happened to be a former student. At the end of this same page mention is made in passing of 'the insurrectionary ideas' which survived only 'among a handful of declassed intellectuals'. What does this mean? For whom is this intended? Who will find this intelligible?

Let us imagine one of our young Red commanders, a platoon commander. He knows Poland only from personal memories and from newspapers. He knows only the Poland of Pilsudski, the one that attacked us. He does not know that Poland was partitioned between Russia, Austria-Hungary and Germany. Yes, yes, comrade agitators and popularisers, just imagine, he doesn't know that. The revolution awakened him when he was still a boy, and since then his attention has been wholly absorbed by internal events and the struggle against the Whites. He first heard the name 'Poland', perhaps, in connection with the attack of the White Poles and the Petlyurists upon our frontiers. It is with such very simple facts as these, clearly and simply expounded, that one must begin: Poland was formed at such-and-such a time, through the bringing together of three parts which had been seized, a century-and-a-half earlier, by three predators. Talk of some insurrectionary ideas or other which survived among a handful of declassed intellectuals – yes, indeed, that is the jargon of small circles of Party intellectuals, who are not so much declassed as completely isolated from the actual working class.

By this I do not want to banish a certain mode of expression and particular words which constitute complex allusions from Marxist usage. It is merely necessary that the form of exposition shall correspond to the dimensions of the question and shall be clearly destined for a particular reader or listener. Expounding very simple, very elementary historical facts which are unknown to the reader, in conventional language that is wholly bound up with the revolutionary memories of the Party's leading circles – that is the very last thing that should be done.

In a booklet intended, first and foremost, for a soldier reader, I found no facts about the territory of Poland, about the number of its inhabitants, about its national composition, about the number of towns and of the urban population, and so on. How can one do without these basic facts? The booklet talks of everything allusively, in passing, and of nothing clearly and intelligibly. One might suppose that it was intended for the upper circles, but no, it has been published in an edition of 25,000 copies. That means that the booklet must be aimed at hundreds of thousands of readers (and listeners). But it can confidently be affirmed that in the whole Red Army you will find barely five to ten thousand readers who will understand this booklet. And those who will

understand it will already know everything that is in the booklet without needing to read it.

The booklet had evidently been written by a Polish comrade. It is speckled throughout with 'polonisms', and, in general, with the crudest offences against the Russian language. Here, the guilt lies entirely with the editors. They have not taken the trouble to read the manuscript, even if only to check it from the language standpoint. In the booklet it is said that parliamentarism 'is obsoleted', instead of 'has become obsolete'. Pusudski refused 'to swear to brotherhood'. The well-known Article 102 of the Tsarist penal code is mentioned as 'paragraph 102', which nobody will understand. To this must be added cruel treatment of grammatical cases (I shall not stop to quote examples) – and, as is to be expected in one of our Soviet publications, an abundance of misprints. If a Polish comrade commits 'polonisms', that is understandable. But what are editors for?

I have no doubt that the author of the booklet would be capable of producing something better than this if he were asked to rewrite two, three or four times what he has written. It was precisely in that way that, in our time, we learnt to write in a popular style. In its present form the booklet is completely worthless. It is of no use to anyone. Its effect upon the inexperienced reader for whom it is intended can only be to cause an irritation close to despair, and to discourage him from reading.

One must learn to write for the young people!

December 10, 1921
Pravda, No.279

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

Concluding Remarks

At the 2nd Conference of Communist Party Cells in Higher Military Education
Institutions, December 10, 1921 [\[1\]](#)

* * *

Comrades, I have been asked a question, in notes handed to me, which the first of the comrades who spoke here also formulated orally – namely, what is the situation of our Navy, what destiny awaits it in the period immediately ahead, what must its structure be? Comrade Posunko, speaking here, said that during the years of Soviet power the Navy has been in a chronic state of collapse, and that the blame for this lies with the commanders, who are hostile to us. I think that, in the explanation he gives for a perfectly well-established fact, Comrade Posunko is absolutely wrong. What has happened, according to him, is that, where the army is concerned, we were able to find reliable commanders and a reliable Commander-in-chief, and so the army has been consolidated, but where the Navy is concerned we were unlucky, we were unable to find such a man, and so the Navy has collapsed.

Nothing of the sort. This explanation is radically wrong. Perhaps Comrade Posunko said more than he meant to say, or less. But I have heard something similar from many sailors: the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Naval Forces betrayed us, and so disintegration began on the ships. This is radically wrong. The entire setting for the development of our army and our navy respectively has been profoundly different in these years. Why were we not destroyed? We can ask ourselves this question: how was it that we succeeded in *not being destroyed* militarily? In February 1918 the working class in this country was, from the standpoint of defence, 'as naked as a picked bone'. The old army had broken up, the new one did not exist, and there were any number of enemies to be withstood.

And yet we were not destroyed. Why was that? Because we possessed an immense *place d'armes*, because Russia is a country of boundless expanses. I was talking not long ago with a German naval officer who had once had a conversation with Nicholas II, and he told me that Nicholas II, a man who, as is well known, was not at all intelligent, expressed himself thus: 'Russia is not a state but a continent.' I told the German officer that Nicholas probably had not thought that up himself, he read it somewhere, but, all the same, what he said was true. Russia is not a state but a continent. Only because we were able, with impunity, to retreat over immense distances did each of the European armies that tried to crush us face the task of occupying a boundless country. And it was possible for us, thanks to these expanses, to set forth from Moscow, in the centre, to build an army. This army developed a strategy of manoeuvre in the course of its battles. Some comrades connect this strategy with the

character of the revolution. Not so! The strategy of manœuvre is the resultant of the two magnitudes – territory, and size of the army. Where the territory is huge and, in relation to this, the army is insignificant, there alone is a strategy of manœuvre possible. Precisely because Russia is not a state but a continent, the Soviet power was able to stand its ground here, whereas in Hungary it fell, suffered defeat. If, at the end of 1917, we had come to power in Belgium or Hungary, we should not have had a strategy of manœuvre, or even an army, for we should soon have ceased to be in power. And where the Navy was concerned we were precisely in the 'Belgian' position, that is, in a worse than tight spot. We had no continent of water on which we could build a navy and conduct operations. Against us stood all-powerful Britain. We may have had a bad commander of naval forces, he may even have been a traitor – anything could happen! – but that is not the main thing: whoever wants to understand the difference between the fate of the army and that of the navy should remember that, while we have more than enough territory – they tried to diminish it for us, and did take a little away – where the sea is concerned we have practically nothing. If you take our army, the role played in it by human material is, broadly speaking, three-quarters of the whole affair, with the role of technology only accounting for one-quarter. But in the navy it is the other way round: three quarters is machinery, metal transformed into the technology of war, and men count for only one quarter. And in which of these elements are we strong? We are strong in manpower: our people, though hungry, alas, are very numerous. But in technology we are weak. These reasons are more than sufficient, so that any others that may exist can be regarded as being of tenth-rate importance. For a navy to live, it must have coal and oil: without them there will be no navy. The army, of course, also needs fuel, for heating its barracks, for its motor-cars, armoured cars and so on. But the relative importance of fuel is not so great in the army. If there are no trucks, the army can manage with peasants' carts. But if the navy lacks coal and oil, it cannot move anywhere. And so, comrades, for naval success we lacked three trifles: first, water, second, ships, and, third, fuel. And to these three trifles you can add, if you like, bad commanders. That's the situation! Our sailor comrades are splendid people, they fight magnificently on land as well, they have proved it by their deeds, but they have been positively badgering us with their complaints and reproaches: they say they are not appreciated, the navy is badly looked after, insufficient attention is being paid to maritime defence, and so on.

The trouble does not lie there, but with our poverty. I have just been haggling, comrades, about 100,000 poods of coal, in the Central Committee of the Party – yes, every pood of coal has to be discussed nowadays by the Central Committee. But do you know what we were talking about last year? We were discussing, in a serious Party way, which of two actions it would be more dangerous to take: to lay our ships up for a long time, or to sink them, because sinking is also one way of preserving a ship – later on, when better days come, it can be raised. We did not do this, however. But it is instructive enough that we were discussing such a question. We gave the army everything we could. That was why we were not able to select commanders for the navy. Since we were engaged in saving ourselves on land, after we had had to fall back almost completely from the seashores, it was natural that the best workers from among the sailors were taken into the army, and eventually we quite denuded the Navy of its men. That is the root of it all!

What was this? Imprudence? A mistake? Nothing of the sort. There were

very profound historical reasons. Moreover, I tell you that from the international standpoint, this passivity of ours where the navy was concerned had its favourable consequences, because it led to a certain split between France and Britain in their attitude to us. Britain could not in any circumstances tolerate any attempts on our part in the naval sphere. When we launched a single submarine, Curzon set up a great racket. Of course the British, like the French, regarded us as an enemy – but as an enemy who had been driven inland and was therefore not so dangerous, and they even entered into commercial relations with us. At our first attempt to revive the navy, the British would take a very much sterner line towards us. This also has to be reckoned with. Today the general international situation gives promise of some fresh prospects. Certain improvements have been observed also in the matter of the output of coal and oil. The attraction of foreign capital and the revival of metallurgy and the metal-working industry open up new possibilities both for ship-repairing and for shipbuilding. We are working out a modest programme, considering that our navy does have a future: this programme is, of course, strictly defensive in character, and consists mainly of submarines and means of defence by minelaying. Nobody, of course, will suppose that we can presume at present to draw up a programme for building mighty ships of the line, superdreadnoughts. But we need a navy for defence, and we shall gradually re-create such a navy, as soon as the necessary material prerequisites become available: at present they are only beginning to appear. But the sailor comrades are absolutely right when they point to the need to preserve a nucleus of manpower for the navy, because, although machinery counts for three-quarters at sea and men for only one-quarter, nevertheless, without that one-quarter the machinery is merely so much scrap-iron. If we do not preserve even a small nucleus of men for the navy, then in two or three years we shall be in no state to fight, even if we then possess the technological means of developing the navy. Consequently, it is necessary to preserve such a nucleus of elite elements. As we are preparing a technical plan for restoring the navy, we must also prepare a reliable body of commanders, consisting predominantly of Communists. That is obvious, and there can be no argument about it here.

The only problem is, what practical measures are we to take immediately, at what pace, and in what order? It would be impossible, fantastic, to leap from our present situation into one in which the commanders would be 100 per cent Communists. This is what I am talking about. In our army we have 5 per cent Communists since the purge, perhaps 6 per cent, and 95 per cent non-Communists. Whoever decides to address this army and say that we are going to allow only Communists to enter our military-education institutions, especially the higher ones, understands nothing and is no politician, no revolutionary. This is a very serious question. To tell an army in which 95 per cent are non-Communists that, after being in power in this country for four years, we have come to the conclusion that we must allow only Communists into our educational institutions, would be a very gross error. It is not a question of the specialists not in the least. Let us not go back to 1918, when we argued about whether or not we needed to allow specialists into the army. Those were childish arguments, those arguments we had in 1917-1918, and we are now living at the end of 1921. The question before us is a quite different one. We already possess a new body of commanders who have come up from below – reliable men, Soviet people, but not Communists: the Communists in our army now constitute only 8 per cent. We have expelled very many commanders

from the Party, not because they are not trustworthy, but because they are not Party people. A certain man would die, if need be, for the revolution, but he lacks the Party education that could give him the right to influence Party policy. After a year or two, perhaps, he will be knocked into shape and come to understand that the Party is a serious matter: perhaps this grave fact that he has been expelled will stimulate him politically. But perhaps he is generally unadapted to Party life – the majority are like that. This merely shows that the commanders are a reflection of the army, and the army is a reflection of the country. The country is 'non-party', but the Party leads it. It is not possible to say: there, I push down a pedal, and at once we get the Communist commanders we need. From where? How? After all, grass does not grow 'at once'. There is hardly any difference of opinion amongst us on the point that we must increase by all means the number of Communists in the army generally, and among the commanders in particular. Our difference concerns the question of how the Communists are to be situated in relation to military education. How should it be: a position of monopoly, of formal privilege – or actual superiority? I am in favour of the latter. When Comrade Ostrovsky spoke of the need for monopoly, he was being a little too clever ... I hope he will forgive me. What was the line of argument? In our country, it was said, we have dictatorship, we have a class army, and therefore the Communists ought to have a monopoly of positions of command. But where are we to get them from? Comrade Kruchinsky expounded a still thicker piece of philosophy, and called it Marxism. No, this has nothing in common with Marxism. This is our very own invention, and it is radically false. In the army, 95 per cent are non-Party men, and we say to every peasant Red Army man: you, Petrov, can attain any position of command, all doors are open to you. We say, like Napoleon: every Red Army man, every recruit, has a marshal's baton in his knapsack. But you want us to decree that that baton is only attainable by Communists. Just think what sort of an impression that would make! No, there can be no question of any monopoly. Can formal privileges be created for Communists? Let's say that we let Communists enter the academy even if they know only half of what they should, whereas higher requirements are imposed on non-Communists? That would mean creating a situation of formal privilege, even if an odious one. I reject such formal privilege, and until the Party removes me from my post I shall not allow it. But there is a third possibility, worthier and more realistic: to create, through the Communist Party, conditions that would furnish the army with an ever increasing percentage of Communist commanders. Through its organisation the Party will prepare and designate suitable elements for the Academy, establishing preparatory courses for them, or else making use of the Workers' Faculties.

Thus, by means of its whole organisational apparatus and of the state apparatus which is in its hands, the Party will facilitate the supply of Communists to the Academy. This is the only proper arrangement. We say frankly to the non-Party commanders that the gates are open to them, and if a non-Party commander has shown his devotion to the revolution, we will help him to get to the Academy. If Communists succeed in preparing themselves better, that is because they have the Party. The Party gives a great deal, but it also demands a great deal. You are a non-Party man: the doors of the Academy are open to you too. Does this mean that we shall allow non-Party people into the Academy in the same percentage as before? No. We shall pay very great attention to the recommendations of the credentials commission, but we shall correct them in those cases where the credentials commission of a

particular educational institution is not able to take account of circumstances external to this institution, in the army itself. It would be easy, of course, from the standpoint of the Communist group in an educational institution, to say: 'Nobody but Communists!' But what about when I am face to face with a company commander who asks me: 'Is it true, Comrade Trotsky, that a decision has been taken not to admit non-Party men?' He has the Order of the Red Banner, he is no creeper but an honourable fighter. And now he asks me: 'Is it true that this has been decided?' And you would like precisely that decision to be taken. The comrade from the Electro-Technical Academy said just that. This gives sufficient occasion for misinterpreters in the army to talk about the doors of the Academy being closed. It would be easy to close those doors; but where are we to find Communists who have sufficient military preparation? Comrade Ostrovsky, speaking here, started to discuss and weigh the question as to which is better: reliability or competence? That reminds me of another Ostrovsky, the dramatist, whose merchant-class heroine asks: 'Which is better – to expect and not to get, or to have and to lose?' [2] It is very hard to say which is better. A commander who knows his job but is not reliable will betray and cause disaster. A commander who is reliable but who can't make head or tail of anything, will also cause disaster. Which of them is better? Let's put them both in the scales. In one scale of the balance I put reliability and, in the other, competence. I think the scales will waver, waver – and end up level. Can it be denied, indeed, that both of these qualities are equally necessary? An unreliable commander causes disaster, and so also does a commander who does not know his job. Therefore, we need a commander who is both reliable and competent. Already in 1917 we said: since we have hardly any commanders who are both competent and reliable, we shall have to combine competence and reliability through combining two or three persons. We took a military specialist and we put on his right hand and on his left a commissar – who was in those days something different from what he is today. I remember how, in Petrograd, already at the time of Krasnov's first attack, when Muravyov was appointed commander, Comrade Lenin and I invited into another room the four sailors and one soldier who had been appointed commissars, and asked them if they possessed revolvers? Yes, they did. Right, then, we said: keep them in your bosoms and don't take your eyes off the commander. That was how we combined reliability with competence. Muravyov had the competence, and reliability was there in the sailor's bosom. And since then? We have made every effort to form commanders who are both competent and reliable. To speak very plainly, this has been a very difficult task. We have been betrayed both by traitor commanders and by ignoramus commanders. How many examples there have been of an excellent, devoted Communist who, when he was in command of a small guerrilla troop, showed courage, led his men into battle, and so on, but who, when he became commander of a division, did the most frightful things, which cost us very dear. And the entire initial phase of the war consisted of very grave mistakes – some due to treason, others to ignorance. And what is the point here? The point is that senior commanders are not formed artificially, in a laboratory, but only grow on the soil of the army itself, as a whole. We can, of course, accelerate this process a little, with the help of the Party, but it is hopeless to try and create military and naval academicians artificially, in a short time. That is why, when I pulled certain comrades up, I was not, of course, implying in the least that we do not need Communist commanders. No, we need them urgently. On this question we and you are following the same line, but at different tempos. You want to effect too rapid a jump in the Naval

Academy, from 1 per cent to 100 per cent. If you want to retain in the Navy those vestiges which we still have, you can't sweep away with a mop, in this fashion, something without which we cannot cope. And when Comrade Kruchinsky said here that they put traitor sailors in prison, but Comrade Trotsky wants to bring them back into the Academy, this is not at all such a simple matter. We discussed this question in the Party's Central Committee. A special commission was set up, under the chairmanship of Comrade Kursky – who is, as you know, not a sailor, but our People's Commissar of Justice and an old Party worker – a commission in which there were sailor members, in order to review those summary arrests, due to exceptional circumstances, in which mistakes might have been made. The overwhelming majority of those arrested have already been released. A certain number (this work has not yet been concluded) are being sent back to Petrograd and, apparently, some will be sent back to the Academy. Chekists are, of course, working with the commission, and they are not at all interested, any more than you and I are, in letting enemies into the Navy Department. That is how the matter stands. I have already spoken about concern for precedence. In reply, some comrades tried to justify this: whereas the old-time concern for precedence [3] was an expression of the dictatorship of the Boyars, that of today, they said, is an expression of the dictatorship of the working class. A worthless comparison. But I might, conditionally, accept it if what we had was a dictatorship of a working class the majority of which was Communist, in a country where the working class was indisputably master of the situation. But the essence of the matter is that the rule of the Communist Party is challenged from time to time. We can even imagine the varying ways in which the Communist Party, if it were to lose its common sense, might bring disaster upon itself. First, if it were to allow a large number of alien elements into its ranks. In Kronstadt there was a non-Party body of commanders, who betrayed us. But have you forgotten that there were several hundred Communists there, who took part in the fighting against us? [4] On the one hand you had non-Party senior commanders, whether naval or military, and, on the other, danger had penetrated into the Party in the form of alien elements. That was a serious lesson for us. If the Party were to take the path of establishing a Communist monopoly of military education, it would thereby impel many people to assume false colours in order to get into our ranks, while, on the other hand, it would alienate honest non-Party people and isolate itself politically. Non-Party people might not hide themselves inside the Party, but, instead, form themselves into groups hostile to the Party. That is where the danger lies. Our political strategy cannot, in these conditions, be a straight-line one such as has been suggested – get the higher educational institutions consolidated in Communist positions, and the job's done. On this question our political strategy has to be a strategy of manoeuvre. We shall open the doors of the higher educational institutions to non-Party people, because, in the Army – don't forget this, comrades! – 95 per cent are non-Party people. We shall say to the ordinary Red Army man: advance yourself! And at the same time, through the Party, we shall create *de facto* advantages for Communists: selection, promotion, preparation, and so on. If we find, as was the case at the end of last year, when, owing to requisitioning and so on, morale in the Army was bad, that an element hostile to the revolution is pressing through the gates, we shall post a Communist guard at the gates, and they will not let through anyone who should not be let through. Today we see that morale is improving in the Army. We say: open the door two inches wider. That does not mean, throw the door wide open to non-Party people! If morale should worsen again – which we think will not

happen – we should say: pull the door to, by one inch. Political manoeuvring consists in doing that. Certain terribly Left-wing comrades look with scorn on such policies – Comrade Kruchinsky, for instance. They would like to get hewing with an axe. But that is not our Communist policy. One needs to know when the door has to be held ajar and when it has to be slammed shut, or to be opened again. In that consists the political skill which has to be applied by the vanguard which constitutes a minority of the working class in a peasant country. In this lies the essence of our present strategy, and it is fully applicable to the higher military educational institutions. All that we can argue about is whether to open the door by half an inch or by seven inches – that is, the purely practical question of who to let in and who not to let in. But to shift this question on to the plane of a discussion about the dictatorship of the Party is nonsense. No such question arises, for who is it that decides whether to open the door by one inch or more than that? The Party decides. That's where the dictatorship exists. The Party, after considering the circumstances, decides to what extent, when and how to admit non-Party people. Thereby it keeps the leadership fully in its own hands, and the dictatorship consists in doing that.

Does this mean 'concessions', 'compromises'? Of course; intelligent concessions and necessary compromises! Where other questions are concerned, too, we have had to speak more than once recently regarding the sense and significance of our concessions. All the international Mensheviks are now howling about our New Economic Policy: 'Look what you are doing, you are granting concessions to foreign capital, you are allowing free trade; but this is an extremely Right-wing, compromising, reformist policy! So why did you take power? When we, in Germany (say the Scheidemannites), conclude compromise agreements with the bourgeoisie, you brand us, yet you yourselves are doing the same thing in your own country. Was it worth your taking power?' Consider, comrades, was it worth it, or wasn't it? To that we reply: 'Unrespected Messrs Scheidemannites. In your country the bourgeoisie decides how far it will go in making concessions to the working class: up to this point, agreed, but try to advance further, and the machine-guns will open up. In our country, however, we, the Party of the proletariat, decide how far to go in compromises with the bourgeoisie: up to this point, to this line, agreed, but try to advance further and – don't be angry! – the machine-guns will open up. That's the difference. The machine-guns are in our hands, the army is in our hands. We enter into various agreements: we have one agreement with the non-Party workers, another with the peasants, a third with the small-scale trade, and with large-scale trade, with the concession-holders, we have yet another special agreement – all different agreements, different deals, carefully calculated. But who holds the key? We do. Who decides on the limits of agreement? The Party. That's the point. Without these agreements we should long ago have fallen, but we are standing firm and shall continue to do so, we shall win – there, you see how far the question about whether to allow non-Party people into the Academy has led us. This is not my fault but the fault of those comrades who posed the question on the plane of 'principles'.

Comrade Kruchinsky tried to attack me along another line of 'principle', namely, that of offensive revolutionary war. I say at once, and straight out, that these are the false prejudices, the superficialities of Leftism, here being played to a military tune, and frighteningly similar to the views of those German Left semi-Marxists, semi-syndicalists, who were at the International Congress that was held here. [\[5\]](#) Such views can cause much confusion. They are clean contrary to the line of our Party. Let us get closer to the question.

Comrade Kruchinsky says that I am 'frightened' by Red imperialism, that I only halfacknowledge offensive revolutionary war, but am afraid to say so out loud. Whereas he, Kruchinsky, will say it all without holding back: offensive revolutionary war, that's it, he says, so out with it and don't beat about the bush! Let's consider the matter. To this question, which is of the highest importance, I am devoting a long article which will appear in the next issue of **The Communist International** and in our military journal. [6] Here, I want to say, in connection with Comrade Kruchinsky's remarks, first of all, that there are two aspects to this question: the political-principle aspect and the political-agitation aspect. The aspect of principle consists in this: do we regard offensive revolutionary war as admissible in principle, and, also, is it probable, or inevitable, historically? Unconditionally, we regard it as both admissible and probable, and, in certain circumstances, inevitable. We spoke about that twenty years ago, even before the first revolution: it is an elementary truth. Already Marx taught us that when the revolutionary class holds power in its hands, and has the army, it uses this to consolidate the revolution and, where possible, also to extend its territory. The bourgeoisie must be overthrown throughout the world, and one of the instruments for overthrowing it will be in certain circumstances, revolutionary war. Thus, there is not and cannot be any question of principle for us as to whether the army needs to be capable, in certain cases, of waging revolutionary war. But when, how and in what circumstances?

At the Third Congress of the Comintern the German, Italian and other 'Lefts' said that they stood for the revolutionary 'offensive'. They were referring not to the strategy of the Red Army but to the strategy of our Party in Germany and other countries. They said: we stand for the revolutionary offensive, because the bourgeoisie can be overthrown only by an uprising. About that there can be no dispute, it is elementary. But it does not follow therefrom *when* and *where* the uprising is to take place. And that is a question of no small importance. The Third Congress said that the present period is not one of offensive by the working class against the bourgeoisie on the world scale, it is a period of political preparation for this offensive. The argument consequently concerned these alternatives - international revolutionary offensive, or international preparation for an offensive. The 'Lefts' tried to wave their arms about and accuse us: you, they said, are against the revolutionary offensive, but that is rubbish. We ridiculed them, saying, you, lads, have only just learnt about the revolutionary offensive, and you are poking it around everywhere, in every corner, like blind kittens. But you need to know what it's all about. That was how we answered them, and we were right to do so. And the 'Lefts' drew a very good lesson for themselves from that. In Germany our Party has, in the last six months, effected the necessary retreat and has carried out extensive work in preparation for the offensive: this work alone will enable it, sooner or later, to go over to the offensive and smash the German bourgeoisie. But if we have gone over to preparation, as against offensive, on the world scale, what conclusion follows from that for the Red Army? Does it perhaps have its own special policy? An offensive now would mean that we want the Red Army to shoulder a task beyond its strength. Such a policy would be fatal. We say to the working class: the international congress acknowledged that, in the period immediately ahead (how long it will last, I don't know), we must concentrate on preparatory work. We are not going to undertake the fantastical task of marching on Warsaw, Berlin and Paris at a time when the International is saying to the workers of

Poland, Germany and France – pull back closer to the masses, don't go too far, you still have big tasks of preparation to accomplish. This is why I consider that in Comrade Tukhachevsky's interesting book there is an error when he writes that the time has come for the Comintern to set up an international general staff. [7] Neither more nor less! An international general staff! What's that? The Communist International is the political organisation which unites the national Communist Parties. When did the International become a possibility? When, alongside the Russian Communist Party, there appeared the German and other Communist Parties. Well, and when would a common general staff become possible? When, alongside the government of the Russian proletariat, other proletarian governments have arisen. Then and only then will it be possible to speak seriously of a common general staff, in the military sense of the word. But, you know, this necessary pre-condition is not present! And we are now at the stage of retreat and preparation. What about our concessions to foreign capitalists? What about our recognition of the Tsarist debts? Are these, perhaps, elements in an offensive? No, they are elements of compromise and preparation. Strategy, after all, is bound up with policy. If we were now in a position to take the offensive, we should not have recognised the Tsarist debts. Concessions, the New Economic Policy, recognition of the Tsarist debts, and, along with all that, offensive war: why, it would make a cat laugh! I tell you in confidence that one can't talk seriously about this matter, out loud – people would roar with laughter! War is the continuation of policy by other means, said old Clausewitz, and old Clausewitz was a sensible man. With you, though, policy goes in one direction and strategy in another. Of course, the offensive method would be more agreeable, but at the opportune moment. We tried to make a revolutionary offensive sortie into Europe with our march on Warsaw, but it did not come off. Why? Because the revolution had not matured. Not because such a sortie was wrong in principle, no, but because the revolution in Poland had not matured. In Italy the revolution had miscarried, and in Germany and Poland the preparatory period had not been completed. Our military movement turned out to be politically isolated – and we recoiled. From that moment began a general political retreat by the proletariat. A retreat can also be a manoeuvre, just like an offensive. That is well said in Comrade Tukhachevsky's book. He shows that, in a war of manoeuvre, defence also acquires a manoeuvring character. Retreat is a purposeful change of location so as to avoid a disadvantageous battle. The result of our military retreat from Warsaw – after sounding out our enemies and our friends – was a political retreat, not only by Soviet Russia but also by the entire revolutionary movement. What was the Treaty of Riga, for which we are now paying? It was part of our retreat. We are pulling back, cautiously and firmly, not yielding to the enemy any more positions than we have to. We are retreating ... and, what's this? we are shouting: 'Since we are Marxists, we are in principle for offensive, not defensive action.' I repeat, it would make a cat laugh. That's what is meant by thinking a question through to the end! Naturally, when the situation has changed in the relevant way, we shall take the offensive, after first halting our retreat and strengthening ourselves. One must retreat at the right time and advance at the right time. That is the meaning of the strategy of manoeuvre about which so many people are making such a stir. If I press on regardless of circumstances, where's the manoeuvre?! The strategy of manoeuvre, comrades, consists in retreating, when need be, advancing, when need be, and, when need be, combining retreat and offensive so as to be in the best position to prepare and deliver a blow. That is how it is with strategy, just as with our revolutionary policy.

So, then, we are now faced with a period of preparation – here, in Germany and in Poland. What does preparation mean here? That we get the army into order, that we assemble some reserve stores, that we try to raise the level of the educational institutions, that we expand the schools for commanders. All that, on the basis of serious concessions to the peasantry and, in part, to the bourgeoisie. In Germany the preparatory period means waging a successful struggle to win the masses. In Poland it means the growth of the Communist Party: at the elections for the hospital-fund clubs the Communist Party won more votes than the Polish Socialist Party – that is a symptom of extraordinary importance. We must always be ready at short notice, and a crisis is undoubtedly maturing in the events that are taking place: but what international expression will this assume? Most likely, that Poland won't be able to stand it, and will start to attack us.

Here we approach the question from the standpoint of political agitation, that is, from that of preparing the consciousness of the masses. What are we doing now in the military field? We are carrying out a general demobilisation. It is astonishing how inconsistent some comrades are in their thinking. We recently demobilised the 13th age-group and we are about to discharge the 14th on indefinite leave. I ask you: how can we, at one and the same time, demobilise and talk about offensive revolutionary war? Either all revolutionary terms have been devalued here, or else we and our 'Lefts' talk different languages! How is it possible not to accuse the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and the Central Committee of the Party of treason if we are demobilising the army when what is on the agenda is offensive war? Be consistent! We are demobilising because we are not at present going to fight, and, consequently, we are not going to launch an offensive. This is what we say to the workers and peasants: we have no war at present, there are no fronts, we are not going to attack anyone, and so we are demobilising. But why keep the classes of 1900 and 1901 in the Army? Because the danger of an attack upon us has not passed, and the army must keep a skeleton, so that it may be expanded in the event of danger. Do we have one doctrine for ourselves and another for the people? From the standpoint of political agitation we must explain to the Red Army men that the danger has not passed, because we are, as before, living in a capitalist encirclement. We are not going to attack anyone on our own initiative. Our stance is a defensive one. But we must squeeze out from our defensive stance all the possibilities, all the political advantages we can, so that the whole army, which is made up mostly of peasants, may feel, in the event of danger, that what is at stake is the fate of the peasants' and workers' power, that there can be no further retreat, that no additional concessions will be of any use, that we have to fight. Only then, with our peasant rearguard which is slow to get going, can we pass from retreat to offensive – provided that there is a revolutionary offensive by the working class of Europe. That is the real view of our Party, and what some comrades spoke about here as revolutionary doctrine is profoundly mistaken. If we were to approach the masses with this doctrinairism they would not follow us, they would forsake us, and we should not obtain the circumstances which we need to prepare. That is the heart of the matter. Now, about preparation. Let us remember that tomorrow's enemy will be more serious than any we have faced hitherto. Some comrades take the attitude: that's all right, we'll bring all our weight to bear on them and win through somehow, that is, we will once more mobilise thousands and thousands of Communists, if necessary we'll put three men behind one rifle, and we'll win. That, after all, was what often happened here

in the past. Of course we'll win, because we'll stop at nothing in order to win. But, all the same, we need to have a very much more attentive and serious attitude now towards political, organisational and technical preparation. Where Denikin and Kolchak were concerned, our old methods proved adequate but where Poland was concerned they did not prove adequate. As you probably know, there were differences among us at the time, on whether to make peace with Poland or to march on Warsaw. I was in favour of making peace, since it was very doubtful if we had the power to reach Warsaw, let alone to take it. The answer to that question depended, however, on a general political appreciation, in particular on our estimate of the attitude the working class of Poland would adopt towards the war. It was hard to forecast that with any precision: eventually, the view that we should go forward won the day. The offensive miscarried. But even after that, as we were being thrown back, voices were raised to demand that we resume the offensive, at all costs! It soon became clear, though, that this was unrealisable: with an army thoroughly shaken by retreat and hastily replenished with fresh, almost untrained, replacements, we were unable to fight, and an attempt to fill up all the gaps with Communists would merely have meant destroying Communists to no purpose – we should not have got to Warsaw anyway. The Polish army was more highly skilled than the armies of Kolchak and Denikin had been. To face the future we must ensure that we prepare with maximum thoroughness.

Some comrades think that the army has to be prepared *either* for offensive action *or* for defence, and with this aim in mind they construct a revolutionary doctrine of the offensive. This is not true! An army is prepared for conflict, for battle, for war, and, consequently for *both* offensive *and* defensive action. The same fundamental methods are applicable both to the defensive and to the offensive, just as a rifle can be used both in retreat and in attack, and just as trained hands can be used both to strike a blow and to ward one off. An army has to be given elementary practical training so that it may make good use of its weapons both when retreating and when on the offensive. And we need no doctrinairism!

What does our army lack? Skill, know-how, precision, meticulousness in execution. It lacks accuracy. It lacks military culture, like every other sort of culture. To ensure that some previously-decided operations shall coincide in time is very, very difficult for us: more difficult than to perform some heroic exploit. For a man to go to the telephone and make a call at a prearranged time, and for another man to be waiting at the other end for that call to come through at that time, in order that he may receive instructions – I give this as an example – to achieve *that* result, with our way of doing things, is a very difficult task indeed. And yet war consists not of mere plans, but of their fulfilment, which, in turn, breaks down into a multitude of details. Each operation, and the war as a whole, is made up of such details. Of course we need *élan*, enthusiasm. Of course we need a proper plan. But what we lack most of all is proper organisation, skill, know-how, well-considered assiduity, accuracy. Most of you know from experience that it is precisely for this reason that we most often miscarry. No one person is to blame for a failure, because they are all linked one with another, this little bit of slovenliness to that little bit of vagueness, and all together they bring about the downfall, the destruction, of thousands of men. Comrade Kruchinsky said, with condescending pity, that he had read my messages about the need to sew on buttons and grease boots. What 'trifles'! How can that sort of thing matter to us when what we have to do is to prepare for offensive war ... But the trouble is that, without

boots it is very hard to carry out an offensive, or even to retreat.

The absence of this precision among us is not accidental, it is a heritage from our past slavery, a result of our backwardness, ignorance, lack of culture. We need to wage a fierce, stubborn, systematic struggle against all that, in every direction and especially in that of military education. The commander who looks down contemptuously upon trifles is not a serious person. Your work in the academies is more often than not hindered by such 'trifles' as shortage of wood, lamp-bulbs or text-books. You, comrades, have quoted striking examples enough on that score. If attention is not paid to these 'trifles' you will not learn, you will not be prepared, and the army will suffer for that. Therefore, without being able, alas, to guarantee 100 per cent success, I do promise you to try 100 per cent to meet all these deficiencies to the limit of what is possible.

From the archives

Endnotes

[1.](#) The Second Conference of Communist Party cells in Higher Military Education Institutions was held on December 10-12, 1921. Besides the concluding remarks printed here, Comrade Trotsky gave a report at this conference the shorthand transcript of which has not, unfortunately, been preserved. Here is an excerpt from the account of it given in the journal **Krasnaya Armiya**, No.9 of 1920. 'The Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic summed up the reports received from the localities and said that the command would immediately take real steps to improve the material situation of the Higher Military-Education Institutions. As one measure for improving living conditions in them, he proposed that they be attached to the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets. Recognising the need to reorganise the Higher Military School, Comrade Trotsky commented on certain tendencies, which had been shown in connection with the question of admission to higher military-education institutions. He stressed that the doors of the military school are open to all commanders who are devoted to the revolution, including non-Party commanders who have proved in action their devotion to the Soviet power.' On the question of the admission of non-Party men to higher military-education institutions see on page 254): *The Military Academies and Non-Party People*.

[2.](#) This is said in A.N. Ostrovsky's play *What you dream on the eve of a feast-day will come true before dinner-time* (1857), by Ustinka, a merchant's daughter.

[3.](#) In Russia between the 15th and 17th centuries closeness to the Tsar and priority in appointment to certain posts was governed, among the nobles, by a formal 'order of precedence'.

[4.](#) Paul Avrich (**Kronstadt**, 1970, p.183) quotes Trotsky as telling the Tenth Party Congress that 30 per cent of the Kronstadt Communists took an active part in the revolt, while 40 per cent remained neutral.

[5.](#) For Trotsky's critique of the German Lefts' 'theory of the offensive', see his speech of July 2 1921, at the 3rd Congress of the Communist International (**The First Five Years of the Communist International**, Volume I, London, 1973, pp.321-333).

[6.](#) The article: *Military Doctrine or Pseudo-Military Doctrinairism* appeared in No.19 of the journal **Kommunistichesky Internatsional** and in No.2 of **Voyennaya Nauka i Revolyutsiya** for 1921. This article is given in Volume V of this edition, in the section *Questions of Military Theory*.

[7.](#) On the establishment of an International General Staff, see Tukhachevsky's book **Voyna Klassov (The Class War)**, Gosizdat, Moscow 1921, p.59.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

Report

To the Conference of Military Education Institutions of the Moscow Military District,
December 12, 1921

* * *

Comrades, we have, up to now, reduced the size of our army to less than one-third what it was last year. In connection, on the one hand, with the forthcoming Congress of Soviets, and, on the other, with the slander put out against us at the Washington Conference, that we are preparing to conquer all Europe next spring or summer and are developing rabid militarism, we have calculated the numbers of our army. In comparison with the numbers of the French army, taking into account the difference in territory and population, even using the most modest coefficient, namely, comparing our population with that of France, our army is only one-eighteenth as big as the French army. Moreover, it has to be remembered that, as regards security, France is in a position at least eighteen times better than ours. The danger to France, about which the French Premier Briand complained so bitterly at Washington, consists in the circumstance that she holds Germany by the throat, and, having forced her to the ground, says to her allies: 'If my grip weakens, Germany may break away and get up.' That is what the danger to France amounts to! Our danger is of a different order. We are still surrounded by an imperialist encirclement, and the imperialists are trying to grasp us by the throat and force us to the ground. *Our army is in the full sense of the word an army for defence:* in the midst of a very grave international situation, in the midst of danger, we have reduced the size of our army by two thirds.

Our army has become considerably more youthful in composition. We have released thirteen age-groups. They were the ones which had been through the imperialist war and the civil war. We are now approaching the point when the army will consist of two age-groups only, the youngest. They are a splendid element, splendid material. But this young age-group haven't much experience. Roughly speaking, not more than ten per cent of them saw service in the civil war. We have therefore not merely reduced the army quantitatively, but it is now lacking in experience, and it will need to acquire that.

The commanders of our Red Army are now much younger than was the case previously. A section-leader is a Red Army man of 19 or 20. And yet it is obvious that, if we are to be able to defend ourselves with an army reduced in size, this army of ours must be highly-skilled, it must be an army of the professional type. If, against our will, we had to face a new war, it would be a more serious war than we have known hitherto. In that event, we should turn to mobilising great masses of men, calling millions to the colours. We are maintaining a strictly defensive policy in international and military affairs: we

are making concessions. Both the Treaty of Riga and our recent agreement to recognise the Tsarist debts, on certain conditions, are concessions on our part. These concessions are inspired by our endeavour to devote all our forces to restoring our ruined economy. But our enemies continue to attack us. Consequently, we have to be prepared. For this purpose we need, without increasing the size of the army, to raise its ideological, political and military level. The army's composition is youthful and, from that standpoint, favourable. The young Red Army men and cadets want to learn and are capable of learning. But they have to be taught, and that presents great difficulty.

Our ideal, which is a practical one and not a dream of heaven, is to put every Red Army man through a short command course. What sort of army do we need? We need one in which every Red Army man possesses the body of knowledge that is possessed by a Red commander who has been through a command course. We shall not achieve this tomorrow, or the day after. But it would be good if, within a short time – say, a few months – the senior soldier in a squad [1] were to attain the present level of a section-leader, and the section-leader to attain the level of a good Red commander. We need to bring the corps of commanders one stage nearer to the Red Army man. In this matter, so far as we know, we enjoy the approval of the Red cadets, who want to begin their probationary period as commanders at section level. In the old army, the section-leader was a non-commissioned officer, whereas the platoon-commander was an officer. This barrier must be broken down. The young Red commander will begin his service as a section-leader, remaining in that post for at least three months. If, in this probationary period, he shows the necessary qualities – primarily, confidence and firmness in command – he will receive promotion. If not, he will be kept as section-leader for another three months, in order to acquire the confidence he needs. In this way Red commanders will be given, to start with, a task that is within their competence. The next phase will see an improvement in the level of skill of the *entire* Red Army. A Red Army in which every Red Army man will be at the level of today's junior commanders will require an improvement in the work of our military education institutions. We must ceaselessly perfect their work, if we want to use the breathing spell to create a well-trained army. Improving military education is now a very important task before the Republic.

Along with this there is another task to be performed: the creation of stores in readiness for mobilisation. During the civil war our greatest misfortune was that we were unable to provide all our fighting men even with rifles, let alone with anything more advanced technically. Every improvement in the country's economic position – and such an improvement has begun both in the iron and steel industry, and in fuel production – will at once have its effect on army supply, which is kept under vigilant observation by the Soviet Government. You know the difficult material situation in our schools – you know it better than I do. And we must find a way out of this situation. It would be good if we could at once increase supply by 20 or 30 per cent but at present there can be no question of that. The only solution is to lay down a definite minimum for the schools and see to it that the schools receive this – receive it 100 per cent. If we can manage to do better than that it will be a gain for you and for us. At the centre we are waging a ceaseless struggle in order to obtain the necessary minimum from the state's common stock, the claimants on which are numerous and can only be allowed something less than they ask for. The reason for this state of affairs is, of course, not ill-will but the condition the

country is in. Supply to military-education institutions has been given first priority, even though much is lacking also in the Red Army's barracks. But we shall explain to the Red Army man – and he will understand – that we are keeping short not only the peasants and the workers but also the Red Army men so as to be able to give to the schools, because the schools are preparing commanders for the Red Army men, and if they do that job badly, then the Red Army men will pay for it with their blood.

Initiative must also be shown in the localities, so as to make better use of what the schools provide. Vigour is required, too, so as to get additional help from local resources. The commander or commissar who is able to interest the local province or district executive committee in the fate of his school, who reports on it to meetings of the local executive committee, mentioning its requirements, can get help from the local organs in the shape of food, felt boots, sheepskin coats, and so on. We at the centre shall support such initiative in every way. Linked with this is our move to attach military education institutions to local executive committees and to central bodies. We must take this process further, and ensure that these attachments do not remain merely moral, but bring real, solid, material advantages. Only the combined efforts of the centre and the localities will ensure that we see an improvement in the position of our educational institutions.

On my way here I read Comrade Verkhovsky's pamphlet dealing with the state of military training in the military education institutions. [\[2\]](#) I urge all the comrades here present to have a look at this pamphlet. It examines the curriculum of purely military training in the light of our Red Army's experience, in the international situation we are in today. Some of the conclusions drawn by Comrade Verkhovsky can be accepted completely, others only with qualifications. You know that a discussion is now going on in the army press and at meetings on the extent to which the strategy and tactics of the revolutionary Red Army are inseparably bound up with the tactics of a war of manœuvre, and whether circumstances might arise in which the Red Army would have to fight a war that was quasi-positional in character. These are very complex and interesting questions. It would be highly desirable and useful to have an exchange of views on these questions. But in no case must it be forgotten that the Red Army has its own, definite, clear tasks.

Comrade Verkhovsky insists, quite rightly, on the immense importance of initiative in the army. But this initiative must have a certain infrastructure of *automatism* in habits, without which no initiative is possible. When necessary actions have become habitual, the brain is freed for creative activity. I have already spoken more than once about our large-scale manœuvres in Podolia. The higher commanders did not disgrace themselves in these manœuvres, but where those elementary practices are concerned which go to make up a military action – march discipline, security, communications, and so on – we proved to be beneath criticism. The Red commanders did not manifest any excess of automatism. But it is essential that certain habits shall become second nature. A commander must not be able to sleep until he has made his report. He cannot forget to make the necessary arrangements for security. All this he does mechanically. And *then* he can be creative. Imagine a musician who had to search over the keyboard with his fingers to find where 'doh' is and where're' – all his playing would be ruined. There is an element of automatism in any craft without which no skill is possible. We are not born with it, but acquire it, through the formation of habits. Military skill begins at the point

where the habits of the military craft are combined freely, in accordance with the situation, the time and the weather; but the basic actions – conducting reconnaissance, posting sentries, remembering what communications have to be established, to right and to left, sending reports – must be so much a matter of habit that they are performed automatically. There is no call to be afraid of automatism here. We haven't enough of it. Yet many comrade cadets, and even instructors, denounce square-bashing and the like. We have got rid of presenting arms and ceremonial marching. If something is unnecessary, right, let it be struck out of the regulations. But whatever has been tested by experience and found to be necessary must be studied, for only with this kind of application of automatism can the mind be freed for creativity. We need to take this into account in our curricula and in all our training and education work. I hope that we shall prepare the summer camp carefully, drawing up a proper programme of summer exercises – provided that we do not find ourselves obliged, this summer, to operate, through the will of our enemies, not on manœuvres but in an actual war situation, something which is also not beyond possibility. But that does not depend on us. For our part, we must do everything to carry out the training and education of the army in the proper way.

Comrade Verkhovsky mentions the role that propaganda plays in welding our army together and in disintegrating the enemy. I should like to correct not only what Comrade Verkhovsky says but also what has been said by many others who have written on this theme. It is often said here that propaganda is a component part, a specific property of the 'doctrine' – how they love that word! – of the Red Army. I spent the first year of the war in France. I have never seen here such propaganda as France carried on – how could we have such propaganda, given our poverty, our 'going about in bast sandals', so to speak? Every Red Army man received several newspapers ... I beg your pardon, there were no Red Army men there. If there had been, we should not have needed to create a Red Army. Every French soldier received several newspapers. And all these newspapers confirmed, with one voice, that the war was being fought in defence against barbarism. Every piece of information was filtered. There were a variety of newspapers: clerical ones, social ones, and so on, all the colours of the Republic were represented, and they all said the same thing – go to the defence of the Republic. And the French soldier absorbed that in the trenches, day after day. The very best artistes performed for him. He was visited in the trenches by a variety of deputations – on the one hand, the Socialist deputy Renaudel, on the other the clerical deputy and Academician Barrès. One spoke of the Catholic God, the other of the Socialist ideal. But both told him one and the same thing: fight. Ballet dancers, the best actors and actresses, all passed through the trenches, and all of them carried on agitation in favour of fighting the war to the end. What's this they say, that we, the Bolsheviks, invented propaganda? Nothing of the sort! Every religion was propaganda. Even our old Tsardom knew how to make propaganda: 'Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality.' [\[3\]](#) If you compare what we do with what was done in France in the sphere of propaganda, we look like miserable pigmies.

What is the point? Not that we invented propaganda, but that our propaganda has a definite class content, that it is better received, that our little grey paper, printed in France on an underground press and translated into French, meets with a better response among the French workers than is met by the splendidly produced French papers. In Paris, two sailors, Marty and

Badina, have been elected to the municipal council [4]: they were on the ships that bombarded Odessa, they refused to take part in the bombardment, and they were sentenced death. They are now in a convict prison, and French workers have elected them to the municipal council. While Briand was telling lies in Washington [5] about how we want to conquer the whole world, French workers were electing two convicts to their council because they had refused to fire on us. We did not invent propaganda, but our propaganda expresses the feelings of the working masses, and that is where its immense power lies. Today, the task in educating the Red Army and its commanders is to explain, clearly and simply, the situation at any moment, and to draw conclusions from it.

I mentioned today that we have made a number of concessions – from the Treaty of Riga to recognition of the Tsarist debts. We are not doing this, of course, with a light heart, and many of you were stirred to indignation: we cancelled the Tsar's debts, we proclaimed this loudly, and now we are saying that, given certain conditions, we are ready to recognise them. [4a] That this is a retreat is indubitable. Yes, we are retreating. But why? Because we regard these debts as being beyond reproach? No. Everyone must realise that our agreement to pay these debts, on certain conditions, is an attempt to pay not for the past but for the future, so that we may not be disturbed by highway robbers. The meaning of these concessions must be comprehended by every Red commander, because he is called upon not only to shed his own blood but also to summon others to shed theirs. Consequently he must first know and understand that our policy is a policy of making concessions to the world-predators who are pressing upon us. The peace with Poland, the Treaty of Riga, was a very big concession. And how many cases there have been since then which have been what is called in thieves' cant *casus belli*, meaning that we could, because of them, have gone to war in full accordance with their laws. We made a peace treaty with Poland, but she is throwing Savinkov at us. In what textbooks of international law is such conduct permitted? There are no such textbooks, but the facts are there. We exterminate the gangs, but we do not declare war on Poland. Why? Because we do not want war, we want to restore our economy. History is working for us. It sometimes works slowly, like a worn-out horse, and has to be given the whip. Nevertheless, the old lady is getting us up the hill. If we did not have confidence in ultimate victory, our policy would not be possible, and we should perish. But we have this confidence, and therefore our restraint in foreign policy is absolutely justified. If, though, we find ourselves obliged to fight, we must be ready quickly to ward off the enemy's blow.

Only recently Poland launched Tyutyunik on to our territory, and Romania acted similarly. Today, White-Guard bands are operating in Karelia, having been thrown by the Finnish Government on to our territory. From the *casus belli* standpoint, pretexts for war are as plentiful as could be wished. But we are not going to fight. We look upon the raid into Karelia and the offensive into Right-bank Ukraine as the remnants of a certain plan. In the autumn, when the news came out concerning the famine in the Volga country, a frenzied agitation began among our enemies. In Poland and Romania they thought the moment had arrived to launch an offensive on a compact front against Soviet Russia. It was then that they got ready the first of Savinkov's units, and the other gangs. The general offensive did not come off, because the famine did not give rise to what they had expected: collapse, revolt, and so on. But the gangs had been got ready. They have now invaded our territory and caused

some disorder, but, since they fail to encounter sympathy even among the elements most favourably disposed to their standpoint, they are, naturally helpless to do us any substantial harm.

These raids at the same time serve to warn us. They tell us that the spring may see the beginning of operations of a more serious nature. The very fact that Briand, in Washington, found it possible to assert that we are preparing to do something against all Western Europe in the spring testifies that they, not we, are plotting something for the spring. In all the work we do in our military education institutions we must reckon with the danger that may be bearing down upon us. I suggest that you all follow attentively what is happening on our frontiers. In the Far East the remnants of the Kappelite army have rearmed [6], put on weight, and are invading the Far Eastern Republic. What does this invasion mean? The Far Eastern Republic is a part of Russia. Why does it exist separately from us? Because it has voluntarily made itself the democratic defensive flank of the Soviet Republic in the Far East. France says: 'We fought against Russia because there was no democracy there, no government elected on the basis of universal, equal (and so forth) suffrage. [7] There was no democracy, which is closely bound up with property-ownership.' We replied: 'You want democracy, with private property – there you have it, in the Far East.' Out there they elected a government on the basis of equal, universal (and so forth) suffrage. All elements of the population in those parts support the government, which, though it consists mostly of Communists, has been elected in such a way that not a word can be said against it. More than that: private property has been retained. Well, so what? Japan and the Kappelite remnants continue to attack it. While Briand was arguing in Washington about how much better it would be to disarm, we had already three-quarters disarmed. We gave them democracy in the Far East. Here, we gave them our promise to pay the Tsar's debts, but, despite all our concessions, they still go on attacking us, from every direction.

Although these attacks are of no military importance, they possess enormous significance as symptoms. The gentlemen who are conferring in Washington know that we are ready to make concessions. They know this, and yet all the attacks on us take place with their knowledge, on their orders. Therefore we need to keep our eyes open.

Our enemies' situation is such that they are seeking salvation in adventures. The crisis has become extremely acute even in America. Germany is in no position to make the payments imposed on her by the peace treaty. France is poor, a state bankrupt who hopes to put off bankruptcy with Germany's aid. But they can get nothing out of Germany, because they can't lay hands on capital. Only the working class can do that, and it will do it not in order to pay France but in order to fight against her. In Poland the Pilsudski clique hopes, by annexing the Ukraine to Poland to plunder her and use her resources to compensate for the ruined state of Poland. That is why it is supporting and sustaining the gangs which are attacking the Ukraine. While striving for peace we must all the time take care that we are in a position to fight.

We need to prepare ourselves through military training and political education. In Tsarist Russia our peasants were cannon-fodder for war. And so long as war did not require a more intellectual type of soldier, our army performed miracles, in the hands of commanders like Suvorov and others. It became weaker in proportion as individuality and initiative came to be required

of the soldier. Our peasants could not provide that sort of individual fighting man. The task of promoting the peasant's general development is an urgent one. Agitation among the peasants must always have a direct, practical, down-to-earth, so to speak, point of departure. The worker is much more capable of grasping abstractions. He is capable of going into battle for a Soviet Germany, understanding the unity of interests of the workers of the whole world. The mass of the peasantry are not capable of doing that. We observed this in the civil war. Only when Denikin approached Kursk did the peasant of Kursk Province realise what was coming towards him. He had to see with his own eyes that the landlords and kulaks were coming, and were starting to take the land away from him, before he would agree that the time had arrived to hit back. The deserters in Kursk Province then began to report for duty, partly under the pressure of the public opinion of the Kursk peasantry. That is the peasant's weakness. After events have given him a fright, he is able to show tenacity and courage. A commander has to reckon with this mentality of the peasant, especially in our army, which must be based on the consciousness of all its fighters. And it is necessary that every peasant shall understand our policy of concessions, our *defensive* line.

Our concessions, including the recognition of the Tsarist debts, mean two things. First, they are an attempt to buy the possibility of our country's economic restoration. Secondly, they are highly instructive for the peasant whose level of consciousness is low. The peasant does not want to fight. While the advanced worker will say: 'I am ready to give my life for the Hungarian republic, for the Polish republic, for the German republic,' the peasant won't say that. The Penza peasant doesn't want to die for the Polish republic, and neither does the Saratov peasant want to die for the German revolution. But when enemies force us to fight, contrary to our wishes, against White Poland, White Romania and so on, it is necessary that the peasants of Penza and Saratov shall realise that we have no alternative. Ferdinand Lassalle said that every revolutionary movement begins with the need to 'say what is'. We have to say what is to the peasants of Penza and Saratov. We are making big concessions, and we say to the peasant: all this is being done so that you may not be forced to fight. There will, of course, be those who will say that it would be better to fight now, instead of making concessions. Let these 'fire-eaters' put that to a company or a regiment, and they will get this reply: 'You want us to fight for the sake of the Tsarist debts?' And the fire-eater will fall silent, because the company, 90 per cent of whom are non-Party peasants, does not want to fight. But if, after we have made all these concessions, they attack us, then the peasants of Saratov and Penza will fight. Even if it means they have to die in their tens and hundreds of thousands, they will march. They will march when they understand that what is at stake is the workers' and peasants' power, the independence of the country, the inviolability of our territory, of their land. It is an urgent task in the political education of our army to explain the meaning of every concession we make and of every blow struck at us. Comparing Washington, where they are forging chains for us, with Paris, where the French workers and soldiers are electing sailor convicts to the council, and the events in Karelia, which, though not large-scale, are highly symptomatic, with our recognition of the Tsarist debts – there you have a simple, honest way of explaining our position to the peasant. A cadet may himself be a peasant from Saratov or Penza, and he must understand this himself and explain it to the Red Army man.

Let every cadet, when he returns to his school, say first of all to his

comrades: the workers' and peasants' government is making concessions so as to avoid war, but we are being attacked in spite of this; you must stand up for the revolution and the future of mankind. Because all the facts show that they are preparing to strike a big blow at us in the spring – not a blow that could crush us, but one that would call for efforts on our part. And we are faced with the task of preparing to fight, if we are forced to, and of winning victory with a minimum of bloodshed. If your conference can explain this to the mass of cadets, its work will be fully justified.

I greet you, comrades, and wish you success in your work.

Voyenny Vyestnik,
1922, No.1

Endnotes

- [1.](#) A 'squad' (*zveno*) consists of 3-5 men, a 'section' (*otdelenie*) of 5-15 men.
- [2.](#) A.I. Verkhovsky, *The tasks of military-education institutions in the light of war experience*: supplement to issue No.19 of 1921 of the journal **Voyennoye Znanie**.
- [3.](#) 'Orthodoxy [i.e., the Orthodox form of Christianity, contrasted with Catholicism], Autocracy [i.e., Tsardom], and Nationality [i.e., 'Russianness']' were the official principles of Tsarist Russia, as 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity' were those of Republican France.
- [4.](#) André Marty was first engineer on the Destroyer *Protet*. While the vessel was in Romanian waters he tried to raise a mutiny with a view to taking the ship to Odessa and turning it over to the Bolsheviks. Arrested on April 16, 1919, he was on April 23 transferred to the cruiser *Waldeck-Rousseau*, which was threatening Odessa. He succeeded in getting in touch with the crew, and on April 27 they mutinied, so that the vessel had to be withdrawn from Soviet waters. Louis Badina was with Marty in the conspiracy on the *Protet*, but escaped arrest by jumping ship. He remained in Romania, and other countries outside France, until September 1920, when he gave himself up to the French Consul at Genoa. In March 1921 he was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment. Marty had already in 1919 been sentenced to 20 years. Both men were released in 1923.
- [4a.](#) The statement [\[4b\]](#) about recognition of war debts [*sic*] was made on October 28, 1921. In a note addressed to the government of Britain, France, Italy and the United States, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Comrade Chicherin, declared that the Soviet Government was ready to assume obligations towards other states and their citizens in respect of state debts incurred by the Tsarist Government down to 1914, provided that favourable terms were granted which would make it possible in practice for the Soviet Government to meet these obligations.
- [4b.](#) The Soviet statement actually concerned pre-war (pre-1914) debts. On Russia's debts incurred during the war the Soviet Government's line was that the Russian people had more than repaid these debts by their contribution made in blood to the fight against the common enemy of debtor and creditors.
- [5.](#) The reference is to the Washington Conference on naval disarmament, held in November-December 1921, which was attended by the United States, Britain, France, Japan, Italy and other states. At the conference sessions on November 21 and 27 [\[5a\]](#) the representative of France, Britain, when discussing the Russian question, accused Russia of militarism, saying that Soviet Russia was ready at any moment to fall upon Poland, and that the Red Army actually numbered 6,000,000 and constituted a menace to Europe.
- [5a.](#) Briand did indeed make a speech on November 21, 1921 in which he spoke of the existence in Russia of 'an army of 1,500,000 men, 600,000 of whom are substantially armed' as a cause for alarm. On November 25, however, he sailed from the USA, arriving in France on December 2, so that it is not clear what the editor means by his reference to a

speech made on November 27.

6. General V.O. Kappel, one of the ablest of the White commanders, died in January 1920. The remnants of Kolchak's forces called themselves 'Kappelites' in honour of his memory. They were commanded at this time by General Verzhbitsky.

7. The four points of the traditional demand for democratic elections in Russia were that suffrage should be (1) universal, (2) equal (i.e. one man, one vote), (3) direct (i.e. not via some 'electoral college') and (4) secret.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

Alas, We Are Not Accurate Enough!

* * *

Precision, accuracy [\[1\]](#), is a precious quality which is acquired gradually and which can serve as the criterion of economic and cultural development for a people, a class or even an individual. And what we lack most of all is precision. The whole past of our people was such that we were not trained to be accurate, and it can be said without exaggeration that every calamity, every setback, every social misfortune assumes much greater proportions here than might have been expected, just because of the absence of co-ordination of operations, which is impossible without precision, and for that same reason every collective effort we make yields far less results than could have been the case.

The accurate person is not hasty. Hasty people, people who are always and everywhere late for everything – we have enough of those. But accurate people, that is, people who know what an hour means, what a minute means, who are able to organise their work and waste neither their own time nor anyone else's – of those we have too few. Their number is growing, but slowly, and this is a very great source of difficulty in our economic as well as our military work.

All practical work requires orientation in time and space. Yet all our past training has failed to teach us to value either time or space. It has always seemed to us that there is nothing to worry about, we have both of them in plenty. We are wretchedly bad at measuring.

Ask any peasant on a country road how many *versts* it is to Ivashkovo village. He will answer: three *versts*. From experience we know that it could turn out that the distance to Ivashkovo is seven *versts*, or even eight. If you are exigent and persistent, and start to cross-examine him as to whether it is exactly three *versts*, not more, not, perhaps, five or seven, in most cases your interlocutor will answer: 'Who has measured it?' And, indeed, our *versts* have not been measured out. There are even various sayings on this score: 'The old woman set about measuring it with her walking-stick, but gave it up as a bad job,' and so on.

During tours of the fronts we encountered every day extremely haphazard attitudes towards distance and time on the part of local peasants who were acting as guides, and also, not infrequently, on the part of commanders and commissars in the army itself.

One could compile a fair-sized notebook of recollections and observations on the matter of the army's guides. We subjected every new guide to intensive examination. Did he actually know the road? How many times had he been

along it? This procedure proved to be extremely important for us in finding out in time that the previous day, or the day before that, this same guide had misled us, because it turned out that he didn't know the road at all. After enduring a severe examination the guide would take his seat and, within half an hour of starting out would be looking anxiously from side to side, and mumbling that he had been along this road only once before, and that was by night.

Undoubtedly the source of this sort of attitude towards one's own and other people's time is the nature of rural Russia. There the harsh climate and the harsh enslavement to the state and the landlord served as a school of passivity and patience and, therefore, of indifference to time. Ability to wait for hours outside someone's door, quietly, passively, is an age-old feature of the Russian peasant. 'Don't worry, he'll wait,' is a very familiar 'formulation' of the mean contempt shown by the lord for the peasant's time, and his equally mean certainty that the peasant will put up with anything, since he is not used to valuing his time.

Today, as 1921 draws to its close, the peasant is not, of course, the same as he was in 1861, or before 1914, or before 1917. Vast changes have taken place in his conditions and in his consciousness. But these changes have so far affected only the basic content of his world-outlook, without as yet re-educating him, that is, transforming his habits and ways.

Industry, production by machinery, by its very nature required precision. A wooden plough digs up the soil like this or like that. But if the cogs of two wheels fail to mesh precisely, an entire machine is stopped or destroyed. The proletarian who starts and stops his work at the sound of a hooter is much better able to value space and time than is the peasant. However, our working class is replenished from that same peasantry, and therefore brings their traits into the factory.

Modern war is mechanised war. It demands precision in relation to time and space. Without that, the necessary combination of different kinds of weapon, technical forces and resources, will not be achieved. But it is just in this respect that we are weakest. When it comes to calculating time, we as often as not miscalculate. Performing a task like getting guns up to a certain place at the right time is very, very difficult work. And not just because the roads are bad (an allowance for bad roads can be included in the overall calculation), but because an order may not arrive in time, or may not be read in time. Also, because we carry out the constituent elements of preparation not all at the same time and in parallel, but one after another. Only after you have provided yourself with fodder do you remember that there are not enough harnesses, then you think about indenting for binoculars, or maps, and so on.

'Lost time is as irrevocable as death,' Peter once wrote – Peter who, at every step, came up against the laziness, immobility and negligence of the bearded boyars. The privileged class reflected in its own way the general features of rural Russia. Peter tried with all his might to teach the service class to regard time in the way the Germans or the Dutch did. The superficial, formal, bureaucratic precision of the Tsarist state machine undoubtedly resulted from Peter's reforms; but this ritual precision served merely as a cover for the procrastination that we have inherited from the accursed past, together with poverty and illiteracy.

Only the extensive development of a mechanised economy, a proper division of labour and its proper organisation foster habits of precision and accuracy. But, on the other hand, proper organisation of a contemporary economy is unthinkable without precision and accuracy. In this matter, one thing is dependent on the other, the one either assists the other or else opposes it.

Our state propaganda has a part to play in this matter. Of course, it is impossible to eradicate sloppiness and irresponsibility by ceaseless repetition of the word 'accuracy'. But the point here is that our work of propaganda and education finds its deepest roots in our mass experience of conscious, planned construction. Mere repetition becomes boring and sometimes unbearable, and eventually ceases to enter people's consciousness, or even their ears. But if this ceaseless repetition is geared to the living experience of factories, state farms, barracks, schools and offices, then, gradually, little by little (oh, how slowly!) it settles into people's consciousness, and contributes towards improving the practical organisation of work. And a slight improvement in the practical work of our institutions in turn facilitates further education in habits of precision and accuracy, which are among the most necessary features of a conscious, independent, cultured person.

In the age of aviation, electrification, the wireless, telegraph and the telephone, in the age of the socialist revolution, which has to transform the entire economy into a single composite factory, in which all cogs intermesh with clockwork precision – in this age we are wading knee-deep, and sometimes even deeper, in the mire of the old barbaric past. In all matters, large and small, we must say to ourselves often, several times a day: 'Alas, we are certainly not accurate enough!' However, there is not and cannot be a note of despair in this cry. Accuracy is something that can be acquired. We shall learn it. We shall master its secret, and that means we shall become richer, stronger and wiser, for the one is impossible without the other.

December 17, 1921
From the archives

Endnotes

[1.](#) The Russian word *akkuratnovst* combines the concepts of accuracy, precision, regularity and punctuality.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

The Disabled of the Civil War

* * *

Among many other acute problems, this too is one which we should not lose sight of. During the ceaseless fighting we suffered many casualties, not only in killed but also in wounded. Care for the latter is a priority duty, in the first place for the Red Army and then for the working people's republic as a whole. We have, of course, we are obliged, to concern ourselves also with the disabled of the imperialist war. They were not responsible for that war, but are its helpless victims. As we get stronger, as industry and agriculture improve, the Soviet Republic will better the existence of all the victims left behind by the old regime. But we must not dissolve in this great task, with which we shall cope only gradually, step by step, another urgent and crucial task, namely, to take care, first and foremost, of those warriors of the working class who were sent out by it to defend the frontiers of the world's first republic of labour, and who were discharged from the army having suffered some mutilation.

Amid the fire and smoke we did not look behind us, and all too often we did not think about our wounded, sick, lame and disabled. The time has now come to pay attention to them and to care for them. This is imperative first and foremost for the self-preservation of the army itself. Every Red Army man must know that the working people's republic will take care of him in an evil moment, if that should come.

The situation of the disabled continues to be grave. Some find a solution through begging and petty speculation; they become corrupt and go to pieces. Themselves demoralised, they inevitably infect the army from which they come. This cannot be tolerated. The work of helping the disabled, reeducating them – that is, training them for a new trade, adapting them to work which is within their powers – must be undertaken on a wide scale and with all thoroughness. The presidium of the Central Executive Committee has taken some extremely important steps in this direction. In the first place it has brought into close collaboration in this field the Commissariat of Social Security and the War Commissariat. A special directorate has been formed in the Commissariat of Social Security to look after the affairs of the war-wounded and the families of Red Army men. The provincial and *uyezd* military commissars have been brought into the provincial and *uyezd* organs of social security so as to ensure special care for the interests of the war-disabled. All departments have been called upon to give every co-operation to the work of ensuring social security for the disabled.

Besides these purely governmental means, the Presidium has indicated a way of arousing large-scale public initiative. As the organ for arousing the initiative and organising it expediently there must be an All-Russia Committee

for Aid to Sick and Wounded Red Army Men, War-Disabled and their Families (*Vserokompom*). Today when the country's economic life is far from being confined within the limits of the state economic enterprises, it is undoubtedly possible, given the appropriate energy and the right approach, to open up an important source of aid to the disabled, over and above purely state resources. This must be the task of *Vserokompom* and its local organs: helping the existing departments, supplementing their work with public initiative, and opening up new sources, new possibilities, new paths.

The departments operate in an undifferentiating way, that is, they deal with the disabled as a mass, applying to all of them, broadly speaking, the same methods of providing security. Public initiative can and must individualise, that is, it must take every disabled person separately, as a personality with his own special features, and adapt the character and form of its aid to these peculiarities and qualities of his. Finally, both the departmental and the public activities directed toward security for the disabled can produce the required results only if the Party, and, under the Party's leadership, the trade unions, and, consequently, the broad mass of the working people interest themselves in this problem, understand its importance and learn to devote to it a share of their active attention.

Responsible military workers must, naturally, be in the forefront of the work to aid the disabled. They must present the problem in its full dimensions to the Party, Soviet and trade union organisations, bring it up at conferences and, most important, tirelessly seek practical ways of aid and cooperation. A proposal has, notably, come from the army's ranks that a regular deduction be made from pay, for the benefit of the disabled. There can be no doubt that this proposal will find a wide response in the army. The Red Army cannot and must not forget its wounded warriors. If it remembers them, the whole country will remember them.

Isvestiya V. Ts. I. K.
December 18, 1921,
No. 285

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

Conference of Military Delegates to the Congress of Soviets

* * *

A conference of the military delegates to the congress with the responsible military workers present in Moscow was convened on two occasions: on the eve of the Congress of Soviets and now, at its close. [\[1\]](#)

The conference provided a very instructive picture of the state of the Red Army, and indicated more precisely and concretely what must be the task of future work.

The army which fought the civil war during more than three years grew directly out of the October revolution. It was the direct prolongation of that revolution. Those same workers of Petrograd and Moscow who had overthrown the bourgeois regime then went forth in their Red detachments all over the country, and later they built regular regiments which included conscripts.

The present Red Army consists of the three youngest age groups. They are predominantly made up of young peasants. The country's general political level has, to be sure, risen to a remarkable degree during these years. Nevertheless the political knowledge of the young generation of peasants who have grown up since the October revolution and who did not pass through the school of civil war, is very superficial and amorphous, like everything which has been obtained at second hand and has not been tested by one's own experience.

The senior and middle ranks of the army's commanders and commissars mostly developed through their experience in the civil war. It is their task to pass on this experience to the young Red Army men. But for this to happen it is necessary that the leading elements of the army, the representatives of the older generation, shall find *a common language with the young Red Army men*. The meeting of military delegates gave special attention to this question.

All of the revolutionary workers of the older generation learnt, in their time, the ABC and grammar of politics from the political facts of the Tsarist epoch. If there was a strike, or a new Tsarist law, the advanced workers explained to the more backward ones, on the basis of these examples from life, the nature of Tsardom, the contradiction of interest between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and so on. Thus, step by step, a certain body of knowledge was accumulated in the heads of the older generation of revolutionary workers: facts, their political explanation, their social interpretation. Then, every new fact was fitted into this framework and found its place there. The longer a man lives a conscious political life, the wider his political experience, the more examples he knows from the past, the easier it is for him to grasp the

meaning of new facts and to assign them their appropriate place. The older generation of members of our Party undoubtedly possess very great political experience, and quickly orientate themselves, understanding each other without the need for many words.

But just for that reason, our agitation, carried on in our customary language, all too often proves incomprehensible to the new generations, who lack not only our experience but any political experience whatsoever. This young generation has to accumulate its experience from scratch, to learn to understand the simplest facts of social and political life and to assign them their proper place. **The ABC of Communism** is a most necessary and useful manual. [2] But to suppose that you can make a Communist out of a young peasant by reading **The ABC of Communism** with him for a month or two is radically mistaken. The **ABC of Communism** can only generalise the experience of life and struggle that one already possesses.

The fundamental fact for a Red Army man is that he is a Red Army man; that is, that he has been conscripted and put in the army. Why? He must understand why this has happened. The mere counterposing of workers' and peasants' Russia to 'world imperialism' is full of rich content for the politically more experienced. But for the young Red Army man who barely knows the names of foreign countries, such counterposing is just empty sound. The young soldiers have to be given elementary facts and living examples, as material for generalisation.

Today we are having to fight along the Finno-Karelian border. This fact must be made the centre of political education work in the army in the period immediately ahead.

What is Finland? Who lives there? Who rules the country? Here one should tell of the attempt made by the Finnish workers to take power, and of how ruthlessly the bourgeoisie dealt with them. Why did we recognise the independence of Finland? Karelia, Finland and Petrograd must at once be pointed out on the map. Each new communiqué about the events in Karelia must furnish material for repeating and concretising this information. Thus, from one day to the next, the events in Karelia will be transformed for the Red Army man into inward *experience*, will become an important part of the political experience that he obtains. For him this will not be just a page from **The ABC of Communism**, which he may read and forget, but a living fact which affects his own fate and is understood by him precisely in that connection.

Similar work must be done where all our neighbours are concerned. Every Red Army man must know who it is that surrounds us. In this way the Red Army man will arrive gradually at a grasp of what is meant by world imperialism, what the external threat to us consists in, and why we need the Red Army.

It is particularly important that the propagandist shall not simply 'instruct' the Red Army man, using the appropriate material, even if this be something like the events in Karelia: no, he must make him aware, as an armed citizen of the Soviet Republic, of the danger we are in. He must explain to the Red Army man the actual situation that exists today.

For this purpose it is necessary to follow events from day to day or, at least, from week to week. When the facts repeat themselves, we too shall repeat them. When changes take place, we shall explain these.

Every other sort of purely-propagandist, theoretical educational work is, of course, both permissible and useful. But the first and most important thing, remember, is that the Red Army man is a citizen in arms, and that the line of our country's development, its internal and external fate, must not be allowed to escape his awareness: and, above all, as a soldier, he must know what danger threatens the revolution today.

The question of the Party purge in the army was discussed at the meeting, briefly, but fully enough. All the delegates reported that the purge was carried out with great seriousness, and produced very valuable positive results. One cannot, however, overlook the fact that, as a result of the purge, the percentage of Communists in the army has fallen still further. All the delegates voiced a categorical demand for consolidating the Communist ranks. The news of the decision by the Party's Central Committee to mobilise all the Communists liable for military service who were born in 1899, 1900 and 1901 was received with unanimous applause. The army consists today of these three age-groups. There can be no exemptions whatsoever for Communists. They must serve in the army along with their coevals. This can be ensured the more easily because among our young comrades of 22, 21 and 20 there can hardly be found any 'irreplaceable' workers. As regards Communists who are studying at Party schools, they, after appearing before the appropriate special commissions, must, if found suitable, be embodied in military units and then temporarily appointed to finish their course of study – after which they will join their units as Red Army men. No exemptions at all! Communists born in 1899, 1900 and 1901 – into the army! This is the unanimous demand of the responsible army workers. This is the decision of the Party's Central Committee.

In general, the provision of Communists for the army was resolved by the Central Committee plenum to be one of the most important of the Party's tasks. The Central Committee gave its attention to the fact that not all local organisations are carrying through conscription for the army with the necessary vigour. The Central Committee's decisions on this question strike a very stern note. One of the tasks of the Communists who are working in the army and are closely connected with local Party organisations is, precisely, to call the attention of the latter to the political state of the army, and in this way to liquidate the last vestiges of the 'liquidationist' attitude. Persons who have been improperly demobilised, or who have improperly demobilised themselves, must be brought back into the army. It is the duty of the Political Departments to see to this. In those cases where their authority is insufficient, they must appeal to the Political Directorate of the Revolutionary War Council, which, in turn, will call in the authority of the Central Committee. The army, being reduced in size, must have a higher combat-capacity, and precisely for that purpose it must have a higher percentage of Communists in its ranks.

Connected with the Party purge is the particular question of the commanders who have been deprived of party membership. In those cases, of course, in which their exclusion from the party was due to conduct discrediting their

personal honour, there can be no question of leaving them in their positions of command, since a Red commander must possess not only military technical but also complete moral authority. But there are numerous cases in which exclusion from the Party has been due to a commander's failure to fit in with the general spirit of the Party, its world-outlook and its internal relations. The Party is a voluntary association of like-minded persons. This association has the right to decide in each separate case whether or not a particular person may belong to it. The Party says to commander Petrov: 'You are an honourable man, you are a commander devoted to the workers' and peasants' republic, and a brave fighter, but because of your entire past education, because of your outlook, you are remote from the Communist Party, and we cannot allow you to influence with your vote the programme and tactics of our Party.' Such a decision is in certain instances not only legitimate but also necessary. Does this mean, though, that the man excluded from the party is thereby deprived of the right to hold a position of command? No, it does not. The Red Army has not rejected and does not reject non-Party commanders. They make up the majority of the commanders. A commander excluded from the Party because of his general failure to fit in with its spirit may remain in his position of command if he is an honourable warrior and citizen. While depriving him of the right to be numbered among the Communists, the Party will nevertheless give him the full support of its authority in his role as a Soviet commander. This was the unanimous view of the military delegates.

The sailors have frequently mentioned with bitterness, in recent months, that the name of Kronstadt has become a sort of synonym for petty-bourgeois revolt against the dictatorship of the proletariat. Yet Kronstadt has remained what it was, one of the most important fortresses of the workers' and peasants' republic. The garrison of Kronstadt remains a valuable part of the Red Army and the Red Navy. The advanced sailors are making every effort to preserve the basic nucleus of the Navy and to strengthen it.

This problem also came up at the meeting, and it was unanimously decided to remind the whole country of the glorious role played by Kronstadt in the birth and development of the proletarian revolution. We must tell the young Red Army men and Red Navy men, by means of both the spoken and written word, the revolutionary history of Kronstadt from as far back as March 1917. The White-Guard-SR mutiny at Kronstadt was only a tragic episode in the history of the fortress, which has been temporarily weakened both materially and ideologically.

The time has come to close the book on that episode. Kronstadt has again become the sentry-post of the proletarian revolution.

Our army has all at once become younger. Its experience and traditions are preserved by the commanders and commissars. The Communist Party in the army has been purged, and has thereby become less numerous. The bulk of the army is made up of non-Party, predominantly peasant youngsters. It is therefore all the more important to establish correct mutual relations between the leading apparatus of commanders and commissars and the Communist cells, on the one hand, and the young non-Party soldiers, on the other. It is necessary to get closer to these young people. To learn to speak their language. To help them to understand Soviet Russia and to hate its enemies.

To teach them to master their weapons in order to fight for Soviet Russia.

And for this purpose we must conclude as quickly as possible the period of demobilisation and reorganisation. Enough of rearrangements, transfers, mergers and transformations! We need a firm regime, stability, organisational definiteness. It is time to get down to work of training and education in the fullest sense. That was the unanimous opinion of the military delegates. The meeting was the best of guarantees that the winter months ahead of us will be a period of intense work and conscientious preparation.

Pravda
January 4, 1922, No.3

Endnotes

[1.](#) The Ninth Congress of Soviets was held on December 22-27, 1921. The article given here, together with an appendix containing the resolutions passed by the conference of military delegates, was published as a separate pamphlet by the Supreme Military Publishing Council (Gosizdat) in 1922.

[2](#) **The ABC of Communism**, by Bukharin and Preobrazhensky, was the official exposition of the Soviet Communist Party's programme. An English translation was published by the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1922. A Penguin edition appeared in 1969, with an introduction by E.H. Carr. See the full text at **ABC of Communism**> in the N. Bukharin Internet Archive.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

Care for the Army

* * *

Three or four months ago, the War Department raised the question of a *Week* of care for the Red Army man's kit. This question has now been posed in a broader way: the 9th Congress of Soviets has opened an entire *epoch* of care for the Red Army in all respects. But the Week has not been made superfluous by this development. It merely enters as a component part into a wider campaign.

The speeches, declarations and resolutions of the 9th Congress devoted to the needs of the army made, of course, a big impression inside the walls of our Red barracks. Everyone looked up with a start, and is now expecting steps and actions to be taken which will correspond to the words and intentions of the Congress of Soviets. Some are waiting too impatiently. Thus, at meetings held since then, I have more than once been handed notes with the question: why have such-and-such improvements not been carried out up to now? Why have such-and-such deficiencies not been made up? And so on.

Naturally, the resolution of the Congress of Soviets has, by itself, brought about no material change, and could not do so. What it means is, first and foremost, a big moral gain for the Red Army. The Congress of Soviets took note of the fact that the Red Army has been reduced in size, and ordered that ensuring 100 per cent satisfaction of the Red Army's supply needs be given priority. However, the Congress resolution will not be implemented automatically. What is required here is broad initiative and tireless persistence on the part of all Soviet organs and institutions and, first and foremost, of the Red Army itself.

It is not possible to improve the situation of the Red Army by some single miraculous act. What is needed is systematic, stubborn, day-to-day work. Resolutions, declaration, decisions must be re-minted into the small change of everyday care for the Red barracks and its residents. In this sphere, loudly proclaimed programmes are least of all capable of bringing results: what is wanted is laborious, hard work at cleaning, tidying, heating and lighting – work which calls for large forces, great attention, much dedication, before truly human conditions of existence can be created for all units of the Red Army.

A condition for serious, protracted and solid success in this direction is the putting in order and improvement of the supply organs of the army itself, from top to bottom. It must be frankly said that this is our Achilles' heel. While, during these years, we have taken a big step forward where the commanders are concerned, in the sphere of army supply we are extremely behindhand. In this sphere too, of course, a certain number of naturally-talented, vigorous workers interested in supply questions have emerged. There are also supply

officers of the old school who are bringing their knowledge and experience to bear with varying success, in the new conditions of the Red Army and the Soviet economy. But a considerable mass of supply workers at the centre, in the districts and in the units are in need of sound schooling and serious refreshment. Mindless routine, and also amateurism without either vision or experience, are still too much in evidence in the army's supply organs.

Yet the new economic conditions not only place the purely distributive work wholly on the shoulders of the army supply organs, but also require that the latter show great persistence, initiative and enterprise in establishing proper relations with the productive organs, establishments and institutions. And yet, up to now, our supply officers have not, as a general rule, learnt how to take stock accurately and to distribute quickly and properly. Today, when army units are living in settled conditions, attached to definite places and areas, the task of supply has been considerably simplified. But our supply workers need to learn the art of providing everything with as short a delay as possible and by the shortest route, so that boots and bread and shirts may arrive where they are needed, and in good time. He who masters well the art of today's 'positional' strategy of supply will subsequently cope more easily, in time of war, with the much more difficult task of 'manoeuvring' supply.

The Week of the Red Army Man's Kit signifies, above all, focusing general attention on the barracks and the military school. The means for doing this are agitation, meetings, articles and resolutions. There can be no doubt that the Moscow proletariat, led by its Soviet, will do all that it should do and is able to do. But this agitational aspect must not distract from organisational work. The result of the Week will depend, after all, not only on those who help and cooperate but, first and foremost, on those who are at the receiving end of this cooperation. Kit Week must become a Week for internal bracing of economic supply activity within the War Department itself.

In particular, so that the goodwill of the working people may produce the maximum result during the Week of the Red Army Man's Kit, our supply personnel must show the greatest possible initiative and resourcefulness in directing this goodwill into the right channels. They must think out properly, and suggest at the right moment, where and how a local garrison can best be helped at the present time. In the way it has been conceived by the Congress of Soviets, the Week, as has been said, opens up a whole epoch of intense work and struggle to raise the level of material and spiritual well-being in the army.

Addressing the workers and peasants and their Soviets, the Week says: 'Let everyone help to put the words of the 9th Congress into practice.' Addressing the Red Army, the Week invites it to learn, as it should, how to look after itself.

Finally, turning to the army's supply apparatus, the Week orders: 'Comrade supply workers, be so good as to pull yourselves together and brace yourselves up!'

January 13, 1922
Izvestiya V.Ts.I.K.,
No.10

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

Thanks, Workers' Moscow

* * *

The men and women workers of Moscow have taken absolutely seriously their adoption of certain military units. They have understood that Soviet patronage is not just a decorative device, useful for solemn speeches at ceremonial sessions. That sin is, unfortunately, observable in some places ... No, the Muscovites have got down to the job, rolling up their sleeves. They have understood excellently that today is not a time for decorative politics. In all spheres of construction we have entered a period of slow, stubborn, persistent hard work. Only thus will it be possible to improve the position of the Red Army. Declarations of sympathy, resolutions and speeches, even the very best of them, will not by themselves solve the problem. What is needed here is businesslike and practical attention to the Red Army, to all the trifles of its everyday life. Just such attention is being given by the Moscow Soviet, the district Soviets and individual large enterprises in Moscow. The *uyezds* around Moscow are beginning to come into line with them. The Red Army's needs are so great and so various that it is not possible to bring about big changes all at once; but it is possible, though, to be free from doubt that, in Moscow, Kit Week will not be an affair of mere agitational uproar, but will leave behind it a substantial heritage, in the form of some improvements, modest but lasting, in the material and spiritual welfare of the Moscow garrison.

All measures must be taken to ensure that information about the way the Week has been carried out in Moscow shall be made known as widely as possible throughout the country. May this good example give rise as soon as possible to emulation.

Meanwhile, the Red Army has every reason to say a very warm *Thank You* to proletarian Moscow!

January 25, 1922

Izvestiya V.Ts.I.K.,
No.18

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

The Fifth Year – A Year for Study

* * *

The Red Army is *only* four months younger than the Soviet Republic. But that is true only in terms of the documents. Essentially, the Army and the Republic were born on the same day. It could even be said that, in the shape of our Party's Military Organisation, the Red Army had come to birth even before the moment when the working class took power into its hands.

The first year of its existence was a period of uncoordinated, semi-amorphous attempts and strivings to create an armed force for the revolution under the very difficult conditions imposed by the break-up of the old army and the disgust for war felt by the working masses.

The second and third years were a period of intense conflict in all the borderlands of our country. The army was built under fire. Various methods and procedures were tried out, and either rejected or consolidated. The army grew in numbers to an extraordinary and even excessive degree. This was due both to the length of the fronts and to the still very imperfect character of our military organisation. New military tasks and requirements engendered new organs alongside those previously created which had already half-demonstrated their unfitness but had not yet been abolished. Inadequate preparation led to a high expenditure of manpower. Wherever quality was lacking, it had to be replaced by quantity.

The fourth year was a year of relative quiet on the frontiers and intense work at reducing and reorganising the army. The task was to release as many age-groups as possible, keeping with the colours only those strictly necessary, while, at the same time, pruning the army's organisation of all superfluous organs, all excrescences and parallel institutions, and cutting down the overstaffed services of the rear. *This task has now, broadly speaking, been accomplished.* Thereby, the conditions have been created for raising the army's qualitative level.

The fifth year of the Red Army's existence will be a year of intense study. Further reorganisation and partial reduction of the Red Army can take place only on the basis of qualitative improvement of its constituent elements, and strictly in accordance with this process.

We must raise the level of the basic cell of the army – the infantryman. He must be well-fed, kept warm, and clothed in clean underwear. A soldier with lice is only half a soldier.

The soldier must be literate. We have firmly committed ourselves to this task. By May 1 not a single illiterate soldier must be left in our army. We are

under compulsion to carry out this task – and to do it not just for show, that is, not in such a way that the man who has been hastily taught his letters will, within a couple of months, fall back into his original state. No, we must and we shall teach all the Red Army men their letters in the proper way.

On May 1 this year the Soviet Republic will call upon its army to take the Red Oath. Every Red Army man must be able to read clearly, distinctly and consciously the text of the *Solemn Promise*. [\[1\]](#)

We must raise the political and, in general, the spiritual level of every fighting man. He must know who our neighbours and possible enemies are. He must know the essentials of the Soviet Constitution and the tasks of the workers' and peasants' state. He must know that the basis of the whole world,, with all its varying phenomena, is matter, bound by its own internal laws. A persistent struggle must be waged to free his consciousness from prejudices and superstitions. Superstition is an inner louse which debilitates a man even more than the outer one does.

We shall steadily improve our purely military training. A regimental commander must set himself the task of bringing every Red Army man up to a level such that, in case of need, he will be capable of commanding a section.

Steady work by the commanders and commissars, both on the Red Army men and on themselves, constitutes the most important precept for this fifth year of work. Despite the short time that the army has existed, we already possess a lot of experience. But this is as yet in a chaotic state. It must be carefully studied, checked, refined, so that what is most essential may be extracted from it and firmly fixed in the consciousness of the entire army.

Every great cause, especially in such a complex and changing epoch as ours, has two great enemies: routinism and superficiality. Routinism thinks in old clichés, without taking account of new circumstances: it lacks initiative, boldness in conception and decisiveness in execution. In the business of war these are fatal faults.

Superficiality is, so to speak, the opposite of routinism. Nowadays it often takes 'revolutionary' form. Having correctly observed the shortcomings of routine, superficiality dismisses all serious work, all conscientious and detailed study of past experience, and deludes itself with cheap generalisations and arbitrary schemas. Superficiality, too, is a fatal fault in the business of war.

We need to be firmly aware that the qualitative level of the army cannot be raised by waving a magician's wand. No, this task calls for stubborn work, persistent, detailed, sometimes mosaic work. Something new, whether great or small, can be contributed only by someone who watches attentively what is under his feet, takes note of everything, studies everything and learns from everything. But he who, striving to say something new straightaway, seeks for it by gazing at the sky will unfailingly step on a rake, and that will come up and hit him sharply on the forehead. Neither routinism nor superficiality! Persistent, stubborn and conscientious work!

This work is now being made easier through the ever increasing attention paid to the army by the working masses of the entire Soviet Federation. Quite recently, as an experiment, we introduced the practice of patronage by Soviets. How quickly this has caught on and developed! What beneficial results

it is already producing today! Even before now the Red Army was an integral part of workers' and peasants' Russia. But now a more everyday, more intimate bond has been established between them. The fraternisation between particular divisions and particular Soviets, and between particular regiments and particular factories and trade unions is raising the moral level of the army and creating better material conditions for its vital work.

The Red Army looks ahead in calmness and confidence: the fifth year of its life will be a year of untiring study.

February 22, 1922
Pravda, No.43

Endnotes

[1.](#) For the text of the solemn promise, see Volume I, Chapter 12.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

Speech

At the Parade on Red Square, February 23, 1922

* * *

I greet you on the fourth anniversary of the existence, the struggle and the triumph of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.

Unlike other armies, we were created, built and trained directly under fire, on the battlefield, and our learning was won at the cost of very grave sacrifices made by our valiant Red Army, in the North, South, East and West.

Three years were spent in unremitting struggle to defend and strengthen the workers' and peasants' Soviet Republic. And if sometimes we lacked skill and knowledge, we made up for these deficiencies with heroism, courage, and the blood of the best sons of our country.

When we look to the West and to the East we say to ourselves, even now, that danger has not yet passed, for power is still held by the bourgeoisie throughout the world. True, it has learnt to fear us, but it will never cease to fight against us and to hate us.

Our duty, comrade Red Army men, commanders and commissars, is to make use of the period we are now living through to develop and strengthen ourselves further. In future we must win our victories with fewer losses. The fifth year will therefore be a year of untiring, intense study. Every Red Army man must be literate by May 1. We give a solemn promise to achieve that. By May 1 there will not be a single illiterate Red Army man in Russia! At the same time we must raise the level of political consciousness of every Red Army man.

The Red Army is strong today, but in a year's time it will be even stronger, because it will be better able to master the art of war.

In the fifth year, every day will be a day for study, a day of progress by the Red Army.

You will hear today the greetings of comrades who have come here from Western Europe for the meetings of the Comintern and the Profintern. We say to them that we have been waiting four years for the day when the red flag of the people will be raised over their countries and over the whole world, freed from capitalist oppression... We are waiting, and we believe that this hope will soon be realised.

The Red Army and, in the first place, the glorious garrison of Moscow, stands always ready to leave its peacetime quarters for the field of battle, ready to

give its life for the existence of our Soviet republic and for the creation of Soviet Republics throughout the world.

Long live Workers' and Peasants' Russia!

Long live the world working class!

Long live the coming federation of workers' and peasants' Soviet Republics of the whole world!

Izvestiya V. Ts.I.K.
February 24, 1922,
No.44

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

Report

To the Eleventh Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), March 29, 1922

[\[1\]](#)

Comrades, you have asked for a report on the Red Army. I shall be very brief, both because I can add nothing to the report which I gave to the Ninth Congress of Soviets and also for the practical reason that we have not much time left today. The year which has elapsed since the Tenth Party Congress can be divided, so far as the Red Army is concerned, into two parts: before the Ninth Congress of Soviets, approximately, and since then. This year was, in its first half, a very hard one for us: a period of demobilisation, contraction, reorganisation. Furthermore, the reorganisation, demobilisation and contraction of the army—and here I touch upon the principal practical question about which, I think, we are going to ask you, through the conference of military delegates, to give a definite decision—took place in several stages, in four main phases. Contraction, amputation, is a surgical operation, and a rather serious one. But if you cut off a man's leg in four stages—first the foot, then up to the knee, then above the knee—this operation will, of course, be very much more serious and painful. Influenced by objective conditions, the uncertainty of the situation, and in part also by our own mistakes, we carried out the contraction of the army during this year in a series of jolts—first, a few hundred thousand, then another few hundred thousand and so on. An army is a complex organism, and the more organised, the more properly structured it is, the greater is the internal proportionality established between its different parts. I should be in error if I were to say that we have already achieved such complete, ideal proportionality. The army is far from having reached organisational perfection, but it is already a properly structured organism. Given its present reduced numbers and comparative organisational orderliness, every fresh contraction is not a mere mechanical amputation but a complex business of taking both from the rear services and from the active units while striving to maintain a certain degree of internal proportionality. That is why, in the course of this year, we have announced establishments A, B, C, and so on, and why the military workers in the localities have expressed bitter resentment against their own centre, which has not given them straight away a programme for reducing and reorganising the Red Army, and consequently has made it necessary to carry out these painful operations.

Can we reduce our Red Army still further? I do not regard this as being absolutely out of the question. It depends on circumstances—partly on how circumstances and events take shape this spring. This spring is, for many reasons, going to be an uneasy time for us, especially on the Western and Southern fronts. But there can be no doubt that, given the appropriate policy on the part of our neighbours and their protectors, it will remain possible to effect a further reduction in the size of the Red Army.

It has to be said, however, that this further reduction will need to be carried

out on the basis of a firm programme. Give us, as soon as conditions have settled down somewhat, a firm figure—say, that the Red Army must be reduced by half (which I consider impossible at present) or by one-third, or by one-tenth, but these reductions will have to be effected over a more or less lengthy period, over the rest of 1922, that is, in the next nine months. What weighs most heavily upon the army is the uncertainty, the indefiniteness of this reorganisation and continual regrouping. It makes it difficult to achieve stability in relations and regularity in study.

The second question is the question of our budget. Comrade Lenin said here that we must make sacrifices for the Red Army, but strictly defined ones. That is a correct view. We are poor. Our sacrifices for the Red Army can only be limited in amount. But, in defining what these limited sacrifices are to be, we need to establish a firm budget. We must get away from the traditions of 1918, 1919, 1920 and even 1921, when, as need arose, we gave to the Red Army, then took from it, then gave to it again. The budget must be fixed at a definite amount. The army must be matched with the military budget and the military budget with the army, that is, with its size. A firm size and a firm budget. Otherwise, comrades, we shall not raise the army to a higher level: and if we were faced with the necessity of choosing because of the difficult material situation, between making a considerable reduction in the army, with a firm budget, and keeping the army at its present size, but with an undefined budget, then I, personally, should vote even for a very considerable reduction in the army, but with a firm budget.

I said that it will be possible to reduce the size of the army, depending on the international situation; but this will also depend to a considerable extent on the way that we ourselves use the army. If we are to reduce the army we cannot go on overburdening it with fatigues. This, comrades, is the most serious problem in the life of our army, which affects its training, education and organisational cohesion. The army is overburdened with fatigues. This is due to the entire nature of our epoch and the entire development of the army. But we have entered a period of planned construction—because, while, in the economic sphere, we are obliged to manoeuvre actively in the market, in the military sphere it is now possible for us to undertake systematic, planned constructive work, and proper, well-prepared study, and we must say to you that systematic constructive work calls for discontinuance of that way of using the Red Army—unavoidable in the past, but wrong today—which is expressed in turning a disproportionate part of the army into guards for various sorts of government property, freights and so on. With our communications and our distances, jobs of escorting and transporting freight mean that Red Army men are detached from their units for months on end, and these units are practically destroyed. A Red Army man costs the state too much in the role of a mere watchman. These guard duties must be reduced to the minimum, the real minimum, and the departments that despatch freight must go over to forming special escort-teams made up of a small number of qualified persons trained for this work. That will be more economic in every way. This question, at first sight purely technical, is, with the reduction in the army's size, a question of life and death for it.

Our present numbers had, by March 1, not yet, alas, been brought down completely to the level which the relevant state decisions assigned to us. We receive for the army, for the GPU units, for the task-forces of the People's Commissariat of Justice, for the Navy and so on, a total of 1,616,000 rations.

Our numbers stood, on March 1 at 1,640,000 that we had fallen short of that norm by 25,000 [sic]. It has to be said that, in carrying out this great contraction we have reduced the active units, that is, the divisions, to less than a third and the rear services to one-eighth of their previous size. If you take the tables which show how this total of 1,640,000 men is made up, you will see, first and foremost, those constituent elements which are not subject to any further change. The universal military training apparatus has been cut down by 10,000 rations. Voices have been raised saying that the universal military training apparatus is being abolished. I regard it as my duty to deny that, categorically. We are reducing the size of the army, and, given favourable conditions, we shall reduce it still further, and so we shall have all the more need to develop pre-call-up training. That is, of course, not a task for the universal military training apparatus alone; it is a responsibility of the local soviet and other organisations, especially as regards sport, as a form of physical education of young people. But it is necessary to retain the basic elements of the universal military training organisation, so as subsequently to be able to strengthen and expand it. The Navy accounts for 35,000 men. We do not see how we could make any further reduction there in the immediate future. We have cut the Navy's numbers down to the minimum. In recent months our young Red Navy has experienced a revival, encouraged by the attention paid to it by the Party and by the Soviet Republic, in the person of the Ninth Congress of Soviets. The navy, I repeat, has been reduced to the ultimate limit. While our army approximates in size to that of pre-revolutionary Russia, the Navy has been reduced to a fraction of what it was. But it has received an influx of youthful forces from the Young Communist League, and is training a fresh complement of seamen, including naval commanders, through the naval training establishments, in which a fresh wind now blows. That figure of 35,000 is the minimum which we must preserve if we do not want to write the Navy off; and to do that does not in the least follow from our situation – we have coasts, maritime approaches to our country, and danger exists. We need a small, purely defensive, but single-minded and well-united navy.

Among the 1,600,000 there are included 101,000 transients, itinerants, nomadic elements. Here, besides a certain unavoidable ebb and flow due to the army's internal life, we find tens of thousands of vagabonds in the shape of men returning from escort duty, who have been travelling for months, owing to the grave state of transport and this is an element that constitutes a heavy burden upon our army.

The material situation of the army roughly since the last Congress of Soviets, and even a little earlier has improved. It would be false optimism to say that it is satisfactory in all respects, and still more so to say that it is good. This I state at an open session of the Congress, and I think that to do so can cause us no harm; our military situation is sufficiently sound for us not to be afraid of speaking openly of the difficult aspects of the army's position. There has undoubtedly been an improvement in all forms of supply, but the situation is still not satisfactory. I do not fear to say this openly because our adversaries and enemies, who appreciate the position, must draw from it the conclusion that the overall situation of the country and the army (even if all other considerations are left out of account) excludes the possibility of any warlike endeavours on our part. But, at the same time, the improved situation of the army, and its morale, which all the data available and all the checks carried out show to be fully satisfactory, and even considerably better than before, render successful defence completely possible, completely attainable.

In this army there are about 80,000 Communists. Their number has now increased and is increasing, in connection with the influx of youngsters born in 1899, 1900 and 1901. [2]

Where these young people are concerned we, as the War Department, are having to fight with other departments, institutions and so on, because everybody wants to have young Communists, and that is quite natural. However, Jam firmly of the opinion that when we conscript young Communists belonging to age-groups whose members have, in general, already been conscripted, exemptions, postponements and so on must be kept to the most minimal minimum, both in the interests of the army and for the sake of educating and tempering the young Communists themselves. I must say, though, that, as well as the great joy naturally felt by our units and by the responsible military workers at the infusion of fresh, red, Communist blood into units from which the outflow of Communists has been very large—as well as this rejoicing, complaints are also heard that a certain percentage of these youngsters do not at all constitute a best-quality, first-rate element. [*A voice from the seats: 'The majority of them.'*]

I am sure that you are very much mistaken, comrade. It is not true that the majority of these young Communists entering the army are not first-rate. The young people entering units of the army have to adjust themselves, have to find their feet in them, and they are not entering the units under fire, in the way that we used to do in 1918-1920, but in comparatively peaceful circumstances of barrack life. They come in with certain ideological pretensions, because they have already, in some cases, been doing quite responsible Soviet work. They have to get used to the circumstances of the army. But a certain percentage are undoubtedly not very suitable, there is a percentage of waste material, and I think that if we are to be serious about the question of purging the Party, and if, when it comes to renewing the forces of our party, we stake our hopes on the youth, it would be a very good thing if we were firmly to decide to put *all our young people through the Red Army*.

When I said, yesterday, that for us the task of Party education consists in infusing the youth, by theoretical means, with the experience that we have accumulated, I received a note, sent up, I suppose, by one of our young guests who is studying at a Workers' Faculty [3]: 'Why, then, do you demand that conscription be extended to Workers' Faculties?' For this reason, because I consider that the Workers' Faculty is not the only school where the Party can hand onto the youth its experience, in the broad sense of that word. I consider that the army, too, is for the Communists of our Soviet Republic a school wherein the Party can imbue our worker and peasant youth with its moral tempering, its spirit of self-sacrifice, its sense of discipline: that is why I shall go on haggling and haggling with our respected comrade Mikhail Nikolayevich Pokrovsky over these same young workers and peasants. People ask: who are we going to train as engineers? There will, of course, be some delay in qualifying, but I consider that a Red engineer who has spent two years in a Red barracks will be twice as valuable to us, because he will be a militant Communist and a tempered worker.

I have here a very interesting report received from the Party commission in the 44th (Kiev) Division. I received this report only yesterday, and read it avidly, as I read all documents in which there are facts and figures depicting

the internal life of the army and the country. It contains complaints about a section of these young people, and emphasises that the purging of the Communist elements in the army, together with the general Party purge, is not over yet. It is now being given a more planned, more organised character. I will read what they say.

'We had, principally, to expel those of the young Communists born in 1899-1901 who, when called up into the Red Army and serving with our division, revealed all the negative qualities characteristic of self-seekers and deserters ...': and, later: 'The experience accumulated by the divisional Party commission in the first three months of its work shows that the period of purging is far from over. At present, to an even greater extent than during the purge (especially in the army), a major re-grouping of forces is still going on, with expulsion from the vanguard of the most cowardly and unreliable elements, and drawing into it from the reserves the elements which are most conscious, revolutionary and devoted to the proletarian revolution.' That is true.

In this connection the question arises of how to educate the worker and peasant youth in the army. And I take note here of an ever larger number of speakers from the floor who call for a much more concrete presentation of this matter of educating the youth—not only the Communist youth, but the elements in the Red Army generally. There can be no doubt that, in the first period, we undertook tasks, in all spheres of training and education, pedagogics both military and otherwise, that were very broad—too broad, unrealisable at present—of universal, all-embracing education. That is, unfortunately, not yet within our power. If you look, from this angle, at our Political Directorate of the Revolutionary War Council, you will see that its programmes are too universal in scope, and therefore, in practice, amount to repeating commonplaces, which say nothing either to the mind or to the heart of the worker or of the peasant who has been taken from his village and put in the ranks of the army. We need to start out, in the barracks, from the fact that the peasant has become a soldier. Why? For what reason? This is the basic fact; this is a new epoch in his life, and this is where we must start—not with the aim of turning a 19 or 20 year old peasant into an ideal Communist by means of an abstract, ideal programme of education: that will not succeed. We have to explain to the young fellow from Saratov or Penza whom the workers' state has taken from his village and put into a regiment and who wants, first and foremost, to understand just why this has happened, and to do this concretely, simply, politically, and not 'pedagogically'. It is said quite correctly in the interesting booklet written by Comrade Perepechko, the commissar of the 27th Division, that we must by no means let ourselves be carried away by universal Communist pedagogics into trying at once to turn a young Red Army man into a Communist: and Perepechko deplors the fact that this universality takes, more often than not, the form of abstract verbiage.

At the same time, he raises another question: the role of *administrative and educational* influence on our young Red Army man.

At present we are going through what is, in the fullest sense, a new epoch in the life of our Red Army. Previously, there was the epoch of battles, when we plucked the Red Army man straight from his village, gave him a weapon—sometimes as he boarded the train, sometimes his weapons travelled separately, and we armed him when he left the train: he spent two or three weeks, or just a week, in a holding unit, and then, inasmuch as he had, all

unprepared, to be thrown into the firing line, the iron net of discipline was brought down upon him, in the shape of the commissars, the tribunal, the battle-police and so on. To be sure, we carried on a campaign of agitation, when we could, but hastily, under fire, under a pressure of 100 atmospheres. Today we live in stationary quarters, and this circumstance makes possible and offers a different way of approaching the Red Army man. Comrade Perepechko is right when he says that purely administrative measures can only drive the Red Army man's peasant prejudices inward, but it is much more difficult to bring him one step nearer to Communism by means of educational work. This is made difficult also by old habits, and it is especially difficult because of the army's poverty in Communist forces.

If I am the only commissar in a regiment, without the assistants I need at lower levels, then I, being absolutely deprived of the possibility of getting to know all of my men, am obliged to issue orders of a summary, too general character, and this inevitably entails bureaucratism. For bureaucratism means an approach which is not practical and concrete but formal: dealing not with the substance of a matter but with circulars and bits of paper. A commissar is the less able to pay practical attention to things, the fewer the number of mature Communists there are in his unit. From this we arrive at the conclusion that, without a good section-leader who is at once a commander and an educator, we shall not advance the Red Army man to a new, higher level in his military and political qualities. In this matter, all our work is now focused on the task of creating a good Soviet, Red section-leader, well-grounded in all respects.

What percentage of section-leaders will be Party members, Communists, is something we shall not pre-judge today. But a section-leader, even if he be not a party member, must personify the commander who knows how his section has to fight and for what it has to go into action. Then our section will be strong, and the army is built of sections: the section is its basic cell. In the old army the section-leaders were NCOs. We have abandoned this rank, because for us there are not and cannot be two storeys of commanding personnel: our Red officer has to begin his career as a section-leader. This question may at first sight seem to you, comrades, to be one of secondary importance, but I think that I shall be voicing the opinion of all the military workers here present if I say that this is one of the most important tasks before our Party to educate a real cadre of section-leaders, who are the foundation of the entire command structure of the Red Army.

If we have a section-leader who is politically educated, within the limits of his task, and is well-trained in the military sense, he will be a fully-finished junior leader. Thereby, the education of the peasant and worker youth in the army will acquire an indispensable lever. We already have more than one case of a Communist commissar at the head of a regiment who has several thousand men before him and few assistants at lower level, but who has a proper system of education based upon section-leaders each of whom knows every one of his Red Army men and is able to talk to him. This opens the way to one-man command in the army. There can at present be no question of abolishing regimental commissars, even where, for example, the regimental commander is a Communist. Why not? Because, it is said, the purely educational-political work to be done is too great. Correct. But when we create a cadre of fully conscious Soviet section-leaders and platoon-commanders, this duality in organisation will swiftly wither away, and we shall go over to

complete one-man command, from top to bottom.

There is now a very great striving to learn. This is, in general, a most gratifying symptom in the life of our country. The young people want to learn. When some Workers' Faculty students jib at being conscripted, this is not at all because they do not want to go into the army, but simply because they are getting their teeth into learning, into scientific work. I have observed this also from private examples, from examples in my own family: all the facts show that the young people are now very keen to study. This is a very important symptom. If we again look back and consider how many forces we spent unnecessarily in our struggle, how many mistakes we committed in all spheres, owing to our lack of preparation, it will be clear that this striving to study is the youth's reaction to the experience gone through in recent years. This striving must be supported at all costs. Upon it we can build everything – both the economy and the army. The army is now in a privileged position, it is not active but is engaged, precisely, in studying, whereas the economy has to be transformed into a field of battle. Even six months ago this striving to study was not so marked. In the army, on the contrary, an uncritical idealisation of the previous period was still alive, with condescending contempt for bourgeois military science.

Not so long ago! had a big discussion in our military academy with General Staff students, young cadets at the General Staff Academy, when I expounded some rather elementary but very important truths: 'Learning is light, ignorance is darkness'; 'Measure seven times, then cut once'; it is not enough to have a broad conception, you have to have the correct methods for putting it into execution, right down to a good, clear distinctly transcribed order, in which times and places are not garbled; you have to establish communications under difficult conditions; and soon and so forth. I pointed out that our main task is to learn, and to learn to be precise, and conscientious where trifles are concerned. A comrade then arose and, with the sympathy of a considerable section of the audience, accused me of nothing more nor less than this, that generally speaking, I value *competence* more than reliability. As Communists, he said, we possess the important quality, namely, reliability, and that is the quality for a commander, whereas competence is a quality of secondary importance: Trotsky, however, puts competence above reliability. This way of posing the question is in the highest degree absurd, all the more so because the discussion was taking place in an educational institution, which was created for the purpose of educating people in competence. But, six months ago, that attitude still met with a certain sympathy even in the General Staff Academy. Go there today -they are working well. They do not always eat well, alas, which sometimes hinders them in their work, for they must become the flower of our army ... I repeat: they are working.

Today there is less and less of that denigration of bourgeois science or bourgeois strategy on the grounds that we, as it was said, have invented a new strategy. That sort of talk was very much in evidence not so long ago. There was an uncritical idealisation of our past. None of us in this hail is going, of course, to repudiate our glorious past struggle on the fronts of the civil war, the achievements of the Red Army, the heroism of the Communists, workers and peasants, that was shown in that struggle. But, comrades, I regard it as my duty to say that to idealise this past as a whole would be a very big mistake on our part. We were very clumsy and ignorant in military matters, we squandered a huge quantity of forces precisely because we were clumsy and

ignorant. When they say that we have created a new, proletarian strategy, I reply: no, that is not yet true. Up to now we have not created a new strategy. What was shown in our battles was the very great enthusiasm and self-sacrifice of the working class, who taught the peasants to form a centralised army, for by themselves, the peasants, when they tried to assert their independence, never got beyond guerrilla-ism. The peasant either gets saddled by the nobles and landlords, or he follows the lead of the advanced worker, as that of an elder comrade. That was what we demonstrated, and it is an historical fact of immense significance. If, however, we review the entire history of our fights on all fronts, we see great upsurges of heroism, but also very great retreats, recoils over hundreds of versts, which testify to what? To the fact that, in this flood, in these upsurges, the necessary controlling centres were lacking, there were not enough firm, reliable cadres, not sufficient military culture. We shall not repudiate the proletarian selfsacrifice, the precious qualities that were revealed in the revolution, and especially in the civil war, by the advanced workers and peasants, but we must supplement that by developing centres of control, that is, of better orientation, better security, better communication: by learning when it is necessary both to retreat and to advance; we must create conditions that will ensure that the army will have control of itself in all circumstances, will orientate itself and act with knowledge of why it is doing what it is doing. Only by raising the quality of the army as a whole, and especially of its commanders, starting at the lowest level, that is, by creating good section-leaders, shall we take a real step forward.

I must say that the army's ideological life, in the sphere of purely military questions, is now developing to a remarkable extent. Commanders are getting closer to politics, and political workers closer to military matters. That is extremely valuable, and we shall do all we can to support and develop it.

The stirring of interest in military questions has already given rise to some theoretical disputes. This is due, as I see it, to the fact that, as soon as work of theoretical generalisation and drawing of conclusions began, that uncritical idealisation of our past at once also rose to the surface and sought theoretical expression. I shall not deal in detail with this question here. Whoever is interested in knowing more about it should be so good as to acquaint himself with our literature on the subject, or come to tomorrow's conference of military workers, 21 where we shall discuss and, maybe, argue, among members of the department, but which, of course, any delegate may freely attend. I will say here, briefly, just this, that what is at issue is the so-called 'unified military doctrine' which is supposed to be the generalisation of a new revolutionary strategy and tactics. With this unified military doctrine is associated military-production propaganda. Note that, if you please: 'military-production'. For a long time I scratched my head trying to think what military-production propaganda might mean. But, on inquiring, I discovered that this was an expression which had already become almost established, and must mean military propaganda, propaganda of military knowledge. This striving for stunning terminology is observable especially among those comrades who uncritically idealise the past, find in it what was not there, sometimes fail to notice what was there, and cover up the gaps in their ideas with luxuriant expressions. They remind me of a seminary-student I knew long ago, who was infatuated with learning, and for this reason never called a rake anything but, Latinically, a 'rakus'. [\[4\]](#) But what we must do is not that, but, rather, try to express abstruse things in simple language, and bring them down to the level of the sectionleader, and through him to the mass of the Red Army men.

I am afraid that the Ukrainian commanders, at their last conference (I am very sorry that Comrade Frunze, who has been taken ill, is not present here: he has a high temperature) I am afraid, I repeat, that some of the Ukrainian comrades have, in their resolutions, rallied too strongly to the military doctrine, idealising the past, and have made too many concessions to that same Comrade Rakus. But we will talk about that in more detail tomorrow. I hope to show that the heralds of the new unified military doctrine are at fault not only because they formulate wrongly the general tasks of strategy and tactics but, principally, because they distract their own attention and other people's from the very important, even though crude, empirical, practical and partial tasks which go to make up the real culture of the Red Army.

This is today the heart of the matter in all spheres. We shall raise the level of the army today, in the present period of its history, not by reiterating the idea that proletarian strategy is better than bourgeois strategy but by ensuring that the soldier receives the elements of military-cultural education. Let's see to it that the soldier is free from lice. This is an immense and most important task of education, for what is needed here is persistence, indefatigability and firmness in freeing masses of men, by means of example and repetition, from the slovenliness in which they have grown up and which has eaten into them. For the soldier who has lice is only half a soldier. His attention is divided, his will-power is enfeebled, and, not realising this, he feels himself constrained. And, as for illiteracy, that is spiritual lousiness. We must liquidate it for sure by May 1, and thereafter continue this work with unrelenting intensity. And believe me, comrades, on the day that our army becomes free from lousiness both physical and spiritual, when all the Red Army men are clean and literate, our army will at once rise two heads higher, regardless of the invention of new and ultra-new doctrines, military production propagandas, and other 'rakuses'.

There, comrades, is, essentially, all that I can tell you today. Summing up, I will reduce everything to four points which are linked together in unity. First, we need to have a firm figure laid down for the army's size. May the new Central Committee which you will elect help the Soviet Government, in accordance with the entire situation that will take shape in the course of the coming spring, to lay down a firm figure for the army's size, so that we may say to the military workers: within the limits of this firm framework, build, organise, train, improve.

Secondly, we need a firm budget'let it be meagre and reduced, but firm. Whatever is lacking will be supplemented by our patrons: the patronage system has wholly justified itself. I warn you: we are keeping lists of all executive committees, at province and *uyezd* level, recording everything, missing nothing out, and we shall know which patrons are doing what they should and which are not. I shall not at present reveal to you this confidential information that we possess, so that the backward ones may have a chance to pull themselves together and draw level with the front runners. [A voice: 'But who are the front-runners?']

The palm must, of course, go to Moscow. I shall not name any others today, so as not to give rise to any competition here. [A voice: 'That would be useful.'] That would be useful, but I am afraid that, through speaking from memory, I might express insufficiently grounded judgments and evaluations of particular provinces or *uyezds*. And that would be harmful. But, in due course,

we shall report on this matter, have no doubt of that ... So, then, a firm figure for the army's size, and a firm budget. Further, reduction in the excessive outside duties imposed on the army. That will make concentrated and conscientious study fully possible. Finally, help us to educate the section-leaders. If I were to be asked today to define in one sentence the course that the War Department is following, I should say that we are now setting our course not towards the unified military doctrine, not towards the proletarian strategy, not towards commanders of genius with great plans in their heads, but towards a good, sound, efficient section-leader well educated and trained both militarily and politically.

Stenographic report of
the Eleventh Congress of
the RCP(B)

Endnotes

- [1.](#) The Eleventh Congress of the Russian Communist Party was held between March 27 and April 2, 1922. During the congress, a conference of military delegates was held, which passed a number of resolutions about the Red Army. In a resolution adopted by the Congress in connection with the resolutions of the military delegates' conference, mention was made of the need to lay down a definite strength for the army in 1922, to establish a fixed budget, determined in accordance with the strength of the army and the demands of military technique, and to reduce decisively the extraneous duties which imposed an excessive burden on the army. The Congress also confirmed the mobilisation of Communists of the 1899, 1900 and 1901 age groups.
- [2.](#) At the beginning of 1922, after the demobilisation of the older age-groups from the Red Army, it became necessary to strengthen the army's ranks with Communists and members of the Young Communist League. There was a call-up of some of the members and candidates for membership of the RCP belonging to the 1899, 1900 and 1901 classes. About 20,000 men were added to the army by this call-up.
- [3.](#) The Workers' Faculties (*Rabfaks*) were special university courses for workers who lacked the usual previous education. They were founded in 1920 by M.N. Pokrovsky, Deputy Commissar for Education.
- [4.](#) In the original, for *grabli* the seminarist said *grablius*: neither the Russian word nor its English equivalent is derived from Latin.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

Speech

At the All-Russia Conference of Navy Men, April 1, 1922

* * *

I am very glad, comrades, that I have managed to be present at your conference.

At the Ninth Congress of Soviets I had to say of the Navy that its fate was a very tragic one. That is undoubtedly the case. Our navy entered history as the first-born son of the revolution, as a first-rate revolutionary fighting force. This first-rate son of the revolution later became a stepchild of the revolution, and subsequently, so far as part of it was concerned, even became an enemy.

The Navy gave too many of its best elements to the service of the revolution, in every sphere: the sailors fertilised the Soviet cornfield. But, as a complex and delicate organism—an organism in both the mechanical and the human sense—a navy requires that its work be uninterrupted: as with any other complex and highly-skilled art, it cannot tolerate a break in its existence. Yet the revolution and its international situation deprived the Navy of the most important conditions for its existence and development. You all know this. The man-power of the Navy was, of course, squandered and dissipated on a large scale. There were moments when temporary elements, of an almost counter-revolutionary character, preponderated in the Navy. And so a time arrived when, from having at first been the revolution's first-born, it became in part the revolution's stepchild and in part even its adversary.

In order that we may be able to deal with the question of restoring the Navy we must ensure the possibility of expanding it from the economic standpoint, even if only to a very modest extent. The Navy, after all, is man-power plus a high level of technology, and a high level of technology means industry ... Only now, after we have secured our land frontiers and taught our enemies not to trouble us—whether we have cured them of that for good and all, nobody can say—when we have ensured a relatively peaceful existence for ourselves, only now can we take up the question of restoring the country economically, and, in connection with that, the question of restoring the Navy. The material conditions of the country's economy tell us that restoring the Navy technologically will be a very protracted process. We have begun with the Navy's human motive force, its men, its sailors.

How quickly will the Navy develop? On that score, comrades, we cherish no illusions, no false notions. Our navy will develop slowly, by the very nature of the case, because this is a high and complex instrument of war, requiring high and complex human organisation. Skill is acquired slowly. That fact imposes

upon us the need to take only picked, first-class men into the Navy, and to put them in conditions such that every rank-and-file sailor may enjoy the prospect of turning himself into a Red officer of our Red Navy: so that, in the event of a change in the international situation, our Navy may occupy a very big place, play a very big role; so that our new revolutionary cadres, with a Communist nucleus, may quickly gather a body of sailors round them, even if only those of the older age-groups which have now been demobilised. We must give, or try to give, to the small number of sailors whom we now have in the Navy the quality of a cadre, by means of *intelligent, correct work in the spheres of formation, training and education.*

I said that, under certain conditions, our navy will undoubtedly and inevitably acquire a certain international importance.

The Navy's primary, fundamental task is, of course, purely defensive. There can be no mistake on that score. We are exposed to danger from the sea; it is necessary to protect our shores, and our navy must be an instrument forming part of the whole defence system of the Soviet Republics.

At the same time we must keep in mind the consideration that our navy may, given a change in international conditions, be assigned a wider role. In this connection it must be mentioned that our navy – this weak, as yet very weak organism – possesses something that constitutes an advantage to us in comparison even with the British navy, namely, that in our case the profoundest crisis in the navy is behind us, whereas for them it still lies ahead. They have a 'powerful' organism, but, as against that, their crisis, too, will be a 'powerful' one, and will paralyse the British navy for a long time.

The British revolution will to a very great extent depend on the conduct of the British navy, and, subsequently, this will also decide the fate of the British colonies. How the process of the break-up will proceed in the British navy, its internal struggle and revolts, perhaps of one part against another – we do not and cannot know about that, but we do know that it is inevitable, and that, in preparation for this critical and acute period, we need to have a Red navy ready which even if it be small, will be firmly united and absolutely conscious.

I cannot at present, in any case, promise you, either on behalf of the Central Committee of our Party or on behalf of the Soviet Government, the creation of conditions that will quickly lift up our navy: we are still too poor, we have fallen too low economically. I know that you will still experience in your life extremely difficult moments when you will find no elbow-room either to the right or to the left, because in every direction you will come up against poverty, when sometimes a man will be, as they say, on the point of giving up the ghost.

We have had such moments, and, maybe, we shall have more of them, but in such moments, when things happen very suddenly, one has to take a somewhat wider view of the historical process: and, then, every one of us must feel confident that, in assembling now just the first bricks for the building of the revolutionary navy, we have an absolutely reliable foundation. Over there, in the British navy, they have a huge Gothic structure, but its pillars and foundations are beginning to show cracks. And, sooner or later, the whole structure will start to collapse, by sections or separate pillars, or it will fall down all at once. Therefore, precisely against that moment, it is very important for us to lay down even the first foundation stone, that is, to create the human

cadre of our Red Navy.

In the name of our joint work, I give you fraternal greetings, Communists, builders of the Red Navy, and together with you I cry: 'Long live the Red Navy!'

From the archives

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

'Ty' and 'Vy' in the Red Army [\[1\]](#)

In Sunday's **Izvestiya** there was an article about two Red Army men, Shchekochikhin and Chernyshev, who had behaved as heroes on the occasion of the explosion and fire at Kolomna. The article tells how the commander of the local garrison went up to Red Army man Shchekochikhin and asked:

'Do you (ty) know who I am?'

'Yes, you (vy) are the garrison commander.'

I doubt whether the dialogue has been correctly recorded in this case. Otherwise, one would have to conclude that the garrison commander does not use the right tone in speaking to Red Army men. Soldiers of the Red Army may, of course, use the familiar form when talking together as comrades, but precisely as comrades, and only as comrades. In the Red Army a commander may not use the familiar form when addressing a subordinate if the latter is expected to respond in the polite form. Otherwise an expression of inequality between persons would result, not an expression of subordination in the line of duty.

'Ty' and 'vy' are, of course, only matters of convention. But definite human relations are expressed in this convention. In some cases the familiar form is used to express close comradely relations. But when? When the relationship is mutual. In other cases the familiar form will convey disdain, disrespect, looking down one's nose, a shade of lordly hauteur in one's attitude to others. Such a tone is absolutely impermissible in the Red Army.

To some this may seem a trifling matter. It is not! A Red Army man must respect both himself and others. Respect for human dignity is an extremely important factor in what holds the Red Army together morally. The Red Army soldier submits to his superiors in the line of duty. The requirements of discipline are inflexible. But, at the same time, the soldier feels and knows that he is a conscious citizen, called upon to fulfil obligations of high responsibility. Military subordination must be accompanied by civic and moral equality, which does not allow the violation of personal dignity.

July 18, 1922
Izvestiya V. Ts. I. K.,
No. 159

Endnotes

[1.](#) Russian, like many other languages, and like English in earlier times, has two forms for the second person singular: *ty* ('thou') which is familiar, and *vy* ('you') which is respectful or polite.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

From a Speech at the Textile Workers' Congress

October 10, 1922

* * *

We are certainly not yet able to say that the most serious dangers are behind us, not to mention the most important difficulties in the economic sphere.

During these five years we have attempted much and experienced much, we have made many mistakes, but we have also learnt much. We have renounced none of our great revolutionary tasks, we have not lost a single grain of our revolutionary conviction and readiness to fight, but we have become more mature, we now appreciate the situation more profoundly, and we hope to commit fewer mistakes in the next five years. And we shall survive another and another five years, and after that yet another five years, and even then shall not see the end ... And if comrades, we have survived these five years which will have elapsed on November 7, then that is a victory for us: it was pre-ordained.

We have, of course, made mistakes in this period, chiefly in the field of elementary military defence. We tried to draw this conclusion at Genoa, when we proposed disarmament.

As you know, however, at Genoa those very governments which had persistently accused us of militarism refused to let this proposal be put on the agenda. *They* accused the Soviet Republic of militarism!

We drew the conclusion from this: we retained an army of 800,000 men. This is a large number for such a starving, cold, ruined country as ours, which is only beginning to recover – 800,000 men under arms. And we cannot do without them, since we have a shortage of men after the demobilising of all the older age-groups.

In the Ukraine and the Crimea we have carried out and are now carrying out a supplementary call-up of the class of 1901. This age-group was not called up in those areas at the normal time.

And what has happened? I was in the Crimea and I travelled through the Ukraine, and all the evidence, the facts and documents testify that the young men of the 1901 class supplementary call-up have responded to the summons 100 per cent; there has been no evasion. Their morale is excellent. There is no question of coercion or repression. We remember how the first conscription went, and appreciate the fact that the supplementary call-up of the 1901 age-group of the workers and peasants is taking place in the Ukraine and the Crimea, which rallied to the October revolution considerably later than Moscow,

Petersburg and the central region, and is taking place willingly, with complete readiness. This means, first, that there has been a tremendous improvement in the political level of the peoples inhabiting our federation. Our entire policy unfolds before us as an immense object-lesson. They learn along with their power, they learn and they are learning. They know what our policy is, what our army is and what it is for. Secondly, this fact of voluntary and even cheerful reporting for duty on the part of the youth testifies that the relation between the working class and the peasant masses has improved even in those borderlands where the Soviet order is more backward than at the centre – and at the centre it is still far from perfect.

Pravda
October 12, 1922,
No.230

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

Speech at the Fifth All-Russia Congress of the Russian Young Communist League

October 16, 1922 [\[1\]](#)

* * *

Comrades, October 16, 1922 is the festival day of the adoption of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Navy by the workers' and peasants' Young Communist League. This event, which might seem to be essentially formal in character, is in fact of profound political and social significance and enters as an important date into the chronicle of our revolution. Here, on this stage, which long ceased to be merely a theatre-stage, and which has been the arena of major historical events [\[2\]](#), a great event is taking place today'our League is joining in our common constructive work, and in the most crucial and responsible form of that work, the building of the army.

This great festival will probably serve'there can be no doubt about this, and I begin by speaking about it'as the point of departure of a new campaign of rabid slander against Soviet Russia by the bourgeois press of the entire world.

We have long since been 'imperialists', who are organising an armed force for the conquest of our neighbours, for the enslavement of Europe and the whole world. And, lo and behold, the Young Communist League, whose tasks are primarily cultural and educational, assembles in this Bolshoi Theatre for what purpose? In order to hand over its banner to the Workers' and Peasants' Red Navy, which it has adopted. Is this not striking and irrefutable proof and confirmation of everything that has been said about our militaristic intentions and the imperialistic spirit of our revolution? I repeat, tomorrow, or the next day, this festival will be interpreted in the really imperialist, really predatory press of the whole world as a festival of warlike intentions and imperialist ambition.

There is a French saying: 'The older the devil gets, the more pious does he become.' [\[3\]](#) This needs to be applied to capitalism, which becomes more hypocritical and baser in its lies (which are refined and disseminated by means of boundless resources of the printed and the spoken word) as it gets older and draws nearer to its grave. Every newspaper which expresses the spirit of the world bourgeoisie (and the world bourgeoisie is rich in newspapers) constitutes in every one of its issues a whole academy of hypocrisy and lies. For each bloody hand which, in the service of the bourgeoisie, is ready to drive a keenlysharpened knife into the breast or the back of the working class, there are a hundred hands armed with a pen, and a hundred tongues, to curse, deceive, bait and slander. And we are called by them 'militarists' - we who in October 1917 came to power under the banner of peace and brotherhood

among all nations.

The first communication from the victorious government of October to the governments of the whole world called for an end to the war and the working out of a peace that would have meant fraternal collaboration of all nations. And if we quickly turn the pages of the book of our five years' destiny, we see, on every page, traces of our intense efforts to bring about, even at the price of very great concessions, peace and working agreement with all the other countries. And not only at the armoured gates of the great imperialist powers, Britain, France and, earlier (after October) Germany, and, later, the United States, did our diplomats stand and knock persistently, proposing and calling for peace, but even at those of little Estonia and Latvia, or, later, of Poland and Romania, did our diplomats repeat again and again, for weeks, months and years: 'We propose peace.'

We paid a price for peace, and we paid it in pure, ringing gold, of which we never had much and still less remained. I single out Estonia, which made peace with us, needing it no less than we did. [4] But take, for example, our relations with Poland: all our notes, appeals and declarations, from beginning to end, were permeated with a profound and sincere desire to achieve peace without bloodshed and to get down to healing the wounds of our exhausted and weakened social organism.

We are imperialists and militarists, because, on the first day that the October government came to power, we announced that we repudiated and cancelled all the old treaties of Tsardom, based on grabbing and violence, and proposed peace to all the peoples of the world. We are imperialists and militarists because we offered a fraternal hand of aid to the oppressed people of the East, because we cancelled, of our own free will, the old treaties with Persia, which laid heavy chains upon her. We reached out a fraternal hand to oppressed and partly dismembered China. We supported oppressed Turkey at a time when it seemed that not even one little spark was left in her hearth. We are imperialists and militarists because we supported the weak and proposed peace to all the nations of the globe. And in this long series of efforts and struggles on our part we tempered ourselves. While, on the eve of October, we already had no illusions as to the character of the bourgeoisie, its methods, its spirit, nevertheless there was, perhaps, among some of us, the idea that there was a limit beyond which even bourgeois cynicism would not go. But there is no such limit. There is only a limit of power, of force. The onslaught of the bourgeoisie stops when it has exhausted its strength, and then its refined hypocrisy is brought up to replace the strength that is lacking.

We built our Workers' and Peasants' Army under heavy blows. To undertake the building of a navy is harder for us, because for a navy one needs much higher technique and a much higher level of the state organisation itself. The fabric of Soviet society and the Soviet state must become more solid, more regular, better, more precise, if we are to be able to undertake the restoration of the Workers' and Peasants' Navy, which is a complex and delicate organism. We have been brought to this necessity under the blows of fate, the blows of our enemies.

I could mention many episodes when our navy, which rendered service of immeasurable importance during the internal civil war, was needed by us for defending our borders against external attack. But, out of a whole series of

facts, I will recall the days of July and August 1920. At that time some French warships approached Odessa, escorting transport vessels, and the French commander, having asked for a pilot, requested permission to enter our waters. Permission was granted. On the transport vessels were Russian soldiers who had been sent by the Tsar to help French capital against German capital, and who, later, after the victory of the October revolution, were made prisoners-of-war by France and the French bourgeoisie. After they had been examined, it turned out that there were nineteen military aeroplanes on these same vessels. For whom were the military aeroplanes intended? Not for us, of course. They were destined for delivery to Wrangel, in the Crimea. But the naval authorities of France were so lacking in ceremony in their dealings with us that they found it possible, in order to save fuel, to carry out two assignments at once: to return to Odessa the former Tsarist soldiers, whom at that time they were in a hurry to get rid of, and then, on the same trip, to deliver to Wrangel nineteen aeroplanes, with which the Wrangelites were to kill Russian workers and peasants. By the laws of war, and we were at war, the aeroplanes were first-class contraband of war, and, naturally, the Odessa authorities at once seized the contraband. Complicated and grave negotiations began. We, the members of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, with the Commander-in Chief and the Commander of Naval Forces, sat at one end of the direct wire, here in Moscow, while at the other end of the wire, in Odessa, sat the local naval authorities, passing on to us every proposal and demand made by the French. Their first statement was that 'these aeroplanes are intended for French troops'. 'Why, then, did they come to Odessa?' 'Because they are intended for the French troops in Constantinople.' 'Why, then, did you not unload them at Constantinople, which you passed on your way?' 'Because we, the French naval authorities, were in a hurry to return to you in Odessa as soon as we could your unfortunate prisoner-of-war brothers, former soldiers of France.' While the bourgeoisie and bourgeois service chiefs are everywhere eaten up with hypocrisy, this is ten times, a hundred times, as bad in France. There has never in history been such highly-finished hypocrisy as in France. It turned out that these aeroplanes had arrived at Odessa owing to the excessive humanity of French militarism which was helping Wrangel to torment and exhaust our already debilitated country.

But even five-month-old infants in Odessa would not have believed the explanation given by the French admiral, and he did not hope to be believed or expect us to trust him. The aeroplanes stayed confiscated. Then the French commander proposed that, in order that the aeroplanes might not be used for military purposes by anyone, they should be taken out and destroyed in the presence of French officers and of our commanders. We conferred about this in the Revolutionary War Council. We were fully within our rights in confiscating this contraband of war, but we sought to reach agreement. By the direct wire we told Odessa: 'We agree.' But this delay had been needed down there so as to bring up from Constantinople three bigger French warships. When these vessels approached defenceless Odessa, the admiral announced: 'If you do not return the aeroplanes by such-and-such an hour, we shall subject Odessa to non-stop bombardment.'

That, comrades, was the situation in which we found ourselves at the beginning of August 1920. I remember those hours very clearly. We hesitated. I will not conceal it from you—we wavered. Should we go through with it, risking the bombardment of Odessa? For there was, after all, the thought: 'They wouldn't dare.' But, in the end, we said to ourselves: 'They will dare anything,

they will do whatever their long-range naval guns allow them to do.' And we retreated. Gritting our teeth, clenching our fists, we retreated, and gave the order, over the direct wire, to return the aeroplanes. Naturally, the aeroplanes were at once conveyed from Odessa to the Crimea, to Wrangel, and used to kill our Red Army men. At that time we said to ourselves: 'If we had had a little fleet in the Odessa roads, just one or two submarines, with, as their crews, a handful of young sailors ready to fight and die, the French Government, the French naval authorities, would not have decided to undertake that experiment.'

Comrades, we do not, of course, need a navy in order to carry out great international plans. We are not going to deceive anyone, and least of all ourselves. We are weak, we are exhausted, we want peace and economic work, and at the same time we want our door to be bolted. We want to be sure that our coastal towns will not be subjected at any moment to the threat of being wiped off the face of the earth at the will of some bourgeois admiral or other. We need a small nucleus of naval forces which will form part of the defence system of the Soviet Republic. And this small nucleus we are now raising almost out of the rubble, almost out of the ashes.

Here the Russian Young Communist League is coming to our aid. It is going to bring forth from its midst the first cadres of new, young sailors, who will have to bear on their shoulders the fate of our revolutionary navy. And if we still needed to prove to someone that there is in the world only one democracy in our Russia I should say: 'Just take a look at this festival of ours; what festival is it? It is the festival of the creation of an armed force of the state with the active, conscious, responsible participation of a real democracy of workers and peasants, men and women alike, of young people who are almost adolescents. They have grown up, all at once, out of the factories, the workshops and the black earth, into a real Soviet democracy.' If I wanted to make a comparison, I should say: 'Look at Germany.' They have a republic there now: a parliament, universal suffrage, votes of confidence, or lack of confidence, in ministries, and a super-mendacious press. But when what had to be decided was a vital question, in the true sense of the word – a question of life and death for the German people – the question of so-called reparations, of paying the crazy indemnities to the French bourgeoisie, who decided, who discussed this question: parliament, the democracy, or, perhaps, the German workers' and peasants' youth league? No, it was Stinnes. Stinnes is the uncrowned banker king of Germany, on whom nine-tenths of Germany is directly or indirectly dependent, the man who has established his dictatorship over the German paper mark. [5] Stinnes went forth to meet a representative of French bourgeois circles, one Lubersac. And there, in a retreat in one of the health resorts, a first-class one, naturally, on the quiet, behind closed doors and drawn blinds, Stinnes settled the fate of the German people. 'That is what I want and that is how it will be!' said the real sovereign, this real dictator by the grace of the stock-exchange, trampling and spitting on what hypocrites, fools and scoundrels call bourgeois democracy.

Let them talk and write about our 'imperialism' and our 'militarism'. A militarism that is built with the voluntary, conscious participation of the worker and peasant youth is not militarism, it is an instrument for the liberation of the working masses.

And we shall, together, create this instrument. The fact that you, the

Workers' and Peasants' Youth League, are from this day forth patrons of our Red Navy does not mean, of course, that from your hands, as from a horn of plenty, all manner of material benefits will pour out upon our Red Navy. No, you possess no horn of plenty, but you do possess the trumpet-horn of proletarian revolution, with which you today proclaim your will: to dedicate your strength both to the task of economic and cultural restoration of our country and to that of defending it in arms.

The fact that you have become patrons of the Red Navy today draws a line under an entire phase of our past and opens a new chapter. We received our navy as a heritage from the old regime. A very profound revolution took place in it, the rank-and-file sailors occupied one of the most responsible places in our revolution, but, all the same, the Navy retained, from the former epoch, a certain exclusiveness and isolation. Everywhere in the world the navy, in the persons of its ruling strata, its officers, constitutes the most exclusive service caste, with the most privileged, arrogant, prejudiced, corporate spirit. That was the case here too, and a spirit of exclusiveness, a certain arrogance, at first just naval, but then in its own way 'naval-revolutionary', characterised certain elements of our navy in the post-October period as well. [6] If we recall the black date of Kronstadt, the revolt at Kronstadt, there can be no doubt that one of the reasons why discontent found expression in such an acute form just there was the corporate spirit, the craft-exclusiveness of the old 'estate of the navy'. The fact that you, the Workers' and Peasants' Youth League, are taking on the patronage of our navy signalises, above all, a real end to that spirit of caste, of isolation and exclusiveness, of group arrogance, in so far as this spirit has still survived in some nooks and crannies of our navy, as a heritage from the past.

You are the link, you are the living bridge between the navy and the working masses of town and country. You will, by virtue of the very fact of your patronage, remind the Navy every day and every hour that it is only the armed organ of the working masses of town and country. You will stand before the Navy as a constant reminder of the proletariat, the revolution and communism.

But the Navy, too, will remind you of something, because it is a complex organism, technologically and organisationally. The Navy can be built only on the basis of constantly improved technology, a high level of knowledge and a high level of social and state organisation. By its requirements and needs the Navy will remind you about knowledge and technique. That is why I sincerely hope that your henceforth inseparable bond with the workers' and peasants' Red Navy will be equally beneficial to both parties—to the adopted and to the adopter.

'The working class, the revolution, and communism', you will remind the Navy: 'Science and technique,' the Navy will reply. And under this banner we shall conquer: 'The working class, communism, science and technique.'

*Bulletin of the 5th All-
Russia Congress of the
Russian Young
Communist League*

Endnotes

- [1.](#) The Fifth All Russia Congress of the Russian Young Communist League was held on October 11-18, 1922. The speech given here was included in a book of speeches and articles about the youth by Comrade Trotsky entitled **Pokoleniye Oktyabra (The October Generation)**, published by *Molodaya Gvardiya*, Moscow 1924.
- [2.](#) This speech was made in Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre, where the Congress of Soviets and ceremonial gatherings are usually held.
- [3.](#) *Quand le Diable se fait vieux, li se fait ermite*. Cf. the phrase in Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, well-known from Motteux's translation: 'The Devil was sick, the Devil a monk would be ...
- [4.](#) Estonia was the first state to make a treaty of peace with the RSFSR. Peace was signed on February 2, 1920, in the town of Yuryev [\[4a\]](#), and ratified by the All-Russia Central Executive Committee on February 4, 1920. The peace terms included payment by the RSFSR to Estonia of 15 million gold roubles. The next state to make peace was Lithuania, with whom a treaty was signed in Moscow on July 12, 1920, and ratified by the All-Russia CEC on September 9, 1920. The RSFSR paid Lithuania 3 million gold roubles. Latvia made peace with the RSFSR at Riga on August 11, 1920, and this was ratified by the All-Russia CEC on September 9, 1920. Four million gold roubles were paid by the RSFSR as an advance on valuables to be returned to Latvia.
- [4a.](#) This peace-treaty is usually called the Treaty of Dorpat, from the original (German) name of Yuryev – which is now known by its Estonian name of Tartu.
- [5.](#) Hugo Stinnes was in 1921 the most powerful capitalist in Germany and was reported to be planning a super-trust to control the whole of German industry. He died in 1924 and his organisation broke up. In September 1922 he signed, at the Castle of Heinburg, on the Rhine, a contract with the French Senator De Lubersac for reconstruction of the devastated areas of Northern France.
- [6.](#) The Bolshevik sailor P.E. Dybenko said: 'The sailor always felt that he was superior to the soldier and to the worker, and therefore he felt obliged to be in the vanguard.' Captain M.V. Ivanov, the most important naval officer to collaborate with the Soviet Government in its first days, said: 'I had a habit of looking down on all who were not part of naval life.' (Quoted by Evan Maudsley, in **The Russian Revolution and the Baltic Fleet**, 1978).

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

Prospects and Tasks in Building the Army [\[1\]](#)

* * *

I

The Army and the Economy

The sphere of army-building has always been one for planned work, In this sphere bourgeois states, too, allowed no 'competition', no private enterprise – at all events, 'private enterprise' by the workers, directed to arming themselves to defend their own class interests, was and is always ruthlessly suppressed by the bourgeois state. Armies everywhere are strictly centralised. The strength of an army is always decided in advance, not only as a whole but also as regards its different branches. The entire internal structure of an army is worked out in conformity with a legislative act, that is, a previous organisational and economic plan. All types of weapons are standardised and laid down in legislation. As is well known, this circumstance in no way hinders the initiative and creativity of inventors, who work with maximum intensity precisely in the sphere of armaments, especially in wartime. The centralised, planned, thoroughly thought-out, thoroughly conscious, rationalised and standardised organisation of the bourgeois army itself was always a very powerful argument against the bourgeois philosophy of the sole power to save possessed by private enterprise, market competition and so forth.

The second distinctive feature of the army from time immemorial has been the 'Taylorisation' of movements, methods and relations, that is, a careful, detailed working-out of all the separate elements of action, with a view to achieving the maximum effect. Senseless square-bashing in no way contradicts this: in the first place because it was, in its own way, a Tayloristic method of knocking the soldiers into shape psychologically, and, secondly, because any and every method and procedure can, under certain conditions, be carried to the point of absurdity and turned into its own negation.

Only one other sphere of state activity resembles the military sphere, in its centralised and planned character, namely, the railways. Here, too, no 'competition' is allowed between two trains on one set of rails, or even (with very rare exceptions) any competition between two lines running parallel to each other. In the railway sphere, however, there is still extensive application of private 'initiative', that is, private ownership, although this is kept within the limits of an overall state plan. A really planned railway system is conceivable only on the basis of a socialist state.

In the purely industrial sphere, application of the planning principle is kept, in capitalist countries, within the limits of each separate enterprise, or of a united group of enterprises (a trust or syndicate), but the relations between trust and

trust are governed by the laws of struggle for the market. Planned regulation on a broader scale and of a compulsory nature is introduced into the spheres of industry and trade only in wartime, when the entire economy has to be subordinated to the needs of a colossal active army.

The position of the Soviet state in relation to the economy is profoundly different. The working class has taken over not merely the railways but all the most important means of industrial production. Consequently, the planning principle finds, in the spheres of industry and trade, even now, under NEP, incomparably wider, more comprehensive application than in capitalist countries. The New Economic Policy allows competition between state enterprises on the basis of market relations, but not as a saving general law, only within those limits in which the state is as yet unable to cope, by planned forecasting and co-ordination, with the appropriate task of regulation. The extension of the market does not mean here that the planning principle has to contract, but only that the planning principle, which emanates from the workers' state, has to operate with an increasing mass of material goods and values. The broad historical success of our constructive work will be measured by the extent to which the planning principle will develop, more and more as time goes by, at the expense of the market. As it becomes consolidated, state regulation must, eventually – not tomorrow, or even the day after tomorrow, but after long years – bring the economy under centralised management, as a unified whole. Even under developed socialism, of course, extensive spheres of the economy will be left to local initiative. But this very division of competence will not result from tradition but will be a component of a thought-out, considered plan.

It was said earlier that the army of a bourgeois state possesses all those features with which bourgeois thought reproaches the socialist economic system. In the army everything is determined by laws, statutes, regulations, establishments and schedules, right down to the number of buttons on a soldier's underwear. What is the situation as regards the planning principle in the Red Army? In this respect *the Soviet Republic lags extraordinarily far behind bourgeois states*. And this is not surprising. We started to build our army almost from nothing, if you do not count the material side that we inherited from the old regime, together with military habits diffused among the population. The initial growth of our army took place in complete opposition to the planning principle. At the fronts whole divisions were improvised from scratch: executive committees formed, at their own discretion, units, regiments, reinforcement companies, squadrons, and so on. The apparatuses of administration and supply took shape 'as needed', and displayed in their structure all the forms of organisational fantasy, not disciplined either by Taylorism or even by the most elementary results of experience. Everything, from beginning to end, was a matter of collective improvisation. If the working class had been lacking in that power of improvisation, that initiative and energy, the revolution would have perished. But this does not in the least mean that improvisation remains forever or for a long time the only, or even the basic, method of a victorious revolution. On the contrary *the socialist revolution would have perished if it had tried to canonise improvisation as a method of construction*.

In December 1920 a period opened which saw extensive demobilisation and reduction in the size of the army, contraction and reconstruction of its entire apparatus. This period went on from January 1921 to January 1923. During

this period the army and navy were reduced in strength from 5,300,000 to 610,000 men. The reduction was carried out in separate, rather fortuitous stages, under the impact of jolts coming, in the main, from our economic situation. It can be said that the army was reduced in the same sort of improvised way that it was built up. To a certain extent, of course, this was unavoidable. It was impossible to predetermine at once the minimum size needed for the army and the chronological programme for reducing it, since the whole situation, both internal and international, continued to evolve – and, moreover, in the features of greatest importance to us – precisely during the course of our work at reducing the size of the army. Nevertheless, it is impossible not to mention that glaring errors were committed in this sphere. Foresight was sometimes not shown in cases where it could have been shown. In the main, the fortuitous reductions aggravated the instability of the demobilising army, and, although they were carried out in the name of the economy, they resulted, on the contrary, in excessive material expenditure. By March 1923 the army, together with the navy, had settled into the limits laid down. Since that time much work has been done to bring organisational and material order into the army, that is, above all, to establish the necessary concordance between manpower technique and the administrative apparatus. But the previous history of the Red Army – both of its growth and of its contraction – already enables even the uninitiated to conclude that there must still be, in the army's structure, quite a few vestiges – that is, features inherited, without being critically thought out and studied, from the epoch of improvisation and work done hastily and roughly. Not only in the sphere of technique but also in that of systematisation of our own experience, or bringing order into the army's organisational forms, we have lagged to an extraordinary degree behind the capitalist states. Their work in this sphere bears a much more planned character. We shall have to work devilish hard to catch up with them.

II

Our Advantages and Our Backwardness

This does not mean, however, that all the advantages are on the side of the bourgeois armies. Without deluding ourselves, we can say that that is not the case. After all, an army is not merely technique, or organisational form, it is, above all, a moral collectivity. Regulations, establishments, orders – all these count for only a third, if not a tenth, in governing human relations. The formal elements of discipline and subordination can be maintained only on the basis of a mental bond, a sense of solidarity, a feeling of comradeship, and faith in the justice of one's cause. In this sphere our superiority is beyond doubt: the immensity of it is perhaps not clear even to some of us. We waged our past revolutionary wars under conditions of foodrequisitioning in the countryside and frightful hunger in the towns. The peasantry often wavered between support for the Soviet power in its struggle with the Whites, and revolt against it. The townsfolk writhed in the torments of hunger. The majority of the intelligentsia sabotaged the revolution. Among the commanders in the army treachery was not infrequent. It is precisely in all these spheres that serious successes have been achieved during the last eighteen months or two years. The new regime has become established in the eyes of the broadest masses of the peasantry as a state system which may make mistakes, and may even commit injustices, but which is basically the only regime possible today for ensuring collaboration

between the workers and the peasants. The Communist Party has come to be seen by the whole population as the axis of this new regime. The majority of the intelligentsia, or, at least, its viable part, has radically changed its orientation – towards the Soviet power. Even in the Church a change of waymarks has taken place, in the sense of an adaptation to the new order, with which it is necessary to reckon as an accomplished fact 'for many, many a year'. Meanwhile, a new body of commanders has grown up and continues to grow up among us, inseparably linked with the mass of the worker and peasant population. Nowhere in the world is there, nor can there be before a revolution, an army so monolithic in its sentiments as ours. Nowhere in the world is there, nor can there be, such a bond between the army and the country as here. Nowhere in the world is it possible at present to go over to the militia system. But we have undertaken this task. And if we are making the transition gradually, it is not from political fears but from considerations of an organisational and technical character: this is a new task, of immeasurable importance, and we do not want to take a second step until we have made sure of the first one.

To appreciate our moral-political superiority it is enough to compare the reaction to Curzon's challenge in Britain and here. [\[2\]](#) [\[3\]](#) Over there, what Curzon did provoked not only a protest by the Opposition in Parliament, but also, what is incomparably more important, profound indignation among the worker masses. The conduct of Soviet diplomacy in relation to this matter meets, on the contrary, with unanimous, undivided support by the entire country. And this is not a formal, 'official' unanimity, as some 'democratic' cretins among the émigrés keep saying, but an incontestable, inalienable, capital conquest of the revolution, and on this moral capital we shall build everything, the Red Army included. In the event that a new war is forced upon us, our moral-political superiority gives promise of making itself felt to the very great benefit of the Union of Soviet Republics.

This fundamental advantage of ours, ensured by the social revolution, gives us the right not only to think confidently about the future but also fearlessly to reveal our present backwardness, organisational, technical and in every other respect. And this backwardness is very serious. The army's level of technique reflects the country's general level of technique and, in the immediate sense, the state of industry. Here, in the sphere of industry, the basic knot is tied on which the survival and further development of the Soviet republics and, above all, their defence, depend.

What is an army of 600,000 men, given our expanses and our population? It constitutes, first and foremost, the cadres of the wartime army: in part, a strategic covering-force, in part, a potential vanguard of shock-troops, but, mainly and primarily, the cadres of our future, wartime army. The quality of the cadres is, of course, of the greatest importance for the combat capacity of our future, wartime army. But cadres constitute only one of the conditions needed. In addition, we must have a proper system of mobilisation and replacement, strictly thought out, calculated and prepared in terms of organisation, depending on all the special features of the Soviet Union and the possible direction from which hostile attacks may come. Furthermore, we need a proper system of supply for the army, embracing all its requirements, to function throughout the period of the operations required for winning victory. These are the three elements – not counting political work – that will condition the work of the Red Army in a future war.

It is quite obvious that what constitutes the biggest difficulty for us is technique, in its present extremely complex and increasingly complex forms. We are poor in aircraft, poor in chemical weapons, poor in armoured forces, poor in artillery, poor in engineering equipment, poor in means of transport, both purely military and general state means. These are all indubitable facts: our enemies know about them, and we feel their reality every day. No miraculous leaps are achievable in this sphere. We have to align ourselves with the economy, that is, primarily, with industry, with its general development, its gradual advance. State industry must, in the next few months, give to the army the maximum that it is capable of giving. But we cannot demand from the economy sacrifices that are unbearable, that is, which would threaten to undermine the development of industry and thereby cut the root on which the army itself depends. Determining the upper limit of economic sacrifices for the sake of defence is one of the most important -perhaps, now, *the* most important - task of our general state plan. The tempo of army-building, while brought up to the maximum, must at the same time correspond to the fundamental tempo of the country's economic development. To get out of step with that would mean undermining the country's capacity for defence. It is, of course, impossible to estimate in advance, with any degree of precision, the tempo of the country's economic development over a number of years, but we can and must forecast this with a certain, even if only rough approximation - so as subsequently, on the basis of experience, to check the draft plan and make the necessary corrections thereto.

III Planned Work

Here we come face to face with the question of planned work. The entire next period of Soviet constructive work will proceed under the sign of going over from rule-of-thumb methods, improvisation, administrative guerrilla-ism, to systematic work in accordance with a draft plan. This is a question which far from all of us have thought out as we should. Some will object: 'He's talking about us, saying that we work by rule of thumb and anyhow!' Others, on the contrary, are inclined to be sceptical where planned work is concerned ('Where is it? What is it?') presenting this scepticism as the very last word in statesmanlike sobriety and revolutionary realism. Sometimes one and the same person uses both sorts of argument, alternately. But if we leave aside cheap and vulgar buffoonery regarding planned work, we find that what all this criticism amounts to is that an all-embracing, universal, 'strict' (that is, administratively enforceable) plan is beyond our powers: how can there be any question of such a plan! The Twelfth Congress of the Communist Party [\[3a\]](#) gave a formulation of the tasks of planned economic construction, which, while mentioning the objections referred to above, possesses importance at the level of principle for military work as well.

'In Soviet Russia', says the Congress resolution, 'all the principal means of industry and transport belong to one proprietor, the state, whose active intervention in economic life must necessarily bear a planned character, and, in view of the dominant role played by the state, as owner and master, the planning principle thereby acquires, from the very first, exceptional importance.

'All previous experience has shown, however, that the plan of a socialist economy cannot be laid down *a priori*. by theoretical or bureaucratic means. A

genuine socialist economic plan, embracing all branches of industry, with their inter-relations and the relation between industry as a whole and agriculture, is possible only as the outcome of protracted preparatory economic experience on the basis of nationalisation, steadily pursued efforts at practical concordance between the work of different branches of the economy, and proper recording of the results.'

Further:

'It is necessary to make a clean sweep, at the centre and in the localities, of all attempts by departments and institutions to secure some decision or other by roundabout means, by stating that it is urgent or must be done at once, or by improvising: such attempts are to be seen as manifestations of economic short-sightedness and most pernicious survivals of *administrative guerrillaism*.

'The success of the work of any department must be evaluated to a considerable extent as a function of its timeliness in submitting drafts and proposals to the State Planning Commission, for comprehensive elaboration and co-ordination. Even more so must the success of the work of the State Planning Commission itself be evaluated as a function of its own timeliness in spotting economic problems, in correctly forecasting the immediate future, and in alerting particular departments to the task of timely coordination, both budgetary and practical, of those spheres and branches of their work which require such coordination.

'It is necessary to combat, through the State Planning Commission, the creation of all sorts of temporary and fortuitous commissions, for investigating, directing, checking, preparing and so on, which are a major evil in our state activity. Proper regulations must be secured through normal and permanent organs. Only thus can these organs improve and develop the flexibility they need, through all-round adaptation to the task assigned to them, on the basis of continuous experience.'

In military matters, administrative guerrilla-ism and petty production 'commissionism' is even less tolerable than in any other. Correctness of conception, accuracy of machinery, precision of execution – these are the basic factors in serious, practical, economical work which produces real results. One cannot trifle with these factors in any sphere, and least of all in the military sphere.

The military plan finds financial expression in the military budget.

IV

Budget, Technique, Supply

First and foremost, we must really ensure, one hundred per cent, all forms of supply for the present army of cadres. This matter does not need to be developed, merely to be put into execution. Parallel with this, but at a second level of importance, must go the accumulation of stockpiles sufficient for arming the very much more numerous army of wartime. These two tasks cannot, of course, be accomplished within a few months, nor even within a single budget-year. States very much richer than ours often have recourse, when they want to take serious measures to strengthen their armed forces, to establishing a special military budget calculated not just for one year but for five, six and seven years ahead. This method is all the more obligatory for us because we are only now undertaking the systematic and planned building of our army and navy. The country's economy is reviving. There are grounds for counting on the continuance of this process and on its tempo increasing in the

next few years. It is quite obvious that the country will be able to set aside an increasing share of its increasing income for the needs of defence. Therefore we can reckon that our military budget will enjoy, in the next few years, a modest but firm upturn. This prospect regarding the budget, with careful allowance for actual possibilities, allowing for reduction rather than increase in the country's resources, is what we must take as the basis for our military and war-industry plan. We must observe the necessary proportionality between the different branches of war industry, in relation both to the army's current supply needs and to the stockpiles. This means that the plan for current army-building and the plan for mobilising and expanding the army in case of war must be co-ordinated with the plan for developing war industry, and the latter can only be a component part of the general state plan for industry as a whole.

A long-term plan – a five-year plan, say – for the development of the armed forces will naturally break down, in its turn, into a series of partial plans, for the different types of weapon, principal and auxiliary. These partial plans will have to be carefully worked out, within the framework of the budgetary progress mentioned above, properly allotted among the internal requirements and needs of the army and navy.

We have referred to the principal and the auxiliary types of weapon. It is however, a peculiarity of our epoch that what were auxiliary types of weapon are quickly coming to the forefront. This applies primarily to aircraft and to chemical warfare. Aircraft have no independent means of destroying the enemy: they make use either of dynamite or of machine-guns, which give them a new sphere of activity. Chemical means of warfare, however, constitute a fully independent type of weapon, one which poisons people. We do not approach this question from the humanitarian standpoint. Which is more humane, to shoot a man, blow him up, cut him down, burn him or poison him, is a question we leave entirely to the discretion of the League of Nations and the Bishop [*sic*] of Canterbury. The last war showed clearly enough that all sanctimoniously humanitarian restrictions fall away like a husk after the first shot has been fired. And until there has been a change in the present situation, that is, until bourgeois rule has been overthrown, the Soviet Union cannot follow, in matters of defence, any rules of conduct but 'an eye for an eye, and gas for gas'.

The first place in our technological concerns must be occupied by aircraft. This task is made easier by the fact that aviation possesses quite independent and, moreover, immense economic and cultural importance, which cannot, unfortunately, be said either of howitzers or of asphyxiating gases. Combining military aviation with civil means, primarily, co-ordinating the programme of the Commander of the Air Fleet with that of the Society of Friends of the Air Fleet and the All-Union Society of the Volunteer Air Fleet. A start has been made in this. It would be radically wrong to try and squeeze civil aviation into the framework of military types and plans of aircraft, but it is necessary to ensure beforehand the line of junction between them, to secure, without detriment to economic and cultural requirements, the maximum uniformity in type of aircraft and co-ordination of the whole aviation organisation. Civil aviation must become a reserve for military aviation. We shall not, for quite understandable reasons, go into details about that here. The general direction to be taken by the impending measures is clear from what has already been said. And what is clear, above all, is that the defence of the Soviet Union is directly and immediately dependent on the consolidation and development of

state industry.

'A plan is a splendid thing,' some will object, 'including a plan for building the army and war industry, calculated for a five-year period. But what if an enemy attacks us before this period has elapsed? What happens in the event of a sudden war? Don't we need to take, beforehand, emergency measures to ensure a minimum degree of preparation against unexpected attack?' Such and similar arguments constitute, in essence, disguised opposition to the plan. The essence of planned work consists in maintaining and developing the necessary proportionality between the constituent elements of the armed forces. It is perfectly obvious that, if a warlike blow were to be struck at us, we should be best prepared for it if our previous work had been carried on in accordance with a plan. Plans of preparation, not only military but also general economic ones, will, of course, be disrupted by the outbreak of war. But it will be a case of one plan disrupted for the sake of another. Because we need to have in reserve a plan for mobilising the industry of the country's entire economy in the event of a big war – and a new war, if it should come, cannot be otherwise than a big one.

V

The Red Army and the National Question [\[4\]](#)

Our army-building work must henceforth reckon, to an incomparably greater extent than before, with the fact that the country which the Red Army is called upon to defend is not a country but a whole continent, that our state is not a national republic, but a union of national republics. Amid the flames and thunder of the civil war this fact was taken little note of, and the conclusions following from it were often, through necessity (but sometimes through ill-will), ignored and even trampled upon. The Soviet Union is now going over from a temporary-camp situation to one that is more stable and settled. The mutual relations of the independent and autonomous republics and regions within the Union are assuming more formal and precise expression. The constitution of the Soviet state is being given the clearly expressed character of a *union*. An army is the most material, sharply defined and irrefutable expression of statehood. If, in the structure of the army, or in its morale, there should be a lack of coordination with the structure of the Soviet union-state, which, in its turn, reflects the relation between the class and national factors in the population, such lack of coordination, or still worse, contradiction, would have the most serious consequences, in the first place for the army and then also for the state. Our army is not a Great-Russian army: it is the army of a great union, of which Great-Russia constitutes the core. The Great-Russian proletariat has the greatest experience of revolutionary struggle and of state-building, including army building. This imposes greater responsibilities upon it, but does not confer greater rights. All the other nationalities of the Union, who were previously oppressed by Tsardom and the bourgeoisie, accept and will accept the comradely assistance of the Great Russian proletariat, its ideological and material help, its advice and indications. But they do not want to take orders from the Great Russians. Even a hint of order-giving irritates them, because it reminds them of their still quite recent state of subjection. While this is true in relation to the state apparatus generally, it is shown a hundred times more sharply in the army. The slightest insincerity, the slightest inequality, the slightest violation of comradely relations and mutual trust in relations between

the army and its units, on the one hand, and the national elements of the Soviet Union, on the other, would be fatal. This is perfectly clear even if we look at the matter only from the angle of military defence. The Great-Russian nucleus of the Union is surrounded by an almost closed ring of national republics, Soviet and non-Soviet, formed on the territory of the one-time 'one and indivisible' state, which perished, in part, because it stubbornly persisted in one-ness and indivisibility. A potential threat from without would, consequently, through the mere logic of geography, be aimed, in the first place, at the national republics and regions on the periphery of the Soviet Union. If, between the mass of the people in the national republics and the Red Army there were to be alienation – we will not speak of enmity – defence would become impossible, and the Red Army would start to rot morally, from the periphery inward to the centre. We saw this happen during the imperialist war, in the case of Austria-Hungary and, in parallel fashion, in that of Tsarist Russia. In this matter a mere 'Soviet' changing of names and disguises, on which some fools and careerists set their hopes, is quite insufficient: very radical changes need to be made in the very essence of relations and connections. By what road can this goal be reached?

In the first place, it is necessary right now to set about preparing conditions for forming national units and armies. Great difficulties will undoubtedly be encountered along this road, difficulties rooted in the differences of economic and cultural level between the different parts of the Soviet Union, and the sometimes complex interlacing of national groups within particular republics, and, finally, the absence in the case of some nationalities of any sort of military training in the past. It is not possible to leap over these difficulties. But they must be overcome systematically. We must begin with a proper network of military-education institutions, fully adapted to national and local conditions, and capable of providing the future national troops, in a planned way, with completely trained cadres. At the same time it is necessary, rejecting all stereotypes, carefully to study the conditions and forms under which the local population can be drawn into performing military service. Needless to say, this work must be done not over the heads of the national republics, but in the closest contact with them and through their own state and Party apparatus. In particular, the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic must be transformed into the Revolutionary War Council of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics – and not only in name but also in substance, that is, in its composition and methods of work. The development of the militia system will make it possible to maintain genuine and unbreakable ties between the army and the population, in all its national heterogeneity.

But this is a long-term process. Parallel with it must proceed intense work at educating and re-educating the present Red Army, to develop within it a clear awareness that it is the armed force a union of national and autonomous republics. It is necessary systematically, persistently, firmly, tirelessly – and, where necessary, also ruthlessly – to drive out national prejudices, the heritage of chauvinism, arrogance, the great-power attitude. It is necessary that units of the Red Army, and, above all, their political and commanding personnel, shall know the character, peculiarities and history of the nationalities among whom they are stationed. Military centralisation, insofar as this results from the inevitable demands of army life, must be effected in such a way that the local inhabitants and, above all, their leading circles, may clearly understand the practical need for centralisation. And, to this end, it is necessary that the War Department itself shall take account of the admissible

limits of centralisation. Any administrative excesses must be ruthlessly extirpated; any vestiges of Arakcheyevism, however 'Soviet' or even 'communist' these may be, must be burnt out with a white-hot iron. From this standpoint it is necessary to carry out a very serious purge of the army apparatus in the national republics, expelling Shchedrin's 'Tashkent people' and their spiritual heirs. [5] Military administrators, commissars and commanders who have shown ill-will where the national question is concerned must, after proper investigation and public trial, be dishonourably discharged from the Red Army. [6] Our army is a great school of revolution. It must become also a school of the national question. In other words, it must, day after day, in practice, study how the working people of different nationalities can, by their joint efforts, in harmony, without clashes or hold-ups, build together the edifice of socialism.

Our potential enemies are stronger than we are technically. This capital advantage they will still retain for years yet (if they last that long). We, as has been said, will do everything we can to reduce the inequality that exists in this sphere. But, however important the machine, it is man who makes and runs this machine. Here the superiority is conclusively and completely on our side. We have undertaken to change part of our army into a territorial militia. From workers who have not ceased to work in the factory and from peasants who are still cultivating the soil we shall build divisions capable of going forth at any moment and, side by side with field divisions, either accepting or giving battle. Two years ago we could not yet decide on such an experiment. Today we are setting about it with complete political confidence, but without, of course, shutting our eyes to the organisational difficulties that have still to be overcome. Within two or three years, our experiments with the militia will occupy a more prominent, perhaps more decisive, place in the defence of our country. Not one of the big capitalist countries of Europe can decide to take such a step, because the ruling class would incur thereby the risk of creating an army dangerous to itself: and still less will the bourgeoisie be able to do so in two, three or five years' time, for the deepening of class contradictions in the bourgeois world is taking its course. We, however, shall grow stronger. That is why we meet the coming day in firm confidence. An army is made up of men and machines. As regards machines, *they* are the stronger, but as regards men it is *we* who are the stronger – and, in the last analysis, it is men who decide.

May 18, 1923
Voyennaya Mysl i
Rivolutsiya 1923, Book
2

Endnotes

1. The article printed here was published, together with the article *The Weapon of the Future* (See in Volume V, in the chapter *Building the Air Force*), as a separate pamphlet by the Supreme Military Publishing Council, Moscow 1923, under the title: **Prospects and Tasks in Building the Army.**

2. The reference is to Curzon's ultimatum of May 8, 1923.

3. On the Curzon Note of May 8, 1923 and Soviet reaction thereto, see Stephen White, **Britain and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Study in the Politics of Diplomacy, 1920-**

1924, London 1979, pp 158-169. Arthur Ransome describes, in Chapter 39 of his **Autobiography** (1976), how he arranged an unofficial meeting between Litvinov and the British representative in Moscow, R.M. Hodgson, which helped to 'de-fuse' the crisis and ensure a moderate response from the Soviet Government.

3a. The Twelfth Congress of the Russian Communist Party was held between April 17 and 25, 1923.

4. This section needs to be read with Lenin's remarks on the national question in his 1923 *Testament* in mind: Trotsky here gives indirect expression to Lenin's criticism of the line promoted by Stalin.

5. The allusion is to Saltykov-Shchedrin's book **Gentlemen of Tashkent** (1869-72), satirising Tsarist colonial officials in Central Asia.

6. 'Dishonourably' represents here the Russian expression 'with a wolf's passport', referring to a document which excluded a person from employment in government service, access to educational institutions, and so on, *which was given to ex-convicts in lieu of an ordinary internal passport*.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Order No.254

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the Political Directorate of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, August 5, 1921, No.254, Moscow

* * *

There is much reason to suppose that political work in Red Army units is falling behind the needs of life to an extraordinary extent. I was able to convince myself of this when I visited the camp at Khodynka and when I inspected the divisional junior commanders' school, the 322nd cadre-training regiment, and the model regiment of the artillery-training brigade.

(1) To start with, newspapers are disseminated and distributed incorrectly and irregularly. Collective readings are not organised, and everything is left to chance. When asked about newspapers, nearly everyone without exception replied: 'We read them sometimes.' The majority had never even seen the newspaper of the Moscow Military District, **Krasnyi Voin (The Red Warrior)**, which is intended primarily for the units in Moscow, while the minority had read only one or two issues.

(2) The life of the garrison is not reflected in the newspaper itself. This is the fault not of the editors alone but also of the commissars and the political leaders of the units. Each unit must cut a road for itself into the columns of the newspaper.

I will give examples.

Among the Red Army men of the 36th Division there are many Ukrainians. A considerable number of them spent a long time as prisoners in the hands of the Polish bourgeoisie. The way they were treated while in captivity was frightful. These former prisoners become very emotional when they talk about their experience. One, two or three articles should be devoted to this subject in the newspaper. For this purpose it will be necessary to enlist the services of a journalist, or just some comrade who can wield a pen, so that he can take down the most striking facts from what the Red Army men say, and present them without embellishment to the readers of *Krasnyi Voin*. An article like that would have great value for the soldiers' education.

Most of the ordinary Ukrainian soldiers did not know who Hetman Skoropadsky was. But one of the Red Army men described clearly and precisely the doings of the Hetman, who erected a gallows in this Red Army man's village, and on it hanged some peasants for having seized a landlord's property. Events are developing rapidly nowadays. Since the time of the

revolution a new generation has grown up which does not know about its own recent past. Yet Skoropadsky is not just the recent past, he is also a live danger so long as world imperialism exists. The Ukrainian Red Army men should know quite distinctly who Skoropadsky is, and this not in stereotyped phrases but from the vivid discourse of one or two of the Ukrainians whose political memory is strongest. All this should be reflected in the pages of the newspaper.

(3) The Political Departments are paying a lot of attention nowadays to questions of *agriculture*. Many articles in **Krasny Voin** are devoted to agricultural matters. Red Army men are taken to the Petrovsky Academy [\[1\]](#), where they receive agronomical information. All this is excellent, of course. But it is a pity that the Political Departments do not pay sufficient attention to the little farms that their own units possess. The state of the kitchen-gardens of the units of the Moscow garrison and the Moscow Military District has found, so far, no reflection in the pages of **Krasnyi Voin**. Yet it would be proper to pay a lot of attention to this matter, holding up for congratulation those units which have formed and maintained good kitchengardens, and shaming those which have not given the necessary care and labour to the work.

(4) The question of careful treatment of items of *military equipment* is also not sufficiently elucidated in agitation, or in political work generally. Economic propaganda should begin with the Red Army men's boots and footcloths, not with electrification. Hardly anyone cleans his boots: either no grease has been received, or they haven't seen it, or it is of bad quality.

But the chief reason is that no-one thinks and cares about this matter.

Commissars and Political Departments must pay very great attention to questions of economy, including the pettiest of them. Without careful and persistent attention to trifles nothing can be built, and an army least of all.

(5) The conditions are present for more successful political work. Completely satisfactory order prevails in the camp. Concern is shown for cleanliness. In the model regiment the ground in front of the tents has been decorated with coloured pebbles – a pleasant sight. Care and interest are apparent. One can build on that foundation. Progress has been made in drill and tactics and also in musketry-instruction. It is the economic and political sides of the work that lag behind.

Just as the essence of tactics is adaptation to local conditions, so the essence of political-educational work *is adaptation to people and circumstances*. One cannot remain satisfied with stereotyped methods, routine, repeating the same old phrases, which no longer get a foothold in anyone's mind. It is necessary to draw out from the Red Army men themselves, from their past and their present, material for political talks, for discussions and for articles. And, to this end, one must get as close as possible to the mass of the Red Army men, not instructing them from above but helping them to learn from below.

(6) In particular, I propose to put on the agenda the question of a special *week of the Red Army man's kit* – his uniform, his footwear, his rifle, and soon. The orders relevant to this subject must be sorted out and embodied in a clear, precise instruction, to be distributed everywhere. The attention of commanders and commissars, Political Departments and the Red Army press

must be focused on these matters. The political education of the Red Army man must begin with proper greasing of boots and culminate in the highest questions of the Communist International. Only then will everything be in its right place.

Endnotes

[1.](#) The 'Petrovsky Academy' was established in 1865 at the village of Petrovskoye-Razymovskoye, near Moscow, where there was an experimental farm, for the training of agronomists. Later it was removed to Moscow. Since 1923 it has been called the Timiryazev Academy.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

Order No.259

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, September 5, 1921,
No.259, Zhitomir

* * *

On September 4 I carried out an inspection of the troops of the Zhitomir garrison and the artillery batteries of the 44th Infantry Division, which had marched to the scene of the inspection from the places where they were quartered.

The cheerful spirit of the troops, their good bearing and orderly movement, the satisfactory state of their uniforms and equipment, and also the strong, robust and well-trained horses of the gunners showed clearly that these troops are completely united, well-trained and well-supplied military units which are ready to take the field at any moment in defence of the Soviet Ukraine.

For their outstanding performance at the inspection I give thanks to all the Red Army men, and to the commanders and commissars, headed by the commander of the 44th Infantry Division, Comrade Dubov, who has worked zealously for more than two years to create a division which is powerful and devoted to the workers' and peasants' power.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Speeches, Articles, Reports

Order No.260

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, September 5, 1921,
No.260, Kiev

* * *

Having this day carried out an inspection of the troops of the Kiev garrison, I am happy to record the fact that the units of this garrison seemed outstandingly well-united formations, with an excellent military bearing. The cheerfulness and self-confidence of the Red units, both when in extended order on the ground and when marching in columns provide irrefutable evidence that the heart of the Ukraine, the city of Kiev, is, in the person of its Red garrison, a strong bastion against any attacks by the enemies of our Soviet Republic.

For the outstandingly good state of the units at the inspection I consider it my revolutionary duty to give thanks to the Red Army men and to the commanders and commissars of the units of the garrison, and I wish the Red troops further success in their military task of defending the conquests of the Revolution and strengthening the might of our young republic.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Order No.262

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, September 10, 1921,
No.262, Zazishe station [\[1\]](#)

* * *

Today I inspected the cavalry regiment of the 51st Red Banner Infantry Division.

The regiment met me in extended order, with on its right flank the platoon of the regimental school, and trumpeters.

The confident and inspired air of the Red cavalymen, together with their perfect dressing throughout the ranks, made a most gratifying impression.

The inspection concluded with the solving of tactical problems and a regimental exercise.

Both were carried out by the regiment with obvious skill on the part of the Red Army men and their commanders.

The general condition of the regiment's weapons was satisfactory.

All this proves that the regiment's work is at the proper level.

This famous cavalry regiment is filled with real revolutionary ardour, and will be able to defend, under hard battle conditions, the independence and dignity of the Federative Soviet Republic.

I wish the regiment further success and prosperity in its service, and in the name of the Red Army I give hearty thanks for the brilliant state of the regiment to the Red Army men, the commanders, the regimental commander Comrade Byelov and the military commissar Comrade Kovalenko.

Endnotes

[1.](#) Zatishe is on the line from Proskurov to Odessa, about 45 kilometres from the river *Dniester*.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Order No.263

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the Red Army and the Red Navy, September 11, 1921, No.263, Bar station

More Care For The Disabled Of The Civil War!

* * *

The harsh struggle with the enemies who came against us one after another removed from the ranks of the Red Army a large number of victims – killed, wounded and mutilated. There are thousands and thousands of men in our country who were disabled in the civil war. In the period of maximum war-tension, when we had several fighting fronts, the Soviet Republic was unable to devote sufficient attention to care for the disabled of the civil war. Today we must make up for this omission. The very great economic difficulties confronting the Republic in the period immediately ahead prevent us from creating fully favourable conditions for the soldiers of the civil war who have lost in action their capacity for work, either completely or in part. Nevertheless, much can be done in this direction, given proper attention and combined effort. The Red Army must itself take on a substantial share of responsibility for looking after its own warriors who have become casualties, and also for helping the widows and orphans of men killed in action. There is a network of homes and hostels for the disabled, all over the Republic. The Red Army must undertake to give real assistance to these institutions – not in words but in deeds, so that the disabled may live there as well as possible, especially as regards food and cleanliness. Care for particular hostels must be assigned to particular units, depending on where they are stationed. In the course of their everyday work for their own units, the Red Army men must not forget the needs of the institutions for the disabled. If one of these institutions is short of fuel, or if educational work in it is neglected, or if it lacks sufficient manpower to cultivate its kitchen garden, an army unit must come to its aid. A representative of this unit must be a regular active member of the home for the disabled and of the local department of the People's Commissariat for Social Security. Help can and must be given to the disabled and semi-disabled to organise workshops, sharing equipment and tools with them and assigning an instructor to work there, even if only temporarily; and, finally, the labour of the disabled themselves must be utilised so that they feel that they are not superfluous men but needed members of the family of labour. Sufficiently extensive opportunities for application of the labour of disabled persons can be found in the army's numerous economic enterprises. Many thousands of the disabled will not merely not be a burden to army units but, on the contrary, will prove very valuable workers on their farms, in their kitchen gardens and so on, if the proper initiative is displayed and they are given work suited to their strength and capacity.

I direct that the commanders and commissars in the Military Districts and the provinces get in direct touch with the social security organs and the local committees for aid to the war disabled, to work out immediate practical measures for helping those comrades-in-arms of ours who have the most unquestionable right to our help.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Order No.264

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the Army Units
Taking Part in the Inspection, September 12, 1921, No.264, Koyuzhany station

* * *

Comrade Red Army men! After I had inspected your praiseworthy ranks I was unable on that occasion to speak to you to convey my greetings. You were present in too great numbers, and regrouping would inevitably have imposed delay and fatigue on you. At the time, a cold prevented me from speaking to you in such a way as to be heard by all, or, at any rate, most of you. I resorted, in those circumstances, to an exceptional measure: gathering the commanders and commissars around me and asking them to convey my greetings to you and to explain two points to you, firmly and distinctly.

First despite the howls of our enemies, our manoeuvres are being carried out for purposes of training and education. It is a lie that we are going to attack somebody. This is refuted by our entire past. But if some adventurers in the service of foreign capital and in alliance with Russian bourgeois-and-landlord reaction should conclude from the fact of these manoeuvres that we are an unconquerable power – well, so much the better for the cause of peace, so much the better for both sides.

Secondly, the commanders and commissars discussed carefully and attentively, at today's meeting under my chairmanship, all the shortcomings, mistakes and defects that came to light during the manoeuvres. We speak of these shortcomings with all the greater frankness because, by and large, our Red units have taken, in the past year, by the common testimony of those who participated in the analysis, an immense step forward. It would, however, be impermissible to remain at the stage we have reached. We must progress further and further, raising the level of tactical training of Red Army men and commanders, improving the supply apparatus, the organs of political education, and so on.

I have no doubt that by the time the next inspection comes round we shall have taken another and no less decisive step forward. Once more, I regret that I was not able to voice these thoughts personally, before all of you.

Long live the Red Army!

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

The Case of Red Army Man Kozlov

* * *

I

Order by the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the Commander of the Train, September 5, 1921, No.256

During my conference today with Comrades Rakovsky and Frunze, Comrade Kozlov was on sentry duty at the door of my office. Comrade Kozlov allowed an unauthorised person to enter during the conference, without having asked for my instructions and without possessing any information whatsoever concerning the right of this person to participate in the conference. I order that Comrade Kozlov be at once placed under arrest and brought before the Military Revolutionary Tribunal.

II

Postal Telegram to the Chairman of the Revolutionary Tribunal of the Kiev Military District, Comrade Zabelsky

Being unable to be present at the investigation of the case of Comrade Kozlov, in order to submit the necessary evidence, I consider it necessary to convey to the Tribunal in writing the motives that led me to hand over Comrade Kozlov for trial.

On September 5, Comrade Kozlov was on sentry-duty at the door of the room in which I was conferring with certain persons. During the conference, Comrade Nikolayenko, chairman of the provincial executive committee, entered the room. Going up to Comrade Kozlov, I asked him on whose instructions he had admitted Comrade Nikolayenko. Kozlov replied more or less in these words: 'He said that he was the chairman of the provincial executive committee and was needed in the office.' This explanation of his behaviour was, of course, radically wrong. If Comrade Kozlov had any doubt as to whether or not he should let a person in, he ought to have opened the door and asked for my instructions.

Regarding Comrade Kozlov it must be said that he is an honourable and conscientious worker, devoted to the cause of the revolution, and I have seen him prove that devotion more than once, with my own eyes. But, at the same time he lacks seriousness in his attitude to his everyday duties. He would much sooner accomplish some heroic exploit than properly carry out a petty errand. This misfortune – insufficient inner discipline – is, alas, still rather widespread in our army, and not only in the army, either.

There is a very important aspect of principle in this matter, which was decisive for me in sending Comrade Kozlov before the Tribunal. The thing is that in the Soviet Republics, and even among their responsible workers, a correct attitude is not always observed towards sentries, their rights and duties. The garrison regulations state that a sentry's person is inviolable. In fulfilling their responsible task, sentries too frequently find themselves in situations where they have to use their weapons. Why is this? Precisely because many responsible workers take no heed of the rules governing guard service, and, more often than not, demand that a sentry let them pass regardless of all the rules. The authority possessed by the person who demand that the sentry break the garrison regulations inevitably shakes the inner discipline of Red Army men on sentry-duty, and also that of their commanders and commissars. This situation is absolutely intolerable. It has already caused much harm and threatens to bring about more serious consequences in the future. Public opinion in the Soviet Republics, and, above all, among their leading circles, must get a firm grasp of the notion that a sentry is inviolable. I appeal to the Tribunal to lend its authoritative co-operation in achieving this purpose. [\[1\]](#)

September 13, 1921
Kiev

Endnotes

[1.](#) The Kiev Military Tribunal, taking into account the mitigating circumstances and the accused's sincere repentance, inflicted a severe reprimand on Kozlov, and resolved to request the People's Commissariat of Justice to issue a special provision for increasing the penalties for disobeying the garrison service regulations on the treatment of sentries. The sentence of the Revolutionary Military Tribunal of Kiev Military District was published in Order No.266, dated September 28, 1921, by the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Order No.2252

By the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, October 11, 1921, No.2252, Moscow

The Week Of Care For The Red Army Man's Kit

* * *

The week of care for the Red Army Man's Kit must certainly not be allowed to assume a purely agitational character. The task of the Week is to effect practical education: by talks, appeals, examples, demonstrations and orders to stimulate the Red Army men to show active attention to the living conditions around them and to their own uniforms and weapons. There would be no need for such a week if the Red Army men's attitude during all the other weeks of the year, towards their barracks, their boots, their greatcoats, their rifles and their horses were as required by the regulations. Hitherto this has not been the case. But it must become the case, and it will.

Before the revolution, the Russian had an indifferent, contemptuous and hostile attitude to state property. During the war enormous wealth was destroyed and annihilated in a short time, and this made it difficult to educate people in a spirit of economy. Undoubtedly, though, there would have been a very large measure of economy of forces and resources during the war if only the soldier masses had been better educated in the spirit of paying attention to their kit and to their petty, everyday duties.

Today, with the coming of a period of peace, the Red Army has to assume a task of exceptional importance: to educate itself in the spirit of socialist citizenship, to learn to understand, feel, not in words but in deed, that, now, 'state' property is my property, the property of the workers and peasants, so that it is my duty to protect military property from damage and destruction. If we are to ensure the practical education of the Red Army men in the spirit of citizenship and economy, it is necessary that the commissars and commanders shall be deeply imbued with these principles. If a commissar is slovenly and inaccurate, any speeches he may deliver about thrift and tidiness will produce only negative results. But if a commander and a commissar carefully watch over the economic life of their unit, day after day, looking into all its trifles, then, even without big agitational speeches, they will accomplish the needed economic education of the Red Army men.

By way of protracted, stubborn struggle, we have ensured that the army is hostile to any form of guerrilla-ism. The deserter and the coward meet the contempt they deserve from the public opinion of the Red Army. We now have to ensure that the public opinion of the Red Army shall mercilessly punish the sloven and the squanderer of army property.

May the 'Week' serve to turn into flesh and blood the words of the solemn promise given by every young citizen when he assumes the high title of soldier of the Workers' and Peasants' Army: 'Before the working classes of Russia and of the whole world I pledge myself to bear this title with honour, to study the art of war conscientiously, and to protect, like the apple of my eye, all public and military property from damage and robbery.'

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Letter

To the Editorial Board of the Military-Scientific Journal of the Eleventh Petrograd
Infantry Division

* * *

Dear Comrades! Please allow me, instead of writing an article, to express some ideas about the military-scientific journal which you have undertaken to produce. I presume that you do not intend to bring out a military publication of a general character, that is, one in which all the theoretical and practical problems of war would be studied in their general state-wide and even world-wide dimensions. It would, of course, be impossible to bring out such a journal with the resources of a division. Given the youth of the Red Army and the insufficient number of theoretically and practically prepared workers in its ranks, we could produce a military-scientific journal really capable of illuminating all questions of army-building only on a state-wide basis.

A military-scientific journal at divisional level can be useful, and even very useful, only on one condition: provided that it does not set itself broad, general tasks, but from the outset takes as its aim to illuminate the experience of its own division, the history of this division's origin, its battles, its successes and failures, its strong and weak sides, and so on. If these articles include factual material, even should this be drawn from the life of one regiment alone, and all the more so should it be drawn from that of the whole division, then these articles will be immeasurably more valuable than sterile theorising and rehashing of military text books. Less abstraction, more concreteness, more of what is your own – what you have experienced, thought and felt! Fewer commonplaces, more attention to living detail, to the particularities, the trifles, of the life of the Eleventh Division. It has a rich past, and this should be illuminated. It has a responsible present, and this should be fertilised with ideas. It has a glorious future, and this should be prepared for.

May your journal be a true and trustworthy weapon for the Eleventh Division!

October 21, 1921

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Order No.2458

By the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, November 1, 1921, No.2458, Moscow

* * *

(1) The 'Week of Care for the Red Army Man's Kit' prescribed in Order No.2252 of 1921 of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic is to be made also a 'Week of the Red Army Man's Service Book and Individual Clothing and Equipment Record'.

(2) During this week, commanders, commissars and members of the administrative and supply services are, either personally or through specially appointed commissions, to carry out a check in army units, administrations, institutions and establishments of the War Departments, to ensure that all Red Army men have been issued with their service-books, that the required information has been entered in these books, and that the entries correspond to the facts of what has been issued to the Red Army men and is in their possession, as regards both clothing and weapons.

If a Red Army man has no service-book, he is to be issued with one immediately, and the required information regarding articles of clothing and weapons issued to him is to be entered in it. If what has been entered in the book is found not to correspond to the facts, appropriate action is to be taken to eliminate the disparity.

(3) Political Departments, commanders and commissars are, through guiding orders, circulars and personal explanations, to impress on the mind of every Red Army man the full importance of the information entered in his service-book, which he must know, and, in particular, of the record of state property which has been issued to the Red Army man, and to explain to him the need to preserve his service-book carefully, both as the basic document which accompanies him throughout his military service and as the document without which he cannot be given any articles of supply that may be due to him, either in his own unit or in the event of his transfer to another unit.

Every Red Army man must know the number of his service-book and the date when it was issued to him, and he must check that the entries in it correspond to actual issues, and, in the event of disparities, must report the fact at once, so that these may be corrected. Subsequent statements by a Red Army man that he has not received a particular article, although its issue to him is recorded in his service book or individual clothing and equipment record, will not be accepted. Absence of the article issued will be regarded as proof of embezzlement of state property, and the guilty man will be arrested and made legally answerable.

All articles of state property handed over to a Red Army man must be recorded in the man's service book at the time of issue. No articles are to be issued without presentation by the recipient of his service-book and, where necessary, also of his individual clothing and equipment record. Persons guilty of violating this rule will be liable to material and criminal responsibility, as persons who have expended public property otherwise than as prescribed.

(4) At the end of the aforesaid week, every Red Army man, wherever he may be, will be unconditionally obliged to have his service-book on his person, and those men who leave their units for various reasons (apart from short leaves and missions) will be obliged also to have their individual clothing and equipment records with them. Without these documents they are not to be issued with any article of supply whatsoever, even if it is due to them.

(5) After this week, and not less frequently than once a month, the commanders of military districts and fronts are to appoint, in every army unit and institution, special commissions drawn from the auxiliary groups of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate of other units, with the task of checking that all the Red Army men actually have their servicebooks and that all the relevant information has been entered in these books. A commission's report on its inspection is to be sent forthwith to the commander of the military district or the front, and a copy handed to the commander of the unit inspected, for him to take the appropriate measures.

(6) All commanding personnel, inspectors and inspection commissions of any kind visiting an army unit, whatever the purpose of their visit, are to carry out a random check (even if it is not possible to do this in all companies, squadrons, batteries and task-forces) to discover whether the Red Army men have their service-books, and whether the information entered in them is correct, comparing these entries with the accounts maintained by the unit or institution and with the actual possession by the Red Army men of the articles of supply that have been issued to them.

(7) If, after the 'week of the service-book', a Red Army man is found to be without his service-book, or if his service-book does not contain the required information, commanders and commissars are to impose on the offender the maximum penalty within the power assigned to them, or to bring the man to trial.

All the commanding personnel must make widely known through orders the results of checks, and also the penalties imposed as a result of the discovery of deficiencies.

(8) In all cases when a Red Army man leaves his unit, administration, institution or establishment of the War Department, and also when he is discharged from a military hospital, possession by the departing Red Army man of his service book, and, where necessary, of his individual clothing and equipment record, with number and date of issue, is to be recorded in all accompanying documents issued to him, on the personal responsibility of the persons signing these documents: unless this has been done no travel document is to be issued to him.

In the event that it is found that these notes have not been entered in a Red Army man's documents, the institution which has made the discovery must at

once inform the commander of the relevant military district, so that the commander and commissar of the unit concerned may be brought to trial as persons who have facilitated the misappropriation of public property.

(9) If a Red Army man loses his service-book, or his individual clothing and equipment record, he is to report the loss without delay, through the usual channels, or, if he is travelling or away from his unit's station, to the nearest town commandant or his substitute, stating the number of his book and when and where it was issued, whereupon the commandant or his substitute will issue a certificate to the loser and inform the unit which issued his book.

(10) In the event that the book is lost in the place where the unit is stationed, the Red Army man is immediately to be given a duplicate and to be subject to disciplinary arrest. A Red Army man who loses his service-book elsewhere than in his own unit is to be subject to the same penalty when he gets back.

(11) In the event that it is found that a service-book or individual clothing and equipment record has been deliberately concealed with a view to the obtaining of articles contrary to law, the guilty man is to be immediately arrested and brought to trial for attempted misappropriation of public property.

(12) This order is to be displayed prominently in the quarters of all companies, squadrons, batteries and task-forces of the Red Army, without exception.

(13) This order is to be brought into force by telegraph.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Order No.515

By the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, February 28, 1922, No.515, Moscow

* * *

Almost simultaneously with the creation of the Red Army, a struggle began in its ranks against a grave inheritance from the old order – the illiteracy of the Red soldiers.

Regardless of the difficulties of life on the march or at the front, this struggle was not suspended even for one moment, and it produced extremely valuable results. Whereas in the old Tsarist army 85 per cent of the men were illiterate, in the Red Army, after the appropriate measures had been taken, 85 per cent were literate. By the end of 1920 the Army was coming close to the moment that would see not only the rout of the last major hireling of foreign capital, Baron Wrangel, but also that of the other most evil enemy of the working masses – illiteracy, that is, complete ignorance.

But it is only since the Army has entered a peacetime situation that it has become possible to wage a fully planned struggle against illiteracy. At the present time there is still a rather big percentage of illiterate Red Army men in certain units, especially where the fresh reinforcements are concerned.

This must not be.

We must set ourselves the task of liquidating illiteracy in the Army, at any cost, by the day of the militant festival of worldwide proletarian solidarity, by May 1, 1922, and we must make the festival of the First of May this year the festival of 100-percent literacy in the Army.

All commanders, commissars and political workers are instructed to carry out with maximum energy a campaign of struggle against illiteracy in their units, putting into effect steadily and with full persistence the provisions of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic's Order No.2915 of 1921 [\[1\]](#)

Developing the aforesaid order, and supplementing its Point 3, it is ordered that:

(1) At once, on the responsibility of the commanders and commissars of units, a careful check is to be made on the state of literacy in units, and the results of the registration of illiterates are to be communicated to the appropriate higher authority, through the usual channels.

(2) Without disrupting the work in progress in the Red Army schools of literacy and of a higher type at the time when this order is published, all the illiterates

found in regiments are to be assigned to special educational companies or squadrons, and those in other separate units, to special educational squads.

(3) Where there is found to be a shortage of experienced specialist teachers, and also in those units in which, owing to the nature of their service (extreme dispersion of the unit, or other circumstances), it is not possible to carry out fully the assignment of illiterates to separate educational companies, the teaching of illiterate Red Army men is to be carried on by the method of comradesly mutual instruction, wherever possible under the guidance of experienced school instructors and specialist teachers.

For this purpose the illiterate Red Army men are to be divided into groups of not more than five, and individuals from the commanding personnel, or Red Army men with a good standard of literacy, are to be attached to them and, under the guidance of specialist school workers, to undertake the teaching of the illiterates.

(4) As many hours as possible are to be devoted to school work every day.

(5) Illiterate Red Army men who have been assigned to school work are to be exempted from all duties and missions except for the internal duties ordered by higher authority, and they are to be deprived of the right to leave for the entire period in which they are being taught.

This measure is to apply also to those Red Army men who have been assigned to work as teachers of the illiterates.

(6) By order of divisional commanders and persons possessing the same powers, at the end of April a check is to be made on the state of literacy in all the units subordinate to them, and the most distinguished of these units are to be put up for awards. When a man has completed his course of instruction, he is to be given a certificate of literacy.

(7) When commanders and commissars have ascertained the results of the work, they are to put up, through the usual channels, those teachers who have most distinguished themselves, for awards, which are to be made at the discretion of the commanders of military districts.

(8) Those units which have most distinguished themselves in the work for liquidating illiteracy are to be mentioned in district (or front) orders and reported to the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic.

(9) A festival of 100-per-cent literacy in the Army is to be organised with as much ceremony as possible, this ceremony to coincide this year with the proletarian festival of the First of May.

(10) With a view to the better organisation of the campaign to liquidate illiteracy in the units, the Red Army's Political Department is to seek help from the local organs of the People's Commissariat of Education.

(11) The Chief Directorate of Political Education and the local organs of the People's Commissariat of Education (the Provincial Departments of Education and the Provincial Departments of Political Education) are to give their utmost support to the Red Army.

(12) The Plenipotentiary of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic for providing the Red Army and the Red Navy with articles and aids of a cultural-educational character is to take urgent steps to supply the schools of literacy with the necessary aids (alphabets, arithmetic books, stationery and handbooks on method).

The supply administration of the People's Commissariat of Education is to cooperate in every possible way in making the necessary articles listed above available to the plenipotentiary of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic.

(13) This order is to be brought into force by telephone, and is to be read to all companies, squadrons, batteries, task-forces and ship's crews.

Endnotes

1. Order No.2915, dated December 28, 1921, by the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic laid down rules for organising the fight against illiteracy. Among other things, this order directed that the illiterate men be concentrated in special school-companies and school-squadrons. The order also contained regulations for the general-education schools of the Red Army and the Red Navy of the RSFSR.

Point 3, to which Order No.515 refers, reads as follows: 'To assist those in charge, in addition to the teachers who are on the strength and those brought in as supernumeraries to establishment, there are to be appointed, to carry out the duties of the platoon and section commanders, a special complement of instructors from the commanding personnel, both senior and junior, or from those Red Army men who are fully literate and have already undergone a course of instruction, with the provision that each instructor shall have in his class not fewer than ten illiterates.'

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

A Contribution to the Question of Military Propaganda

* * *

I

Postal telegram to Comrade Polonsky [\[1\]](#), copies to Comrade Sklyansky, to the Commander-in-Chief and to the Chief of Staff of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, March 16, 1922

We ought to issue a small book consisting of articles brought together under the title: **The Model Section-Leader**. The purpose of the book would be to enhance the importance of the section-leader both in his own eyes and in those of the persons who are above and below him. The collection could be made up of a few articles describing the role of the section-leader as fighter, organiser, educator and commander. The section-leader has to combine in his person the commander and the commissar, that is, he must be both the leader in battle and the political guide. Basing ourselves on section-leaders like this, we shall gradually advance towards one-man command throughout the structure of the Army.

The book might include the most substantial orders and instructions which relate to the section-leader, and also a list of the textbooks and manuals that are most important for him. I would write a foreword to this collection (after acquainting myself with the manuscripts of the articles). I think that the book should be not more than three quires in length, or four quires at most, with each of the articles not more than eight pages long. The articles must be carefully worked on, written simply and clearly. It would be worthy paying a high honorarium for these articles.

I request you to get this matter going with all speed. [\[2\]](#)

From the archives

II

Postal telegram to Comrade Polonsky, copies to Comrades Sklyansky, Kamenev, Lebedev [\[3\]](#), March 24, 1922

What about trying to bring out a small book for the Red Army men and junior commanders on the lines of Suvorov's **Science of Victory** [\[4\]](#), but, of course, without the incorrect title of 'science', because the soldier's trade is not a science but an art (no offence meant to our thick journal, which is called a

journal 'of military science')? The book's task would be to furnish, in brief, simple and expressive formulas, as graphic as possible, the answers to the most important problems of the soldier's trade. It would be good to include (again, as in Suvorov's work) some striking symbolic drawings and sketches, so as to fix the points in the memory.

A book like this cannot, of course, be written like an article for a newspaper or a periodical. It must be written with care, with love. Perhaps it could be the product of collective labour (by submitting a number of variants, discussing them, and co-ordinating them). A final editing at the centre could endow the book with the necessary unity. The book should be small – between 16 and 32 pages long.

This would constitute a more correct approach to a unified 'military doctrine', that is, to the working out of a programme of education and training, than the repetition of commonplaces about manoeuvringness and revolutionariness which is now going full blast in our circles.

It is very easy to stun oneself and others with general formulas. Simply, practically (but as graphically as possible) to expound to the section-leader the essential tasks of the Red Army, is something very difficult, and this not at all from the standpoint of form but, precisely, from that of content. If your ideas are not clear, finished and concrete, this will most mercilessly be revealed when you try to express them simply and clearly, in the role of teacher.

We are all talking about revising the regulations, a useful and necessary task, and one that was put on the agenda, it seems, over two years ago. But the regulations are a bulky affair, containing many details, and the process of revision itself may get lost among secondary questions. But if we were to try and give a very brief exposition of the essence of the duties, tasks, procedures and methods of the Red Army, this work would prove highly educative, above all for those leading elements who took part in it. If we succeed in mastering this work, revision of the regulations will be greatly facilitated.

Should this proposal perhaps be communicated to the military districts? Perhaps they may put up some fortunate suggestions, regarding both ideas and formulations?

I request the Editorial Council to discuss this and refer it for comment to particular competent comrades. I request also that a decision be given on my suggestion of a collection of articles for the section-leader. [\[5\]](#)

From the archives

Endnotes

[1.](#) V.P. Polonsky was chairman of the Red Army's publishing organisation, and Ya.M. Sklyansky was Trotsky's deputy in the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and the People's Commissariat for Military and Naval Affairs.

[2.](#) The symposium **The Model Section-Leader** did not appear, as the contributions submitted failed to meet the standard required.

[3.](#) The addressees are the same as before, S.S. Kamenev being the C-in-C and P.P. Lebedev the Chief of Staff.

[4.](#) Field-Marshal Suvorov's *Science of Victory*, written in 1795-97, was first printed in 1806. It is the earliest known work on the art of war intended not only for officers, and written in language comprehensible to the common soldier. Suvorov's methods anticipated Sir John Moore's training of the Light Infantry at Shorncliffe in 1803. Byron depicts, in Canto Seven of *Don Juan*, the impact of Suvorov's arrival (at the age of 60) to take command at the siege of Ismail:

*There was not now a luggage boy
but sought
Danger and Spoil with ardour much
increased:
And why? Because a little, odd, old
man,
Stripped to his shirt, had come to lead
the van.*

Philip Langworth writes, in *The Art of Victory: The Life and Achievements of Generalissimo Suvorov, 1729-1800* (1965): 'Suvorov was an innovator. It was he who first broke away from the conventional strategies of the 18th century. He anticipated Napoleon in bringing mobility to warfare: he instilled into his conscripted peasant serfs the dash and the attacking spirit no other army possessed until the French after their revolution.'

[5.](#) Comrade Udorov had already written a pamphlet on the subject **How To Win**, under that title, and this was published on the Western Front and also, in revised form, by the Supreme Military Publishing Council. This pamphlet did not satisfy the demands laid down by Comrade Trotsky. Comrade Trotsky himself wrote, on this subject, **A Short Memorandum for Warriors of the Workers' and Peasants' Army and Navy**, which was published by Gviz in 1924.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

The Military Academies and Non-Party People

Letter to the editors of *Izvestzya V.Ts.I.K.*

* * *

In No.2 of the Petrograd journal **Voyennoye Obozrenie (Military Review)**, it is said, in the correspondence from Moscow:

'In December a conference was held in Moscow of the Communist cells in military-educational institutions. At this conference Comrade Petrovsky made a detailed speech dealing with the international situation and the tasks of the military-educational institutions resulting from it. Later on at the conference, Comrade Trotsky raised the question of the admission of non-Party workers to higher educational institutions (this year, the intake of the Military Academies consisted exclusively of Communists). Comrade Trotsky finds that, in view of the large number of commanders who do not belong to the Russian Communist Party, it would be proper to allow the abler of the non-Party men to enter the Academies. A lively debate took place on this question, but no final decision on it was reached.'

These lines give a completely false account of the matter. I did not and could not have put it to a conference of Communist cells to decide the question whether or not to allow non-Party persons to enter the Military Academies. I merely explained to the conference that the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic opens wide the doors of all the Military Academies to commanders who are able, industrious and conscientious, both Party members and non-Party men. The writer's statement that 'no final decision was reached on this question' shows merely that he does not know how such questions are, in fact decided: not at conferences of Communist cells, but by the appropriate organs of the state – in this case, by the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic.

The doors of the Military Academies are open to every military worker who is conscientious and devoted to the Red Army. To the Communist Party the idea of demanding a monopoly for its members where the Military Academies are concerned is utterly alien.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Letter to a Red Army Man

* * *

Red Army friend! I am writing to you on the First of May. And you are reading what I write. Literacy brings us together: that is its great power.

Everything that the thousands of generations of mankind before our time saw, experienced and accomplished is written down in books. Everything that men have learnt up to now is written down. And now that you are literate, all this is accessible to you.

The Red Army taught you to read. I congratulate you fraternally on this great success: for now you have in your hand the key that opens the door to learning.

But do not halt half way. The man who is not very literate often forgets his letters. You must get a firm foothold in reading, and then in writing as well. You must learn to read fluently, easily, freely, without effort or hesitation. Exercise yourself in reading whenever you have a free moment.

There are in the world so many splendid verses, songs, stories and books on history and science. A whole ocean of human thought. And how many more books will be written, more splendid than all those that exist today. After all, people do not stay put, they go forward. As soon as we have healed our country's wounds, we shall raise the level of the economy, we shall make life better and more beautiful - all our people will be freed and will go forward.

See to it, friend, that you do not lag behind. Study, don't waste time. Catch up with those who are ahead of you!

*Krasnoarmeyets (The
Red Army Man), No.47,
May 1922*

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Greetings to a Glorious Division!

Telegram to the 16th (Kikvidze) Division

I greet a very old and glorious division of the Red Army on its fourth anniversary. On the fields of the Ukraine, the Don region and Poland is its history written. The heroic spirit of its father and leader, Kikvidze, hovered over it in its hours of severest trial. Young warriors of the 16th Division, be worthy of your elders, take inspiration from the behests of Kikvidze! [\[1\]](#)

Izv. V. Ts. I. K., May 17,
1922, No. 108

Endnotes

[\[1\]](#) The Sixth Division, subsequently called the Kikvidze Division, was formed on May 16, 1918 under the leadership of Comrade Kikvidze. This division performed many feats of arms. It fought against Petlyura, against the Germans, and against Krasnov's troops. The divisional commander, Comrade Kikvidze, was killed on January 11, 1919, near Zubriovo hamlet, in the Don region. Thenceforth, the division was called, in honour of its commander, the Kikvidze Division. After Comrade Kikvidze's death the division continued to take part, with success, in the fighting on the Southern Front. The division retained its fighting power during Denikin's offensive. In the battles of autumn 1919 it defeated large enemy units near Davydovka, Lugansk, Liski and elsewhere. In the winter of 1919-1920 it fought the enemy at Bataisk and Olginsk. On March 2, 1920 the division captured Bataisk. During Denikin's retreat, a brigade of this division was the first to enter Novorossiisk, for which it was decorated with the Order of the Red Banner. In May 1920 the division was transferred to the Western Front: it took part in the breakthrough on the Polish front in July 1920 and in the march on Warsaw. The peace with Poland found the division in the Minsk area.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Order No.1247

By the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, May 20, 1922, No.1247, Moscow

* * *

Thanks to the vigour and staunchness shown by the commanders and commissars at all levels, and especially to the diligent and thoughtful work of the political education workers and teachers, the campaign for liquidating illiteracy in the Red Army and Navy, according to Order No.515 of 1922 by the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, has produced very considerable and valuable results within the time laid down.

Tens of thousands of illiterate Red Army men and Red Navy men were drawn into systematic school work, and when the First of May came round, an illiterate Red Army man was a very rare exception. The commanders of military districts and armies, the commissars and commanders of divisions, brigades, regiments and other units did everything they could to fulfil their military task.

The Political Directorates of the Military Districts, the Political Departments of the Armies and the Divisions, the Political Education workers and the teachers were able to tackle the work of teaching in the schools in such way as to evoke among the Red Army men a burning desire to learn to read and write and raise their cultural and political level, and thereby they animated the other forms of political-educational work in the Red Army and the Red Navy.

Party and Soviet organisations were drawn into the work (Party Committees, Executive Committees, the local organs of the People's Commissariat of Education and the organs of the Educational Workers' Trade Union).

In many places the patrons gave substantial backing to the Red Army in the campaign being pursued.

Thanks to the vigorous measures taken in good time by the supply organs both at the centre and in the localities, the schools' requirements in teaching aids for the liquidation of illiteracy were satisfied.

But, as on any fighting front, the success achieved cannot be considered complete unless the positions conquered are consolidated. The enemy must not only be defeated, he must be finished off, thoroughly annihilated. The ignorance and illiteracy of the working people constitute an enemy no less dangerous and stubborn than the counter-revolutionaries and White-Guards of the whole world. In certain units, owing to various insuperable obstacles, it did not prove possible to complete the liquidation of illiteracy by the First of May. A hastilytaught Red Army man is in danger of relapsing into illiteracy.

In view of this, and so as to ensure further progress in the fight against illiteracy and quasi-illiteracy among the Red Army and Red Navy men, and also in order to prevent relapses into illiteracy, I order that:

1. For the purpose of consolidating the knowledge attained by the Red Army men who finished at the schools of literacy by May 1 of this year, the companies of illiterates and quasi-illiterates are to be kept in being, with their school apparatus, so that every Red Army man who has completed the first standard of the school of literacy may consolidate and broaden the knowledge and practice he has attained in the second standard of these schools, in accordance with the curriculum published in order No.104 by the head of the Political Directorate of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic.
2. The campaign to liquidate illiteracy and quasi-illiteracy in the Red Army and Navy is to be prolonged until July 15 of this year.
3. Illiterates who return to their units from missions, from leave, from hospital, etc., are to be immediately assigned to school-work.

Responsibility for the successful conduct of work in the school companies, squadrons and task-forces is to remain with commanders and commissars of units.

4. The links established with Party and civic organisations by the Chief Directorate of Political Education and its local organs are not to be severed.
5. The pursuit of studies is to be guided by the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic's orders No.295 of 1921 and No.515 of 1922, the force of the latter being extended until July 15, 1922.
6. The present order is to be brought into force by telegraph and is to be read to all companies, squadrons, task-forces, batteries and ships' crews.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Greetings to Commander-in-Chief S.S. Kamenev

July 8, 1922

* * *

Dear Sergei Sergeevich! Today marks the completion of three years of service of the Revolution by you in the post of Commander-in-Chief. These years have been hard, and your service was hard. But the results can be seen: Workers' and Peasants' Russia has been defended, and the Red Army has learnt from the past and is preparing for the future. I strongly wish you health and good cheer, for ahead there still stretches a long road of revolutionary service and struggle.

I cordially shake your hand.

Yours truly, *L. Trotsky*

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Order No.764

By the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, July 25, 1922, No.764, Moscow

To a hero of the pencil and the paintbrush

* * *

In the first period of the Civil War, when the Republic – s situation was particularly difficult, and the overwhelming majority of the Russian intellectuals were again supporting the enemies of Soviet power, or were holding aloof, waiting for the outcome, one of the first of them to give his talents to the service of the Revolution was the artist Moor (Dimitry Stakhnevich Orlov). [\[1\]](#)

Working continuously in the War Department from the beginning of 1919, Comrade Moor rendered immense services to the Red Army with his vivid brush and sharp pencil. The comrade Red Army men remember his revolutionary posters, which raised their fighting spirit and lit up the path of struggle.

In the course of his three years' work, Comrade Moor gave the Red Army about 150 pictures and posters, which were reproduced in millions of copies, and a large number of drawings which were published in the journal **Krasnoarmeyets** and in separate booklets.

The Workers' and Peasants' Army values such devoted friends, and the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, taking note of Comrade Moor's services to the Revolution, expresses its gratitude to him for his heroic work with the weapons at his disposal – the pencil and the paintbrush.

Endnotes

[1.](#) 'Moor' is perhaps best known for a very striking poster he produced for the famine relief campaign in 1921. Between the wars he worked as a book-illustrator, and then again produced posters for the Army during the war of 1941-1945. He died in 1946.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Order No.273

The supplementary call-up of the class of 1901 has been completed!

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary Council of the Republic to the Red Army and the Red Navy, October 24, 1922, No. 273, Moscow

* * *

Comrade Red Army men and Red Navy men!

The supplementary call-up of the class of 1901 has been completed, and it has confirmed afresh that the entire country of the workers and peasants stands behind the Red Army. The supplementary call-up proceeded everywhere with great élan and was accomplished with complete success. [\[1\]](#)

In some provinces the expected number was greatly exceeded. There was a considerable influx of volunteers.

The conscripts arrived at the assembly-points in serried ranks, with Red banners and singing revolutionary songs.

I call on those who have been serving in the Red Army for some time to greet the newcomers in a brotherly way. May these men who have temporarily left their homes find here a new family. May the Red barracks provide them with friendly com-radeship and a Red school.

On January 1 all the new recruits will acquire the status of Red Army men who have been serving for some time. There must be no illiterates among them. They must firmly master the rudiments of military training. It is for you to help them to learn, to bring them up to your own level.

Red commanders, commissars and political workers!

The country has sent you its sons to be trained, so that you may make of them firm, reliable fighting men and conscious citizens. Yours is a lofty duty and a great responsibility. The period of service is short: get to work!

After three months, may the new recruit be able to repeat confidently after you, in full awareness of his duty and in readiness for honourable service, the words of the Red Oath:

'I, a son of the working people, a citizen of the Soviet Republic, assume the title of warrior of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.'

Endnotes

1. The supplementary call-up of citizens born in 1901, which began on September 5, 1922, was completed, in the main, by November 1. This was the first call-up to take place in peacetime. Despite the considerable organisational difficulties, it proceeded very successfully, and the number brought into the army as a result, in the Republic as a whole, exceeded the forecasts of the Red Army's General Staff.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Order No.274

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the Red Army and the Red Navy, October 24, 1922, No.274, Moscow

The capture of Vladivostok

* * *

Today, October 25, at 4p.m., the troops of the Far Eastern Republic, which form an inseparable part of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, entered Vladivostok, which had been cleared of the Japanese and White-Guard occupying forces. Russia has recovered her outlet to the Pacific Ocean.

I congratulate the Red Army and the Red Navy! Glory to the workers, peasants and fighting men of our Far East! [\[1\]](#)

Endnotes

[1.](#) The situation in the Maritime Region after the defeat of Kolchak and the evacuation of foreign troops from Siberia was briefly as follows:

In the spring of 1920, Red guerrillas occupied nearly all the territory of Russia's Far East, with the exception of Transbaikalia, where fighting against Semyonov continued. A Maritime Government was formed in the Maritime Region. During the night of April 4-5, 1920 [\[2\]](#), the Japanese, who did not want to let the Maritime Region escape from their clutches, seized simultaneously Vladivostok, Khabarovsk and a number of other places. After this, they presented the Maritime Government with an ultimatum demanding the removal of the Russian troops who had been captured by the Japanese, and the establishment of a 30-verst-wide neutral zone between the Japanese and Russian forces. In November 1920 a conference of regional governments, held at Chita, resolved to form, on the entire territory of the Far East, including Vladivostok, a Far-Eastern Republic organised on democratic principles. In February 1921 a Constituent Assembly was convened, and elected a government for the Far Eastern Republic. Meanwhile Japan continued to support the Russian White Guards of Semyonov, Rappel, etc. At the end of May 1921 a government headed by Merkulov was formed at Vladivostok with the backing of the Japanese. In July 1921 Japan invited the FER to enter into peace negotiations. At a conference held at Dairen [\[3\]](#) in August 1921 Japan presented the FER with seventeen quite impracticable demands, which were rejected by the delegates of the FER. The negotiations dragged on for a very long time. The Washington Conference forced the Japanese delegation to make a few concessions at the outset, but, after the Washington Conference ended, the Japanese put forward a number of fresh demands concerning matters on which agreement had already been reached, and refused to give a deadline for the withdrawal of Japanese troops from the Maritime Region. On April 16, 1922 the peace negotiations were broken off. In a note dated July 19 the Japanese Government

expressed its willingness to resume negotiations and to withdraw its forces from the Maritime Region not later than November 1. The conference opened at Changchun, with Soviet Russia participating, on September 4, 1922. At Changchun Japan refused to agree to a demand to evacuate the northern part of Sakhalin, and the negotiations were again broken off. The failure of the Changchun Conference strengthened the movement in Japan itself in favour of evacuating the Far East. The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement that evacuation would be completed before the end of October, despite the break-down in the peace talks. However, the Japanese army command was slow to carry out the order to withdraw. In mid-October troops of the People's Revolutionary Army, led by Comrade Uborevich [4], routed the White-Guard army of Dieterichs and occupied Okeanskaya station. On October 19, the People's Revolutionary Army encountered Japanese troops, nine *verst*s from Vladivostok. Comrade Uborevich proposed to the Japanese commander that they negotiate an organised surrender of the town. In reply, the Japanese commander, threatening to resume military operations, obliged the People's Revolutionary Army to fall back to Ugolnaya Station. At the same time, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs threatened that if the People's Revolutionary Army resumed their advance, the evacuation of Japanese troops would be halted. Meanwhile, in Vladivostok, the Whites were plundering the town and carrying off valuable property to overseas ports and into Manchuria. Comrade Chicherin and Comrade Yanson, the FER's Minister of Foreign Affairs, sent a protest about this to the Japanese Government. On October 25 Japanese forces left Vladivostok and troops of the FER entered the town. (See maps No.2 and No.6).

2. The events of April 1920 in the Far East are described in H.K. Norton's **The Far Eastern Republic of Siberia** (1923) pp.111-118. This book contains, as appendices, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the FER.

3. Dairen is called by the Chinese Talien. Both Dairen and Changchun are in Manchuria.

In 1905, after Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, the southern part of the island of Sakhalin was annexed by Japan. The Japanese occupied the northern part as well during their intervention in Siberia. Since 1945 the whole of Sakhalin has been Russian once more.

4. I.P. Uborevich, who had commanded the Fifth Army and the East Siberia Military District, was in August-December 1922 War Minister of the Far Eastern Republic. He was one of the Soviet generals executed in 1937.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Telegram

To the Revolutionary War Council of the Black Sea Fleet

* * *

I visited the Destroyer Division. In spite of difficult conditions, substantial success has been attained in the work of restoring the Red Navy. From now on we shall go forward step by step, confidently, steadily and systematically. The Revolutionary War Council of the Republic will make every effort to improve the position of the sailors and, in particular, that of the commanders and commissars. Difficult conditions have reduced our navy to the minimum. All the more important and necessary, all the more obligatory, is it to make the navy exemplary in all respects. Long live the Red Navy!

Izv. V. Ts. I. K., October
29, 1922, No. 245

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Order No.275

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, November 2, 1922,
No.275, Moscow

* * *

By the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic's order No.515 of February 28, 1922, illiteracy in the Red Army and the Red Navy was completely liquidated in time for the May First festival. During the summer work was steadily carried on to teach those with a low level of literacy and to consolidate the knowledge won. The older age-groups who had been discharged on indefinite leave to their homes in town and country became there, to a considerable extent, bearers of enlightenment and solidarity among the working masses. But the mass of the workers and, especially, the mass of the peasants, who were kept in ignorance by the Tsarist government, will for a long time yet be unable to send into the army Red soldiers who are fully literate.

Those who have been sent home have been replaced by fresh contingents, and, once more, these include a large number of illiterates.

The Red barracks must be their school. All of them must, at all costs, be taught to read and write, and this in a very short time, so that they may learn the soldier's trade better, and be enabled to distinguish friends from enemies of the workers' and peasants' power.

I order all commanders, commissars, political workers and teachers to work steadily at the liquidation of illiteracy among the newcomers, in accordance with the Commander-in-Chiefs order to all the armed forces of the Republic, September 25, 1922, No.25. [\[1\]](#)

1. A check on the state of literacy in units is to be carried out immediately, on the responsibility of unit commanders and commissars.
2. All illiterates found in the units are, for convenience of teaching to be assigned to separate companies for a threemonth period of instruction.
3. Illiteracy among the newcomers it to be liquidated by February 1, 1923

By the anniversary of the foundation of the Red Army, that is, by February 23, 1923, a 100-per-cent literate army must be able to read the text of its solemn promise.

4. Those among the commanders, political workers, Red Army men and teachers who have most distinguished themselves in the work of liquidating illiteracy among the newcomers are to be given awards at the discretion of commanders of military districts.

5. The present order is to be brought into force by telegraph and read to all companies, squadrons, batteries, task-forces and ships' crews.

Izvestiya V.Ts.I.K., November 9, 1922, No.253

Endnotes

1. The Commander-in-Chief's Order No.25 (in the text it is mistakenly given as No.25 [*sic*]), dated September 25, 1922, set out the programme of activities for Red Army units during the winter months. A great deal of attention was given in this order to the liquidation of illiteracy. It was ordered that the commanding and political personnel of units, and also fully literate Red Army men, were to be involved in the work of teaching men to read, and in school work. A timetable for the liquidation of illiteracy was annexed to the order.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Order No.2846

By the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, December 21, 1922, No.2846,
Moscow

* * *

The Ninth All-Russia Congress of Soviets, having taken note of the importance of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Navy for the defence of the maritime frontiers of the Soviet Republic, entrusted to the sailors the hard and responsible task of building the Red Navy.

A year of tireless work by the best section of the revolutionary sailors has produced positive results.

The establishment of patronage of the Navy by the Central Committee of the Russian Young Communist League marked the beginning of participation by the broad masses of the workers and peasants in building the Navy.

For further strengthening of the Navy's might and for drawing closer the bonds between the sailors and the working masses of the Soviet Republic, the period between January 15 and 22, 1923 will be made 'Red Navy Week'.

During this week, every Red Army man, commander and political worker must explain the importance of the Navy for the Soviet Republic and the successes which have been achieved in building it.

The Revolutionary War Council of the Republic orders that:

1. Naval parades are to be held at the bases of the Red Navy, at which the fleets will receive patronage banners from the Russian Young Communist League. Land forces of all arms will participate in these parades as ordered by senior army chiefs.
2. The political authorities and commanders of the Army and the Navy are to make use of the campaign to establish close ties and mutual friendship between Red Army men and Red Navy men, remembering that defence of the land and sea frontiers of the Soviet Republic is a task for all the working people of our country.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Order No.2848

By the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, December 22, 1922, No.2848,
Moscow

* * *

I

The strength of the Red Army and its most profound difference from the bourgeois armies lies in its moral cohesion and the comradely solidarity which is engendered by unity in a great revolutionary aim.

A commander is a senior, more experienced comrade. A chief is an authoritative leader and teacher. Discipline is based on consciousness and is inseparably linked with respect for the human dignity of every Red Army man. Discipline may be strict, even severe, but may not be humiliating. Everything that, directly or indirectly, disrupts or undermines the unity of the Red Army must be ruthlessly rooted out. But such facts, a heritage from the slavish past, continue to be met with in certain units.

Rough treatment of subordinates, with theeing-and-thouing, ordering to shut up, and swearing, this expression of caste-ridden militarism has no place in the Red Army. The commander and the commissar of a unit are themselves primarily responsible for drunkenness among theft subordinates. Finally, cases of the use of violence against subordinates, which testify that serfowning habits have survived into our day, however isolated such cases may be, must be given very close attention, strictly investigated and ruthlessly punished. Anyone guilty of hitting a subordinate is to be sent before the Revolutionary Military Tribunal!

II

A commission of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic under the chairmanship of the Deputy Head of the Political Directorate, Comrade Pavlovsky, has established that extremely unhealthy and in some cases directly criminal events have taken place in the 33rd Infantry Division.

1. In the 99th Regiment and the Artillery Battalion School there have been during the last two months several cases of organised heavy drinking by the commanding and political personnel.
2. This heavy drinking took place before the eyes of subordinates, and was paid for out of the resources of the unit concerned, including those received from its patrons.

3. In the 98th Regiment the higher commanders connived at the attendance of political workers and commanders who were drunk at a ceremonial meeting to celebrate the anniversary of the October Revolution.
4. Cases of rough treatment of Red Army men were often observed.
5. Instances of commanders boxing soldiers' ears were established, with the guilty by no means suffering appropriate punishment.

I order that:

1. The commander and the military commissar of the 33rd Division are to be removed from their posts and brought before the Revolutionary Military Tribunal, on a charge of connivance.
2. The commander and commissar of the 99th Regiment and the commander and commissar of the Artillery Battalion School are to be removed from their posts and brought before the Revolutionary Military Tribunal for conduct incompatible with the spirit of the Red Army and the duty of military leaders.
3. The commander and commissar of the 98th Regiment are to be removed from their posts, for having brought the Red Army into discredit, and are to be placed at the disposal of the Staff and the Political Directorate of the Military District.
4. The Revolutionary Military Tribunal is to establish through investigation who the other guilty men are, so that they may be subjected to the appropriate penalties.
5. The Revolutionary Military Tribunal is to institute legal proceedings against commanders who have tolerated physical abuse of their subordinates.

I bring to the notice of the command of the Volga Military District the fact that appropriate measures were not taken in good time, and I demand that greater vigilance be shown henceforth.

This order is to be published in printed form and to be read to all separate military units.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Order No.59

By the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, January 6, 1923, No.59, Moscow

* * *

The reduction in the size of the Red Army makes the task of the military-educational institutions a particularly responsible one. They are called upon to provide the Red Army with fully-prepared professional commanders who have reached the highest standard in up-to-date military matters.

The normal military school has already begun to produce Red commanders with a serious three-year training. The army has the task of turning these Red commanders into experienced and firm military chiefs who are fully worthy of the Red Army. Confirming that the Commander-in-Chief's order No.33 of this year to all the armed forces of the Republic [\[1\]](#) is to be carried out undeviatingly, the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic orders the commanders of Military Districts to take steps to ensure that proper arrangements for study are made at once in units where there are young Red commanders.

A military school can provide preliminary preparation for a future commander. The work of the school will be successful only if the unit to which the commander is sent becomes a practical school for him, completing the work begun at the military-educational institutions.

In order to secure more normal working by the military-educational institutions, the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic orders that:

1. Cadets are to be put on guard duty only in so far as this is necessary for instructional purposes.
2. Cadets are not to be taken away for tasks extraneous to their studies, and every effort is to be made to free military-educational institutions from all self-supply work.
3. Schools are to be surrounded with the attention they deserve, so that they may be given the chance to fulfil properly their exceptionally important responsibilities.

Endnotes

[1.](#) The Commander-in-Chief's order No.33, dated December 10, 1922, explained that no school can turn out a fully-trained commander. Army units must function as direct continuations of the military school. The order noted the necessity for more attention to be paid to the young Red Commanders by the commanding personnel of the combatant units. 'Ill-will and mistrust depress the energy of the young Red commander and nip in the bud

those good qualities which might have been broadly developed to the advantage of the Red Army, and criticism is useful only when it is accompanied by training and education.'

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Order No.278

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, April 22, 1923,
No.278, Moscow

* * *

To Commanders and Commissars

The Red Army has been shrunk to the utmost limit. Reorganisations will occur less frequently from now on. The cadres must increasingly specialise and perfect themselves in their work. And then the commander and the commissar will, to an increasing extent, be merged in one person.

The reasons for the duality that exists in the command and administrative apparatus of the Red Army are known to all. The revolutionaries did not know the soldier's trade, while the military men did not know, or did not want to know, about the revolution. The revolutionary soldier needs not only training but also education, not only to be commanded but also to receive political leadership. This is why a commissar was appointed to head the military units and the military institutions of the revolution alongside the commander. If this had not been done, the revolution would not have triumphed: without it we should not have had today a Red Army built in the image and likeness of the revolution itself.

However, organisational duality was not established to last for all time. The cadre of commissars is now not temporary, as it was in the first period of the civil war, but permanent. This means that every commissar must endeavour to master the soldier's trade, so as to become, in time, a finished commander. On the other hand, every commander who is worthy of the name must be not only an instructor but also an educator, not only a military chief but also a revolutionary leader. Commander and commissar must, in the course of time, merge in one person.

But we cannot go over immediately to this new regime. Great caution and strict gradualism are needed. It is necessary that the present commissars become commanders and that the young commanders, at least, learn to perform the duties of commissars. This is the goal we must aim at. We must move towards it cautiously, but firmly and confidently.

A new step in this direction has been taken, in the first place where the central administrative and supply directorates and institutions are concerned. This measure has been motivated, apart from general considerations of principle, by the need for a further reduction in establishments.

Here and there it is being said that the relevant order by the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic has been understood to mean that the corps of commissars is to be completely liquidated in the very near future, and that this measure is being preceded by withdrawal of the commissars into the background. If the order has been understood in this way, then it must have been badly formulated. The Revolutionary War Council of the Republic has now given the necessary clarification. Our fundamental task is not to subordinate the commissar to the commander but to merge in one person these two functions, which are equally important, equally necessary. In all those cases where this has not yet been achieved, and until it has been achieved, commander and commissar will, as before, work side by side, their rights and duties and their mutual relations remaining just as they have been hitherto.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Order No.279

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, April 22, 1923,
No.279, Moscow

* * *

Demyan Byedny [\[1\]](#), sharpshooter at the enemies of the working people, valiant trooper of the word, has been awarded by the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, on the initiative of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, the Order of the Red Banner.

Demyan Byedny did not leave the ranks of the Red Army all through the civil war. He participated in its struggle and its victories.

Demyan has now been discharged on indefinite leave. If the hour should come, the army will summon him again.

When he learns of the award made to his very own poet, every Red soldier will say: 'Thanks, All-Russia Central Executive Committee. A well-deserved award!'

Endnotes

[\[1\]](#) 'Demyan Byedny' was the pseudonym of E.A. Pridvorov, a Bolshevik since 1912. In the 1930s he wrote 'anti-Trotskyisi' poems. He died in 1945.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Letter

To the Second All-Russia Conference of Communist Navy Men

* * *

Dear Comrades! I am extremely sorry that urgent and unpostponable work in commissions and on editorial committees connected with the congress makes it quite impossible for me to visit your conference. I do not doubt in the least that the second conference of Communist Navy men will mark a new step forward in the putting to rights, the betterment and the strengthening of our Red Navy.

We are all, of course, fully aware that the development of the Red Navy can be accomplished only slowly and gradually. It is all the more important and necessary to ensure that *strict unity of conception and plan* prevails in this work. Where the Red Navy is concerned, as with the Red Army, we need a rigorously thought-out prospective programme for a period of not less than five years. Only in the setting of a prospect such as this can we utilise properly and consistently the credits provided by the state, and ensure that the Red Navy is supplied with really well-trained and educated manpower. Such a five-year programme must be worked out not only in offices but also through live exchange of views among the advanced elements in the Navy, taking account of the experience already accumulated by every individual. During the past five years we were obliged, owing to the entire situation, to work without system, without a plan, adjusting ourselves to circumstances from one day to the next. The justification of that heroic and chaotic period is that we were victorious over our enemies, and the Red Navy played a very prominent part in the struggle and the triumphs. But the second five years will not be like the first. We have won for ourselves the possibility of working in a more systematic way, and we have accumulated a substantial volume of experience. We must now build the Red Navy not on a day-to-day basis but in accordance with a more broadly conceived plan – strictly co-ordinated, of course, with the overall system of our defence.

At the same time we must introduce as much precision and attention to detail as possible into our current practical work. Working to a more broadly-conceived plan and working with a more precise instrument – that, as I see it, is the watchword for the period we are now entering.

I cordially wish you success.

Yours,

Trotsky

Pravda
April 25, 1923, No.90

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Order No.280

**By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's
Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, to the Red Army and the Red Navy, May 26,
1923, No.280, Moscow**

* * *

The Second All-Russia Congress for the liquidation of illiteracy which was held recently took note sympathetically and warmly of the work of the Red Army in the struggle against illiteracy. The greetings of the educational workers are precious to us, but ought not to cause us to indulge in self-deception. Illiteracy in the Red Army has been liquidated only in the rough. The majority of the Red Army men are returning to illiterate villages, and there the man who has not learnt his lesson thoroughly risks forgetting it altogether. We need to ensure that every Red Army man who returns to his village becomes an active fighter against illiteracy. In order to achieve this aim we need, besides correct, organised planned work by the entire army apparatus, to ensure the exercise of constant influence by the more literate, more conscious, more cultured Red Army men upon the backward ones. Illiteracy and semi-literacy must come to be looked on in the Red Army as something shameful, which everyone will strive to get rid of as soon as he can.

The fight against illiteracy is only the first step in a great struggle against poverty, grossness and all the other heritages of slavery. Let us never forget this for a single day or a single hour.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Order No.281

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the USSR and the People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, October 29, 1923, No.281, Moscow

* * *

The Red Army and the Red Navy greet the Red youth on the fifth anniversary of their league. The armed forces of the Soviet Republic grew and become strong in step with the growth of the organisations of the proletariat and the peasantry, and, in particular, of the Young Communist League. The repeated mobilisations of young people that were carried out at difficult moments were among the surest ways to the achievement of victory.

In releasing the older age-groups from their ranks, the Army and Navy have thereby drawn still closer to the youth. The YCL's patronage of the Navy played a very big role in the restoration of our naval forces. The League's active attention to the Air Fleet is a guarantee of its development. Of inestimable importance is the organisational and educational work of the League in the sphere of pre-call-up preparation, which must and will become the basis for our defence in the years that lie ahead.

So long as the worker and peasant youth are inspired by the ideas of the Young Communist League, no storms or ordeals will break or shake us.

On behalf of the Red Army and the Red Navy, the Revolutionary War Council of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics hands over a banner to the Central Committee of the Young Communist League, as a token of greeting, gratitude and brotherhood.

The Red Army on a Peace Footing

Orders, Circulars, Telegrams, etc.

Order No.2656

By the Revolutionary War Council of the USSR December 8, 1923, No.2656

* * *

Today, December 8, the Military Academy of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army celebrates its fifth anniversary.

This is a day that deserves to be marked not only in the Army's calendar, but also in that of the Republic.

Five years ago, an order by the Revolutionary War Council called the Red Academy into existence. It was built in exceptionally difficult conditions, inheriting from the past neither an apparatus of administration nor a cadre of professors, nor even the necessary property. Everything had to be created afresh, amid a situation of acute civil war and severe material shortages.

The years that have passed since then were for the Academy a period of maximum tension. These years in the Academy's life were closely involved with the life of the Red Army, with its combats, its adversities, its successes, its temporary defeats and its ultimate victory.

In the epoch of the great civil war the students of the Academy, and also a section of the present professorate, combined their scientific and teaching work with active combat, and fought bravely for the Soviet Republics, and this was in due course recognised by the award of the Order of the Red Banner both to the Academy itself, as a whole, and to a considerable number of its members.

The period of calm which followed was filled with persistent work, intense quests and achievements. Striving to blaze new trails in scientific and teaching work, the Military Academy steadily advanced along the road of living creativity, in unison with the aims and the tasks of the Red Army.

Three waves of highly-qualified Red military workers have already passed from the Academy into the ranks of the Army and three more waves are now acquiring strength, knowledge and skill in the Academy.

Much work lies ahead. We must improve ourselves, go forward, and draw others in our wake.

The shared battlefield behind us and the community of aims and interests link the Military Academy with the working people of all the nations of the Union and with the Red Army.

The nations of the Soviet Union have always shown special attention, care

and love for their Red Academy, the laboratory of organised military thought and practical achievement.

Warmly greeting the Red Banner Military Academy on its fifth anniversary the Revolutionary War Council of the USSR thanks the Academy for its hard and useful service and is confident that all its members will continue in the future to carry on their harmonious and fruitful work to strengthen the might of our Union and of its Red Army.

The Kronstadt Mutiny [\[1\]](#)

The Mutiny of Ex-General Kozlovsky [\[2\]](#) and the Vessel *Petropavlovsk*

Government Communiqué

* * *

Already on February 13, 1921 a telegram from Helsingfors, dated February 11, appeared in the Paris newspaper **Le Matin**, reporting that a sailors' revolt against the Soviet power had broken out at Kronstadt. The French counter-intelligence service [*sic*] had only slightly anticipated events. Within a few days the events expected, and undoubtedly also prepared, by the French counter-intelligence service actually began. White-Guard leaflets appeared in Kronstadt and Petrograd. In the course of arrests some notorious spies were detained. At the same time the Right SRs began an intense agitation among the workers, exploiting the difficult situation where food and fuel were concerned. On February 28 disturbances began on the vessel *Petropavlovsk*, continued on March 1. The same resolution was passed by a general meeting. On the morning of March 2 the group of the former General Kozlovsky (commanding the artillery) already appeared openly on the scene.

Ex-General Kozlovsky, together with three officers whose names have not yet been established, came out openly as mutineers. Under their leadership the commissar of the Baltic Fleet, Comrade Kuzmin, was arrested, along with the chairman of the Kronstadt Soviet, Comrade Vasilyev, and a number of other officials. Thus, the significance of recent events was made quite clear. Behind the SRs, this time too, stood a Tsarist General.

In view of all this, the Council of Labour and Defence decrees that:

1. Ex-General Kozlovsky and his accomplices are pronounced outlaws,
2. the city and province of Petrograd are placed under a state of siege, and
3. all power in the Petrograd Fortified Area is transferred to the Defence Committee of the City of Petrograd.

Moscow, The Kremlin,
March 2, 1921
Pravda, No.47

Endnotes

[1.](#) The fullest account of the Kronstadt events is given by Paul Avrich, in **Kronstadt** (1970). – *B.P.* [See also [1b](#)]Note 1b]

[1b.](#) The disturbances at Kronstadt began on February 28, 1921. On March 1 a meeting was held at Kronstadt which was attended by between twelve and fourteen thousand Red Army men, sailors and workers. Present at this meeting were the Chairman of the All-Russia

CEC, Comrade Kalinin, and the Commissar of the Baltic Fleet, Comrade Kuzmin, who had both come specially to Kronstadt.

Under the influence of anti-Communist agitation, a resolution was adopted which had been moved by a sailor named Petrichenko, from the Petropavlovsk: this included demands for freely-elected soviets, legalising of the socialist parties and the anarchists, abolition of the Political Sections and the Special Assignment Troops, removal of roadblock detachments, restoration of freedom of trade, and release of political prisoners. [\[1c\]](#)

On March 2 a meeting of delegates from all the units formed a Revolutionary Committee with as chairman Petrichenko, who had seized power in the town. That day can be regarded as the beginning of the open mutiny.

The situation of the mutineers, who had made themselves masters of a first-class naval fortress which occupied the approaches to Leningrad for naval vessels, was a very favourable one. Their total numbers amounted to 15,000, and they had at their disposal heavy artillery machine-guns, depth-charge guns and so on. The bulk of them were sailors: the military garrison and the civil population remained passive.

The Red command was taken by surprise by this mutiny, and at first also temporised, counting on a change in the attitude of the mutineers. For several days no active measures were taken by either side.

The situation altered with the arrival in Leningrad [SW], at about 13 hours on March 5, of Comrade Trotsky [\[1d\]](#), accompanied by Comrades S.S. Kamenev, Lebedev and Tukhachevsky. At 14 hours on that day an address to 'the garrison and inhabitants of Kronstadt and the mutinous forts' was issued, categorically demanding that they lay down their arms. Comrade Tukhachevsky was appointed commander of the forces operating against Kronstadt, and the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic ordered him to suppress the revolt in the shortest possible time.

At 5 o'clock on March 8 the general onslaught on Kronstadt began. The attack was made by two groups; the southern group advancing along the line Oranienbaum-Kronstadt, and the northern, advancing along the line Sestrovetsk-Kronstadt. The southern group's attack ended in failure: a section of the troops went over to the mutineers, and though another section, including Special Assignment Troops and cadets, broke into the town, they had to retreat under the pressure of the mutineers' superiority in numbers. The northern group's attack failed similarly.

Between March 9 and 16 no operations took place. During this period the Red command was busy taking resolute measures to strengthen its forces with new units made up of Communists and cadets. The heavy artillery and sapper units were also strengthened. Three hundred delegates from the Tenth Party Congress came to join the troops. Intense political work went on in the units.

On their part, the mutineers' forces were added to by renegades and recruits from the population, and by March 16 they numbered 16,500 bayonets.

On March 15 the order was given for the fortress to be taken by a swift onslaught during the night of March 16-17. After artillery preparation which was started at 14 hours on March 16, the advance of the Red forces across the ice towards Kronstadt began during the night of March 17. After a fierce struggle they broke into the town, where street fighting started. The mutineers defended themselves desperately, having to be dislodged from each separate building. After ceaseless fighting, by dawn on March 18 the whole town was in the hands of the Red troops. By that time the dreadnought *Petropavlovsk* and *Sevastopol* had surrendered. Some of the mutineers fled to Finland. (See the annexe to Map No.1).

[1c](#). The full text of the resolution is given in Avrich, **op. cit.**, on pp.72-74. The 'roadblock detachments' were deployed to guard the approaches to towns and confiscate the bags of food which townspeople tried to bring in from the countryside, contrary to the pre-NEP laws against private trade.

[\[1d\]](#) This contradicts Trotsky's statements that he did not go to Petrograd at this time: 'I continued to remain in Moscow and took no part, direct or indirect, in the military operations' (*More on the Suppression of Kronstadt*, July 6, 1938).

[2.](#) The role played in the revolt by General A.N. Kozlovsky, commanding the artillery of Kronstadt fortress, has certainly been exaggerated in Soviet accounts, but Francis Wyndham goes too far in the opposite direction when he writes of 'a mythical General Kozlovsky'! (F. Wyndham and D. King, **Trotsky, A Documentary**, 1972, p.84) Kozlovsky's actual activities are described by Avrich, **op. cit.**, pp.99-102, 138-139.

The Kronstadt Mutiny

A Last Warning

To the Garrison and Inhabitants of Kronstadt and the Mutinous Forts

* * *

The Workers' and Peasants' Government has decreed that Kronstadt and the mutinous ships must immediately submit to the authority of the Soviet Republic.

I therefore order all who have lifted their hands against the socialist fatherland to lay down their arms at once. Those who resist will be disarmed and turned over to the Soviet authorities. The arrested commissars and other representatives of the Government must be released forthwith.

Only those who surrender unconditionally may count on the mercy of the Soviet Republic.

At the same time I am giving orders for everything to be made ready for crushing the mutiny and the mutineers by armed force.

Responsibility for the harm that may consequently be suffered by the peaceful population will fall entirely upon the heads of the counter-revolutionary mutineers.

This warning is final.

March 5, 1921, 1400
hours
Petrograd

The Kronstadt Mutiny

On the Events at Kronstadt

Interview Given to Representatives of the Foreign Press

* * *

The fact that the Kronstadt mutiny has come at the moment when we are about to sign the peace treaty with Poland and the trade agreement with Britain is, of course, not accidental. Very big forces – not so very numerous, but politically powerful – not only in France and among the Russian émigrés but also in Poland and in Britain, are interested in disrupting the peace treaty and the trade agreement.

You probably know that in a number of foreign newspapers, including **Le Matin**, a report of a revolt at Kronstadt appeared so early as the middle of February, that is, at a time when Kronstadt was completely calm. How is this to be explained? Very simply. The centres of counter-revolutionary conspiracy are situated abroad. Between these Russian émigré centres and certain groupings of European imperialism and the European press there is a very close bond, which is, of course, not at all platonic in character. The Russian counter-revolutionary organisers promised to arrange a mutiny in good time, but the impatient boulevard and stock-exchange newspapers wrote about this as though it were already a fact.

On the basis of the report in **Le Matin** I sent a warning to Petrograd, to my naval colleagues, mentioning that last year there appeared in the foreign press a quite unexpected report of a rising in Nizhny-Novgorod and the formation there of a government headed by Chernov and Spiridonova – and, roughly a month after the publication of this report, a revolt was actually attempted in Nizhny.

Thus, the imperialist press not only reports an immense number of fables about Russia, and does this quite consciously, but also, from time to time, forecasts with some accuracy attempts at revolt which are to be made at particular points in Soviet Russia. The press agencies of imperialism 'forecast' events which other agencies of that same imperialism have the job of bringing about.

Kronstadt was chosen as the point nearest to Europe and to Petrograd. Since, in the present international situation of our Republic, the Baltic fleet can play no active role, it has inevitably been denuded of manpower as well. An enormous number of the revolutionary sailors who played a very big role in the October revolution of 1917 were transferred to other fields of work during the past period. Those who left were replaced, to a considerable extent, by casual elements, among whom there were rather a lot of Lettish, Estonian and Finnish sailors, who looked on their service as a temporary job and who had mostly played no part in the revolutionary struggle. This circumstance naturally facilitated the work of the organisers of the conspiracy. They made use of a

partial conflict, expanding this so as to render it impossible for a section of the sailors to retreat. Given the passivity of the garrison and the inhabitants, who did not even understand what was happening, the mutineers were able to seize the powerful artillery of the fortress and two ships.

The reports of a coup d'état in Petrograd and of the bombardment of Petrograd from Kronstadt are foolish inventions. Petrograd is as inaccessible to a counter-revolutionary coup as it is to the artillery of Kronstadt.

If the liquidation of the Kronstadt mutiny is taking some time, this is because, in the measures we are adopting, we have had and are having not only to spare our units unnecessary losses but also to spare in every way possible the peaceful population and the garrison of Kronstadt, which is not participating in the mutiny. Our losses due to the guns of Kronstadt have so far been insignificant.

I forgot to mention that the SRs have come forward as the open organisers of the mutiny, but that, behind them, some more serious figures have now emerged: counter-revolutionary generals, whose connections extend through Finland and Estonia to the centres of imperialism. To suppose that the SRs (or the Mensheviks) are capable of forming a government in Russia means having, where our country's internal and international situation is concerned, a Pickwickian conception. The historical assignment of the SRs and Mensheviks consists in trying to put the Russian counter-revolution in the saddle, as the agent of world imperialism.

So long as Russia is surrounded by bourgeois countries in which there are powerful cliques that will stop at nothing to strike blows at the workers' republic, events like the Kronstadt mutiny are quite inevitable, and will probably be repeated many times in the future. We have no grounds for doubting that the workers' republic will cope with all these attempts on its life, just as it has coped up to now. [\[1\]](#)

Pravda; March 16,
1921, No.57

Endnotes

[1.](#) A version of this interview appeared in the **London Daily Herald** of March 17, 1921.

The Kronstadt Mutiny

Kronstadt and the Stock-Exchange

* * *

We find some remarkably instructive echoes of the Kronstadt events in the Paris financial and economic newspaper **L'Information**. This organ most directly and fully reflects the French and international stock-exchanges. The Kronstadt events have found expression not in political articles or 'slogans' of any kind, but in dry accounts of the moods of the stock-exchange and its transactions. In the March 8 issue of **L'Information** we find a message from Brussels dated March 5. I will quote an extract *verbatim*: 'The news – to be sure, not yet official – of large-scale disorders in Russia, directed against the Soviet dictatorship, has had a strong effect in improving the state of the market. Everyone realises what the consequences for the whole world would be if the Soviet regime in Russia were to collapse ... We may hope to see in the near future the establishment in the former Empire of the Tsar of a rational form of economic organisation, corresponding to the needs of the post-war period. This would mean hope for the *restoration of many Belgian-owned industrial enterprises in Russia*, and at the same time would be a direct blow at Bolshevik intrigues in Belgium and outside Russia generally.'

Thus, the Brussels stock-exchange is quite uninterested in how the slogans of the SR Petrichenko differ from the intentions of General Kozlovsky and the historical philosophy of the Menshevik Dan. The stock-exchange is clever enough to appreciate that what matters is not these nuances and verbal hairsplittings. The stock-exchange realises very well that only two regimes are possible in Russia: either the dictatorship of the Soviets, led by the Communist Party, the only historical party capable of leading the revolution, or the dictatorship of French, Belgian or other capital exercised through the agency of the Russian counter-revolution. Petrichenko, Dan, Kozlovsky, Chernov, Makhno – these are only little screws in the mechanism which is to wrest power from the hands of the proletarian dictatorship and give it to imperialism.

In the March 9 issue of this same **L'Information** we find the bulletin of the Paris stock-exchange for March 8. At the beginning it is said that the stock-exchange had until recently been experiencing 'its usual inertia', but in the last few days it has started to move, thanks, above all to the 'favourable news' about extensive revolts in Russia, threatening the rule of Bolshevism. 'All sections of the stock-exchange experienced animation, to a greater or lesser degree. But it was the group of Russian stocks that attracted most attention, for reasons that are becoming more and more solid.' This is followed by the rates at which Russian securities were being quoted on the Paris stock-exchange.

The language of these figures is very much clearer, more precise, more convincing, more serious than the slogans fabricated by the SRs of Reval, the Berlin Mensheviks (Martov and Abramovich) and Makhno's Anarchists, their allies. Makhno demands (or, more correctly, demanded) free people's Soviets.

Martov and Dan demand independent trade unions and an all-round mitigation of the dictatorship. Petrichenko wants Soviets without Communists. Chernov advocates a Constituent Assembly. General Kozlovsky does not hasten to speak of the monarchy, but merely offers his services for firing on the Bolsheviks. Milyukov, in his Paris newspaper, is also not interested, for the time being, in the slogans put out by Petrichenko and Dan, but bides his time and collects (belatedly, alas) from among the Russian capitalists and financiers abroad millions of francs for aid to the rebels. Meanwhile the European stock-exchange notes calmly, pencil in hand: 'In Petrograd the Mensheviks are kicking up a row; Putilov Works shares rise in value by 10 francs. Chernov promises to open the Constituent Assembly; another 5 francs marked up. At Kronstadt the artillery has spoken in the name of the Soviets against the Communists; that means that the Belgian capitalists will get back their works and mines in the Donbas – a rise for those shares of 20-30 francs.'

If we take the bulletins of the stock-exchanges of Europe, and especially of France, for February and March, and draw a graph of the movement of Russian stocks, we can quite clearly see that the White-Guard, Menshevik or SR slogans were being quoted on the stock-exchange at a perfectly uniform and perfectly insignificant figure. But as soon as these slogans were combined with artillery, their value at once rose to a fairly high point.

The counter-revolutionary scoundrels, the SR windbags and simpletons, the Menshevik foxes and the Anarchist hooligans all, consciously or unconsciously, from cunning or from craziness, perform one and the same historical role: they co-operate with all attempts made to establish the unrestricted rule of the bandits of world imperialism over the working people and over all natural wealth. Economic, political and national independence is possible for Russia only under the dictatorship of the Soviets. The spine of this dictatorship is the Communist Party. There is no other, nor can there be.

You want to break that spine, Messrs SRs and Mensheviks? So, then, the experience of four years of revolution has not been enough for you! Just try! Just try! We are ready to complete your experience.

March 23, 1921
Pravda, No.63

The Kronstadt Mutiny

Speech

At the Parade in Honour of the Heroes of Kronstadt, April 3, 1921

* * *

The Kronstadt events were a link in that steel chain which the imperialists of all countries are forging against the Soviet power.

Under the slogan of improving the Soviet power, 'Soviet power without the Communists', the bourgeoisie, national and international, sought to rally the workers and peasants against the Soviet power.

The Paris and Finnish stock-exchanges grasped at once the meaning of Kronstadt, and their loyal spokesman Milyukov repeated: 'There's no need to be frightened. One can't get anywhere by coming out against Soviets. It's necessary to use the slogan of non-Party Soviets to destroy the Soviet power.'

A section of the sailors swallowed this bait. We waited as long as we could for the bemused sailor comrades to see with their own eyes where the mutiny was taking them. But we found ourselves faced with the danger of the ice thawing, and were compelled to strike a short, sharp, well-aimed blow.

With unprecedented heroism, in a feat unheard of in the history of war, our cadets and the Red Army units inspired by them took by storm a first-class naval fortress.

Without firing a shot they advanced across the ice, perished and conquered, these sons of workers' and peasants' Russia who were loyal to the revolution. They will not be forgotten by the working people of Russia and of the whole world.

I am sure that no spot will ever stain this banner. And in difficult times, when weary doubt stirs in our hearts, we shall remember Kronstadt and its banner, and go forward cheerfully to victory.

Izv. V. Ts. I. K.
April 5, 1921, No. 73

Banditry and Famine

Speeches and Articles

The Famine and the World Situation

Speech at a meeting of the Moscow Soviet, August 30, 1921

* * *

1. Why Has the Famine Put Russia at the Centre of the World's Attention?

Comrades, our famine and Soviet Russia are now altogether at the centre of the attention of all civilised mankind. Everywhere they are talking, writing and arguing about aid to the famine victims in the Volga region. A most vigorous, sincere and impassioned agitation for aid to the working masses of Russia is being carried on by the workers' organisations [\[1\]](#) and their press, and, above all, by the Communists. That is quite understandable. The warm sympathy and ever-increasing support given by the working masses of Europe and the whole world was and is the principal condition for the survival of the Soviet regime. What underlies the world proletariat's aid to us is a complete identity of interest between them and ourselves.

Much less understandable is the fact that the question of aid has now taken such a strong hold of the ruling classes and governments of all the bourgeois countries. Even three years ago, immediately after the seizing of power by our working class, Soviet Russia was not the focus of world attention to such an extent as it is now. Ministers, industrialists, stock-exchange speculators, journalists, deputies are all passionately interested in the question of aid to the victims of famine. This is certainly something, you will agree, that is somewhat less easy to understand. Naturally, oh, naturally, none of us doubts that stock-exchange speculators, industrialists and ministers have very kind hearts, but those hearts did not prevent them from inflicting a bloody and ruinous intervention upon us, or from imposing the barbed-wire blockade. It is quite obvious that, besides considerations of humanity and other lofty but imponderable matters, there must be other, material and quite ponderable causes and forces compelling the rulers of Washington, London and Paris to take so much to heart the situation of the starving population of the Volga region, and to divide their attention between the Irish question, Japanese naval armaments and the Greco-Turkish War, on the one hand, and the terrible need of the muzhiks of Kazan and Samara, on the other. In the absence of such deeper reasons, what is now happening all over the world would be quite incomprehensible. The newspapers are full of articles, the ministers are making speeches, parliamentary commissions are assembling, the wireless telegraph is busy in every direction – and they are all talking about one thing, all thinking one thought: how to help the provinces of Kazan and Samara, which very few of the ministerial gentlemen would be able to point

out on a map.

The industrialists and stock-exchange speculators are, of course, obliged to reckon with the disinterested and ever more powerful striving to help Russia which presses up from below in their society, but the true essence of the matter is, nevertheless, that what is actually happening, under the guise of the question of aid to the famine victims, is a new and apparently decisive attempt to take up in all its dimensions and to solve in a practical way the question of relations with Soviet Russia, of including Soviet Russia in the circulation-process of world economy.

The famine in Russia coincides with a commercial and industrial crisis throughout the world which is unprecedented in scale. International capitalism is now paying – it has only begun to pay – for the destruction and devastation caused by the imperialist war. Capitalist economy is taking account, in the form of this most severe crisis, of what it has lost, what it has ruined, what it lacks. This shortfall in the world economic inventory is no less menacing to the bourgeoisie than was the revolutionary wave which rolled over Europe as a direct consequence of the war. What is at stake here is the very basis of bourgeois rule. While during the last year or eighteen months the bourgeoisie recovered politically, restoring its state and police apparatus, economically it is only now seeing with full clarity the gulf which has opened beneath its feet. The turnover of international trade in the first six months of this year barely attained half the corresponding figure for the first half of last year. Yet the first half of last year was already deeply affected by the crisis which broke out in March (in Japan and the United States). Finally, even 1919, a year of artificial, imaginary, fictitious commercial and industrial boom, showed an extraordinary decline in trade and production as compared with pre-war. It is natural that the chief concern of the leaders of the bourgeoisie is to restore the capitalist economy on the basis of the world division of labour. Along this road the principal problem is that of Soviet Russia. Without including it in world-economic life, without increasing its power to produce and consume, the capitalist world can see no way out of their difficulties. But they say to themselves: after all, one can't overlook the fact that Soviet Russia is a socialist state, headed by the Communist Party, whose thoughts are directed towards overthrowing capitalism throughout the world. The leaders of Soviet Russia have again, at the 3rd Congress of the Communist International, confirmed their unshakable belief in the inevitable downfall of capitalist society. What would be the sense of the bourgeoisie's restoring economic relations with European [*sic*] [\[2\]](#) Russia? That is how the question is put, on the one hand, by some of the most inveterate doctrinaires among the bourgeoisie and, on the other – for quite different motives, of course – by some extreme Left and super-Left critics of Soviet Russia.

Counterposing the inevitability of the proletarian revolution in Europe to trade relations between Europe and the proletarian state, Soviet Russia, means not grasping the real mechanics of development. In the first place, the bourgeoisie does not in the least admit that its downfall is inevitable: it intends to fight. Furthermore, it intends, by means of trade relations, to transform Soviet Russia, subjecting us to its own regime. Consequently, relations between world capitalism and Soviet Russia, including 'peaceful', commercial relations, form a component part, one of the stages, in the struggle between the bourgeois regime and the regime that will replace it. And not only that. If an individual merchant who, theoretically, fully accepts the inevitability of his

personal death, nevertheless does not in the least, on that account, give up buying and selling, but goes on squeezing out profit until his last breath, still less can the profit-making class give up trading, even if they agree to believe us when we say that their historical doom is inevitable.

But let us leave philosophy in peace. The fact is that, without ceasing to fight against us, the bourgeoisie is concluding agreements with us. The fact is that, without ceasing to hate us, they are signing treaties with us, some of these valid for very long periods. This does not signify at all that such treaties forbid history to intervene, in the capacity of an unforeseen third party, and liquidate through revolution one of the contracting parties. Nobody has so far signed a treaty with history. When we sign some treaty or other, it means that we answer only for ourselves. Contrary to what is stupidly alleged by the yellow press, we carry out all our treaties quite conscientiously – not out of sympathy with the other party, but because we know what is to our own interest. But we do not answer for history.

2. Philanthropy And Calculation

There can be no doubt – I return to my basic idea – that, behind the screen of the philanthropic organisations, Red Cross groups and so on, a new orientation of the capitalist governments is taking place where Soviet Russia is concerned. Precisely the circumstances of this new test by famine are causing the shrewder leaders of imperialism to become convinced, more clearly than ever, that there is in Russia no power other than the Soviet regime, and the Communist Party which guides it, that could have any hope whatsoever of undertaking to organise order and economic revival in our country.

Lloyd George said at a session of the Supreme Council [\[3\]](#), if certain newspapers have reported him correctly, that the question of Russia and the Russian famine is not a question of philanthropy: that, essentially, what is involved is the establishing of such mutual economic relations with Soviet Russia as will ensure her economic recovery. On that matter Lloyd George is absolutely right. Philanthropy can possess only palliative significance, and have very limited effect, at that. From the standpoint of world capitalism, the question amounts to this – how to invest capital in Russia which would subsequently realise a high level of profit.

To be sure, in the present movement for aid a big part is played by well-known bourgeois philanthropists such as the American Quakers [\[4\]](#) and so on. But they, too, are not only philanthropists: they fulfil a certain function in the struggle of their class for self-preservation and domination. Just as conquest of the colonial countries very often began with the despatch thither of missionaries, who were followed by traders and soldiers, so the restoration of trade relations can very well begin with philanthropic aid. Regardless of the will of individual persons, who may be acting in a perfectly disinterested spirit, philanthropy fulfils in the given case a task of wide reconnaissance, the creation of points of support and of a favourable, sympathetic atmosphere, without which there can be no commercial dealings. By saying this I do not in the least wish to cast discredit on anyone's philanthropic intentions. On the contrary, when they are cleansed of the foam of sentimental phrasemongering and hypocritical conventionalities, these intentions assume very great

significance in our eyes. They signify the onset of a new stage in relations between ourselves and the capitalist world.

I repeat, the most perspicacious elements of the bourgeoisie have understood, or are starting to understand, that in the Russia of today, after the world imperialist war, after the revolutionary civil wars, after a series of foreign interventions and blockades, there is no organised force capable, in these unprecedentedly difficult conditions, of doing the work that we are doing, for it is a fact that the famine has not brought chaos, that Soviet order is inviolate, and that the first measure of help and self-help, the winter sowing of the Volga region's fields, has been carried out by us, with our own resources. Hence this at-first-sight-unexpected result, that the famine, this new and grievous trial for Soviet Russia, has been transformed into a political factor impelling bourgeois governments to seek economic rapprochement with us. But, along with this, there is also another result.

3. New Hopes For (Peaceful) Intervention and the Russian White Guards

The famine crisis which Soviet Russia is experiencing has aroused to an extreme degree the energy of those elements for whom the ultimate establishment of the Soviet regime means the loss of everything, or of very much. These are, in the first place, the White-Guard émigrés, and, secondly, those groups and cliques of the world bourgeoisie which in the past involved themselves very closely with the policy of intervention, blockade and other ways of strangling Soviet Russia. Here we see a second paradoxical phenomenon – that is, one which cannot be explained at first sight. Along with the marked strengthening of the tendency to economic rapprochement with the Soviet power we see a parallel strengthening of the tendency aimed at overthrowing the Soviet power.

There is no contradiction here – on the contrary, the one tendency complements the other. The Russian counter-revolutionary émigrés, who are connected in Europe with very powerful and influential imperialist centres, are fully aware that, if the present moment is allowed to slip by, if a renewal of intervention is not brought about now, if the Soviet power is enabled to cope with the famine, and even to strengthen its international economic ties, then they can say goodbye to all their plans and hopes of restoring old Russia. 'It's now or never!' the landlord and capitalist émigrés tell themselves. 'Perhaps it really could be done now?' some French and other interventionists ask themselves.

What means are there for overthrowing the Soviet power? Nobody is going to invent gunpowder where this matter is concerned. All the means have been tried. A new Wrangel campaign, through Bessarabia, through the Caucasus or through the Far East: a movement of the Petlyurist, Savinkovist and other bands: peasant revolts inside the country: acts of terrorism – combining all this with 'famine relief', with the Committee of Public Personages [\[5\]](#) as a 'mighty' centre relying on all forms of struggle against the Soviet power and enjoying support from all the international aid organisations and the governments which are behind them. In this way the banner of aid becomes, on the one hand, the cover for a new orientation towards Soviet Russia, in the sense of economic

rapprochement, and, on the other, the cover for plans of armed intervention, for which the famine has provided the long-awaited moment.

The Russian émigrés who, only a few months ago, were sinking and shrinking, little by little, have now woken up and are displaying feverish activity, raging furiously in all directions, sending telegrams, interviewing, calling up on everyone's telephone, lying and slandering. 'Now or never,' cry their leaders of all tendencies, from the Black-Hundred monarchists to the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, some in a hoarse bass, others in a shrill falsetto. That is the impression, one of many-voiced yet fundamentally co-ordinated baying, that the émigré press produces today.

4. What The Emigre Press Writes About Russia

Comrades, for lack of time I am, like the overwhelming majority of you, unable to follow properly the Russian White-Guard papers which are published abroad. But we have in the War Department an institution whose duty it is to keep track of what is being said by the foreign press generally, and the Russia White-Guard press in particular, regarding the Red Army, our military problems and our policy. From this institution I received yesterday this bulky book of extracts from the Russian émigré publications of the last few weeks. It would, perhaps, be useful to print this collection in its entirety, since it gives a very striking impression both of what these newspapers publish and of those for whom they are published. That the newspapers, by their very nature, do not always give true reports, that they often exaggerate, and are obliged to do so, is something which one can accept. But inevitably tendentious emphasis and exaggeration is one thing, and quite another is a rabid bacchanalia of fabrications, lies and slanders. I apologise in advance for having, along with you, to go down many steps and to spend a few minutes at a level which is lower than any other.

The principal task of the émigré press in recent weeks has been to show that we are preparing for a new campaign. Against whom? Against all around us. The Reuter agency reported in the second half of July, from Helsingfors, that the Soviet Government has ordered a general mobilisation. 'It is presumed that this measure is directed against Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, or else that its purpose is to support the Kemalists against the Greeks.' This telegram made its way into all the White-Guard papers. There can be no doubt that it came originally to Reuters from this same émigré source, and then ricocheted back, enriched by the authority of the semi-official British news-agency.

From Warsaw it is reported, through the Russian Press Bureau, that 'the Bolsheviks are preparing fresh adventures, intending to send forward the newly formed Lithuanian army to take Vilna'. [\[6\]](#) It might have seemed that adventures connected with Vilna were a subject one ought not to mention precisely in Warsaw, for the same reason that, in the home of a hanged man, one avoids talking about rope. This, however, has not in the least prevented the Warsaw telegram from finding its way into all the émigré papers.

A week ago it was reported from London that mobilisation of all persons liable for military service, up to the age of 48, has been ordered here. This time, 'the Bolsheviks' military measures are being taken with a view to launching an attack on Poland'. Furthermore, the report gives details: 'The

railway battalions have been concentrated in the area Gusyatin-Shepetekova-Novograd-Volynsky-Korosten-Podvolochisk, which shows – listen, listen – ‘that Trotsky and Bukharin have not renounced their warlike schemes’ ... As you all know, our railway battalions are controlled by Comrade Bukharin.

Then there is a report, with several variants, that ‘Trotsky’s project of an attack on Romania is being taken seriously in Soviet circles because, in the Bolshevik’s opinion, the conquest of Romania would provide Soviet Russia with the grain that it needs ...’

That these senseless reports, which contradict each other at every step, are printed in their dozens every day in the Paris **Obshcheye Dyelo (The Common Cause)**, goes without saying. The editor of **Obshcheye Dyelo** is Burtsev [7], and those of us who spent long years in emigration know that Burtsev has always had the firm reputation of being a persistent and indefatigable – how should it be put? – unwise man. All of us always knew that Burtsev not only would not invent gunpowder but was by the very form of his thinking the exact opposite of one of those people who invent not only gunpowder but also more modest things than that. If Burtsev has become almost the leader of the most frenzied wing of militant Russian nationalism, that is in the order of events. However, these same reports, word for word, are also printed in the newspaper of Milyukov, who has entered into history, not accidentally, as the inventor of the Cadets’ gunpowder – and, although this gunpowder did not always produce the expected political effects, all the same, Milyukov is not in the same league as Burtsev.

In one of the latest issues to reach us of Milyukov’s Paris paper, **Posledniye Novosti (The Latest News)**, that of August 16, it is reported from Reval, or allegedly from Reval, literally this, that ‘in Moscow a desperate campaign has been whipped up against the Baltic border states. Appeals have been posted up in the streets in which the population is incited against Latvia and Estonia, where “the barns are bursting with grain”. The appeals end with the call: “To arms! Save the dying women and children! All into the campaign against the White Baltic states!”’ As you know, there are now in Moscow official representatives of the Baltic states, and also many foreign correspondents, and I should like to ask both the former and the latter to examine with care the walls and fences of Moscow, to see if they can find even one such appeal as that.

Further in my book there are reports on the condition of the Red Army. This is the central theme for the White-Guard émigrés. They have two tasks to accomplish where the Red Army is concerned, tasks which, to be sure, contradict each other, but which are both equally vital: first, to show that the Red Army constitutes a colossal menace, that it is the most powerful armed force that directly threatens the security of Europe: and, second, to show that armed intervention against Soviet Russia would be a very simple and easy enterprise because the Soviet power is dying and the Red Army is breaking up and already hardly exists any more. And it must be said that the Russian émigré press performs both tasks with amazing resolution, giving every day, in the same columns, reports on the growing strength of the Red Army and on its terminal disintegration.

I will quote only a few recent items, concerning the First Mounted Army, or ‘Budyonny’s army’, which has become widely known abroad, and the name of

which is most frequently used by the émigré press in order either to frighten or to reassure the European bourgeoisie.

Here is one of the reports which have appeared during the last two or three weeks: 'According to completely trustworthy information' – these people never write otherwise than on the basis of completely trustworthy information – 'two cavalry divisions of Budyonny's First Army, stationed in Stavropol province, have revolted against the Bolsheviks and Communists and seized Stavropol'. Later, after a day or two, **Le Temps** gives a report from Moscow that 'Budyonny's army has refused to submit to the order for demobilisation. The lower ranks have preferred to remain in the service, that is, to go on plundering and receiving high rations.' It must merely be mentioned that the same papers deny, day after day, the demobilisation of the army which we are carrying out, and if, as we see here, they admit it, they do so merely so as to report that the cavalrymen do not want to be demobilised. Only a few days later we read in the same papers: 'Cossack units of Budyonny's army are deserting with their horses and weapons, and entire detachments are going over to the rebels.' Thus, the same cavalrymen who do not want to be demobilised are leaving the army and going over in entire detachments to join the rebels.

But listen to what comes next: 'Budyonny's 1st and 2nd Mounted Armies were entrained at Yekaterinoslav and sent, abundantly equipped with machine-guns and artillery, to help Kemal. On May 20 they arrived at Trebizond, being destined to go on from there, through Ankara, to the Smyrna front.' Whether Budyonny's army seized Stavropol on their way from Yekaterinoslav to Smyrna, or at some other time, our sources do not tell us. But the itinerary of Budyonny's army is not exhausted by the reports I have quoted. From Riga, or allegedly from Riga, the White-Guard papers report: 'Budyonny's Mounted Army has been assembled, brought to order, made up to strength in men and horses, and moved into Byelorussia. At the present time its units are disposed from Chernobyl up the Dnieper as far as Mogilev: they occupy the *uyezds* of Mozyr, Rechitsa and Bobruisk.'

I request you to look at the map. Smyrna is rather a long way not only from Yekatarinoslav but also from Stavropol, and yet it turns out that this same Mounted Army which did not want to be demobilised, and which at the same time broke up into rebel detachments, has been brought up to strength, equipped with horses and everything necessary and brought into complete order, and while its left flank, passing through Trebizond, advances towards Ankara and Smyrna, almost threatening India, its right flank is resting on Bobruisk *uyezd*, directly threatening Poland. I again beg your pardon for having had to take you for a few minutes into the realm of the White-Guard émigrés, where farce is combined with lunacy. But it is not possible to avoid doing this. The Russian émigrés form the extreme wing in the worldwide mobilisation of social forces which is now taking place in connection with the famine in Russia. The émigrés and the interventionists are at one. We therefore need to know what methods these people are using. In my hands I hold an inexhaustible mass of data. I am ready and willing to provide the foreign journalist gentlemen with copies of these quotations, with precise indication of source, if they will undertake to bring this material to the notice of Europe's public opinion.

Here are a couple of telegrams describing the internal condition of Soviet

Russia – one dated July 27, the other August 7.

The first says: 'During labour disturbances in Petrograd on June 19 and 20, 618 workers who refused to go to work were shot. In addition, many were killed by the Kirghizes in the streets, and about 1,500 wounded. The Kirghizes lost four killed and 31 wounded.' The second telegram ten days later, reports: 'During the bloody events of July 19 and 20 in Moscow, 628 people were shot and more than 1,500 wounded. The troops lost four dead and 21 wounded.' Thus, on days with the same number, 19 and 20, in Moscow in June and in Petrograd

in July [*sic*], there were bloody disturbances of which you and I knew nothing, but of which the Helsingfors correspondent of Mr Milyukov's paper, and many others, had precise information. In Petrograd on those days 618 workers were killed, and in Moscow 628, and in both places, 1,500 were wounded, while the troops lost four killed and 21 wounded [*sic*]. In Petrograd it was Kirghizes who operated, but the nationality of the troops in Moscow remains unknown. And this repeated day after day, and indignant articles are written on the basis of these reports!

From that same Helsingfors it was reported at the beginning of August that Red troops 'are releasing asphyxiating gases in order to prevent starving peasants from invading Moscow'. This was in Mr Milyukov's paper! There too we read: 'People are fighting in the streets of Moscow for a crust of bread. Revolver shots are heard every night. Nearly all the doctors have been killed.' And, to conclude: 'General Zayonchkovsky has been appointed commander of all the Soviet forces operating against the starving people.'

Ah! We see from here those persons who have lost so much and who are ready to pay any price to recover even part of what they possessed as a result of centuries of oppression and robbery. We see from here those landlords, manufacturers, Tsarist ministers, lawyers and professors who have suddenly been filled with burning sympathy for the Volga peasants. We know them, those philanthropists, by their deeds and by the deeds of their fathers and their children. If at this moment those gentry had in their hands the end of a fuse by means of which they could blow up nine-tenths of workers' and peasants' Russia, in order to subject and enslave the remaining tenth, then they, these tried friends of the human race, these Wrangels, Krivosheins, Ryabushinskys, and Milyukovs, and their servants the Savinkovs, Avksentiyevs and Chernovs, would all, without a moment's hesitation, put a lighted match to the fuse. But no such fuse is available to them. And that is why their choking fury finds its outlet in this flood of unbridled lying.

In order to finish with the White-Guard press, inspired by the extreme imperialists of Europe, I will quote a report from the most recent issue of Milyukov's paper to reach us, that of August 17, a report concerning Siberia, which the White-Guard press fills with endless revolts and coups d'état, although complete calm reigns there. This is what the Paris paper has to say: 'A Havas telegram from Tokyo reports the capture of Chita by Baron Ungern and the fall of Soviet power in Irkutsk.' News, as you see, of high importance! Baron Ungern was a major card in the intervention in the Far East. He invaded Mongolia and threatened the Far Eastern Republic. Now they tell us that he has taken Chita and overthrown Soviet power in Irkutsk. I must admit that in this report, unlike the others, there really is a grain of truth. Baron Ungern is now

indeed west of Chita. I have recent official despatches from our Siberian command which, while confirming in this respect the telegram from Tokyo, on the other hand correct what it says to a very substantial degree. I will allow myself to read out one of these despatches: 'On August 22, at 12 o'clock, Shchetinkin's [8] combined force (then follows a list of units) captured General Ungern with his bodyguard of 90 Mongols, led by a Mongol prince. General Ungern was brought to headquarters at 10 o'clock on August 23 and interrogated. General Ungern readily answered all questions, on the grounds that it was all up with him anyway. There is no fresh information about some small, scattered units of General Ungern's force.' Thus, Baron Ungern was taken prisoner and taken under escort westward of Chita. His army has been destroyed. Consequently, this card, too, of the intervention in the Far East has been covered. [9]

5. The British Government's Position

What, however, are the possible chances of intervention, and, above all, what are the possible forms that intervention might take? Independent military action by any of the major European powers is not really counted on even by the Russian émigrés. But they do expect of the capitalist governments, and the French especially, that they give active assistance to Russia's minor adversaries, on the one hand, and, on the other, that they present to the Soviet Government definite political demands in connection with aid to the victims of the famine.

Let us begin with the latter idea. Its absurdity is quite obvious. Conditions have already been put to us, and in the form of an ultimatum, at that. They were rejected. Then followed the period of military intervention and blockade. We stood firm. The capitalist states were compelled by the logic of the situation to open negotiations with us. We went to meet them. A trade agreement with Britain was signed by both sides, in which Lloyd George, drawing the conclusions from past experience, did not dream of presenting any conditions whatsoever relating to Russia's internal regime. [11] One surely cannot suppose that this same Lloyd George would decide to put forward political demands in connection with the question of philanthropic aid? A ridiculous idea. Even if one were to allow for a moment the possibility of the inconceivable, namely, that an ardent supporter of Milyukov, Burtsev and Kuskova should take over from Lloyd George and present political conditions to us, it is quite obvious that this could only end in the greatest discomfiture for him. [12] Naturally, we should refuse to engage in any negotiations on such a basis. This we should do circumstantially, politely and firmly – you know how circumstantially and politely our diplomats sometimes reject highly uncircumstantiated and impolite demands. We should even enter into a dialogue. We should explain to the other party, that is, to the one presenting us with the proposal that we introduce here a regime of so-called democracy, that our theory recognises the utter uselessness of democracy as a way of deciding the conflict between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Democracy is a regime suitable for concealing and upholding the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, which can be overthrown only by the dictatorship of the proletariat. But while democracy is unsuitable for deciding the basic issue of our epoch, namely, the class conflict between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, nevertheless this same democracy may possess a certain

historical value and progressive use, for example, in deciding issues of the national independence of entire nations, especially those amongst whom modern class antagonisms have not yet developed to a high degree. Thus, we should regard it as historically and politically quite correct to offer to India, Egypt, Turkey, Algeria, Tunisia and a number of other countries the possibility of taking the democratic road, that is, of deciding their national fate by means of universal suffrage, of voting whether to remain as colonies or to live as independent national states. On that theme our diplomats might – as, indeed, they have done already more than once – compose a very courteous and very cogent note which would be lethal for the other party. We have no doubt that the other party will not enter upon a dialogue of that sort.

6. Hoover's Initiative

Perhaps the Russian émigrés pin their hopes on the initiative taken by America? We consider this improbable. The visit of Senator France [\[13\]](#) and the philanthropic initiative by Hoover are, in our view, symptomatic of that shift which has taken place in the public opinion of the American bourgeoisie. There are serious grounds for such a shift – the unprecedented commercial and industrial crisis in the United States, on the one hand, and, on the other, the growing antagonisms with Japan and with Britain. In our negotiations with Mr Hoover we went very far in the direction of concessions and the granting of various privileges to the American relief organisation. [\[14\]](#) In doing this we took into account – and said so frankly – the prejudices to which the public opinion of the American bourgeoisie, even of its leading upper circles, is subject. But, while making big concessions to prejudice and political ignorance, we utterly rejected those claims which resembled political conditions, attempts to lay hands on the sovereignty of the Soviet Republic. These conditions were withdrawn by Hoover. An agreement was signed. And we consider that this agreement will not only result in more nourishment for millions of children but will also serve to promote economic rapprochement between the two countries.

We do not, however, shut our eyes to the fact that elements exist – and not only among the Russian émigrés, – who associate the Hoover organisation with counter-revolutionary projects. For them it is not a matter of openly proposing or 'dictating' conditions to the Soviet Government, but of intruding themselves into Russia's internal life, forming an apparatus under the guise of reliefwork, and using this apparatus to carry out a counter-revolutionary coup. There is no reason to regard such plans as being out of the question. Some precedents exist in this connection. None other than the organiser of relief on Hoover's behalf in Hungary, a certain Captain Gregory, provides us with an interesting example and an instructive warning. This gentleman told, in the American periodical **The World's Work** [\[15\]](#), of his very intimate, all but leading role in the overthrow of the Soviet Government in Hungary. In pursuit of this aim, Mr Hoover's representative established close relations with certain traitors inside the Hungarian Government itself and then, with the blessing of the British military mission and the diplomatic representatives of Italy, got down to his work, which had the effect of establishing in Hungary the rule of Admiral Horthy's band of arch-criminals. According to Gregory, Hoover instructed him to keep out of politics. However, as we see, Gregory did not take this instruction seriously. It may turn out, comrades, that among Mr Hoover's

plenipotentiaries in Russia, too, there will be found persons who decide that the instruction they receive to refrain from meddling in Russian politics is not to be understood literally, and who will be tempted to follow the example set by Captain Gregory – especially as the relief organisation may be penetrated by actual Russian White Guards who decide that it is worth shaving themselves in the American manner, and putting American shoes on their feet, in order to secure complete immunity for their conspiratorial work. These gentry are miscalculating. We shall hold close to the spirit and the letter of our agreement with Hoover, and take all necessary measures to enable the American organisation to carry out its philanthropic work unhindered, without any meddling in politics. We have no doubt, comrades, that all local Soviet organs will, in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the agreement, show real vigilance and exercise serious political supervision in the localities, so as to exclude the very possibility of adventurers and rogues utilising the peasants' hunger to attempt a counter-revolutionary coup in Russia.

7. France and Plans for Intervention

Perhaps France will venture to link the question of relief with the question of political conditions? This is not likely. So far as we know, France's principal condition is our payment of debts, but this condition is not so much political as usurious. True, French semi-official spokesmen and French ministers permit themselves from time to time to pronounce sweeping judgements about Russia, condescendingly slapping the Russian people on the back while counterposing it to the Soviet Government, and so on and so forth. But this sort of banal chatter, which plays a big role in French political life generally, possesses no political content whatsoever. The Russian people, as this people lives, works, suffers, starves, fights and hopes, is now represented by its Soviet power, and for the French Government there is no road to the Russian people except through the Soviet power, nor will there be. Realisation that this is so is penetrating even the French bourgeoisie. A whole series of organs and politicians are calling for the restoration of relations with Russia. But the wavering in ruling circles is still very substantial, and seemingly renders it possible that decisions may be taken either this way or that.

The not unknown Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, who most often acts as a diplomatic courier for France, Mr Take Jonescu, declared, according to some Romanian papers, on August 10, at a meeting of the Romanian Council of Ministers, that 'there can be no question of aid from France to the famine victims in Russia, because France is only awaiting the right moment to attack Russia and restore the bourgeois order'. This report does not seem to us altogether without foundation. I said at the outset that the marked and perhaps decisive shift towards economic rapprochement with Soviet Russia is complemented by a revival of plans for armed intervention. Most of the time, these two tendencies conflict sharply with each other. But they may also coexist. It is not impossible, for instance, that the French Government, having realised that it must finally reject the barbed-wire-fence policy of Monsieur Clemenceau, which has become mere window-dressing, like a lot else in the legacy of that politician, may be tempted simultaneously to try and test, for one last time, the soundness of the Soviet Government. What if it is the fact that, as Wrangel, Krivoshein, Milyukov, Kerensky and Martov all affirm, the Soviet Government is on the brink of collapse? What if it is only necessary to

show political self-control for just one quarter of an hour more? And what if one were to try and shorten that historical quarter of an hour by means of a new intervention? In the past, intervention was not a success, but perhaps this time it might be? And if it should miscarry this time as well, then one could at last sit down at a green-baize-covered table and haggle over debts and interest-payments. Such moods are quite possible in France. Furthermore, they are highly probable.

8. The Holy Trinity of French Philanthropists

Indeed, it is enough to take a look at the personages whom France has appointed to participate in the international commission for aid to the famine-victims in Russia. You know that this commission has been, or is being, set up by decision of the Supreme Council. Its purpose is extremely vague. Its task is, apparently, to look into the conditions for forming a committee to study the question of the best ways and means for possible aid to Russia's famine-victims. And to serve on this highly preliminary committee France has nominated three persons: General Pau [\[16\]](#), who is much better known as an ardent monarchist than as a military commander, and who was closely connected with Tsarist Court circles; the former manufacturer Giraud [\[17\]](#), who made a fortune in Moscow out of pitiless exploitation of men and women workers; and, finally, France's last ambassador to Russia, Monsieur Noulens. The latter's candidature is particularly symbolic. Noulens was the inspirer and banker of the Yaroslavl revolt organised by Savinkov in 1918. Noulens was at the centre of a conspiracy the aim of which was to destroy all the railway lines round Petrograd, so as thereby, through starving the city, to bring about a coup d'état. Thus, Noulens is a qualified specialist in matters of famine. He regarded famine as his ally already in 1918. He himself tried, by exploding dynamite, to doom the women and children of Petrograd to starvation – in the highest interests of civilisation and humanity. Who but Noulens should now represent the France of the stock-exchange in its disinterested, ardent impulse to bring aid to the starving muzhiks of Kazan and Samara? In 1918 the name of Noulens was one of the best-known names in Russia. It has now, perhaps, faded somewhat in the memory of Russia's workers and peasants. Your task, comrades, is to restore this name in all its brilliance in the memory of the working people.

Hungry children of Petrograd, peasants and peasant women of the Volga region, hear the good tidings: the France of the stock exchange is sending Noulens to help you.

9. Poland and Intervention

But Noulens' malevolence is not enough. In order to test for the very last time the stability of the Soviet Government, armed intervention is needed, and for that one has to have an army. To use French troops for this purpose, as in the days of the occupation of Odessa, is now out of the question. One way alone remains – to act through the vassal states of the Little Entente.

Not so long ago, France's principal weapon against Soviet Russia was Poland. But today the situation has altered. Poland did not come easily to the peace

treaty of Riga. You will recall how we frequently but vainly offered peace talks, before the Polish Government, under French pressure, carried matters to the point of a major war. As a result of fighting that was severe, exhausting and ruinous for both sides, Poland obtained peace – a peace settlement which, though less favourable than what we had offered her before the war, was, all the same, essentially favourable to her. There are no grounds for fearing that, alter this hard historical lesson, the rulers of Poland will agree, at France's demand, to start military operations against Russia a second time.

Poland's internal economic and political situation is far from being such as to facilitate extensive military schemes. One of the Polish newspapers, **Kurjer Poranny**, writes as follows: 'A state in which the railways have stopped running, in whose capital the water supply and the city hospitals are serviced with the help of soldiers, in which the workers and office staffs are quarrelling with the Government, the exhausted treasury is helpless, speculation and exploitation are raging all around, and the different parties are savagely fighting for power', a state in such a condition as this cannot, obviously, place its army at the disposal of those heirs of Clemenceau who, before entering into negotiations, would like once more to put down a gambler's stake on the battlefield, in the form of another nation's blood.

It appears that commercial and industrial circles in Poland are resolutely opposing the fantasies of the petty-bourgeois chauvinists. And that is understandable. Europe's markets are inaccessible to Poland. Closest of all to her is the old familiar Russian market. Polish capital hopes to work not only on its own account but also as middleman for European capital. There is nothing impracticable in that calculation. Poland's geographical position facilitates it. But the first condition for realising this scheme is that peaceful relations be maintained with Soviet Russia. As for ourselves, there is no need to say, at a meeting of the Moscow Soviet, that, despite the White-Guard lies, we do not even contemplate resuming war with Poland. The best proof of our peaceful intentions is our progressive reduction in the numbers of the Red Army. This fact is excellently well known at Polish Army Headquarters, just as at other such Headquarters.

10. Relations with Romania

The position is considerably different where Romania is concerned. Here I must recall, if only in rapid outline, the history of our relations with Romania, since in this quickly-passing epoch of ours even important events soon fade from memory. During the imperialist war Romania was an ally of Tsarist Russia and shared a front with her against Austria-Hungary and Germany. These relations survived the revolution of March 1917. But they were sharply disrupted after the November revolution and the establishment of Soviet power. The Romanian Government exploited the advantages provided for it by the existence of a common war-front, invaded Bessarabia, and established there its *de facto* dictatorship.

On February 21, 1918 the Italian diplomatic representative Fasciotti made the following declaration to the Soviet Government, on behalf of all the Allied representatives with the Government of Romania: 'Where Bessarabia is concerned, the appearance of Romanian troops there is a military operation

without any political character, and which has been undertaken with the full agreement of the Allies, with the clearly humanitarian aim of ensuring food supplies for the Russian and Romanian soldiers and also the civil population.'

Serious armed clashes took place, however, between the Soviet and the Romanian troops, and, as a result, on March 5, 1918, the Romanian Government signed an agreement with Russia, by the first article of which Romania undertook to withdraw from Bessarabia within two months.

I recall this not in the least because I consider the Bessarabian question to be on today's agenda. But it is perfectly obvious that these facts cast a bright light on the strange, misplaced and utterly monstrous statements made by some responsible Romanian statesmen to the effect that 'good-neighbourly relations' have never ceased to prevail between Romania, Russia and the Ukraine. If we interpret good-neighbourly relations as widely as that, the difference between war and peace does indeed disappear, and peace talks are deprived of any significance. It is not for nothing that the Romanian Government has so persistently evaded peace talks for at least eighteen months. I shall not recall here all the episodes of these peaceful and good-neighbourly relations, such as the murder by the Romanian military authorities of Comrade Roshal [\[18\]](#), or the attack by Romania on our ally, Soviet Hungary.

Since the beginning of 1920 the Soviet Government has made ceaseless efforts to bring about peace negotiations with Romania – above all, so as to create conditions of security and stability on that frontier. In the last few days, comrades, I have been rereading the notes and other documents covering relations between Moscow and Kharkov [\[19\]](#), on the one hand, and Bucharest, on the other, since the beginning of last year, that is, since the time, after the liberation of the Ukraine, when the Soviet federation came into direct contact with the territory over which the Romanian Government has extended its defacto authority. When brought together, the notes by Chicherin and Rakovsky make a tremendous impression. An unbroken series of appeals to Mr Take Jonescu, to Vaida-Voevod, again to Take Jonescu, then to Mr Averescu – all with one and the same proposal, to discuss the question of establishing peaceful relations between Romania and the Soviet Federation.

On the other hand, the Romanian Government's replies, when assembled, strike one with their evasiveness and contradictoriness. First, Bucharest agrees, and proposes that the place for negotiations be agreed upon. Then, through absent-mindedness and forgetfulness, the Romanian Government unilaterally designates, as the place for the negotiations, Warsaw – that is, the capital of a state with which we were at that time engaged in open war. When our diplomats, with their characteristic calm persistence, explained, in a popular and circumstantial manner, the misunderstanding that had occurred, Bucharest remained silent. To explain its actual refusal to engage in peace talks it began to refer to the forthcoming conference in London, and at the same time informed the Romanian public through the press, that the Soviet Government had returned no reply to the note regarding the location for the peace talks. Our diplomats calmly and persistently exposed this fresh 'misunderstanding', as well. It might seem that one could go no further in avoiding a direct answer. All that was left was to name the place where negotiations could begin. But at this point the Romanian Government resorted to a new and unexpected course: it demanded that the allied Soviet Governments tell it beforehand, that is, before the talks began, what, precisely, the negotiations were to deal with.

For the Romanian Government, you see, has always lived on friendly terms with the Soviet Republics and therefore sees no reason for any peace talks. One cannot improve on that for diplomatic tightrope-walking.

But, meanwhile, the absence of regularised relations affects everything – the frontier guards, with their constant skirmishes, navigation in the Dnieper estuary, fishing in the Dniester itself.

11. The Danger of a New Adventure

Having evaded negotiations, deluded Romanian public opinion and created artificial misunderstandings and obstacles to negotiation, the Romanian Government, fearful of the dangerously undefined situation it has itself created on the Dniester, is providing itself with additional safeguards in the form of the Petlyurist bands. For their part, the French interventionists, groping for the line of least resistance, are bringing all kinds of pressure on Romania to prevent negotiations with us. When Take Ionescu says that France is only waiting for the right moment to attack Soviet Russia, that is quite false, if what is expected is that France herself is going to launch an attack. But it is quite true in the sense that very influential circles in France are doing everything in their power to urge Romania to attack us, so as to see what will come of that.

It is not, of course a question of the opening of military operations by Romania's regular army. No. A more modest beginning is proposed. Operations are to be opened by the Petlyurist bands which have been concentrated in Bessarabia for that purpose. Romanian regular units will remain in the background, to back up the Petlyurists and bide their time.

The note of August 13 from Rakovsky and Chicherin was devoted to this plan. This note does not tell everything: almost nine-tenths of the information in our possession cannot be communicated for reasons of military secrecy. But even that one-tenth of this information which was made public in the note is more than sufficient to describe the actual state of affairs on our South-Western frontier. It is indeed not a question of diplomatic quibbling, or of verbal tightrope-walking and playing with the concept of 'good-neighbourly relations'. It is not even a question of the history of our relations with Romania, not even of the most recent phase of these relations. It is a question of today and tomorrow.

In Romania, Bukovina and Bessarabia preparations are still going forward for hostile acts against the Soviet Republics. At Bendery a plenipotentiary of the Petlyurist rebel bands is with the Romanian army staff. The principal Ukrainian military representative with the Romanian Government is a certain Gulyay-Gulenko, who is well in with all the Romanian army staff and feels at home with them. The task of the bands being formed and supplied in Bessarabia is to seize Kamenets-Podolsk and Mogilev uyezds, as bases for subsequent military operations. Their immediate task is to disrupt food-procurement work in Right-bank Ukraine. Chicherin and Rakovsky demand in their note, in the name of the Soviet Federation, that an end be put to this activity.

Mr Take Ionescu replied, in the style with which we are already familiar, that when the note from Chicherin and Rakovsky was laid before the Romanian Council of Ministers, it caused the greatest amazement: there, you see,

nothing is known about any such facts. They do not know. But we know! We know, very distinctly, about the people, the organisation, the staff, the communications, the arms, the money, and where the money comes from. And when Mr Take Jonsescu tells us that he does not know about this, we can only advise him to make more thorough inquiries at Romanian army headquarters, starting at Bendery and ending in Bucharest. There they know, because there they act.

In reporting on this to the Moscow Soviet, as I reported on it to the Government, I ask you to give your closest attention to this alarming question. I do not in the least wish to be understood as saying that we are threatened with inevitable war with Romania. So far as I understand the situation, there can be no question of such inevitability. But, through the pressure of the French interventionists and the logic of its own lying policy, Romania may go a lot farther than it would itself wish to go. It is beginning with a little thing. It is grouping Petlyura's bands along our frontier, establishing an administration and communications for them – that is, continuing to perform actions that were customary amid the bloody chaos of recent years. But we want, on the South-Western frontier of our federation, calm and stability, and not the continuation of bloody chaos. Again I say: what is involved here is not settling accounts for the past, but ensuring security for the future. If Take Jonsescu speaks of the amazement of his Government, which knows nothing of the dangers that threaten the future, we can draw only one conclusion from that: alongside the official Government, which carries on negotiations, expresses amazement and 'doesn't know', there is another one, an unofficial one, which knows and acts!

What would the realisation of this plan mean? Right-bank Ukraine is today the most abundant part of the Soviet Federation. They have reaped a splendid harvest there, which can and must alleviate the famine in the Volga region. If into Right-bank Ukraine were to advance the Pelyurist bands of which Take Jonsescu knows nothing, that would mean that Right-bank Ukraine would become the theatre of the most exhausting kind of war – war between regular forces and guerrilla bands. It would mean that the dreadful roller of civil war would again pass over the villages, barns and cornfields of the Ukrainian peasants of the Right bank. It would mean that the Petlyurist bands armed at Romania's expense, of which Take Jonsescu knows nothing, would destroy in the Ukraine between five and ten times as much grain as the combined philanthropy of the whole bourgeois world is going to give us. And here, comrades, in the name of this authoritative organ of local Soviet power, as in the name of the workers and peasants of all Russia, we say to the Government of Britain, to the Government of France and to all the governments of the Entente: 'You talk of helping us. You are preparing to investigate the needs of the Volga peasants: investigate first what is going on in our border territory of Bessarabia and in Romania. Are there not bandits and incendiaries there, whose activities may cause a conflagration in Right-bank Ukraine which would have most grievous consequences for the starving peasants of the Volga region?'

We do not expect, comrades, to receive an immediate reply from the Entente, but we are willing and shall be prepared to safeguard our frontier and our possessions with our own forces. However burdensome it may be now, when we should prefer to devote all our strength and resources wholly to the task, first, of aiding the famine victims and, together with that, the fundamental task of reviving our economy as a whole – we cannot take our

eyes off our south-western frontier. The fate of the Volga-region peasant and his children is being decided today not only on the Volga itself, to which we are sending and shall go on sending thousands of men and women workers to help on the spot – their fate is also being decided on those sectors of our frontier where world imperialism has still not renounced the idea of subjecting the Soviet power to one last trial of strength. After all the experience we have acquired, after all the calamities we have undergone, after nearly four years in which we have fought and conquered, we feel that we are firmly enough established to defend, without slackening our economic work, the inviolability of the Soviet Federation everywhere that anyone dares to threaten it, despite our sincere and frank readiness for peace with all our neighbours. We are prepared to crush, with the same strength and resolution as before, any attempt made within the country to utilise the new difficulties we are having to overcome, in order to bring about a counter-revolutionary coup. Comrades, it was not for this that we took power in November 1917, not for this that the working class made nameless and numberless sacrifices – not for us to stumble now and give up in the fight to overcome our new difficulties. No, our enemies' calculations will prove false this time too.

We shall stand firm, we shall overcome, we shall conquer, we shall consolidate, we shall go forward!

*Stenographic Reports
of the Moscow Soviet,
1921, No.6*

Endnotes

[1.](#) The Communist-led organisation called Workers' International Relief (W.I.R., or for Russians *Mezhrabpom*) came into being in connection with the campaign for aid to the famine-stricken areas of Soviet Russia. It was wound up in 1935. – *Brian Pearce*

[2.](#) 'European' is presumably a mistake for 'soviet'. – *Brian Pearce*

[3.](#) The Supreme Council of the Allies, formed after the end of the European war, was an organ of the victorious Great Powers which had the task of dealing with problems connected with the fulfilment of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. It was made up of representatives of Britain, France, Italy, the United States and Japan. The Supreme Council has now been transformed into the Conference of Ambassadors of the Allied Powers.

[4.](#) The Quakers are a religious sect which began in England in the 17th century. – *Brian Pearce*

[5.](#) In October 1920 the Lithuanian capital, Vilna, had been seized for Poland in an 'unauthorised' operation by General Zeligowski. This caused an international scandal, and (fruitless) attempts were made by the League of Nations to get Poland to give up her conquest.

[6.](#) The All-Russia Committee for Aid to the Victims of Famine (the Committee of Public Personages) was formed on July 21, 1921. It included Kishkin, Prokopovich, Kuskova and other public figures. This committee was dissolved at the end of August. The Government communiqué about the dissolution of the Committee said that counter-revolutionary émigrés circles aimed to utilise the Committee for struggle against the Soviet power. Wishing to safeguard the Committee's practical work, the Government proposed that an intended journey abroad by delegates of the Committee be postponed. The Committee insisted on carrying out its decision to send a delegation abroad, and declared that, in the event of refusal, it would have to cease its activity – after which it was dissolved.

[7.](#) V.I. Burtsev (1862-1942) became famous before the Revolution as an 'investigative journalist' in the service of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party. It was he who exposed the Tsarist police provocateurs in the revolutionary movement, Azef and Malinovsky. – *Brian Pearce*

[8](#) P.E. Shchetinkin led the Red Army's expedition into Mongolia to help the revolutionary forces there, whose opponents included Ungern's White Guards then using Mongol territory as a base for raids into Siberia. – *Brian Pearce*

[9](#) Baron Ungern von Sternberg was one of the last of the leaders of White-Guard-officer banditry in the East. With help from Ataman Semyonov and Chinese and Mongol monarchists an army of between four and five thousand sabres was organised in order to conquer Mongolia. In May 1921 Ungern occupied Urga [\[10\]](#) and launched an offensive against the territory of the Far-Eastern Republic. At the end of May 1921 forces of the Mongolian Revolutionary Army began a resolute offensive and on August 8, after his forces had been defeated, Ungern, with a small number of 'bodyguards', tried to flee into Western Mongolia. At the end of August he was captured by units of the Revolutionary People's Army of Mongolia (see map No.2). On September 15, 1921 a public trial of Ungern was held and he was sentenced to the maximum penalty and was shot.

[10.](#) Urga is now called Ulan Bator Khoto. – *Brian Pearce*

[11.](#) Trotsky doubtless specifies 'Russia's internal regime' because the Anglo-Russian Trade Agreement of 1921 was accompanied by British insistence that Soviet Russia cease supporting revolutionary activity in India. See R.H. Uliman, **A History of Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1921**, Vol.3, *The Anglo-Soviet Accord* (1972), pp.479-482. – *Brian Pearce*

[12.](#) One of the factors which caused the Conservative revolt that put an end to Lloyd George's coalition government in October 1922 was his relative readiness to seek agreement with Soviet Russia. The purely Conservative Government which succeeded him – headed first by Bonar Law, then by Baldwin – took a harder line, expressed in the Curzon Note of May 1923.

[13.](#) Senator France, of Maryland, after a four-weeks visit to Russia, assured the Press on his arrival in Riga, that Russia was 'reverting to capitalism'. – *Brian Pearce*

[14.](#) Hoover, the American minister of trade and industry, offered the help of his organisation for relieving the famine victims. Negotiations with the American Relief Administration (ARA) ended on August 20, 1921 with the signing at Riga of an agreement for the provision of relief.

[15.](#) T.T.C. Gregory's account of his activity as Hoover's representative in Central Europe appeared, under the title: *Stemming the Red Tide*, in the New York monthly **The World's Work** in April, May and June 1921. He described how he got Bela Kun's representative in Vienna to pay him large sums for food supplies while at the same time he was secretly informing dissident members of Kun's government that Hungary would receive nothing until Kun was overthrown. A coup d'état took place, and then 'supply trains began to roll into Hungary.'

[16.](#) General Pau (1848-1932) headed the French military mission in Russia during the World War, until 1916, when he was replaced by General Janin. – *Brian Pearce*

[17.](#) Paul Giraud was a big textile manufacturer in Moscow before the Revolution. Pierre Pascal says, in **Mon Journal de Russie**, that Giraud told him how he bribed the police to avoid prosecution because he was polluting a river with the dyes from his factory, and also mentions Giraud's notoriety as a gambler who lost 700,000 francs in one night. – *Brian Pearce*

[18.](#) S.G. Roshal was sent by the Soviet Government in November 1917, as commissar for the Romanian front, to Jassy, to negotiate with General Shcherbachev, commanding the Russian forces on that sector. He was arrested and shot on the orders of the local Romanian military governor. – *Brian Pearce*

[19.](#) The capital of the Soviet Ukraine at this time was Kharkov. It was not moved to Kiev,

the country's traditional capital, until 1934. – *Brian Pearce*

Banditry and Famine

Speeches and Articles

Greetings to Right-Bank Ukraine!

* * *

The replacement of the requisitioning of food by a tax means a tremendous change in the life of the countryside. Under the previous system the peasant was left with only what was strictly necessary, while everything over and above that went to the state. Under the tax, the peasant gives to the state only a strictly defined part of his crop, while all the rest remains at the disposal of the owner and his family. The introduction of the food tax was entirely motivated by the interests and needs of the peasant economy.

In Right-bank Ukraine the introduction of the tax coincided with an excellent harvest. Whereas in the south-east of the Soviet Federation, on the Volga, an unprecedented drought parched the grain, and millions of peasants, peasant women and their children are now suffering the frightful torments of famine – here, between the Dnieper and the Dniester, the grain has ripened marvellously this year. The Right-bank peasant has to hand over part of his crop to the state, in payment of the food-tax. This part will go to maintain the Red Army, which protects the land of the Ukrainian peasants from Russian, Polish, Romanian and other landlords; to the urban workers, who have to provide the peasant with the implements for agricultural work; and, finally, to help our starving brothers on the Volga.

The Right-bank peasant must, and will, pay his tax in full and in time. He has the means to pay. Only a dishonourable, self-interested kulak can object to paying a just food-tax which goes not to the Polish landlords but to help his own brothers-workers, peasants and Red Army men. The overwhelming majority of the peasants of Right-bank Ukraine, and, in particular, of Kiev province, have already begun to fulfil their duty to the workers' and peasants' state. So far as I know, the Kiev-province peasants are in the front rank. This means that the Petlyurist atamans and the other bandits are no longer able to confuse the peasants of Kiev province. These peasants have understood that the present good harvest can become the starting-point for economic revival and progress in the Ukraine, provided that the countryside is purged of bandits and thugs and that the towns receive grain to make possible the development of industry.

The peasants of Kiev province are now in the forefront where their attitude to the food tax is concerned. The peasants of the other provinces will come into line with them.

Cultivators of the Right Bank! Your starving brothers of the Volga region greet you and appeal to you. They firmly hope that you will not let them down. You will do your duty to the end. You will pay your food tax when it is due, and even earlier, like true sons of the workers' and peasants' fatherland!

September 2, 1921
Kiev
En Route, No.142

Banditry and Famine

Speeches and Articles

Speech

At a Meeting of the Zhitomir City Soviet, September 5, 1921

* * *

In Zhitomir today, during the military inspection, I had occasion to speak about the most burning question of our international policy, the question whether we are going to have to fight in the near future or are going to be able to devote our principal forces to economic and cultural work. The mere fact of our coming here, to the towns and points lying near the frontier, has given rise to a supposition that major military events are expected. Some talk of war with Poland, others of war with Romania. I therefore considered it my duty today, at the inspection parade, to say clearly and distinctly to the Red Army men that these suppositions, rumours, hopes or fears are absolutely incorrect. No events whatsoever have occurred which could have prompted us to change our fundamental line, that is, the line of peace: on the contrary, all the events that have taken place, and the biggest of these events is the famine on the Volga, have compelled us to intensify our efforts to promote and realise a policy of peace.

We have grounds for hoping that we shall succeed in maintaining this policy in the period immediately ahead. True, we are now in an unsettled state, both internally and internationally, as a result of facts which have upset – one cannot say our equilibrium, for that did not exist, but a regime that approximated to temporary equilibrium. Our country had hardly even emerged from a condition of semi-famine.

Today we are experiencing an acute crisis of famine which has seized tens of millions of human beings in its clutches, and this famine is again dominated by the question of our achievements in the field of international relations. We have to ask once more: what is going to happen next? The American bourgeoisie, which moved from military intervention, from the occupation of Odessa, Archangel and the Murman coast, from supporting Wrangel, to commercial relations with us – will it stay on the road of these commercial relations, or will it attempt a fresh armed intervention? The French bourgeoisie – what policy will it pursue in relation to us? These are the fundamental questions today. What we are going through is, on the one hand, a new and serious sign of the stability of the Soviet power, and, on the other, a test of the attitude of other states and their ruling classes towards the Soviet power.

When we consider this question of the new constellation of forces, what, above all, leaps to the eye is the fact that the famine on the Volga is today the central question in international politics. Pick up any newspaper of the European or American bourgeoisie and you will see that the principal articles

are devoted to the famine in Russia. In ministers' speeches, in all the articles, at meetings of parliaments, they discuss only the question of the famine in Russia. This is understandable so far as our friends, the workers, are concerned. For them this question is of extraordinary interest, because they fear for the stability of the Soviet Government in Russia. The question stands quite differently where the bourgeoisie and its ruling circles are concerned.

What are the reasons why governments of capitalist states, ministers, deputies and journalists are concentrating such great attention on the problem being discussed from the standpoint of giving aid? When the Committee of Public Personages was formed here, with Prokopovich, Kuskova and Kishkin and other SRs and Mensheviks, numerous articles were devoted to this extremely modest committee. There can be no doubt that bourgeois ministries discussed this question at secret sessions. The American minister Hoover, who was at one time the country's food dictator and is now their minister for trade and industry, approached us with an offer of aid for the famine victims. He entered into lengthy negotiations with us, which ended successfully. The two sides signed an agreement. The French ex-minister Noulens also approached the Soviet Government with his conditions and proposals. The overall impression one gets, at first sight, is as though Europe and America had no more radical and vital preoccupation than with the starving Russian peasant. This fact alone should incline us, if not to alarm, then to a critical attitude, because we know that this class cannot be directly interested in and sympathetic to the hungry workers and peasants of Russia, in the way that the workers can; and so what is it that explains their putting the question of the famine at the centre of all their discussions?

The explanation is this, that the bourgeoisie of Europe and America are considering afresh the problem of their relations with Soviet Russia. They are asking themselves: will the Soviet regime stand firm in Russia, or will this famine give the final impulse for its overthrow? If, say the bourgeoisie, the Soviet regime is standing firm now, with this famine, that means it is necessary to recognise that this regime possesses the forms of life. It is necessary to establish, once and for all, economic, diplomatic and all other kinds of relations with it. And, in order to win a certain sympathy on the part of the Soviet Republics, the bourgeoisie resorts to philanthropy.

But there are groups among the bourgeoisie who argue differently: if, as a result of the famine, this great domestic upheaval, the Soviet Government should fall, then, clearly, there would be no point in entering into economic and, perhaps, diplomatic relations with it. Far better to wait and see what the outcome of the famine will be.

Thus, the famine has again posed the question of the attitude of the bourgeoisie to the Soviet Republic. And in so far as now, before this political process has reached definition, one can take account of the direction it is following, we can say, without any optimism, without any official cheerfulness, that, by and large, the majority of the leading bourgeois politicians apparently recognise not only that the famine is not flinging down the Soviet power but also that there is in Russia no other force, no other class, no other party, no other possible regime but the Soviet regime and the Communist Party which guides it. If, in such a devastated country as Russia, a country exhausted and shaken to the depths, a famine which has gripped tens of millions of people has not reduced the Soviet apparatus to a state of complete helplessness; if

the Soviet power has, from the very start, begun to take most vigorous measures to ensure the sowing of the winter fields of the Volga region and has already registered the first big successes in this direction; if the apparatus continues to work non-stop under these extremely arduous conditions – this proves to the bourgeoisie, part of which was beginning to realise it even before the famine, that the Soviet power is not a passing or a temporary phenomenon, but a factor to be reckoned with for a certain number of years to come. The British bourgeoisie has apparently understood this well enough. The British bourgeoisie is, in general, the most perspicacious: it was said long ago that this bourgeoisie thinks in terms of centuries and continents. The British bourgeoisie has forged its might in the course of centuries, it has grown accustomed to looking a long way ahead, and it is led by politicians who have all the past experience of their class concentrated in their minds. In relation to this question, too, they are showing great perspicacity and political flair.

Lloyd George said: 'It is not a matter of philanthropy but a matter of returning Russia to a state of economic equilibrium, and this can be done by establishing a regular economic alliance with Soviet Russia.' Lloyd George hopes that regular commercial and economic relations with us will lead us to restore our economy, and considers that it is as impossible to bring us down by means of the famine as by military intervention. Thus, we have here a seeming paradox: the famine, a profoundly negative fact, has not weakened us internationally, but rather has strengthened us. The bourgeois newspapers write: 'Yes, this power has living roots, it has withstood the scourge of famine, we shall have to reckon with it, there is nobody who can replace it.' Consequently if even this power were to fall, that would mean the coming of a period of death, mediaeval barbarism and chaos. Europe would have no hope of restoring its internal economy and it would not be possible to look forward to a time, a few years from now, when Russia would have the capacity to purchase goods, and Europe's industry could sell them. But Europe urgently needs this, for it is now paying the price for the war, in the form of a terrible economic crisis.

But while the famine has served to impel one section of the bourgeoisie to realise that the Soviet power is unshakable, on the other hand it has impelled other groups of the bourgeoisie to indulge in hope for the overthrow of the Soviet order. This is especially noticeable in the case of our own bourgeoisie abroad, namely, those two million manufacturers and landlords who do not stand alone, because European and American capital assumes that this Russian bourgeoisie, on its return to Russia, would become an agency for the exploitation of Russia by foreign capital. On the other hand, we hear that in a number of countries, and especially in France, influential government circles have, for three or four years past, consistently assured their bourgeoisie that our downfall was inevitable. They spent millions in gold on intervention in our affairs, and to abandon hope in our overthrow would mean for them, abandoning their careers. Finally, that section of the French bourgeoisie which in its time invested a lot of capital in Russian industry cannot wave goodbye to its old profits for the sake of getting new profits from trade relations with Russia and the Ukraine.

Where relations with Soviet Russia are concerned, the bourgeoisie has always been divided into two camps, but these two camps are becoming defined ever more distinctly and sharply. The most influential bourgeois have apparently swung over once and for all in favour of recognising the Soviet

power. This is true of Britain and America. In America a fundamental conflict was waged, with many questions asked in the Senate, and, a few months ago, one-third of the senators expressed themselves in favour of renewing relations with Russia. A representative came to see us in Moscow and is now carrying on a big agitation for the renewal of trade relations. The financier Vanderlip also came to see us, and there were others. [1]

One of our most active opponents is Hoover, America's present minister of trade and industry. He is at the same time president of the mighty American philanthropic organisation for aid to the famine-victims. Philanthropy is very highly developed in America. The American bourgeoisie is the richest of all bourgeoisies. Over there a big role is played by the Quaker sect, who are greatly devoted to good works, which does not prevent them from engaging in big business and making big profits. So then, there is absolutely no reason for worry where they are concerned. They gain doubly by their philanthropy: on the one hand it ensures them unhindered entry into the Kingdom of Heaven, while here and now it must win sympathy and publicity for them among the hungry masses.

And for Hoover [2] – I don't know whether he is a Quaker or merely serves the Quakers, but he is now minister of trade and industry – it is therefore very convenient to combine the one thing with the other. The fact that one of our inveterate and most irreconcilable enemies has addressed himself to us can be interpreted in two ways: either he is convinced that we are unconquerable and has decided to seek agreement with us, or he considers that we are on the brink of collapse and has decided to help us on a little in that direction. From the theoretical, practical and political standpoint both interpretations are possible. The negotiations we carried on with him, and which culminated in an agreement, were concerned exclusively with famine relief. The agreement amounts to this, that his organisation is to supply food and some clothing to one million starving children in Russia, while we undertake to make the railways and so on available to them, and to refrain from interfering in their charitable distribution of this aid. That is what their autonomy consists in. They are engaged in philanthropy and can deal with that matter as they see fit. This philanthropy must be non-political. That has also been agreed. Hoover's agents are not to meddle in the country's political life. True, there may be a mental reservation here, those of you who are very suspicious may say that, but since I signed the agreement with Hoover, I cannot show suspicion. However, looking at the matter from the standpoint that Hoover wants to win popularity in Soviet Russia on the basis of gifts, and to use all this popularity to promote a counter-revolutionary coup, it is possible to say: yes, that may be so, such plans may exist, but this cannot prevent us from making an agreement with him. To look after all that we have means of supervision and revolutionary vigilance. If we were to receive simultaneously American condensed milk and an American plan for a counter-revolutionary coup, we should try to crush the attempted coup *after* the hungry children had obtained their condensed milk.

I say this so as to direct your attention to the dual character of the bourgeoisie. But there are elements which are sincerely wavering, and cannot make up their minds whether or not to shun us.

Such is the situation in which we now find ourselves. Recently the numerous White-Guard papers published abroad have been in a state of convulsion. Our White Guards realise that if we now survive this period, if we feed or even

half-feed the starving, and form ties not only with Lloyd George but also with the charitable American Quakers, then the Soviet power need not fear any armed attack by the bourgeoisie of Europe. That is why what is for us a question of famine relief is for the bourgeois class which has outlived itself a new, repeated sentence of death. That is why they are now mobilising all the lies and slanders of which they are capable. Certain quotations which I gave from the SR newspapers and Burtsev evoked Homeric laughter at our meetings, owing to their monstrous impudence and exaggeration. But they are characteristic of the present moment, they show that the fate of Soviet Russia and the Soviet Ukraine is now being decided, perhaps finally. Until, that is, the really final decision, which will be given by the European revolution. But between *that* decision, that is, between the victory of the revolution of the European proletariat and the present day, a certain interval of time will elapse. How long that interval will be none of us knows: it may go on for months, it may go on for years. Many people say that the proletarian revolution will actually come sooner than we now expect, but we can have no precise information about that, and I am speaking about the period which separates us from the international revolution in Europe.

As regards the Hoover organisation, if we were to lose our footing in the country, if we were to start to fall, Hoover would take an active part in that process, just as he did in Hungary. We have no right to blame Hoover for hostile activity against the Soviet country to which he sent aid. But Hoover signed an agreement to aid Hungary, and his plenipotentiary Captain Gregory told an American periodical in 1919 [*sic*] how he had taken part in a conspiracy against the Soviet Government in Hungary. Despite Hoover's instructions to him, he gave all the food to the counter-revolutionaries. We therefore say that, while Hoover himself may not meddle in our affairs, there may be somebody in his organisation who will try to meddle and then, on the basis of the agreement, we shall be able to take every such Gregory by the scruff of the neck. The question here is one of struggle between revolution and counter-revolution. In the given instance, an American counter-revolutionary scoundrel differs in no way from a Russian one. We have available definite measures for struggle, and they remain fully in force against such elements as may try to bring about some coup or other.

The embryo of such a policy was the Committee for Aid to the Famine Victims on which sat Prokopovich, Kuskova and Kishkin, or, as they were called in Moscow, 'Prokukish' [\[3\]](#) – a semi-counter-revolutionary organisation. There can be no doubt that there are some really counter-revolutionary plotters around that organisation. The counter-revolutionaries tried to make use of the famine-relief committee, and this committee, imagining that it was already only five minutes away from being the unofficial government of Russia, relied mentally upon support from public opinion in Europe and America and engaged in negotiations with certain groups abroad. Although, essentially, 'Prokukish' was only a minor affair, nevertheless, so as, first, to put things on a proper basis, and, second, to deprive the counter-revolutionaries of encouragement, this committee was dissolved after a first warning.

If we take France, we see there groups which are undoubtedly more serious, more dangerous. All the Russian émigrés are concentrated in France, and our Committee of Public Personages was the organisation through which they intended to operate. France was more closely associated with the policy of armed intervention and its bourgeoisie lost many milliards through it, so that

for them the overthrow of the Soviet power is an enterprise in which they have invested a huge amount of capital. This capital can produce dividends only after the Soviet power has fallen. That is why this bourgeoisie is obliged to carry on a relentless war against us, and even those groups of the French bourgeoisie which understand and appreciate, through their own economic activity, the absolute necessity for France to change her policy, say to themselves: if the situation is such that it is a matter of waiting just another quarter of an hour (in France during the war with Germany there was a saying: 'We must hang on for a quarter of an hour more') [4], then what sense is there in re-establishing economic relations with Russia – perhaps the entire Soviet regime is on the brink of collapse?

And it is a striking fact that the French Government has placed at the centre of the organisation for aid to the victims of the famine in Russia a truly classical threesome: ex-Ambassador Noulens, Giraud and General Pau. There will be much talk about these three personages in the coming days, and I recommend that you keep them in mind. Noulens was the French Republic's last ambassador in Russia. He was the organiser of the Yaroslavi revolt, he was the organiser and banker of the Czechoslovak conspiracy and the revolts on the Volga and the Ural. And this Noulens, who wanted to bring about a counter-revolutionary coup by means of famine, has now been appointed chairman of the international commission which is to delegate an international committee and send into Russia a commission to study the question of famine relief. Noulens is at the centre of this organisation, and as his assistants they have appointed General Pau, well-known as a monarchist, and the former Moscow manufacturer Giraud, who is filled with burning hatred for Soviet Russia and wants to get back his lost factories.

You see how the French bourgeoisie is preparing to help us. Does this mean that it is preparing to declare war on us? No, a section of the French bourgeoisie wants to enter into relations with us, but it is wavering a little, while another section, which wants to overthrow us, hopes that this commission may serve as the apparatus for a counter-revolutionary coup. But there is no reason to fear that France is capable now of sending her own troops against us. Although there are in France no such manifestations of mass discontent as we see in Germany, the internal revolutionary process is developing consistently and systematically. The fact that the revolutionary elements already constitute half of the French trade-union organisation shows how the French proletariat is developing. [5] As regards the gains from victory, they have already become convinced that even the most frightful plundering of Germany has not saved France from the ruin brought upon her by the war. All this evokes among the worker masses desire not for national but for class *revanche*.

Thus, in France the Communist Party is learning from the experience of the Russian Revolution and from that of the war with Germany. All this deprives the French bourgeoisie of zeal for hurling its own troops against us. The working class of France will not allow that section of the French bourgeoisie which most irreconcilably hates us to attack the working class of the Soviet Republics. This is now no mere agitational phrase or slogan, but a real, live, revolutionary fact.

But the French bourgeoisie have at their disposal the governments of the Little Entente. [6] These governments are as follows: Poland, Romania,

Czechoslovakia, and so on [*sic*]. Consequently, the interventionist policy of the French bourgeoisie might find expression not in some new campaign by France against us, but an attempt to incite Romania and Poland against us. Is this probable? Is it possible? Comrades! From what I have said it follows that there is much that tells against it: the failure of armed intervention and the bankruptcy of the political émigrés, precisely now, in the eyes of the European bourgeoisie, all of which provides serious arguments against any repetition of military adventures. To offer an estimate in terms of percentages, I should say that it is more than 70 per cent likely that Poland, and more than 50 per cent likely that Romania will *not* decide in favour of the criminal adventure of a new war with Soviet Russia. Poland's internal situation is very close to catastrophe. The country is ruined economically, its finances are in a desperate condition. To be sure, our Soviet finances are also in a desperate condition, but we have a growing and strengthening apparatus for planned socialist organisation of the economy. For us, therefore, the low state of our currency is not as catastrophic as for bourgeois states in which everything is based on the market, and consequently on competition. In Poland the working class frequently goes on strike, and the struggle is becoming as acute there as in former times the struggle between the different cliques of the old Polish nobility. The industrial bourgeoisie is increasingly coming to the conclusion that Poland's economic salvation lies in reestablishing close ties with the Russian market, for Polish industry cannot dream of invading the American or the European market. Hence, a considerable section of the Polish bourgeoisie is hostile to the adventurers and romantics who still play a very big role in Poland. The low state of the Polish currency, the bankruptcy of the chauvinists, the condition of the worker masses – all this provides serious grounds, almost amounting to certainty, for considering that the Polish Government will not, in the immediate future at least, take the road of renewed interference in our affairs.

The situation is somewhat different in Romania. That country has, up to now, refrained from formalising its relations with the Ukraine and Russia. I shall not go over the history of these relations. Comrade Rakovsky will do that better than I can – as the Ukrainian People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs he has played a leading role in these negotiations. The latter began when Romania opened a front against us. Romania took advantage of the fact that she was an ally of the old Russia and of Kerensky's Russia. When the workers and peasants took power, Romania turned against them. The Entente then assured the Soviet Government that the temporary occupation of Bessarabia was only for the purpose of feeding the Russian and Romanian troops. The Romanian Government put forward no arguments in the sense of annexation. And after clashes had taken place between Romanian and Soviet troops, Romania signed an agreement to withdraw from Bessarabia within two months. When, later, after the White Guards had been cleared out of the Ukraine, our diplomats proposed to the Romanian Government that we hold peace talks, the then Prime Minister (this was at the beginning of last year) Vaida-Voevod, returned a positive answer. We all expected that, within a few weeks representatives of Russia, the Ukraine and Romania would meet together to work out the terms of a treaty of peace. From that moment Romania started to pursue an ostrich policy, a policy of fraud. The Romanian Government named as the place for the negotiations – Warsaw, at a time when we and Poland were engaged in open war with each other. Then, in reply to the protest made by our diplomats, the Romanian Government said that this had been a misunderstanding. The Romanian workers asked their Government why peace

had not been made, and the Romanian Government replied that the reason was that Russia had not responded to their peace proposal. They referred to the fact that they had not received any wireless message from us. In short, a miserable, petty policy which was dictated by their inner lack of decision. Precisely because the Romanian Government is evading negotiations, it is disposed to create some sort of inviolability for its *own* frontier, though not for ours. This has led to a series of attacks by Petlyurist bands on our Western frontiers and, in the first place, on the frontier of the Ukraine. This constitutes a threat to the Soviet Federation as a whole. Recently the activity of these bands has assumed a more menacing character.

Over a substantial part of Right-Bank Ukraine, the harvest has been fairly good this year. This fact endows the Right Bank with exceptional importance in relation to our common economic task. The food tax collected in Right-bank Ukraine constitutes a very important part of the whole country's resources. For this reason the French interventionists are asking Poland and Romania, if not to move their regular armies against us immediately, then to move against us the countless bands of Petlyura and others, in order to ruin our foodcollection campaign.

Thus, we are now faced not with the danger of a new attack by France, or even by Poland and Romania, but with the deeds of particular bands, deeds which, by their logic, may lead to a very serious, bloody *denouément*. And here, on our nearest frontier, is one of the extreme points of that world policy towards the famine in Soviet Russia which I have tried to describe.

We are not now taking up the question of Bessarabia, although we do not regard this question as having been settled. Such questions are not to be settled independently of the will of the population concerned. But, taking into account the circumstance that the seizure of Bessarabia was an act of aggression, contrary to all the bourgeoisie's own standards, I make so bold as to say, plainly and frankly, that it was a very great injustice.

But we pin our hopes on the development of the revolution, which will liquidate all this, and, as I said to the Red Army men today, on Bessarabia's ceasing to be an apple of discord between Russia and Romania and becoming a link between Soviet Russia and the Ukraine [*sic*]. That is why we are not making it our task today to solve the Bessarabian question, sword in hand, by means of war. We have with us today the question of the Volga-region famine, we have the question of restoring our economy, and for that purpose we need certainty and calm on our Western frontiers. These frontiers are now the scene of the last convulsions of the Western-European bourgeoisie, for every band which enters from Romania or Poland is nothing but a detachment of those forces of world capital which have not lost hope of overthrowing our power. And if we are signing an agreement with Hoover, mobilising our forces for aid to the Volga region, and collecting from our poor resources material for sowing the fields of the Volga region, then, by the same token, we must make our Western frontier secure.

That is why we have been sent here, why we have been sent to inspect and check this frontier. It must cease to be a sieve through which grain is taken from us and through which bands percolate in among us. We are prepared to have, we want to have, gates, doors, windows through which we shall communicate with our neighbours – but on agreed principles. And ii our

neighbours do not want to regulate this question at the diplomatic table, then, without provoking them – that would be a misfortune both for us and for them – we shall find in ourselves the courage, strength and endurance to safeguard the inviolability of our frontier.

Upon you, comrades, as our leading workers in one of the border provinces, lies a responsibility not only to the Ukraine but also to the Soviet Federation. It is necessary to establish, at all costs, a definite and clear regime whereby no administrative muddles may help those who are not averse to grabbing what can easily be grabbed. The frontier must be strengthened, and towards that end all the efforts of the trade union and Party organs must be directed. The Red Army units must be made aware that they are now fulfilling a responsible mission not only on behalf of theft starving brothers on the Volga but also on behalf of the entire Federation. We say herein Zhitomir, under the eyes of two frontiers, that we want peace, peace based on lasting agreement. So long as one of our neighbours refuses to give us such a peace, and so long as the other fails to keep the peace properly, so that our frontiers are used for disturbances, we shall close with a triple lock all the illegal exits from and entrances to the Soviet Ukraine and Soviet Russia. We say: 'Whoever comes to us seeking agreement will be made welcome, and we shall sign binding agreements with him. But whoever tries to break in will run himself on to a weapon. There will be no other fate for burglars and pogromists.'

From the archives

Endnotes

[1.](#) On Vanderlip's visit, see Lenin, *Collected Works*, Volume 31, pp.444-447, 464-470, 478-479. – *Brian Pearce*

[2.](#) Herbert Hoover (1874-1964) was Secretary of Commerce in President Harding's administration, and himself became President of the United States in 1928-1932. An engineer of Quaker upbringing, he was active in relief work for war refugees in Europe in the period of US neutrality, and when America entered the war he was appointed Food Administrator. After the war he again concerned himself with relief work in Europe. – *Brian Pearce*

[3.](#) S.M. Prokopovich, E.D. Kuskova and N.M. Kishkin were prominent members of the Cadet Party. – *Brian Pearce*

[4.](#) The allusion is to the phrase: *le quart d'heure de Nogi*. During the Russo-Japanese War of 1904/1905, the Japanese General Nogi, the victor of Port Arthur and Mukden, had said that 'victory goes to the side that can hang on for a quarter-of-an-hour longer than the others.' – *Brian Pearce*

[5.](#) After the expulsion from the French TUC, the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), in 1921 of several hundred unions, for their support of the Communist line, these unions formed, in January 1922, a rival trades-union grouping, the Confédération Générale du Travail Unitaire (CGTU).

[6.](#) 'The Little Entente' was the nickname given to the alliance between Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia, the three countries which had gained territory at the expense of Hungary under the Treaty of Trianon. They were linked with Poland and France by separate alliances.

Banditry and Famine

Speeches and Articles

The Stock-Exchange Republic and Its Noulens

* * *

Noulens – the name is a banner. The appointment of Noulens as chairman of the commission for international relief to Russia constitutes an extremely significant action by the French Government. By doing this it has given itself away at once and completely. Any other name would have left room for unclarity, doubt, supposition. The name of Noulens immediately defines the situation with all possible sharpness. Noulens is known and remembered in Russia. He is known in the Ukraine as well. This stupid, narrow-minded and greedy bourgeois represented the Third Republic at the Tsar's Court. Naturally, he retained his credentials in Kerensky's time. And naturally, he at once became a rabid enemy of the Soviet power. Noulens is a typical French politician in the sense that he is *a petty-bourgeois who has become rich*: big capital, little vision.

The Russian revolution crashed down on this flat skull like a thunderbolt. Noulens did not understand it at all. One thing, though, he grasped very well, namely, that, along with him, many petty-bourgeois who had become rich were going to lose theft milliards through the Russian revolution. And so this stupid political shopkeeper resolved to overthrow the revolution of the Russian working class. For this purpose he possessed connections with the White Guards – those of the Court, the Liberals, the SRs, and other varieties – and, most important, he possessed gold. Noulens set all his agencies in motion. This miserable, cowardly petty-bourgeois, under the influence of the greed that had him in its grip, decided to launch extremely adventurous actions. Noulens got in touch with Petlyura and opened a credit for him. Through his numerous agents Noulens organised the mutiny of the Czechoslovak corps on the Volga. Noulens hired Savinkov and gave him the job of raising revolt at Yaroslavi. Finally, along with the British representative Lockhart, Noulens organised an extensive conspiracy against Petrograd. Their plan was simple: to blow up the railway lines and bridges around Petrograd, deprive Petrograd of food, heat and water, reduce it by hunger to desperation, take it by means of famine, and raise over it the white flag of counter-revolution. Noulens saw a Russian famine as his ally in 1918, just as the manufacturer Ryabushinsky had pinned his hopes on the bony hand of famine in 1917. But Noulens did not just hope for famine, he actively strove to hasten its coming. He tried to become an organiser of famine. And now this unmasked and exposed specialist in famine has been put forward by the French Government of usurers as chairman for the commission for international aid to starving Russia. It is not surprising that our memory of Noulens, which had somewhat faded, has burst into bright colours again. Noulens is a banner, a programme, a symbol of the French bourgeoisie and its Government.

The leading French newspaper **Le Temps** – which was on the payroll of the Tsarist foreign ministry, and of many others too – the Government newspaper **Le Temps**, which is filled with the same spirit of the petty-bourgeois who has become rich, writes that it is necessary not only to render material aid to Russia but also, at the same time, to liberate her from the 'barbarous' government of the Bolsheviks and give her a different one – a 'free' government, a government 'of the people'.

This is the voice of Noulens. It is the voice of the usurious French bourgeoisie, the greediest, the most bombastic, mercenary-minded and reactionary class in the whole world. Towards the countries of Central Europe, towards tens of millions of people, bourgeois France acts as the vilest of executioners. It oppresses tens of millions of colonial slaves with black or yellow skins, and at the same time arms them against the workers of Germany and its own workers. [\[1\]](#) The name of bourgeois France is hated in every part of the world. There is nothing more disgusting than a bloodthirsty usurer who holds forth about democracy. There is nothing fouler than an international hangman who talks of creating a 'free' government for the Russian people.

Noulens-the-philanthropist is a symbol of the French stock-exchange in its role as propagator of democracy. Briand has already said more than once that the only condition for an agreement with Soviet Russia is recognition by us of the Tsar's debts. No principles of democracy prevented the Parisian usurers from lending money to the Tsar, or the democrats of **Le Temps** from accepting handouts from that money. Having burnt his fingers in the intervention in which the French stock-exchange supported the worst Black-Hundred monarchists, Briand asked the Soviet power to recognise these debts. Payment of interest is the only guarantee that the stock-exchange requires. Democracy is only a pseudonym for interest-payments. Such is the nature of the petty-bourgeois who has become rich, where politics is concerned: he exposes his greed to the very bottom, but then suddenly recollects himself and starts to declaim about what is right. And in the role of such a declaimer he is even more repulsive than in that of a naked Shylock.

The worst, most reactionary, most frenzied international stock-exchange mob, whose representative Noulens is imagines or pretends that the famine will open up some road for it to the Russian people, avoiding the Soviet power. Just let them try! Precisely the famine disaster has shown with especial clarity that the Soviet power is the organised self-help of the working people, just as the war showed more than once that the Soviet power is their armed self-defence. Fresh calamities merely serve to temper the state organisation of labour. Noulens was crushed as leader of conspiracies and interventions. He is trying to resurrect himself as philanthropist. Noulens means greed, hypocrisy, treachery, the cowardly stab in the back. Noulens means the French stock-exchange and its republic. The road of revolution is not strewn with roses. It has to fight its way through obstacles, measure swords in mortal combat with enemies, beat off live dogs and step over dead ones. The revolution will step over Monsieur Noulens as well.

September 7, 1921
Odessa
En Route, No.145

Endnotes

1. The use of 'black troops' (mainly Senegalese) by the French in their occupation of the Rhineland was a frequent theme in *both* German Nationalist and Communist propaganda in the 1920s. – *Brian Pearce*

Banditry and Famine

Speeches and Articles

This Must Be Stopped

* * *

On September 7, at 6 o'clock in the morning, between the stations of Fastov and Kozhanka [\[1\]\[2\]](#), a food train was wrecked as a result of the rails having been dismantled by one of the Petlyurist bands which are being systematically unleashed on to the territory of the Ukraine from across the Polish and Romanian frontiers. The train was carrying food for the workers of the Donets Basin – about 44,000 *poods* of that rye which is now so precious to us. Everything perished in the wreck – the locomotive, the trucks, the grain – and a considerable number of people as well. Over a stretch of tens of *sazhens*, fragments of planks, metal, grain, muscles and blood were mingled with the earth.

The Petlyurists started out as a party of nationalistic petty-bourgeois democrats. In proportion as they lost their footing among the lower orders of the working people, they became transformed into armed detachments of the kulaks. But this phase, too, has now ended. Numerous detachments, often amounting to several thousands of fighting men, have now been smashed, destroyed, crushed. The leaders and their staffs have long since gone across the nearest frontier and joined the army staffs of neighbouring states. There have remained in Right-bank Ukraine only gangs of insignificant size, useless for any sort of military operations, and these have reduced their treacherous activity to what is called 'wrecking' espionage on behalf of foreign bourgeois-landlord governments. The idealist Petlyurists have recoiled from this work of Cain and presented themselves in repentant mood at the camp of the Soviet power. Only corrupt garbage is left in the gangs. Their animators, organisers and instructors sit behind the nearest frontier-line. Thence they send the gangs arms and replacements, thither the gangs withdraw to rest, and thence they again set forth to commit their disgusting and senseless crimes.

This tactic, the destruction of our railway lines in order to doom the population to famine, was attempted on a large scale in 1918 by the French envoy, Noulens. He would like to put his hand to this work again today, but Paris is far away, and Noulens cannot reach the Soviet frontier. Kishinev and Lvov are closer. Bands set out from there which are paid with French money: from there our peace and our labour are being dis-rupted.

To the protests of our diplomats the governments of the neighbouring states reply with hypocritical amazement or with references to the revolutionary activity of the Communist International. But no expressions of amazement by these ministers can alter the fact that the Romanian and Polish army staffs are directly guiding the brigandage carried on by the bands of Petlyura, Savinkov and others. This activity, its methods and its organisation, have been

established in full detail by the testimony of dozens of the most responsible agents of Romania and Poland among Russian and Ukrainian White-Guard officers who have, in their time, held high positions.

Reference to the Communist International also constitutes disgraceful hypocrisy. Of course we regard this as a fraternal organisation, of course we give it hospitality. But it is an inter-national organisation. It exists in all countries. Only wretched idiots could suppose that such a movement could be artificially evoked or artificially sustained.

What comparison can there be between the Communist International, the worldwide organisation of the working class, and the armed bands of Savinkov and Petlyura, created specially to carry out sabotage in the Soviet Ukraine and Soviet Russia?

'What crudely cynical hypocrisy! We are here concerned not with the 'ideological' centres of the Russian counter-revolution, not with the newspapers and committees of the monarchist, SR and other varieties of counter-revolution which swarm in the cities of Romania and Poland. This is not what we are talking about. We understand the close ties between the expelled Russian landlords and usurers and the landlords and usurers of Poland and Romania, and we take account of them, just as we do not deny our own close ideological ties with the working people of Romania and Poland. But, after all, the existence of such ties is something far removed from sending armed bands over the frontier. While not cherishing the slightest sympathy with the landlord-capitalist order in Poland, we nevertheless intend strictly to observe the terms of the treaty we signed with Poland, because we want peace. While not cherishing the slightest sympathy with the *boyarciocoi* [3] order in Romania, we are willing, nevertheless, to make an agreement with it and intend to honour such an agreement. But we see our neighbours constantly playing with fire. They are not at war with us. They merely chuck a handful of lighted tow from time to time onto the roof of our house. And they are amazed when we get angry.

The entire world is talking about aid to starving Russia. Some do so hypocritically, others sincerely. But even those who are hypocritical testify by their hypocrisy that it is impossible to remain indifferent in the face of such frightful calamities. And so, while from America and Britain, from Norway and Germany, modest freights of foodstuffs are coming to us, for the purpose of mitigating, if only a little, the torment of hunger suffered by our peasant and proletarian families, bands despatched from Poland and Romania are setting fire to our food-depots, killing dozens of workers engaged in the collection of food, and wrecking food trains

This cannot be tolerated. This must be stopped. If, of course, we were to suppose that our neighbours have decided to have a fight with us at whatever cost, then there would be nothing to do but get ready to hit back. But such a conclusion would be incorrect. Actually, there is in both places more light-mindedness than serious planning. Backed by the French imperialists, who risk very little by this, the adventurers of Poland and Romania are playing with fire.

There can be no doubt that the latest notes from our diplomats will impel the overwhelming majority not only of the working people of Poland and Romania, but even of the bourgeoisie as well, to remind the adventurist elements in

these countries, firmly and decisively, that playing with fire is a dangerous game, and that it must be stopped.

Pravda
September 16, 1921,
No.206

Endnotes

- [1.](#) For more detail on this, see page 376, Order No. 265, September 18 [*sic*], 1921, by the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic.
- [2.](#) Fastov is about 60km south-west of Kiev, on the line to Vinnitsa, and Kozhanka about 20km farther on. – *Brian Pearce*
- [3](#) 'Ciocoi' is the Romanian word for an upstart, a *parvenu*, and was used for rich men of non-noble origin. – *Brian Pearce*

Banditry and Famine

Speeches and Articles

Speech

At a Plenary Session of the Moscow Soviet of Workers', Peasants' and Red Army Men's Deputies, September 20, 1921

* * *

Comrades, about three weeks ago I addressed the Moscow Soviet on the question of our international situation, in connection with the famine question. If you remember, the central theme of my address was then the question of our relations with Poland and Romania, with the assumption, moreover, which seemed to all of us to be correct, that behind Poland and Romania stands French imperialism, which tries to set them on us so as to prepare the way for another armed intervention through the gateway left ajar on our south-western, Bessarabian frontier. What was then an assumption, though one that was inwardly very well-founded, has now become a fact known to everyone. You have, of course, read the notes sent to Poland and Romania by Comrades Chicherin and Rakovsky, and the note exposing France's role in this matter. [\[1\]](#)

On the very same day that I spoke to the Moscow Soviet, I left for the Ukraine, on the instructions of the Soviet Government, in connection with those events and problems which have given and continue to give rise to great alarm, that is, in connection with the behaviour of our nearest Western neighbours, Poland and Romania.

The matters which had to be looked into in Ukraine amounted to this: to what extent were our Western and South-Western frontiers safeguarded against further irruptions by bands – because, as you will remember, that was also the subject of my address. There was no doubt in our minds that neither Poland nor Romania was thinking, seriously at least, of sending regular troops against us in the immediate future. What they were up to was trying to sound us out by means of the irregular guerrilla bands of Savinkov and Petlyura, and only in the event that we showed that we had grown weaker as a result of the famine in the Volga country and our economic difficulties, only if it proved that the organism of the Soviet state had ceased to react and hit back, and that their expectations and hopes were confirmed – only then, probably, would they be intending to follow up the irregular bands by sending in regular troops.

The question of the frontier, the question of the condition, the feeling and the morale of our troops along that frontier, and, above all, the question of yield from the food-tax in the frontier zone, as a result of the depredations of the bands – those were the questions which formed the subject of my immediate observations. As regards the frontier, the mere fact that it is possible for isolated bands, of larger or smaller size (they are, predominantly, very small) to make their way into our territory proves that the protection of

our frontier is not yet as good as it should be. This circumstance is connected with the entire past of the Ukraine, with the nature of Right-bank Ukraine, with the insufficient number of the proletariat there and, resulting from this, the relative weakness of the Soviet apparatus in that part of the country. Nevertheless, the fundamental conclusion at which I arrived as a result of my journey, on the basis not only of my own, very fleeting observations but above all, of what I learnt about the situation through comrades better informed than myself, was that the Soviet apparatus, Soviet institutions, and the idea of workers' and peasants' power had taken an immense step forward in the Ukraine, including Right-bank Ukraine. This is obvious. The Ukraine, which not so long ago presented a picture of chaos – especially in Right-bank Ukraine, with an enormous number of bands and bandits – this Ukraine now offers a scene of incomparably greater stability. I am going to go into this, and quote some figures, but first of all! shall allow myself to diverge on to the subject of our army in the Ukraine.

The army, even though drawn from other parts of the country as well, reflects to an extremely high degree the mood of the population living round it. So long as the spirit of Petlyurism, kulakdom and chauvinist domination reigned in the Ukraine, so long as banditry possessed a broad political character, our Red forces in certain parts of the Ukraine (predominantly in Right-bank Ukraine) found themselves surrounded by a hostile atmosphere, and this could not but have a disintegrating influence on them. Hardly a trace of that epoch is now left. In Right-bank Ukraine, just because the Soviet apparatus is technically less perfect there than in Left-bank Ukraine, the victualling of the troops is effected to a considerable extent at the expense of the local peasant population, and from that fact one might naturally expect some hostility on the part of these peasants. Yet, according to the general opinion – and on this point I questioned not only the commanders and commissars but also the local civil authorities and rank-and-file Red Army men – there is now no noticeable, palpable discontent among the peasants due to the fact that the army gets its food supplies to a considerable extent from the local inhabitants. This is so not only because of the abundance of the harvest in Right-bank Ukraine but also because of the essentially new orientation of the Right-bank peasants. There is now not only no sympathy with the bands, among broad circles of the peasantry, but even among the upper circles in the villages, who were always for them, no trace of the Petlyurist orientation remains.

Petlyurism has ceased, in Right-bank Ukraine, to be a political tendency which embraced the rural upper circles and, through them, the middle peasants, who, more often than not, drew the lower orders of the village in their wake. What were called the *Komnezamozhi*, that is, the Committees of Poor Peasants, were an organised instrument of class differentiation, for splitting the peasantry. They played a huge role and, in recent months, the lower orders of the Ukrainian countryside have experienced their maiden union with the Soviet power. There will, of course, be some misunderstandings between them and the Soviet power, some fluctuations in their feelings – this we know, it is to a considerable extent inevitably bound up with the nature of the economy and with that of the transitional epoch but the first rough union of the peasantry with the Soviet power, with its spirit, methods and tasks, is happening only now in the Ukraine. This fact has created a highly favourable situation for our Red Army, in all respects.

I saw down there, among others, your N Division, and I can convey to you its hearty greetings. This division is unquestionably one of the best in our Army.

It is probably no secret to you that army manoeuvres have taken place in Right-bank Ukraine which have caused a lot of uproar in the foreign press – uproar which is, of course, not benevolent but malicious and tendentious. The matter was depicted as though the Soviet power was concentrating inconceivably large forces in Right-bank Ukraine with a view to launching an attack on the neighbouring countries, and so on. That is, of course, the purest nonsense. The manoeuvres had a military significance. I do not hide the fact that it was part of our intention to remind those who seemed to have forgotten the fact that our Red Army is still in being. It might have appeared that there was no need to do this, but if, comrades, you were to enter for a moment into the psychology of our enemies, the French imperialists and their agents, you would understand that these people, who yearn for our downfall, take their dreams for accomplished facts. And now, in these weeks of acute famine and the political difficulties connected therewith, they are comforting themselves with illusions about how everything is collapsing in our country.

In my previous address to you, I read out a number of extracts from their newspapers which said that the Red Army was cracking up and that General Zayonchkovsky [\[2\]](#) had been appointed commander-in-chief of a front to fight against the famine-victims. Given such a capacity to believe their own monstrous nonsense, our nearest neighbours might, of course, cheer themselves with the thought that, in the bloody chaos into which they had plunged Soviet Russia, the Red Army had also been submerged. It therefore seemed necessary and useful to remind them, at a distance from which they could see it through good binoculars, that the Red Army has not broken down, but exists, and, while striving for peace no less than the rest of the country, is at the same time capable of defending the country when circumstances demand this.

Comrades, I would ask you not to regard what I am saying as an official communication which I am making by virtue of the office that I hold. Our defects have always been openly proclaimed, and so I have no fear of my words today being taken literally.

Our army has made very great progress. After the manoeuvres, which were quite complicated, and revealed some defects, we carried out an analysis of the manoeuvres in which the entire body of commanders took part, and at this analysis one could, so to speak, sense palpably how the army had grown in strength. Looking back, not even as far as the difficult period of our guerrilla-ism, but just to the period of the struggle against Denikin, and even the struggle against Poland in its best phase, one can say that our armed forces – after the painful turn at the time of the Kronstadt mutiny, when the general turn produced a crack in one part of these forces – have taken in recent months an immense step forward. What, above all, characterised these manoeuvres (there were two groups, one 'the Blues', the other 'the Reds') was the extraordinary offensive élan, the extraordinary fighting zeal that was shown. Despite the fact that, during the manoeuvres, some terribly forced marches had to be made, and the men became very tired, the morale of the troops was splendid. And I must tell you, making no secret of it, that our Red Army men thought that it was not a question of manoeuvres, and in this

respect both the 'Reds' and the 'Blues' held the same views, for the 'Blues' were also very good Reds.

At the assemblies and meetings we had to repeat more than once that the Soviet Government has no desire whatsoever to go to war, and I noticed how the Red Army men would glance at each other then, as though to show that they understood the needs of diplomacy and were saying: 'We know that you have to speak officially.' Furthermore, when, in the Odessa area, I went into the frontier zone and visited the forward batteries, I was at once met with literally these words: 'When is it to be?' – without any explanation of what was being referred to, because it was assumed that I was bound to understand this without having it spelt out. There, comrades, that was the feeling in the army. When I spoke about this at a meeting of the Odessa Soviet, and uttered the words: 'When is it to be?' the Red Army men present put that same question to me, and a storm of applause broke out, with shouts of approval for the Red Army and for the idea implicit in that question. I admit that I was taken aback, and demanded: 'Can it really be that the Odessa Soviet, or any other Soviet institutions, can desire, in our present difficult circumstances, that we should engage in armed conflict?' The resolution that the Odessa Soviet adopted was, of course, fully in accord with the general line of our policy.

If I quote these facts it is not for the sake of sabre-rattling or in order to frighten anyone on the other side of the frontier, but solely in order to depict the instability of the situation on our frontier and the mood that this has created in a very extensive zone along that frontier.

At the same time, these facts indicate the spirit that prevails in the army. We want peace, but the army, once we have formed, armed and trained it, must always be ready to fight. Our army is certainly capable of fighting. After observing our units in a great mass, in their manoeuvres in Right-bank Ukraine, I can have no doubt that that is the case.

There are also substantial shortcomings, and I do not mean to pass over these in silence, because there are also Red Army deputies in the Soviet. These substantial shortcomings concern, primarily, our supply apparatus, or, more precisely, the education of the Red Army men, including the commanders and commissars, in supply matters.

Our army finished long since with guerrilla-ism in matters of organisation and operations, but we have not yet managed to give every Red Army man the necessary education where supply matters are concerned. In order to clarify this question for you I will formulate it as I formulated it to the commanders and commissars after the manoeuvres. Almost every one of our Red Army men, not to speak of our commissars and commanders, is ready to die for Soviet Russia, but we have very few Red Army men who properly and regularly grease their boots, and that, comrades, is something which is very important. An ungreased boot wears out twice as soon as one that has been greased. And what that boot, multiplied by the number of feet in our army, signifies for our economy is clear without lengthy explanation.

And, further, I will say here frankly that even in the Kremlin, among our splendid cadets, you will not find properly, regularly greased boots on their feet and there are units, comrades, in which rifles are not always cleaned and oiled as they should be. That means that the expenditure of rifles is doubled, it

means that the resources of the Soviet Republic are squandered, and now, when we have an army whose cadres have been tempered in battle, an army with great experience, with fighting commanders and commissars, inspired from top to bottom with a single feeling – that is an absolute fact, not an exaggeration – now, comrades, we must open a new epoch. Just as, in its time, we fought against guerrilla-ism and extirpated it, so now must we begin a new epoch in the life of the Red Army: grease your boots properly, clean your rifle, oil your rifle, look after your greatcoat, sew buttons on it without delay – your shoe is not laced up and so it has got twisted to one side, and because it has not been greased it will rot in three weeks when autumn sets in, when it will have to cover 30 versts a day in wet weather. Our slogan for the Red Army must be: ‘Sew on your buttons and grease your boots.’ This is no trifling matter, it is a question of the education, not only economic but also in matters of army supply, of every Red Army man, every individual soldier.

Our army, with its ideological tradition, with its tempering in revolution and battle, will, when it has also learnt to sew on its buttons, and properly lace up and grease its boots, become the most invincible army that has ever existed.

Comrades, I promised to come back to the question of banditry in the Ukraine, a question of enormous importance. I shall give some facts and figures, although, of course, the figures can only be approximate. Where banditry is concerned, as with all other problems – economic, political and military – the Ukraine is divided into two parts: Left-bank and Right-bank. Right-bank Ukraine is much more kulak-ridden, much more chauvinist, and therefore much less organised in the Soviet sense, than Left-bank Ukraine. Right-bank Ukraine was always a base for banditry, mainly of the Petlyurist variety. In Left-bank Ukraine banditry was to a considerable extent anarchist in colouring, connected with the name of Makhno. If we take the strength of the bandits, we have to consider both the cadres that make up their permanent element and the numbers of the forces that group themselves temporarily around these cadres, for the bandits have a transient element, and it is on the relation between the constant and the transient element that the strength of the bandits depends.

When Petlyurism was the dominant tendency in Right-bank Ukraine, the transient element among the bandits greatly outnumbered the permanent, cadre element, because kulaks and middle peasants flowed steadily into their ranks. As Petlyurism lost its importance as a political tendency, these ranks shrank more and more and became reduced to their cadres. From a political phenomenon embracing broad masses of the population the Petlyurists became transformed into fairly large military units, by means of which Petlyura or his commanders tried to conquer the Ukraine. But now, in recent months, the transient element has been quite wrung out of these units and they have been reduced to narrow bandit gangs. I have a map, a very accurate one, showing the distribution of these guerrilla units. Since June and down to the present moment, their locations have remained more or less the same, but their numbers have declined to a remarkable extent.

In Right-bank Ukraine the bandit cadres amounted to 6,500 men. Today there are barely more than 2,000 or 2,500. The most interesting phenomenon in the history of this bandit movement is that during this period entire bandit gangs, principally the ideological bandits, that is, the Petlyurists, not the mere brigands but the Petlyura nationalists from among the former village teachers,

from the intermediate petty-bourgeois intelligentsia and semi-intelligentsia, are coming in more and more often, in repentant mood, and giving themselves up, influenced by the fact that the countryside has cast them out. They have lost all hope of establishing a Petlyurist regime and are surrendering to the Red Army.

In Left-bank Ukraine, as I have already said, we have mainly Makhnovite bands, and on June 1 we calculated, again confining ourselves to the cadres, that they numbered about 2,500 men.

Since June a proper, systematic struggle against banditry has begun, in the sense that the Red Army is advancing on a broad front and carrying out a purge. In June some prominent bandit ringleaders in Right-bank Ukraine gave themselves up: Lisitsa, Mordelevich, and part of Orlik and Strup's band, with Ataman Zamogilny. In the Tarashchinsk and Chigirin areas Atamans Tsvetkovsky and Ponomarenko surrendered, with 45 bandits, and also three ringleaders of Khmara's group, and Rodchenko, a prominent ringleader, was killed. These names mean nothing to you, of course, you don't know them, but I must tell you that they were literally the kinglets of the *uyezds*, and even provinces, where they ruled, spread terror, and carried out trials and punishments. Later, Ataman Rapchinsky was killed.

Since June banditry has markedly declined. During July the struggle was continued, and went on into August. In August the very prominent Atamans Martynov, Dergach and Grozny surrendered. In Chigirin district, in August, Atamans Boyko, Shaposhnikov, Byk and Petrenko gave themselves up. In Tarashchinsk district Martynovsky and others came in, and in Ovruch district, Dergach and Grozny.

The disintegration in this period affected even the leading organs of the bandits. In Chigirin district one of the heads of the local Kholodnoyarsk rebel committee surrendered, and in the same district the band of Ovcharenko was smashed and its leader killed. In the Kiev area Petlyura's organiser General Gallun was captured. In Fastov district an underground Petlyurist organisation was discovered, and 500 participants arrested. Many weapons were seized. In general, the discovery of underground organisations has become relatively easier in this period than before, because the masses are not hiding them but rejecting them. I call your attention to the circumstance that Petlyura's agent General Galkin came from Galicia, because Galicia has something to do with Poland, and Poland has something to do with these bandits who cross the frontier into our country. A revival of bandit activity was observed in August in the Kiev area, having as its aim to disrupt the collection of the food-tax by attacking collection-centres, food-trains, and so on. Thus, in Berdichev district the bandits burned 7,000 poods of rye, and at Fastov the bandit Dayevol wrecked a food train, causing the loss of about 40,000 poods of grain, which was mingled with earth and human blood.

If one takes a clear look at the history of the degeneration of banditry in the Ukraine, a conclusion emerges that is optimistic for the Soviet regime in the Ukraine. Previously, Petlyurism was a kind of party which embraced wide sections of the population. It was a political movement in a country in which a petty-bourgeois population predominated. Then the class struggle broke out, and Petlyurism was transformed from a mass political party to a narrower but still fairly numerous one – into a military force which relied mainly on the kulak

element in the rural areas. Later, the process of break-up of the Petlyurists was expressed in the loss of their peasant supporters by the petty-bourgeois Petlyurists, so that they retained only a cadre, which is, fortunately, also disintegrating, engaging in internecine conflict, and finally fragmenting into small gangs.

The first period of the Petlyura movement found expression in hope that the Ukraine could be won from within. The second period was a period of conquest by military means; and the third, the present period, is one in which the numerous bandit groups are breaking up into petty gangs. The aim of their activity is to take revenge for the disappointment of their hopes.

In the first period the Petlyurists went into the villages, and even seized towns, especially those in which the petty-bourgeois element predominated. In the second period the Petlyurists still had some ground under their feet inside the Ukraine itself: and, finally, the third period is characterised by the fact that the Petlyurists, no longer possessing bases inside the Ukraine, have entirely shifted their base across the frontier. The Petlyurist leaders have either surrendered to the Soviet power or else gone abroad and merged there with the Romanian and Polish army staffs. In accordance with this development, the petty Petlyurist gangs are ceasing to be an expression of the Ukrainian national idea, and are becoming organs of foreign army commands, the aim of which is to do technical military damage.

Espionage, according to the theory of this dismal trade, is divided into two departments, namely, intelligence and sabotage, and these degenerated Petlyurist gangs have become organs of sabotage. From the standpoint of the strengthening of the Soviet power in the Ukraine, the process of degeneration undergone by the bandit movement is a tremendous gain, a tremendous step forward, but from the standpoint of the security of our food trains, our food depots and our food-procurement workers this constitutes an absolute menace, which we must combat quickly and ruthlessly.

It is quite natural that we cannot accept a situation in which the base of these petty brigand gangs lies in a neighbouring country which is not at war with us. This applies equally to Poland and to Romania. Three weeks ago I spoke about our fears regarding Romania, because our relations with that country have not been settled. True, Take Jonescu assured us that good-neighbourly relations between us and Romania have never ceased to exist, but I consider this to be a misplaced joke on his part, which cannot reassure us even for one minute. We told the Romanian Government at that time that we know about the connections that exist between Bucharest and Paris, connections of which we have subsequently obtained documentary confirmation.

As regards Poland, we were at that time inclined to consider that everything was all right, even despite a number of acute misunderstandings which had arisen, in connection precisely with this very question of banditry – for this is now the question of questions, and the key to them all. Despite all the misgivings that arose after the Polish war, there could, after the Treaty of Riga, be no question of any upheaval in our relations with Poland. Now, too, comrades, I think that peaceful relations will be maintained, but I must say that the misunderstandings which are observable today are very much more alarming than those of three weeks ago.

I have here some original documents which I brought along with me. They are all very small, it will be hard for you to see them – they are photographs and documents depicting the bandit activity of Savinkov's organisation which previously bore the name: 'Russian Political Committee', but later was called the 'Evacuation Committee', and these documents testify with complete certainty that the Polish army authorities, the Polish general staff and, in the first place, its Second Department, participate directly in the organisation of the bands which are being thrown into our territory, in the organisation of conspiratorial attempts, terrorist acts, and so on. Savinkov speaks openly about this in his newspapers. Polish official personages appear at the Savinkovites' congresses. Chicherin said all that needed to be said about this in his precise and eloquent note. But the Polish Government replied that it knows nothing about these matters. There are émigrés in Poland, and they have their press organs, but the Government has no knowledge of any armed activity directed against us. We find it difficult even to understand today this psychology of falsehood. The natural explanation of it is that in Poland a very fierce struggle is going on around the Government, between different groups, individuals, parties and cliques, and amid this fierce *mêlée* a sense of perspective is not always retained, and answers are sometimes given in which common sense is lacking.

And when Savinkov boasts of his friendship with the Belvedere (the palace where Pilsudski, the head of the Polish state, resides), he has in mind, of course, not the doorkeeper of the Belvedere but a person occupying a higher post than that. At the congresses of the Savinkovite terrorists, who do not conceal their White-Guard activity, individuals from the bandit gangs appear (and are named) who have passed through the appropriate military points on the Polish frontier, with the help of the Second Department of the Polish General Staff, or of some other department, for each of them has its own Savinkovite or Balakhovichite agents. We have captured quite a few such agents, with the relevant certification on their persons, and have proposed to the Polish Government that it join us in a commission in which we shall show all these documents, in the original.

Here we have a certain Pavlovsky. [3] Balakhovich wrote that he arrested this Pavlovsky for being a pogromist. He is an officer of the old Russian Army. Savinkov released him and he made him his confidential agent. We have the originals – not copies – of letters from Pavlovsky to both of the Savinkov brothers. [4] Here is a letter addressed to Viktor Savinkov. Pavlovsky says in this letter: 'We are established here in the forest and are active in a small way. The work, glory be to God, is going well so far: we are setting fire to bridges and also finding out the disposition and strength of army units ...' and so on.

Here is a letter with more innocent contents. Pavlovsky writes in it that he has a brother in Egypt who has to be set free. It is for this purpose that he is engaging in espionage, sending reports which he proposes to sell to the French for a high price. And he asks for a camera to be sent to him. Then he says: 'Tell me when the general uprising is to be.' This is evidently so that Savinkov should not forget to tell him when he gives the order for a general uprising to be organised in Russia.

To the other Savinkov brother Pavlovsky writes: 'Be so good, if you receive money from the French for the report, to give 30,000 to Colonel S.'s wife.'

And here is a third, a short note: 'Send me twelve revolvers, cartridges, ten small grenades, poison, daggers' ... and so on. That is the equipment needed by the innocent agent of Savinkov on Soviet territory. Here is another note: 'Let me have, in cipher, a few V.G.S. [5] addresses in Moscow. Pavlovsky.'

There are a number of credentials for other agents here, signed by Savinkov, and all, without exception, worded like this one: 'The bearer of this document, so-and-so Pimenov, has been despatched to me, on behalf of the Russian Political (or Evacuation) Committee, from Poland into Soviet Russia, to carry out activity.' That is how it is put: 'to carry out activity'. The document is signed by Savinkov and by Rudin, who was formerly his *aide-de-camp* and is now in charge of his office. Further: 'To Colonel Suyevsky. I order you, on receiving this letter, to go to Rubezhevichi and unite under your leadership all the detachments and organisations located in the Rakov, Rubezhevichi and Nesvizh sectors.'

Here I have Account No.4. I also have Account No.5, for the Russian Evacuation Committee in Poland (this committee is the Political Committee under a new name, 'Evacuation Committee' sounds more innocent), in respect of the expenditure of certain sums: 'For one suit of civilian clothes, 3,000 marks. For pay to persons sent into Soviet Russia for activity to bring about a general peasant uprising, 110,000 marks. Total, 113,000 Polish marks.' So, then, for a general armed uprising, plus a suit of civilian clothes, the sum of 113,000 marks was laid out. I don't know whether the price of the clothes is high or not, I don't presume to judge, but 110,000 marks was not very much to pay for an uprising.

Whether this money comes through the Polish committee or directly from French sources, the fact is that this activity is going on all the time on Polish territory. You have read a series of notes on this subject. In the last few days the Polish press, so far as we can follow it from here, has been, so to speak, split in its attitudes to the Polish Government's policy, but one section of it is definitely carrying out an order given from Paris.

You will remember that on September 3 the French Government ordered the Polish Government to present us with an ultimatum. [5b] The French ambassador to Poland, Panafieu, and General Niessel, whom we saw in Soviet Russia and who actually sits astride the Polish General Staff, consider that the moment is now propitious for overthrowing the Soviet power. This has induced the French Government to issue its command. The Polish Government, as we know, wavered at first. A crisis of the Witos ministry took place, and this peasant and big-bourgeois democratic ministry, which was more or less pacifist, fell from power.

A struggle is now going on over there between three groups: between the petty-bourgeois pacifists, that is, the party of Zelichowski and the groups associated with it; the crazy petty-bourgeois adventurers who occupy posts of responsibility in Poland; and, finally, the big-bourgeois party of the National Democrats. This party, which is the object of merited hatred on the part of the worker and peasant masses, and which is now trying to obtain from France a permit or an order to take state power, is ready, for that purpose, to declare war on Soviet Russia.

Thus, on the one hand, there is a small group of adventuristic and rabid

petty-bourgeois chauvinists, who want war, and, on the other, the big landowning and industrial bourgeoisie, who want power, and are ready to pay for that power the price of war against us. But whereas the petty-bourgeois chauvinists who boast of their intimacy with the Belvedere want war with the help of the Belvedere, the National Democrats want war so as to overthrow the Belvedere and take power into their own hands.

This conflict is now rending Poland from within. How it will end is at present hard to forecast, but this is what is said in the Polish papers, which are of very great importance to us in these undoubtedly anxious days. **Rzeczpospolita**, which is the organ of the National Unity group (a comparatively small one, if I am not mistaken) headed by Skulski, a voice which can be described as that of good sense, says: 'On the one hand, the Soviet Government asserts that we are supporting the "Union for Defence of Fatherland and Freedom" [\[6\]](#), while, on the other, the Polish Government asserts that Communist agitation is carried on in Poland with the backing of the Soviet Government. The straining of relations through the exchange of fresh notes and through an ultimatum is in no way advantageous either to Poland or to Russia. Poland made peace with Soviet Russia because she needs peace with Soviet Russia: she lacks the strength to overthrow the Soviet power and instal a new social order in that country. In other words, Poland cannot and must not undertake that sort of operation. The Soviet Government also has the same need of peace. The cause of disagreement between us is known. It must be carefully looked into. We would suggest that a commission be formed to investigate all points of misunderstanding.'

'Poland', **Rzeczpospolita** goes on, 'cannot expel the Russians who enjoy the rights of asylum. However, Poland can and must eliminate any cause for suspicion that she is supporting organisations which are active against the Soviets. The Soviets, on their part, must refrain from supporting the Bolsheviks in our country. This question needs to be cleared up without delay.'

The newspaper **Czas** writes: 'As regards the so-called White-Guard organisations in Poland, these exist only in the luxuriant imagination ... of the Soviets' secret agent in Warsaw. Does Mr Karakhanj [\[7\]](#) really suppose that Poland is going to repudiate the right of asylum possessed by every sovereign state and expel peaceful Russian residents merely because they get on the nerves of Soviet commissars?'

So, then, comrades, the question is posed like this. We, it is said, assert that you (that is, the Polish Government) support monarchists and counter-revolutionaries, and they reply: 'But you support the Communists.' **Rzeczpospolita** considers, however, that peace is necessary and possible, but says: you will not presume to require of us that we expel Russians living peacefully in our country. What sensitive nerves we have; just think of it. People are living peacefully, from time to time they ask for a few bombs and grenades, a little poison, they present accounts not just for clothes but also for organising a revolt, and for this purpose they have a committee in Poland which is in contact with a Major on the General Staff who supplies them with poison, small grenades and all that sort of thing. And they say that this gets on our nerves, that we can't bear it. As for us, it is no secret here that we do have something to do with the Communist International – Soviet diplomacy is not going to conceal that fact, for in it, we consider, lies the meaning of our political and ideological existence. In this International (I do not intend to go

into the philosophy of history and explain how the International is the world movement of the working class), we play our part, and by so doing we support it. But are we going even so far as to demand, for example, that all the monarchist or Cadet papers in Poland be suppressed?

Of course, by the fact of our existence and our conscious activity we give support to the Communists, but that is one thing, while if we were to organise detachments, give them small grenades and poison and send them against Poland's Belvedere and War Ministry, that would be another thing. Have we organised on our territory Red Communist detachments under the sign of the International? Of course we have. When we were at war with Poland we did that, and we had an organ which formed these detachments, and armed them, and sent them forth, saying: 'Do your best', and we gave them not small grenades but large-sized ones. But then we made peace, and we did that seriously, not out of sentimental feelings but for practical and profound reasons, wishing to safeguard the Soviet Republic. We said that we should put an end to hostile military operations, and we did. We do not demand, finally, that they expel from Poland Merezhkovsky or Mrs Hippus [\[8\]](#), who write against us every day, demanding the extermination of all Bolsheviks, on a wholesale basis and also each one in particular. That is, if one may say so, an ideological tendency, but Pavlovsky, armed with bombs and poison, and sent to Moscow for tactical purposes, is a phenomenon that one cannot possibly describe as peaceful.

Pavlovsky is a bandit who has been armed, at the expense of the Polish people, by the adventurist and imperialist elements in the Polish Government which are hostile to us. That is a fact.

We proposed to the Polish Government a mixed commission to discuss all the questions that have given rise to misunderstanding. The Polish Government refused, and the Polish press threatened us with an ultimatum. Moreover, both France and a section of Poland's ruling circles tried to involve Romania, as well, in this conflict.

Regarding Romania we have had very great misgivings. She has not actually gone to war against us, as Poland did, but she is uneasy about Bessarabia. She is not sure what our intentions and plans are, she fears a thrust across the Dniester, and, out of this fear, sends forth the Petlyurist bands: this situation may compel her to go further than the less adventurist section of her government would wish. That is why, I repeat, we have looked with apprehension towards the frontier with Romania.

I spoke to you about the state of feeling on the frontier, where the gunners manning our riverside batteries ask: 'When are we going to advance across the Dniester estuary and across the Dniester?' This mood is terribly dangerous in itself, for, in such an atmosphere, guns have more than once been known to go off by themselves. Consequently, while taking a number of measures to strengthen the frontier, we have, at the same time, done everything to ensure that behaviour on our side of the frontier is such as to exclude the very idea that we wish to attack Romania on account of Bessarabia. We only want to safeguard our south-western frontier. How and when the Bessarabian and other questions will eventually be settled is, of course, very important, but where many questions are concerned we wait, and wait patiently. We wait on the development of events on the world scale, and we wait patiently, and at

the last congress of the Comintern it was we, the Russian Communists, who proved that we are free from any feverish impatience. We can wait calmly to see how and at what stage in the future the question of Bessarabia will be settled. It is absolutely impossible that we should, on our own initiative, start a war for the sake of one province. [9]

We have continually sought peace negotiations with Romania. Now, it would seem, these negotiations have begun. Mr Fal [10], a representative of the Romanian Government, has left Bucharest for Warsaw in order to negotiate with Comrade Karakhan, while Take Jonsescu, who, three weeks ago, said in the Council of Ministers that there could be no peace treaty with Russia because France was only biding her time to strike the final blow at us, is now using much more acceptable language. He has said to the correspondent of a foreign newspaper: 'We must make sure that we are at peace with the Soviet republic, and that it has acknowledged that fact.' Yes, that is the (ask, to make sure in Warsaw that we are at peace, and that means that we are not to hurl bands at each other and threaten the very bases of peaceful existence. Take Jonsescu says just this in a talk with a representative of **Le Figaro** (these are all recent telegrams): 'Where Russia is concerned, I hope that everything will be peaceful. In any case, our conduct will be completely honest and courteous.' Courtesy was even somewhat more than we expected. We should have been quite satisfied with honesty without courtesy, and since what we are asking for in Warsaw is, above all, not a settling of accounts for the past but guarantees for the future, I, for my part, have no doubt that with a minimum of businesslike honesty, and even without courtesy, we shall in Warsaw arrive at the establishment of peace with Romania.

But now, just at this moment when from Bucharest they are talking to us even in the language of courtesy, the Polish Government has yesterday presented us with a sort of ultimatum. Do you know what this is about? Poland demands that we fulfil our side of the treaty, meaning the articles about restitution of Polish property, certain items of material compensation, questions concerning the repatriation of Polish citizens, and so on, which we have made dependent on the Polish Government's fulfilment of the points in the treaty about putting an end to the struggle that is being waged against us by means of guerrilla bands.

Our diplomats say: 'A treaty is not a unilateral but a bilateral document. It imposes obligations on both of the governments which sign the treaty. We have some serious claims against you, which are expressed in these documents and these photographs. You have some claims of a material nature? We promise to satisfy your claims in proportion as you take account of ours, and satisfy them!'

After some wavering, the Polish Government has apparently decided to carry out the order given by the French stock-exchange on September 3. This order said, as you know: 'Present an ultimatum to the Soviet Republic, with all the consequences that ensue therefrom.' To justify this order, the French Ambassador in Warsaw, Panafieu, said: 'We in France (that is, the French stock-exchange speculators) consider that Poland is in a desperate situation economically. Poland can be saved only by extensive aid from France. This extensive aid can be given only after her relations with Russia have been settled afresh.' France, said Panafieu, has already settled her relations with Germany. Her hands are no longer tied, and she must now review her policy

towards Russia. To this end she needs Poland and Romania as instruments of military pressure upon Soviet Russia. If Poland and Romania fulfil this role, if they strangle or smother Russia, then France will thereby have settled her relations with the Russian people – and only then will she help ruined Poland. I have given you almost word for word the gist of the declarations made by the French ambassador, Panafieu, in explanation of the French stock exchange's order of September 3. And now, after a series of waverings, and internal conflict, a situation has taken place in Poland which favours the presenting to us of that ultimatum which was delivered yesterday. It cannot be described otherwise than as an ultimatum. If I am not mistaken, the deadline for its fulfilment is fixed for October 5.

This step, comrades, is undoubtedly one of great seriousness. We had misunderstandings with Poland earlier, too, and we kept trying to remove them by peaceful means. We offered conditions that were much more favourable than those which Poland subsequently obtained under the Treaty of Riga. Poland rejected our offers, and that led to a protracted war which caused very heavy losses to both sides. The balance was drawn at Riga, where obligations for both sides were laid down, and we have up to now fully met those obligations. Poland, in the persons of the groups which have (only temporarily, I think) won the upper hand there, is trying once again to interpret this treaty as though it were unilateral in character. And since Poland was given, on September 3, the order from the French stock-exchange, Warsaw (that is, the relevant section in Warsaw) is trying to carry out that order against us, and instead of businesslike negotiations about reciprocal claims is presenting us with a unilateral ultimatum. The underside of this policy was formulated by the French ambassador Panafieu. He told the Polish Government that 'we consider your economic situation to be desperate'. And the fact that Poland is carrying out the order from the French stock-exchange does verge on a policy of desperation.

Comrades, a few days are left before October 5. How these days will affect the suicidal course that Poland's ruling circles are following we cannot predict. We have no doubt that our diplomats will do everything to ensure that, not only among the Polish people but even among the Polish bourgeoisie, that tendency will prevail which wants to preserve peace and normal economic and state relations with us. Now, after an ultimatum, totally unprovoked and in the gross form of a unilateral order, has been presented to us, our striving, our will, to arrive at a peaceful settlement of the conflict has not slackened, but, on the contrary, is firmer than before. But the conflict can be settled only through bilateral negotiations, in which both sides make concessions. And we hope that the days which remain before October 5 comes will bring calm, will clear the air, that such voices in the Polish press as that of **Rzeczpospolita** will prevail, and we shall reach agreement, for there can be no alternative to agreement. It must be said that we are not, in relation to Poland and her government, in a situation like that of the Polish Government in relation to France. While the impudent, insolent, greedy Paris stock-exchange tries rudely to dictate its will to the Polish and Romanian peoples, we, despite our famine and difficulties and other misfortunes, are nevertheless not in a situation in which anybody can give us orders that we have to obey. And we say, therefore, that we shall not lose our *sangfroid* even in face of an impertinent ultimatum. We are ready to engage in negotiations on a businesslike basis, and we say to Poland's bourgeois circles: 'Call some of your people to order.' We say to the Polish workers that if their bourgeoisie does not succeed in calling the adventurers to

order, then it will be the task of the workers and peasants of Poland to call the Polish bourgeoisie to order, and to force them to do what is required of them.

*Stenographic Reports
of the Moscow Soviet,
1921, No.8*

Endnotes

1. It was stated in the communiqué from the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs (**Izvestiya V.Ts.I.K.**, September 15, 1921) that the Commissariat was in possession of precise information showing that, in the course of the immediately preceding weeks, the French Government had taken steps to draw Poland and Romania into war with Russia. The French note to Poland of September 3, expressed the idea that the famine created favourable conditions for Poland and Romania to present their maximum demands to Russia in the form of an ultimatum, threatening that, if these demands were not met, military action would be taken.
2. General A.M. Zayonchkovsky, a well-known military historian, was a member of the Red Army's General Staff and later taught at the Frunze Military Academy. – *Brian Pearce*
3. Pavlovsky was later captured by the Soviet security service, 'turned round', and used to lure Savinkov into Russia, in 1924, to be himself taken prisoner. – *Brian Pearce*
4. The terrorist leader Savinkov was named Boris; he had a brother who assisted him, named Viktor. – *Brian Pearce*
5. It is not clear what the initials 'V.G.S.' stand for here. The initials of the 'Supreme Monarchist Council' would be 'V.M.S.' – *Brian Pearce*
- 5b. On the Polish ultimatum, see above, note 8. In the note from the People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs on September 22, replying to the Polish ultimatum of September 18, it was stated that the ultimatum-like character of the Polish note made it unacceptable, and a number of counter-demands were put forward – for the expulsion of Russian counter-revolutionaries from Poland and cessation of the support given by Poland to the organisation of bands. The People's Commissar proposed that the deadline for fulfilling the demands be put off from October 1 to October 5.
6. The 'Union for Defence of Fatherland and Freedom' was Savinkov's organisation.
7. L.M. Karakhan was Soviet ambassador to Poland in 1921-1923. – *Brian Pearce*
8. The novelist Dmitri Merezhkovsky and the poetess Zinaida Hippus were husband and wife.
9. Louis Fischer writes, in **The Soviets in World Affairs**, 2nd edition, 1951, Vol.I, pp.xiv-xv, that Rakovsky told him in 1928 that there was a division of opinion among the Soviet leaders at this time on what to do about the disputed province of Bessarabia: Trotsky, supported by Litvinov (then Chicherin's deputy) proposed recognising the Romanian annexation, but Chicherin and Rakovsky opposed this. Until 1940, when the Red Army took over Bessarabia, the province was marked on all Soviet maps as 'unredeemed' Soviet territory. – *Brian Pearce*
10. The Romanian representative at these talks was named Filaliti.

Banditry and Famine

Orders

Order No.257

To the Provinces of Volhynia, Podolia and Odessa, September 5, 1921, No.257, Zhitomir

* * *

Under present conditions, when the allied governments of Russia and the Ukraine are exerting all their efforts to overcome the famine disaster which has befallen the Volga provinces, and to restore the economy of the fraternal Soviet republics, events frequently occur on the western frontiers of the Ukraine and Russia which cause very great harm to the state interests and, in particular, to the economic interests, of Russia and the Ukraine. Smugglers and speculators make their way across the frontier by secret paths, and by means of fraud, bribery and plying with spirits they carry over the frontier a considerable part of the grain which is now so badly needed for our own Soviet republics.

On the other hand, from time to time criminal bands of Petlyurists, Savinkovites and other hirelings of foreign capital are thrown on to Soviet territory from behind our frontiers with neighbouring states. The way is prepared for these bands by spies and traitors who get in through the gaps in our Western frontiers.

Such occurrences threaten the peace and well-being of the population, especially in the frontier provinces of the Soviet Ukraine and Soviet Russia.

In view of this, the allied governments of the Ukraine and Russia, having taken the measures necessary for strengthening the protection of the Western frontiers, hereby inform the population as follows:

1. It is the duty not only of all Soviet organs and institutions in the frontier zone, without exception, both civil and military, but also of all the local inhabitants to co-operate in every way with the government in guarding our frontiers against agents of speculation and banditry.
2. The executive committees of *volosts*, *uyezds* and provinces in the frontier zone must thoroughly discuss and put into effect additional measures of a local character for the same purpose.
3. Individual citizens, and, in particular, representatives of the Soviet power who are found to be guilty of helping, directly or indirectly, the criminal activities of speculation or banditry on the frontier, whether through negligence, idleness, connivance, or outright crime, are to be handed over to the Revolutionary Military Tribunal and judged with all the severity appropriate to the state importance of the interests which they have violated by their actions.
4. The present order is to be made known as soon as possible, on the

personal responsibility of the Chairman of the Provincial Executive Committee and the Head of each District, to the Executive Committees of uyezds and volosts, and is also to be disseminated as widely as possible throughout the province, by way of distribution, pasting up, and oral announcements in public places.

Banditry and Famine

Orders

Order No.262

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the Red Army and the Red Navy, September 10, 1921, No.262, Odessa

* * *

I report that a note has been sent by the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs to the Governments of the Entente concerning the appointment of Mr Noulens as chairman of the international commission which allegedly has the task of bringing aid to starving Russia.^[1] The meaning of the appointment of Noulens, a sworn enemy of Russia's working masses, as chairman of the relief commission, is understood by everyone. Noulens, a criminal whose place is in the dock in a criminal court, thought that the need of Russia's working masses and the hunger of the Volga peasants would give him the possibility and the right to talk to the Republic of Labour in the tone of a master, to subject it to his inspection from on high, and to dictate to it the will of a clique of stock-exchange speculators. By Comrade Chicherin's note the Workers' and Peasants' Government has put an end to these insolent pretensions. The Red Army must learn once more, from this example, how obdurately our irreconcilable enemies lie in wait for us at every difficult passage on our road. At the same time the Red Army can tell itself with satisfaction that, thanks to its heroism and its victories, the Soviet Government, supported by millions of working people, is now in a position to give a decisive rebuff to any imperialist attempt to interfere in our internal affairs.

The note of the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Comrade Chicherin, and the present order, are to be disseminated and explained in all units of the Red Army and the Red Navy.

Endnotes

¹. In the note of the People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs addressed to the Entente powers, Comrade Chicherin said that the Soviet Government saw the appointment, as head of the international commission for famine relief, of Noulens, who had taken part in plots against the Soviet power, and the decision of the commission, instead of bringing immediate aid to the famine victims, to engage in collection of information about the state of Russia, as an unheard-of mockery of millions of people who were dying of hunger.

Banditry and Famine

Orders

Order No.265

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the Red Army,
September 13, 1921, No.265, Kiev.

* * *

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

A bloody crime has again been committed in the Ukraine – one of the most disgusting crimes, in its senseless cruelty. On September 7 in the Kozhanka-Fastov stage of the Kiev railway line, as a result of malicious tampering with the rails, a through-train carrying food destined for the workers of the Donets Basin suffered frightful disaster. The locomotive and the trucks were smashed up and 27 persons were killed and 31 wounded.

Who tampered with the rails? The answer is clear: those who have done the same thing dozens of times before – the Petlyurist bandits, the hirelings of the Romanian and Polish land-lords and capitalists. At whom was this blow struck? At the Ukrainian workers and peasants. Among those killed were representatives of the starving Donbas workers, who had been sent to escort the train. Sixty-one truckloads of grain collected by the peasants for the workers were destroyed, scattered and mixed with earth and human blood.

At first the Petlyurists hoped to *deceive* the working masses of the Ukraine by means of lying agitation. Their deception was exposed, and they lost political influence. They then decided to *conquer* the Ukraine by means of detachments armed with French, Romanian and Polish money. These detachments were smashed and broken up. The Petlyurists have no more hope of conquering the Ukraine. All that remains to them is to *take revenge* on the workers and peasants who have rejected them. The defeated Petlyurist detachments have become petty gangs. The bandits have become vermin. Their sole aim is to take revenge, to inflict damage, to shed the blood of the Ukrainian workers and peasants.

The Ukraine must be purged of vermin as soon as possible, so that it may devote all its strength to peaceful labour. The Ukraine must become a well-provided, rich, prosperous country.

The many victims of the senselessly bloody Petlyurist outrages demand of us that we put an end quickly to the Petlyurist vermin!

Red Army man! Crush the vermin under your boot!

Banditry and Famine

Orders

Order No.267

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the Red Army and the Red Navy, November 11, 1921, No.267, Moscow

* * *

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

A Fresh Provocation by the Polish Military Clique

Only recently the Red Army experienced, together with the country to which it belongs, several weeks of acute political tension: the question of whether or not there would be peace with Poland was being decided. Thanks to the extraordinary firmness and peace-loving persistence of Soviet diplomacy, agreement was reached: the Polish Government undertook to expel from Poland those White-Guards who had openly formed bands on Polish territory and prepared terrorist acts against the Soviet power in Russia. But hardly had this agreement been signed by both parties than Poland hurled on to our territory a fresh lot of sizeable bands, linked by a common plan and led by that very same Petlyurist bandit, Tyutyunik, who was to have been expelled from Poland. [1] The unprecedentedly provocative character of this new attack has forced the army to stir itself and ask: 'How long?'

Undoubtedly, from the standpoint of the so-called international law of bourgeois states, the latest White-Guard provocation is a direct challenge to war. But since the Soviet Government does not want war, it is not hurrying to take up this challenge. It counts firmly on the Polish people to restrain the criminal adventurers and call them to order.

Every Red Army man must, however, appreciate the real state of affairs. In Poland there is not one government, but two. One of these is the official government, the public one, which speaks in Parliament, carries on negotiations and signs treaties.

The other is the secret government, which relies on a considerable section of the officers, and is headed by the so-called Head of State, Pilsudski. Behind this secret government stand the extreme imperialists of France. While the official Polish Government, under pressure not only from the working people but also from wide bourgeois circles, is compelled to seek peace with Soviet Russia, the provocateurs of the Polish army command strive with all their might to bring about war.

What are the conclusions for us? In no case to facilitate the work of the provocateurs but, on the contrary, to show, as before, the utmost restraint in

maintaining peaceful relations. But, at the same time, we must keep firmly in mind the split in the will of Poland's ruling class. We do not know whether it will be the supporters of peace or the criminal incendiaries who will get the upper hand in Poland this winter or next spring. We must be prepared for the worst.

The Red Army is again crushing the Petlyurist bands hurled against us by the Polish adventurers. The Red Army is redoubling its work of military preparation. No turn of events will take the Red Army by surprise!

Endnotes

[1.](#) On Tyutyunik's band, see below, note 61.

Banditry and Famine

Orders

Order No.268

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the Red Army and the Red Navy, December 11, 1921, No.268, Moscow

* * *

In the Far East General Kappel's troops have begun operations against the Far-Eastern Republic, which is closely linked with US. [1] The Kappel units are the remains of the former army of Kolchak. Today the Kappelites are in the service of the Japanese Government, which has predatorily seized the Far Eastern coastal area and does not want to let go of it.

In their fight against the Soviet Republic the world predators often allude to the fact that Russia does not have a 'democratic' government, elected on the basis of so-called universal suffrage. But the Far-Eastern Republic is not a republic of soviets, it is a democracy. Its government is organised on the principles of universal suffrage. Private property has not been abolished in the Far-Eastern Republic. The working masses of this republic know the advantages of the Soviet order and want complete unification with the Soviet federation as a whole. But, precisely so as not to give the Japanese and other predators an excuse for attack, they tolerate in their country both private property and the 'democratic republic' which is closely bound up with it. However, this is not helping them, either. Against the democratic republic the imperialists are advancing the Black-Hundred Monarchist forces which have organised a coup d'état with the help of Japanese money and Japanese weapons.

In the Far East we see the same picture as in the West. On the one hand, the working masses of our country, in order to obtain tranquillity and peace, are making very big concessions, even going so far as to recognise the Tsarist debts, and are at the same time reducing the Red Army to one-third of its previous size. On the other hand, armed attacks upon us are not ceasing. With the aid of gold and arms from French, Japanese and other sources, the inviolability of our territory and the development of our economy are being ceaselessly disrupted by perfidious blows struck from across the Polish, Romanian and Finnish frontiers and from the shores of the Pacific Ocean. Beneath the hypocritical speeches of the capitalist diplomats in Washington on the theme of disarmament, alarming signs are multiplying.

The conclusion is clear. If we are to uphold our independence, it is not enough for us to be compliant – we have to be strong. For the Red Army there is only one answer to recent events: to redouble our efforts in the sphere of training, and to close up our ranks. War industry and the country as a whole will not be slow to come to the aid of our army.

- **Be alert, Red warrior of Russia!**
 - **On your guard, warrior of Siberia!**
-

Endnotes

1. On the general situation in the Maritime region, see above, note 38. The Kappelites' offensive was organised with all-round support from Japan, which set up a 'Maritime buffer state' in the form of Merkulov's government. At the end of November 1921 the Kappelite bands, supported by Japanese armoured cars and artillery, attacked along the Ussuri Railway and, pushing back the scanty units of the People's Revolutionary army of the FER, occupied Khabarovsk on December 22. Throughout January 1922 a stubborn struggle was waged for the fortified positions on the river In. After capturing these, units of the People's Revolutionary Army went over to the offensive, and on February 14, Khabarovsk was again in the hands of Red units. The subsequent course of events, up to the occupation of Vladivostok, can be followed from note 38 (See Map No.6).

Banditry and Famine

Orders

Order No.365

By the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the Red Army and the Red Navy,
February 11, 1922, No. 365

* * *

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

Fraternal thanks!

Soviet Karelia has been cleared by the Red regiments of the White bands organised by Finnish officers with the resources of the Finnish and other bourgeoisies. [\[1\]](#) Under the very hard conditions of the North, amid the cold wastes, sometimes up to their middles in snow under which the water has not frozen, the soldiers of the revolution have once more done their duty to the end.

The crime committed by the ruling classes of Finland and its protectors has imposed fresh hardships and losses upon the working masses of Russia and has entered fresh feats of heroism in the history of the Red Army.

The Red Army and the Red Navy are proud of their Karelian units and enthusiastically give them fraternal thanks.

The Revolutionary War Council of the Republic will take all measures to record and reward the exploits of the most outstanding heroes, and to imprint in the consciousness of the Red Army the entire history of this harsh campaign.

The north-western frontier of the Soviet Federation has once more been re-established at the price of blood. The Red Army and the Red Navy count firmly on the Workers' and Peasants' Government to secure our frontier with Finland against fresh predatory and treacherous attempts.

Long live Soviet Karelia! Glory to the Red warriors, defenders and liberators of the working people of Karelia!

Endnotes

[1.](#) So early as the autumn of 1921 intense agitation began in certain rural areas of roadless Karelia for separation from Russia and union with Finland. In October 1921 two bands of Whites, each 70 men strong, entered Karelia from Finnish territory. On November 19 one of these bands blew up a bridge on the Murmansk Railway, and at the same time disturbances broke out in Ukhtitsa *volost*. A Karelian Government, organised with Finnish help, and in receipt of substantial material backing, tried to reinforce the bandits by

conscripting peasants. The bourgeois government of Finland requested the League of Nations to recognise the self-determination of 'rebel' Karelia and to make Soviet Russia refrain from combating the bands in Karelia. Already by the beginning of January 1922 the White Karelian bands, together with small guerrilla detachments, numbered up to 5,000 men. The Whites' command received direct instructions and plentiful support from the leaders of Finland's Schutzkorps [\[2\]](#) organisations.

By the end of December 1921 units of the 10th, 11th and 56th Infantry Divisions had been concentrated for the purpose of liquidating this invasion of Karelia. The cold climate, the extremely broken terrain, which in winter could be traversed only on skis, and unfamiliarity with the country, all greatly hindered our operations.

From the middle of January our units went over to a general offensive and quickly defeated the White Finns, pushing them back into Finnish territory.

[2.](#) The Schutzkorps (sometimes referred to as the 'civic guard' in English books) was broadly similar to Britain's Territorial Army or the US National Guard: a voluntary force, it had formed the backbone of Mannerheim's army in the Finnish civil war.

Military-Political Surveys

There Are No Fronts, but There Is Danger

Report to the Ninth Congress of Soviets, December 26, 1921 [\[1\]](#)

* * *

The reduction in the size of the army

Comrade delegates, a year ago, at the Eighth Congress of Soviets, you decreed that we should proceed to a systematic reduction in the size of the Red Army and the Red Navy. You prescribed, in general outline, the direction and tempo for this process. According to the calculations which you approved last year, we were to reduce the Red Army so that by the middle of the year now ending it should be no more than half the size it was a year ago, before the Eighth Congress of Soviets. I reported already last year that, at the moment of its maximum development in terms of numbers, the Red Army contained 5,300,000 men. Halving this number meant bringing it down to about 2,700,000. The international situation and the need to lighten the military burden upon the working people of the Soviet Federation impelled us to push further this programme for reducing the army. At the present time the legal limits within which the Red Army and the Red Navy are confined, along with the Special Assignment Units and the universal military training apparatus, are expressed in the figure of 1,595,000 men. If we leave aside the Navy, which is extremely small in terms of manpower, and if we exclude the units of local and special assignment, and also the personnel of the staging-posts – if we take the Army in the proper sense of the word, it amounts already today to no more than 1,370,000 men. In other words, the army has been reduced to less than a third of its previous size.

This work of reduction was no easy matter. Many of you, delegates from the army, are as well aware of that as I am. It was inconspicuous work, there were no heroic episodes in it such as to attract the attention of the whole country, but it was work that meant very great strain on all the nerves of the army organism.

We sought to ensure that the reduction affected as little as possible the active part of the army, its divisions and regiments. The so-called rear services were reduced by 70 per cent. As a result, in the army now, 34 per cent of the men belong to the central and local institutions, and about 66 per cent to the active part of the army. This correlation is very much more favourable than what we had a year ago. We have managed a 13 per cent shift from the rear services to the active part of the army during this year.

What was a military secret – the overall numbers of the army and its overall formal limits – now ceases, with the transition to a peacetime situation, to be a military secret. Our peacetime army consists today, in terms of brigades, of 95 infantry and 49 cavalry brigades. Those are the overall limits of the numerical

structure of our army which I consider it both possible and necessary to make public; and I think that if the Congress of Soviets should now find that it needs to know the army's structure in more detail than that, it will find its own way to that information.

The reduction in the army's size meant the removal from its ranks of the older age-groups. We began with the men born in 1885 and earlier, a section of whom had been mobilised. Then we moved on to the classes of 1886, 1887 and 1888, and, as a result, we demobilised in the course of this year 13 complete age-groups, from 1886 to 1898 inclusive. In the army now there are three age-groups: those of 1899, 1900 and 1901. Thirteen age-groups, not including those which were only partly mobilised, have been released. Three age-groups remain in the army, not counting specialists and those Red Army men who are involved in the more highly skilled work.

The question of discharging the class of 1899 has come on to the agenda. It would be possible to keep the army up to strength numerically with two age-groups only, but the alarming circumstances which have already been mentioned and which call for maximum vigilance by the Red Army, have obliged us to suspend any further discharge of men on indefinite leave, so as to ensure that the army enjoys maximum stability and so as to retain, within the numerical limits indicated, the class of 1899, as being the most experienced and most highly trained.

The process of reduction was a process of contraction and a process of very difficult reorganisation.

The process of demobilising an army is a painful operation, signifying loss of blood and an inevitable temporary weakening of the organism. This operation has now been completed, broadly speaking. It is now up to you either to order that the army be reduced still further or that it be kept at the size we have now arrived at. But, if you ask us, the War Department, I think that I am expressing the opinion of all the army delegates present here if I say that the army's greatest dream at present is that the reorganisation process be brought to an end, so that the army may acquire stability and firmness, with lasting establishments, and so that it may really get down to the day-to-day work of preparation and training.

Improvement in the Army's Living Conditions

If we look back over this year of intensive demobilisation and ask ourselves how the Red Army has been living, I will say that it has been living badly. It accords with the nature of our policy to tell the truth, without embellishing anything, and this applies especially to such highly authoritative legislative assemblies as this one, whose voice resounds throughout the world. Yes, our army lived badly during the past year. It lived badly because its apparatus, including the supply apparatus, was weakened by the ceaseless haemorrhage of demobilisation.

The army lived badly because material demobilisation inevitably brings with it 'demobilisation' sentiments in the country at large. We witnessed this inevitable temporary condition when public opinion in our country ceased to attend closely to the needs and requirements of the army, after the army,

having completed its urgent work, had gone into stationary quarters, and started a process of continuous contraction.

In the spheres of food-supplies, of accommodation, of fuel (which is closely connected with accommodation problems), and of clothing, our army suffered severe hardships during the past year, hardships which were all the more severe because the army's own attention was divided between those whom it was sending home and those whom it was keeping with the colours. And now, when we have reduced the army to one-third of its former size, the fundamental task – which, I hope, the Congress will fix firmly in the minds of every one of us – consists in fully ensuring the army's supplies, without which it cannot carry out, to the full, its work of preparation. We must make the barracks more comfortable, we must ensure, above all, that it is clean, well-lit and warm. And we ask the Congress of Soviets to order, despite our poverty, which is known to all, that at least a little more comfort, warmth and light be made available to the young Red Army men. [Applause] And we must keep in mind, especially, the fact that the army consists now of the three youngest age-groups. Hardly any of them experienced the civil war, and the bulk of them need both training and education.

The fact that the army consists now of three age-groups only is, basically, a very great advantage, because it ensures homogeneity in outlook, in experience and in level of military training. But this also has its negative side, from the standpoint of the soldiers' previous military preparation, and we have to make up for the disadvantage. It can be made up for only by means of intense work on the part of the leadership of our army, its commanders and commissars.

The Commanders

The reduction in the army has not entailed any acute changes in our commanding personnel. As before, they are drawn from a variety of sources. Among them are both workers and peasants who rose from below amid the heat of the civil war, without any military training: among them, too, are former NCOs of the old Tsarist army, there are workers and peasants who have been through our new military schools, there are former regular officers of the Tsarist Army, former army officials, and, finally, making up a rather high percentage, there are wartime-commissioned officers of that same Tsarist Army.

I will give you the approximate proportions constituted by these main groups. Those commanders who have had no military education – and here we have reckoned not from the level of the section but from that of the platoon, that is, in accordance with the former concept of who were and who were not 'officers' – those without military education make up 43.4 per cent of all our commanders. That was the situation in the autumn, in September and October. It is a very big percentage, one that might give some militarily-qualified foreigner the impression that our army is weak, that it is ignorant in the military sense. We, knowing our army in both its weak and its strong sides, say: these 43.4 per cent who have enjoyed no military education do have their shortcomings. We know that very well; but these are the kernel, the foundation of our commanding personnel. These are the real Red officers of

the revolution, the true representatives of its spirit. They came from the factories and the villages that were threatened by the forces of Kolchak and Denikin. They led others who were less experienced and knew even less than they did. In battle they acquired that experience. And they are the commanding personnel upon whom we are building. We are introducing refresher courses for them, and on these courses they are filling in the gaps in their formal military education: we hope to put the majority of our 'self-made' commanders through these courses during the coming winter.

Former NCOs account for 13 per cent of our commanders – too small a proportion. We expended this precious material too vigorously. We must again apply ourselves to picking them out and making commanders of them.

Red commanders who have passed through Soviet military schools make up about 10 per cent of the total.

The sum of these three categories, the most democratic, the most 'lower-class' in origin, is 66.3 per cent – that is, two-thirds of the total. Wartime-commissioned officers of the old army make up 22.1 per cent, army officials 6 per cent, and regular officers 5.6 per cent: 33.7 per cent altogether.

Comrades, I have not quoted these categories in order to counterpose one to another. I said that we should not have created the Red Army if we had not possessed that precious leaven, the worker and peasant Red officers who, though unqualified in the military sense, were highly qualified as fighters. But the army which is alive before our eyes today and is ready to fight has fused in its melting pot a variety of human material – by way of ebbs and flows, through tragic experiences, even betrayals by individuals and by groups, and harsh punishment for these betrayals, through the counterposing of the Red Army to other armies and of the Red Army's truth to their lies ... We have drawn and consolidated our commanding personnel from various sources. But they now constitute, as a whole, a united body. Those 5.6 per cent of old regular officers have their place in the general structure of our army and we need them. And they understand and know that we value them. They themselves have learnt a great deal. I will permit myself to quote here the opinion of one of the regular officers of the old army who held a very high position before the coming of Soviet power. This is the former War Minister in Kerensky's Government, then Major-General Verkhovsky, who now holds one of the responsible posts in the organisation of our military-education institutions. In his booklet **On the Tasks of Military Education Institutions** he writes:

'The most important driving impulse in the struggle we have lived through was *the striving of the workers and peasants to defend their life and welfare*, together with the position they had acquired and the land they had seized during the revolution, from attack by the old, dispossessed classes. This was the basic motive which guided the masses in the struggle. The best, the advanced, the most idealistically-inclined men went forth in the name of an idea, into the struggle for socialism, for the new world of emancipated labour, and the *enthusiasm* of these men was the organising force around which rallied all the resistance of the republic to the forces of counter-revolution.

'This created *the will to victory* which forged the Red Army and, despite the terribly severe privations, despite the defeats, crowned the struggle with a victory of major historical importance.'

Many of us would perhaps have expressed this idea in different words, would have said it differently, but it is clear that here the tongue, or the pen, of Verkhovsky speaks for almost all – I say this with confidence – of our old regular commanders, who have become assimilated into the army and form one of its necessary components.

If we consider the commanders from the angle of social origin, the picture is broadly the same. In our army today, peasants – listen to this, comrade peasant delegates, and tell them about it in the villages – peasants constitute 67.3 per cent of our Red officers. Workers make up 12 per cent – many workers have gone back from the army into industry, or into Soviet institutions – and ‘others’ account for 20 per cent. Workers and peasants together make up 80 per cent of our commanders.

Allow me also to mention here a question which is also of importance for the Congress of Soviets, and not of minor importance either, since it concerns the role played among the commanders by the Party which holds the position of political leadership in our country. According to approximate figures, before the purge, before the recent contraction of the Party through elimination of those elements which, in the Party’s view, have no place in it, about 20 per cent of the commanders were Communists. They are now fewer than 20 per cent. As for the proportion of Communists in the entire army, and not just in the commanding personnel, this is now less than 10 per cent. These figures are of very great importance. What do they tell us? The Communist Party, to which the workers and peasants have entrusted the leadership of our country, is the embodiment of the historical, political experience of the working masses. But the figures show that, even so, the party is not at all the receptacle of all the military, technical, economic, producing and trading experience of the working masses. The Party, as the Party, retains political leadership through the trust of the working people. But where the function of command is concerned, Communist commanders are, shoulder to shoulder with non-Party commanders, doing the same job as the latter. The Party has been entrusted by the working masses with exercising the revolutionary monopoly of leadership in our state, guiding it through the sandbanks and shoals of very difficult circumstances. But the Party does not claim in the least, it cannot and it does not want to claim, a monopoly of military, technical, scientific and every other sort of leadership. This question is all the more important for us – and I raise it frankly here – the Party, which is a voluntary union of like-minded persons, has in recent months eliminated from its ranks a rather large number of individuals belonging to our commanding personnel. I shall not speak of those who were removed for conduct incompatible with the honour of a citizen. They are done for. But quite a few were removed because the Party found that, by virtue of their mentality, their education and their habits of thought, they do not fit into the life of our Party collective. The Party said to these men: you are absolutely honourable revolutionary warriors, but you cannot demand for yourselves the right to influence our Party programme and tactics, because your whole past has not prepared you for that responsibility. And those commanders to whom the Party has said that it cannot retain them as members, but to whom neither the Party nor the Government which it leads has denied the right to enjoy respect and to hold responsible posts are not a few in number. And we must say to them that the fact that they have

been removed from the Party does, of course, deprive them of the rights of Party membership, until – through inward effort, re-education, getting closer

to the working masses, study and work upon themselves – they induce the Party to reopen its doors to them. But in so far as the Party and the Soviet power found nothing in their conduct that was incompatible with the dignity of a revolutionary warrior, these commanders who have been put out of the Party will continue, as before, along with the general body of non-Party commanders, to enjoy all the authority they need as commanders, with the support of the organs of Soviet power and – I will say – not least with the support of the entire Communist Party.

The Military-Education Institutions

Renewal of the composition of the commanding personnel calls for the development of a network of military-education institutions. We have given a very great deal of attention to this aspect. But this work, too, like the work of the commanders, requires, above all, a minimum of material well-being such as makes possible the devotion of all one's powers to the hard and responsible task of training others and studying the soldier's trade. Comrades, I said that we need to improve the army's material situation, and we need to improve, we must improve, the very difficult situation of our commanders, commissars and administrative and supply chiefs. The army delegates know this very well. If it be asked why I single out this question of the commanding personnel – a young Red Army man may ask, and has the right to ask that, and the hostile foreign press will try to play up this question – I reply: we have the most democratic army the world has ever known, and the best proof of that is that 43.4 per cent of its commanders have spontaneously emerged from the masses, and two-thirds of its commanders have originated from the lower ranks of society. But there is a difference between the position of a rank-and-file Red Army man and that of a Red Army commander. The former is in the Army only for a time (and we must see to the defining of his period of service, as soon as we have established more precisely the army's numerical composition and the annual contingent of conscripts – we are already getting down to this), whereas the latter is a professional, a specialist in his trade, and we want him to devote his whole life, or at least the best part of his life, to the Army. Thus, we have, in the one case, temporary service in the army, and in the other, a permanent profession which should provide the one who exercises it with the means of working and maintaining his family. This is why the question of the most elementary and modest safeguarding of the position of our commanders is a very important question, along with that of the material safeguarding of the military-education institutions which must become a constant source of fecundation and inspiration for our young army.

Our network of military-education institutions has three tiers. At the first level there is the normal school which has the task of providing us with trained junior commanders as the result of three years of study of infantry work.

We want to ensure – we are getting down to this, and hope to have accomplished it very soon – that every Red commander, on leaving the school bench, shall begin his work as a commander not with a platoon but with a section. We intend thereby gradually to eliminate that old distinction of rank whereby the section was commanded by an NCO, whose career prospects stopped there, whereas an officer only began as a platoon commander. The whole character and nature of our army is in contradiction with this artificial

watershed. For us the marshal of the revolution begins with the Red Army man, and in our army there are no impenetrable barriers. It is entirely a matter of the adequate development of a network of military-education institutions. Next March our military-education institutions will summon from among the workers and peasants new strata, new groups, of young cadets. We ask, we insist – and I think the whole country will demand this – that the local authorities and all the organisations of the working people will take care to see to it that the flower of the worker and peasant youth enter our military-education institutions.

The second level of military education is looked after by the narrower circle of educational institutions which prepare commanders of higher formations. The third level is that of our military academies. This year our military academy, the former General Staff Academy, produced its first group of graduates, its first hundred general-staff officers. That was a great achievement for the Red Army, for the creation of a young General Staff will mean the crowning of our entire edifice. But we are as yet, of course, far from having reached that stage. This first group consists of workers who have fought honourably and studied honourably, but they still have many gaps and deficiencies and these they will rectify through practical work, and we do not doubt that they will succeed in developing into a type of complete military leader with all-round qualifications.

One of the tasks involved in the education of commanders – not their training but their education – is the inculcation in our commanders of the psychology and consciousness proper to sons of a leading, governing, ruling class. This is no simple task. Your sons, comrade peasants and comrade workers, when they enter a military-education institution, do not bring with them that spirit which was an attribute of the sons of the nobility and the bourgeoisie, who, coming from families of exploiters, brought to school the firm conviction that it was for them to govern, to lead, to command, to give orders and to conquer. The foundation for all that was exploitation and oppression, but the spirit of domination which grew out of it helped them to hold the army in their grip. Our army is based on the revolutionary initiative of the working masses. And the commanders of our army – which has waged and will wage a struggle against a stern enemy – our young commanders must foster in themselves, must convert into their own flesh and blood, the stern conviction that the working class is unshakably in power in our country, that it has built an army to fight to the death, and that nobody else is going to take that power, that any force which thinks of making an attempt on the inviolability of the power of the working people in this country will be smashed. And with this question a psychological question is connected – that of the characteristic of excessive good-nature, I should say that sometimes simple-minded good-nature, of the working man. The ruling-class officer knew that when you are fighting an enemy you have to fight to a finish. Never think that the enemy is weak! A weak enemy plus your mistakes can mean a strong enemy. Whether the enemy be big or small, give him all your attention, leave no trifle out of account, and, when the fight has begun, carry it through to the end. A partial success – and this, too, is one of the weak sides of our junior commanders – a partial success must never lull you and cause you to halt, as often happens. Why does this happen with us? It happens because of the good-nature of the working man, of the proletarian and the peasant. We need, however, to educate a worker-and-peasant body of commanders who, I repeat, will turn into their flesh and blood their conviction that, once the enemy

has flung down his challenge and the struggle has begun, that struggle must be fought to a finish. If you have gained a partial success, redouble your efforts, your success will then be doubled, strike three times as hard, fight to a finish, until complete victory, until the enemy has been utterly smashed!

The Country is Getting to Know the Army More Intimately

The training and education of our army is now acquiring an unusual character through our going over to stationary quarters, through the circumstance that we are now for the first time finding it possible to bring the Red Army and the country face to face. Comrade delegates, you have frequently welcomed our army in your provinces, at your annual congresses, after its victories and trials and also after its defeats, for your link with the army has never been broken. But if we ask whether you know our army, we must answer: no, you do not know it. You know the mounted army slightly. Why so? Because the mounted army, that precious section of our army, was unique, and it focused your attention. You knew about that. But you hardly know the infantry at all. Our army as a whole did not come into being in peacetime, when regiments publicly occupy certain quarters, and have numbers and names. Our army was built in battles, military secrecy hid it from you, you read in army communiques about how some N regiment or some N division had had such-and-such a success, or such-and-such a setback. The army has now 'returned home', for the time being. It is being attached to the local soviets, to the workers' organisation, to the provinces and towns. From anonymity and obscurity our army is moving into a zone of bright light. It will be as though under a bell-glass. You will get to know our divisions, brigades and regiments – you will know them and will follow their progress, and if the mounted army has enjoyed a constant stimulus to its energy in the fact that the country knows it and follows its progress, it will be no less of a stimulus to the energy of all units of our Red Army when the local soviets and the whole Soviet Republic come to know them. Henceforth our Red Army as a whole and every one of its divisions, every one of its regiments, will be able openly to write its brief but already rich and bright history. We possess not only an army, but also the traditions of a revolutionary army. These traditions we must write down, we must fix and imprint them in the minds of the young Red Army men. That link between divisions and local soviets the example for which was given by the Moscow and Petrograd Soviets, and which is now being extended ever more widely over the whole Soviet land, is a phenomenon that is important and valuable in the highest degree. Every regiment must have its patron, not an individual patron but a collective one – a local soviet, or other organ of the Soviet power, on the basis of the closest spiritual and material association.

Technique

The question of our army's technique is a very difficult one. Our enemies have built and continue to build their hopes mainly upon this. They know that we have boundless spaces and countless numbers of people, but are weak technically.

And that is true. An army's technique, by and large, reflects its country's production-technique. But, at the same time, an army's technique can, within

certain limits, outstrip its country's production-technique; and since it can, it must. We are now witnessing only the first signs of a revival of our economy. We do not doubt that these signs will become transformed already in the next few months into indisputable facts that show the development of our economy. We must simultaneously make every effort to build our military technique, to provide our army with the weapons of war that it needs. This applies especially to aircraft. We need a strong air force. We need armoured forces. It is necessary – and you will order this to be done – that the economic organs shall calculate their pluses and minuses more precisely where aircraft are concerned, and that the War Department, for its part, shall bring forward more suitable skilled elements for aviation work, so that the army may obtain the air arm appropriate to the tasks and requirements of forthcoming trials.

The Army'S Economic Work – Guard Service

Our army's economic work has undergone very big changes. Last year the army's independent economic work played a big role. There can be no question of that now. The so-called labour units were, by decree of the Council of Labour and Defence, detached from the Red Army and transferred to the People's Commissariat of Labour, and then disbanded. The army was reduced numerically and its attention had to be concentrated above all on the work for which it exists, that is, on preparing itself to defend the frontiers and the independence of our country. Use of the army for economic purposes, apart from combating natural calamities such as snow-drifts, floods, and so on, is necessarily being restricted to the army's own self-service needs: but in that sphere, too, the use of Red Army men's labour is permissible only in so far as it does not disrupt tasks of training and education. There are two spheres in which the army is performing important, although far from identical, economic functions. One is the sphere of educating the army itself in the spirit of an economical, conscientious and honest attitude to public property generally and, in particular, to the public property which has been entrusted to the Red Army. Precise accounting, careful maintenance, cleaning, repairing, again accounting and again maintenance – this is the economic work of the Red Army as such. The second, and principal, economic role of the Red Army consists in defending with its bayonets the economic work of the Russian workers and peasants, against any attacks from without.

In peacetime a very important part of the army's service is constituted by guard service. Let me say a couple of words about this. The role of the sentry who guards institutions, storehouses, the property of the Republic, is far from always and everywhere understood among us as it should be: this is the result of relations not yet being firmly settled, being still primitive. And yet, comrades, if you want to have an army – and you do want this – an army that knows its high calling, knows it thoroughly, even in peacetime, then start with the soldier on guard, start with the sentry. When a young peasant from Penza province, 19 years old, is on sentry duty, he is, in the words of our garrison regulations, an inviolable person, he is a manifestation of the supreme will of our state, and, consequently, he must be given full attention, he must be surrounded by an atmosphere of support and respect, so that he may feel, during the difficult hours in which he is on guard, that he is not just the rank-and-file soldier Ivanov, but the incarnation of the will of the Workers' State, which he is defending, rifle in hand.

The Red Navy

Comrades, I could apply much of what I have said to our Red Navy. But this also has had its own particular fate, and I will say a few words about that. The fate of the Red Navy has been profoundly tragic. In these years we have had at our disposal an ocean of land, and on that dry ocean we have manoeuvred. We advanced, we retreated, and we built our Red Army. We were without an ocean of water, they had cut us off from that. Our navy found itself locked up within narrow confines. Remember how our Navy went into the October Revolution, how many vanguard elements, the bravest, most resolute fighters in the land forces came from a naval background. And how many of them laid down their lives on all the fronts of our civil war! They gave splendid executives to the Soviet power in all parts of the country. The Navy was weakened when it was cut off from the sea, when it was shut up in narrow confines, and when, above all, the counter-revolution laid its hand on this complex instrument of war. A series of cruel, merciless blows was struck at our navy by the hands of the Russian White Guards and of foreign imperialism. Often our sailors, the best of them, feel in their hearts bitter resentment that the Navy has been, so to speak, forgotten for the time being: people talk about the Red Army, but they talk and think too little and too rarely about the Red Navy. We shall not here engage in prophecies. We do not know how world history will go, and we do not know in which direction or when its oceans and seas will start to flow. But we do know one thing, namely, that we need to conserve a nucleus of men and technique for our Navy, to defend our shores. Resuscitating the Navy within these defensive limits is a complex task. It can and must be accomplished, on the basis of the revival of the country's economy as a whole. Here I repeat what I said about the Red Army's technique. The Soviet power must do all it can to conserve and consolidate the basic manpower nucleus of the Red Navy, and to equip it within the necessary limits of technique needed for defence of the maritime approaches to the Soviet Federation. Within those limits, let no-one have any doubt of it, the Navy will perform its responsible task.

Universal Military Training

We have an important organ of the army in the apparatus for universal military training. We expected that transition to the militia system would take place more quickly and more directly. That did not happen. The transition proved to be slower, on account of the whole world situation. The contraction of the Army severely affected the universal military training apparatus. But, comrades, the universal military training apparatus has, in principle, been entrusted with a tremendous task, which will expand – namely, the pre-call-up preparation of the young generations. This means developing ways of transition to the militia system. It means developing sport in our country, linking this with military matters and with labour. And we say to the comrades in the universal military training apparatus: 'You are passing through dark days, conditions are difficult for you, but let the country breathe just a little more freely, let it obtain just a little more material prosperity, and then the universal military training apparatus will carry out an enormous amount of military-education work in our country.'

Banditry and the New Economic Policy

I must devote a considerable part of my exposition to the use of the Red Army to defend revolutionary order and the fight against counter-revolutionary banditry. I thus pass to a section of my report which is closely bound up with the internal political and economic life of the country. The first half of the year covered by my report was a time which saw an unprecedented development of banditry. The year was opened by Kronstadt, Tambov, bandit movements in Siberia, Caucasia, Transcaucasia and the Ukraine. The second half-year brought a radical change in this situation. Here and there, of course, bandit gangs still remain, but they are just gangs. Banditry as a broad social phenomenon, as the armed detachments of the broad kulak (and, in part, middle-peasant) masses in various districts, is a thing of the past. This we find to be the case in all parts of the country. Consequently, it is something more than an achievement by the War Department. It signifies a whole socio-political turn, and this is closely connected with the turn in our economic policy. If the question of our new economic policy were to be discussed here, if I were to be asked to reply, from the standpoint of my report, to the question: does our new economic policy signify a plus or a minus, a step forward or a step back, a movement towards communism or a retreat from it? If you were to ask me: what was our previous economic policy, a mistake or a necessity? (on that score a great many very intricate, very subtle questions could be formulated), I should answer: at the beginning of this year there was Kronstadt and there was Tambov, but now this is not so, and we are sure that there will be no recurrence there. Is the economic policy a step forward or a step back? The liquidation of banditry – not just military liquidation, but political liquidation as well – is a very clear, very distinct, direct, soldierly-sharp testimony that our military [\[2\]](#) [*sic*] policy is an immense step forward. True, it could be said that, as compared with the idea of all-planned, all-socialist all-construction in every corner and every sphere, on every square inch of our territory, it is a step back. But as compared with Kronstadt and Tambov it is an immense step forward. Was the old policy a mistake, and, if so, within what limits? This is now an academic question, which can be left to the historian to answer. But that the Soviet power correctly and in good time changed its policy when such change was clearly and distinctly required by the actual situation, and that it thereby created a better atmosphere, in the Red Army as well as elsewhere, created new attitudes within it – that is a fact, and upon this fact we are now building.

The history of banditry in our country is the history of landlord and bourgeois counter-revolution. Banditry is its expression and its instrument. The history of banditry is the history of counter-revolution's retreat from the Muscovite heartland to the borderlands. But, while withdrawing to the borderlands, banditry continued for a long time to be a broad movement of the rural upper circles, and, in part, of the urban petty-bourgeoisie, and this was true especially of the Ukraine. The Petlyura movement in the Ukraine began as a national-democratic movement. Later, it degenerated into armed detachments of the kulak upper circles, and towards the end it disintegrated and became transformed into bands and gangs which had lost support even among the upper strata of the Ukrainian countryside and which must now base themselves outside the Ukraine, mainly in Poland and Romania.

The Bandit Gangs and Foreign Capital

Let us take what I may perhaps be allowed to call the 'classical' case of banditry, namely, the Makhno movement in the Ukraine. Only yesterday an extraordinarily interesting document came into my hands. It must be mentioned that, thanks to the disintegration among the émigrés of all shades, we are getting hold of a huge quantity of documents issued by all these Russian ministries and Ukrainian ministries which reside in various streets in Paris, Prague, Vienna, Berlin and so on, communicating with each other, setting forth their plans, their 'reasons of state', and so on. Our intelligence directorate is duty-bound to reproduce these documents in a rather large number of copies, which imposes a heavy burden on us in view of our shortage of paper, which you know about. And here is one of these documents, – I am afraid of making a mistake: it is from ... Petlyura's department of foreign relations. Please do not think that I have made a mistake: this institution is so named – 'department of foreign relations'. I cannot give its exact address. Whoever is curious to know can find this out from our intelligence directorate. This department informs all Petlyura's envoys in Central Europe that Makhno and his bands are in Romania. Makhno, as is proper in a strictly constitutional state, where the liberties of citizens and émigrés are protected as they are protected in that classical country of freedom and constitutionality, Romania, has received a friendly welcome. In this report there are even some homely details about how six thoroughbred horses – which had, of course, been brought from the Ukraine – were sold in order to ensure that Makhno could live comfortably in Bucharest. And here he is, in this very 'department of foreign relations' of the Petlyurist Government, where they ask him about what is happening in the Ukraine. At first, of course, he replies in terms of exaggerated personal dignity, but later on the report says literally this: 'As a result of systematic questioning, Makhno's fate emerges as follows. After losing its footing in the Ukraine, after Wrangel's defeat, the Makhnovite organisation began to look for allies. With this aim it transferred a considerable part of its forces to the Don country, where, however, it discovered that there were no substantial anti-Bolshevik forces to be found on the Don, either, and the Don could give no help to the fight against the Bolsheviks. After that, they moved eastward, so as to make contact with Antonov; but there, too, they found the same situation as on the Don and in the Ukraine. From there they went to Kursk, where again they discovered that the anti-Bolshevik forces were insignificant and crushed.' I must mention that, a few lines earlier, the report says that the whole importance of the Makhno movement lay in Makhno's exploitation of the conflict between Wrangel and the Soviet power, and only in relation to the aims of that conflict was it able to play a certain role.

After that, the report goes on, the Makhnovites tried to make their way into Poland, but, as they feared that the Reds might bar their way, they took, instead, the road to Romania, a country where they also felt secure, and in this they were not mistaken, because, so far as Russian counter-revolutionary bands are concerned, Poland and Romania are merely two different rooms in one and the same flat.

We have another report, comrades, on the activity of the bands which are thrown on to our territory from time to time. This concerns the 'Black-Sea

Committee for the Salvation of Russia'. [2b] (They are saving Russia on the Black Sea, too!) This committee is headed by Socialist-Revolutionaries. Disclosures which have undoubted political significance have proved that the so-called Black-Sea peasants' militia led by the Black-Sea Committee for the Salvation of Russia, is financed by Armenian and Russian industrialists behind whom stand two groups: one (we can name them precisely) is British and the other Italian-British oil interests and Italian manganese interests. They, you see, are vitally 'interested' in the destiny of democracy in Caucasia and Transcaucasia! The Italian manganese merchants and the British connoisseurs of Baku oil have their military agency in this committee for salvation set up by the SRs. The activity of the SRs is expressed in the organising of frenzied bands armed with money from Italian and American [*sic*] industrialists, which slaughter Russian people and destroy Russian railway lines.

The Knights Of The Second International

There you have the living reality, and in the light of this living reality I recall that British socialists belonging to the Second International, like Citizen Henderson and some others, empty-headed democrats, although they now write in their publications about the need to give *de jure* recognition to the Soviet Government (to such fearful heights have these people risen!), at the same time they lay down their conditions for this: let the Soviet power withdraw its troops from Georgia, let it give the right of self-determination to the Georgian people – and then esteem for it on the part of the democrats of the whole world will mount to the point of giving *de jure* recognition to Soviet power in Russia. Splendid, Messrs Socialists of the Second International, Citizen Henderson and democrats whose heads are full of wind and other light materials, but let me ask you this: well, suppose we were to withdraw the Red troops – which, incidentally, live in harmony with the workers and peasants of Georgia – suppose, let's say, that the Georgian workers and peasants were to say that they agree to our withdrawing the Red forces: will you, esteemed democrats, in that case, give us a guarantee that the British oil-industrialists and the Italian manganese-industrialists will not establish in Tiflis and Baku the rule of a committee for the salvation of Baku oil from the workers of Azerbaijan? There's a question for you! They ask for trifles: they ask for the disarmament of Transcaucasia, and yet this very same report from which I have quoted to you says that in Prague (one of the centres where 'Russian' policy is made), in the émigré circles of Prague, it is regarded as a very big achievement that the Black-Sea Committee for the Salvation of Russia has at last concluded an agreement with a Georgian rebel committee for the seizure of Tiflis. The Black-Sea Committee for the Salvation of Russia, that is, the SR agents of British oil interests and Italian manganese interests, concludes an agreement with those interests' Georgian Menshevik agents. If we were so naive as to believe in the windy arguments of these same pseudo-democrats and were to withdraw our forces, if the Georgian workers were to ask us to do this, then through Batum would come, just as the Japanese came through Vladivostok (the British know the sea-routes well, they are good at geography), through Batum would come elements, either in SR-and-Menshevik or in openly-monarchist dress, who would open the road for foreign conquest further eastward, towards Baku.

We can say to the Second International: if you want to test the strength of

the principles of democracy, turn your eyes a little away from Transcaucasia and take a look at the Far East. There we also have a republic which is completely democratic, where the government is elected on the basis of universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage. The British government recently concluded a very important agreement with Japan, yet only the other day Japan, acting through its military agents, the Kappelites, seized Khabarovsk from us. Khabarovsk fell. A town in a democratic republic fell before the onslaught of monarchist bands, armed against democracy from the resources of foreign imperialism. But, comrades, before I speak in more detail about this, I must mention an example which is nearer to hand.

Poland and Banditry

I have said already that, as banditry, forced out by the turn in our internal policy directed towards establishing more correct relations between the working class and the peasantry, retreated to the borderlands, a moment came when the bandits passed beyond our frontiers. I mentioned incidentally that they passed principally into two countries which are sufficiently well known to all of you. And if you were to ask me, trying to catch me out, why we cannot reduce the Red Army, I should point, comrades, to the map which hangs here. [3] This map could be variously titled: it could be called: 'Russo-Polish (or Soviet-Polish) relations', it could be called: 'The Treaty of Riga in operation', it could be called: 'The triumph of international law', or it could be called: 'The defence of Western civilisation against Soviet barbarism'. This red line on the map is our frontier with Poland, as laid down by the Treaty of Riga. This dotted red line is the frontier which separates us from Bessarabia, which was seized from us. The Treaty of Riga was signed on March 18, 1921; here [*pointing to the map*] is its history since then. I don't know whether these arrows have been marked clearly enough, whether they are sufficiently visible, especially to those of you who are sitting at a distance – I think these innocent arrows should have been made clearer, thicker, so that they could be seen from all the seats in this hall, without exception. These arrows are of different colours, but they have one and the same meaning. They are the bands which from over there, from Poland [*pointing to the map*] have been sent in here, across our frontier. The arrows are of different colours because they refer to different periods, and not because they differ in quality. They are all of one quality, that which bears the trademark of the Second Department of Poland's General Staff. Some of them are smaller, some larger. This, however, did not depend on the goodwill or ill-will of the Polish General Staff, but only on the forces at its disposal. It did what it could to throw on to our territory bands as big as it could manage, so as to do us as much harm as possible.

Now look again. This is the frontier with Poland according to the Riga Treaty of March 18. You will see, comrades, how it is all indented and pierced by these arrows. This is no joke, not subject-matter for a newspaper-article. What we see here are systematically-organised bands which are disrupting our economic life, our constructive work, every month and every week. Some of the arrows are longer, like poisonous snakes, some are shorter, like leeches. All are directed into the body of the Russian people, the Russian workers and peasants. All this, do you see, is in accordance with the Treaty of Riga. If you turn the pages of the book of our negotiations with Poland since the Treaty of Riga – I do not even speak of our attempts to make peace with Poland before

the war, before the Treaty of Riga – then after a certain time no right-minded persons will believe what is in this book. They will say: it cannot be that the Russian workers and peasants, even though exhausted and weakened, should have shown such incredible restraint, such amazing persistence in struggling to maintain peace and avoid bloody war. Remember all the protests by Chicherin and Rakovsky regarding the bandit activities of Savinkov and Balakhovich. Remember the latest episode, at the end of September, when it seemed that in Poland's upper circles they really wanted to go to war with us, whatever the cost. [4] At that time the Council of People's Commissars sent me to have a look at what was happening on our western frontier and check on what state our troops were in. The commander-in-chief came too. That was in September but on October 6 we received good news from Comrade Karakhan, our ambassador in Poland: a new agreement had been signed with Dombiski, there would be no more bands, all active counter-revolutionary thugs were to be expelled from Poland. That was on October 6. But on October 25-26, in that same month, from that same Poland, these [*pointing to the map*] very long arrows, very big bands, were hurled at us.

I am addressing the Congress of Soviets, the speeches are being taken down in shorthand, and I must impose some restraint on myself in my choice of expressions. But that is hard to do – very hard.

What does this mean, comrades? And can we go on living in a situation in which we are constantly subjected to these raids and blows – 'pinpricks', it may be said? But pinpricks, too, are not such harmless things. Doctors tell us that it is enough to prick or cut a section of skin in order to bring about the death of a whole organism. What is this if it is not an attempt, under the guise of peace, constantly to rend and demolish the outer integument of Soviet Russia, so as by such exhaustion-inducing measures to cause us to perish? I ask you, can we go on living in such a situation? Impossible! And that is why we need the Red Army. And that is why we must build and strengthen it.

Romania And Banditry

After that, it remains to say a little about the second 'room' in the same flat, about Romania, with whom we have a provision-al, temporary frontier. We tried to negotiate a permanent frontier and permanent relations, but we did not succeed, for Romania actually broke off negotiations because she did not want to remain neutral in the event of an attack on us by another state. Across this dotted line the Romanians hurl bands at us in exactly the same way as the Poles do across this unbroken line, and at the same intervals.

The latest appearance of Tyutyunik's bands in the Ukraine was liquidated – they were routed, and in part thrown back over the frontier. From the standpoint of internal politics, the most important fact is that these bands, the latest bands of Tyutyunik and Paliy, met with absolutely no sympathy in the localities; they wandered about in a vacuum, and that was precisely why they were soon liquidated, and the bulk of them ground to dust. We know who is behind this – it is not only Poland and Romania. We know that, in the last analysis, the Second Department of the Polish General Staff and the army headquarters at Bendery and in Bucharest are merely relay-stations for French imperialism. We have no doubts on that score. And the news which the

telegraph brings us, that the negotiations will soon take place, those negotiations which we have long been waiting for, which we are waiting for now, and into which we shall most willingly enter, this news about forthcoming negotiations for the establishment of peace, with Soviet Russia included, will become more concrete and meaningful for us as soon as France ceases to subsidise the bands which violate our peace, our labour and our frontiers.

The Far East

Here, comrades, I come to a question which is of particular topical importance, the question of the Far East, where, I repeat, we have lost Khabarovsk. We have, of course, temporarily lost, and then later recovered for good, many a town more important, bigger and nearer to Moscow than Khabarovsk – but in this case the conflict is profoundly instructive in character, not only for us but also for the working class of the whole world. Monsieur Briand has said more than once, and in Washington in particular, that he is waiting, waiting impatiently for the time to come when a government will have been formed in Russia which expresses the national will. The national will, in their conventional language, which we consider a language for defrauding the working masses, means a government artificially fabricated by means of pressure from above and oppression by capital, under the fiction of universal, direct, equal and secret suffrage. But look comrades, at the Far-Eastern Republic: what is it? It consists of Russian peasants and Russian workers. Why is it 'Far-Eastern' and not Russian, why does it exist separately, and not with us? Why are there no soviets there? Who is in power there? The Communists. On what basis? On the basis of universal suffrage, of democracy. Why? Because the peasants and workers of the Far East have said to the Japanese, American and French imperialists: 'You want democracy – well, here's a democracy for you, elected by us, on the basis of universal suffrage. You have promised that if Russia becomes a democratic republic you won't touch her – well, here's the Far-Eastern Republic, as the flank of that Soviet Federation.' So, does this Far-Eastern democracy enjoy independence and inviolability? Perhaps thugs and bandits of all denominations are not tearing it to pieces, perhaps in May of this year (in which the same thing had already happened once before) there did not take place over there a military *coup d'état* carried out under the guidance of Japanese instructors? What a tremendous exposure of their utterly false democratism! We, comrades, have so far done too little to disseminate the appeal of the People's Assembly of the Far-Eastern Republic. I cannot read it all, unfortunately. Listen, comrades, peasant and worker delegates, listen to the voice which comes to us from the Far East, from eight or nine thousand *versts* away:

'For the fourth year already the Japanese bayonet is violating the will of the Russian people. Japan began by landing troops at Vladivostok. Now, in the fourth year of Japanese intervention, it is in practice master of the entire Russian coast of the Pacific Ocean. Japanese fortifications, trenches and barbed-wire entanglements have been established on Russian territory. Japanese mines have been laid in Russian rivers. The mouth of our principal river, the Amur, is not only closed to our trading vessels but has been transformed into a base for hostile military forces, a base from which they will carry out attacks and from which Japan will extend and continue her conquests.

'Having seized the lower reaches of the Amur, Japan seized Russian Sakhalin in the same forcible way. There the Japanese lord it as though in their own

country, selling off our timber, our fish and our mineral wealth. No Russian may enter the island of Sakhalin or the lower reaches of the Amur without permission from the Japanese authorities.'

At the end of this appeal, our Far East says: 'The people of Russia's Far East have lifted their voices more than once in protest against the wrongs and the violence committed by Japan. So far there has been no response to our protest.' The reference is, of course, to the capitalist states, the 'great democracies', those which assembled in Washington, whither we were not invited, but where they decided without us the fate of the Pacific Ocean. Look at the map. The Pacific Ocean is a large mass of water ruled over by the navies of the United States, Japan and Britain, and these states, together with France, have concluded an agreement concerning the Pacific Ocean. But this ocean has two coasts, one American and the other Asian. And many hundreds of versts of that Asian shore enclose the domain of the Russian peasants and workers. In Washington, however, they are settling this question without us. Nor is that all. After the conclusion of the agreement between the four imperialist states, bands whose starting point was Vladivostok gathered strength, moved northward in the direction of Khabarovsk, seized that town, an important point on the Amur, and are now trying to advance westward. Who arms them? Japan. The three other partners allow this to happen, which means that they instigate it. A voice of protest reaches us from the Far East, a voice that summons us to help. And, of course, the All-Russia Congress of Soviets cannot ignore the voice of our far-off brothers who today, at this time when we are discussing the question, are defending, 8,000 versts way, the flank of the Soviet Federation. For there can be no doubt that the Far-Eastern Republic is merely a defensive formation prompted by the 'reason of state' of the Russian working man in the Far East, who has endeavoured in this way to hold back the onslaught of Oriental imperialism.

We see now this fact of life. We fling captured Khabarovsk in the face of all the European pseudo-democrats. We fling it in the face of the Second International and we say: so much for your shield of democracy – it has protected nothing. Perhaps you will tell us to withdraw our forces from the Far Eastern Republic as well? But the trouble is that there are too few of them there. We say that, while the attack from the East to the West has not, up to now, been held back by the democratic shield, we do not doubt that, in some month, sooner or later, this attack will be halted by the Red bayonet. We have retreated more than once, comrades, and we shall probably have to retreat again more than once in our lifetime. We possess patience and endurance. And therefore, across those 8,000 versts we reply to the Far East that, while we cannot help so quickly and decisively as we should wish, nevertheless our help will come! We call on the workers and peasants of the Far East to remember that neither the fate of Khabarovsk nor that of Vladivostok has been decided by those 'Four' for good and all. Besides the Four there is a Fifth – the Soviet Republic and its Red Army.

The Bands in Karelia

And, finally, our most recent experience where democracy and international law are concerned is depicted on another, more modest map [\[5\]](#), where the Karelian Labour Commune is shown, lying to the west *[sic]* [\[6\]](#) of the frontier which we voluntarily granted to Finland, taking its economic interests into

account and reconciling them with our own. To the right of this line lies the Karelian Labour Commune. It covers an area twice the size of Belgium, with a sparse, scattered population of about 150,000, spread over a huge, often impassable expanse. In this Karelian Labour Commune the Soviets of the working Karelians rule. Here, on this side, under the fiction of universal suffrage, foreign capital rules, acting through its agents, the Finnish bourgeoisie. During our peace negotiations with Finland our diplomats announced, by way of information, that Karelia was being given autonomy, like all the other parts of our many-millioned federation that wish to have this. But the Finnish ruling class is dissatisfied with the class content of Karelia's autonomy. They prefer, they rate higher, their own form of state self-determination. We knew that when we signed the treaty with them. We knew that this was a treaty between a proletariat organised in its own state and a bourgeoisie organised in its own state, a bourgeoisie which had crushed its own proletariat and killed many thousands of workers. We knew that, and we signed the treaty knowing beforehand that our autonomy would differ from the Finnish concept, just as the proletariat and the working peasantry differ from the bourgeois exploiters. That, after all, was the meaning of the peace treaty with Finland. And there is nothing surprising in that.

But in the autumn of this year, when the frightful spectre of famine arose in the Volga region, when the enemy thought that the hour of doom was near for the Soviet power, they began preparing, on that frontier as well, to launch an autumn attack upon us. They fixed this, originally, for August 28, but then postponed it to September, and then again to October. And here, comrades, these arrows [*pointing to the map*] show the White-Finnish bands that were sent from Finland into Karelia. Their numbers and their direction are shown here quite precisely. These bands started to cross into our territory on October 24 and 25 – on almost the very same day as the bands of Tyutyunik and Paliy, and in fulfilment of one and the same plan.

As a result of the reduction in our army, no troops whatsoever had been left in the Karelian Commune. We had removed the one brigade which was there. Why? We had no reason at all to suspect that even a regiment, let alone a brigade, was needed in those parts for the maintenance of internal order. True, we miscalculated where our north-western neighbour was concerned. We miscalculated, and unquestionably, we, as the War Department, we must bear responsibility for that. We did not trust in the fiction of international law, of course we did not, but, all the same, with all our lack of confidence in bourgeois fictions, we did, this time, accord too much significance to the letter of a treaty. Of that we were guilty. We withdrew the brigade, leaving merely weak frontier units that were capable only of combating smugglers but not of conducting military operations. And on October 24, 25 and 26 the bands began to move in from Finland. Expanses that are boundless, roads that are impassable. While we were concentrating the necessary forces to be sent there, these bands were establishing themselves in the frontier zone. All bourgeois Europe reported that our routes to the North had been cut, that we were cut off from Murmansk, and so on and so forth.

Nothing of the sort! The bands never reached the railway-line. They were dozens of versts distant from it. And what is most instructive, and gives one a clear idea of what they are like, is that they are afraid, in general, of advancing eastward. These are not bands of local men, as the Finnish press lyingly asserts, with the foreign press following it, when they write about a

'revolt' in Karelia. There has been no revolt in Karelia, but there has been an invasion from across the Finnish frontier by White-Karelian, émigré and White-Finnish bands, led by Finnish officers – specifically, officers of Finland's 2nd Division. These bands began their operations in accordance with an agreement made with the Petlyurists and Savinkovites, an agreement reached through Viktor Savinkov, who went to Finland for the purpose of organising these actions.

Furthermore, the Finnish Government – isn't it amazing? – put in a complaint to the League of Nations, that is, it stated that in the Soviet Republic the Karelian people have Soviet self-determination. The League of Nations is to decide the question of Karelian self-determination. How the Finnish politicians imagine this is going to be done, I don't know. The question of the self-determination of the working people of Karelia can be settled otherwise than it has been settled up to now only by armed force. This is what the White bands are trying to do. Force is their argument. Against the argument of force we counterpose force. But what is the League of Nations supposed to do? Japan and France belong to the League of Nations. We are having to talk with the Japanese member of the League of Nations now, somewhere in the area of Khabarovsk, and the conversation of our Red Army units and guerrilla detachments is not carried on in the diplomatic language of the League of Nations. Is it contemplated that the League of Nations should engage in armed intervention here in Karelia? If so, then that means that Finland is going to conclude an agreement with some third state for the purpose of armed invasion of our borders – because diplomatic intervention merely serves to clear the way for armed intervention. Whether Finland wants this is not clear to us. We are not clear as to how far the Finnish Government appreciates what is happening, being, as it is, subject to incitement not only by the White-Guard émigrés but also by the extreme elements of Finnish, chauvinism and, especially, by foreign imperialism. It would appear that the Finnish Government is merely drifting. At first it tried to resist, then it began to connive, and it ended by openly supporting the White-Guard bands. We receive information that a band is being formed in some place in Finland, and within a week or two we record the presence of this band in some place in Karelia. The Finnish Government provides these bands with the military supplies they need. Our commander-in-chief is now in the area of Soviet Karelia, with the task of examining the situation at first hand and giving the necessary direction to the operations which are in prospect there. This morning he reported to me as follows, and I consider it possible to make this report public: 'A survey of the state of feeling in the *volosts* shows that, out of 46 *volosts*, 26 are indubitably and actively on our side. The attitude of 14 is passive or undecided, and those where the Whites meet with a certain sympathy number 11' – out of 46.

I ask you to remember that the expanse of territory concerned is enormous, and the roads are difficult to traverse, so that there are many *volosts* there whose sentiments have not yet been elucidated.

'However, this figure of 11 *volosts* is obviously exaggerated. According to all the reports received, manifestations of banditry have been observed only in 7 *volosts* (Tunguda, Reboły, Voknavolok, Tikhtozero, Ukhtitsa, Porosozero and Maslozero).

'The most striking proof of the loyalty of the inhabitants to the Soviet power is the fact that destruction or damage by the population to our lines of communication, which run quite unprotected over immense areas, has been

recorded only in the zone immediately adjoining the frontier, and there has been only one case of this.

'The commanders of the bandit units are either Finnish elements from beyond the frontier, officers of the Finnish army, or local elements who served in Miler's [7] counter-revolutionary army. Words of command are, in many of these units, given in the Finnish language. Officers from Finland's 2nd Division have arrived in Karelia.

'In the reports we have captured (for example, those signed with the Finnish surname Ekkel) there are statistical data on the number of households in the villages, which testifies to the alien character of the bands.'

Further on in the commander-in-chief's report there is a list of the new bands of small size which have appeared from over the frontier in the last few days, and the statement that during engagements these bands use signal rockets to communicate with each other and with their headquarters across the frontier.

'When our intelligence agents abroad report the formation in Finland of a particular band, these reports are always confirmed by the appearance of a new band on our territory, at the corresponding point.

'Men in Finnish naval uniform have been observed among the bands. Finnish-made cartridges have been found, from the Riikhimaki factory. [8]

'The bands are obviously afraid of getting cut off from their base across the frontier. All the foreign reports concerning the Murmansk railway, about how it has been destroyed and so on, are products of fantasy. The line is unharmed.

'Absolutely no addition to the strength of the bands through volunteering by the local inhabitants has been observed. Everywhere that we have come into contact with the enemy, as in the Rugoozero direction, we have noted decrease and not increase in the size of the bands. Their reinforcements come from outside.'

Meanwhile. Finland, in the persons of its activists, that is, the extreme chauvinists, grows more and more reckless in what it prints in its chauvinist press. Thus, you can read, day after day now, in the leading Finnish newspapers, that Soviet Russia is insufferable as a neighbour. The phraseology about being a barrier against Soviet barbarism is familiar not only to the rogues of the Paris boulevards but to the journalists of Helsingfors as well. They write that it is for them, do you see, insufferable to have Russia as a neighbour! What do you require us to do, gentlemen from Helsingfors? We cannot transfer our country elsewhere. We live where we live, and we shall stay where we are. They don't like the self-determination of Karelia and they don't like the self-determination of Petrograd – a magnitude greater than Karelia, and very near the Finnish frontier. They would prefer bourgeois self-determination for Petrograd, just as we – and we do not hide this, for it is no secret – would prefer proletarian self-determination for Finland, and we say this frankly in our newspapers. But it is one thing to express one's preference in a newspaper and another thing to discharge such bandit arrows as these [pointing to the map]. We are not sending such arrows into Finland, because we are honourably fulfilling the treaty: even though we have no liking at all for that treaty, we fulfil it, because this conduct is dictated by reason of state.

The Finnish Army numbers 35,000 men. The population of Finland – I don't know whether the workers killed by the Finnish bourgeoisie have been properly deducted from this figure – amounts to 3,300,000. In the Finnish Army the

officers openly boast (and this is said in the Finnish press) that Mannerheim – you know him [9] – will soon march on Petrograd. There has been some dancing around Petrograd more than once already, and the Finns have played some part in it. Many of you, both in the time of Yudenich and in the time of Kronstadt, when Finland's Mannerheims tried to establish contact with the mutinous fortress and fleet, enjoyed a close-up view of this. We have had the devil's dance around Petrograd more than once, and we have had enough of it. Just as we do not want to put up any longer with this way of fulfilling the Treaty of Riga, so we cannot put up with constant shameful threatening of proletarian Petrograd!

Comrades, at the Congress of Soviets, where delegates of the workers and peasants are assembled, I do not have to say how sincerely and honestly we want peace; but peace demands that Karelia be cleared of the bands, and we advise Finland, advise her very strongly, not to put an elbow or a hand over that line [*pointing to the map*] because we are going to pass along there in the next few days. With full awareness of our responsibility we advise the Finnish commanders not to be in any hurry to measure the distance between Helsingfors and Petrograd, because, if it should come to measuring that distance – and we do not want to do this – it may turn out that the road from Petrograd to Helsingfors is shorter than the road from Helsingfors to Petrograd.

We Want Peace

After what I have said, there is no need for me to prove to the Congress of Soviets that we need a strong Red Army precisely because we want peace!

You have come here from different places, some of you from the starving Volga region, and our starving and dying Volga peasants, men and women, and the peasants' children, who are dying before their parents' eyes, do not want to conquer other people's lands – that is obvious without any need for long discourses. One would have to possess the very great stupidity of foreign imperialist journalists, ministers hostile to us and parliamentary windbags to suppose that we, who are now engaged in healing our frightful wounds amid terrible economic ruin, are setting ourselves aggressive military tasks, that we are preparing to enslave somebody or attack somebody. Falsehood, slander, lies!

Yes, we still retain an army of over 1,300,000 men. That is true. But what about the international situation, the imperialist encirclement? And what about the size of our country? If you compare the two countries in terms of population, our army is less than half the size of the army of France, and if you compare these countries in terms of territory, our army is only one-eighteenth as big as the French. But we have to defend our territory, the land that lies under our feet. And what about the dangers of the world situation? What is dangerous in France's position? Briand spoke about that in Washington. The danger to France consists in this, that if her grip weakens, those whom imperialist France is strangling will try to get up from the ground, on to their knees and, maybe, even on to their feet. That is the danger threatening France. But if our grip were to weaken, they would force us to the ground and, probably, strangle us. If one measures the extent of territory, the size of

population and the degree of danger, we need an army one hundred times as big as that of France – and even then its relative size would not match theirs. Ours is the most defensive of all the armies in the world. Have we not proved that, are we not proving it every day? Has not our policy been an intense struggle for peace, at the price of very heavy concessions? And what of our recent statement about recognising the Tsarist debts? Yes, you know it, the whole world knows it, that we, a proud and victorious revolution, having taken power and defended ourselves against countless enemies, have agreed, given certain conditions, to recognise the old Tsarist debts – may they be thrice accursed. We have announced this. Why? Out of reverence for what the usurers of the whole world regard as sacred obligations? Nothing of the sort! This is not payment for the past, because this was not our past but a past that was against us – no, this was payment to safeguard our future. We say: if those who lent money to the Tsars will agree, in exchange for our paying them the Tsars' debts, to leave us in peace, to enable us to breathe, to live and to work, then we are ready to pay them ransom, not with the blood of Red Army men but with the produce of our labour, with gold.

It is reported that the British and French merchants and industrialists are saying in the stock-exchanges: that's not yet all – besides the state debts there are the claims of the aggrieved private investors. There is no difference of principle here, so far as we are concerned. Let us talk together about it! Our diplomats have spoken about this matter more than once.

Our diplomats are very patient. They are used to propaganda, and, patiently, persistently, day after day, when fresh demands are put to them, they say: let us sit down at the table and discuss claims both governmental and private. And there is, of course, no difference, so far as we are concerned, between these claims: all that matters to us is the conditions – that and only that. This kind of declaration, which we have made many times, signifies our endeavour to buy ourselves off from war. The Treaty of Riga was such an attempt. But what is each one of the arrows on this map? A provocation to war – precisely, each one, taken separately, for they do not coincide in time. But how have we responded? We have exterminated each band, taken separately, and we have made our payments under the Treaty of Riga, according to those articles which obligated us to make this or that payment.

It cannot, of course, be said of us that we are non-resisters, disposed to offer first this cheek and then the other to be struck. No, we are revolutionaries and we know how to fight. But in the struggle for peace we show the maximum self-restraint. Not indefinitely, however, but only up to a certain limit. And, comrades, there is danger that somebody is going to go beyond that limit. On the one hand, every day sees many telegrams appearing in our press about how recognition of the Soviet power is not far off: how they are assembling in London or at Cannes, and are going to invite us there, and intend to talk definitely about recognising the Soviet power. Everywhere, of course, that they invite us to engage in negotiations for establishing peace, even if it be not such a peace as we regard as just and necessary, we shall go and, I hope, reach agreement. But it is precisely this atmosphere of impending changes in the international situation that compels our sworn foes, the White-Guard émigrés and the extremists among the foreign imperialists, to say to themselves: strike the iron while it is hot, or soon it will be cold. The last months, perhaps the last weeks, remain, and if a decisive blow is struck at the

Soviet power now, then, perhaps all these negotiations will miscarry. It is in this connection that a development is taking place in the policy of the imperialist cliques of Poland and Romania – where, by the way, Averescu, with whom we had a score to settle, and who in 1918 signed an undertaking to return Bessarabia to us after two months, has been replaced as Prime Minister by Take Jonescu, whose entire political career has consisted in rabid incitement of the Romanian bourgeoisie against the Ukraine and the whole Soviet Federation. In these circumstances we need to maintain twofold, tenfold vigilance.

Release Marty and Badina!

I will mention an episode which shows how the proximity of recognition of the Soviet power is interwoven with bloodthirsty hatred of everything that actually tends towards rapprochement with Soviet Russia. You remember the days when Briand was making his speech in Washington, a speech filled with hatred of the Soviet Republic, a speech in which he depicted us as a people who are seeking to enslave other peoples, a menace to civilisation, and so on. In those same days and hours the proletariat of Paris was electing to the Paris municipal council two convicts, Marty and Badina. Marty and Badina are two French sailors. They were in the French naval vessels which operated against Odessa, in the Black Sea, and when the order was given to bombard Soviet Odessa, Marty and Badina gave the signal for mutiny: the French sailors refused to bombard Odessa and the ships were withdrawn. These heroes were arrested. If Marty and Badina were not shot, it was only because all the working people of France were against the war on Soviet Russia: they were sentenced, instead, to many years of penal servitude. And on that day when Briand, that sham representative of the French people, on the basis of universal suffrage, was slandering the Soviet Republic in Washington, the workers of Paris made a correction to Briand's speech by electing to the municipal council two convicts – our friends Marty and Badina. A wave of protest rolled over all France, with the demand for freedom for Marty and Badina. How did the French Government respond to this – that government which is now supposed to be going to negotiate with us, and which, therefore, must admit that Marty and Badina were right when they did not want to bombard Odessa? By way of mercy, they are 'releasing' the sailors from the convict prison and sending them to Africa, to Biribi [\[10\]](#), to the disciplinary battalions, where hundreds and thousands of rebellious citizens of France have perished under the scorching sun. And we here, comrades, in the Congress of Soviets, say: 'Gentlemen, bourgeois of France, do you want to conclude an agreement with us? As regards the Tsarist debts and other claims, we are ready to negotiate with you. We are ready to do this because you still exist; but if you want the Russian workers and peasants to believe that you really do wish to conclude an agreement with us, and not to torment us further in the way you have tormented us up to now, then give us a little earnest for our future payment to you of the Tsarist debts – give us back Marty and Badina!'

Our Revolutionary Unity

True, the press and politicians who are hostile to us say that it may be the case that the Soviet Government is really in favour of peace, but there exists

in Russia a war party which has large, ambitious plans and wants aggressive wars and the enslavement of other countries. They do indeed depict us in their own likeness. We know a country – and it is not separated from us by any seas – in which, when the minister of foreign affairs signs a treaty, the country's chief of state and military authorities send out bands to make up for this act of his. There is such a country. We say that what we see in that case is a division in the will of the ruling classes, and this is a very dangerous situation, because division of the will leads to uncoordinated, that is, unwise and sometimes senseless actions; and unwise, uncoordinated and uncontrolled actions in the sphere of international relations sometimes lead to wars, where this eventuality could have been completely avoided by the exercise of goodwill and common sense. But, comrades, if *here*, in *our* Soviet Republic, which has undergone so many changes in these four years, which has fought, which has tacked and manoeuvred both in the economic field and in the sphere of pure Soviet state there had been so much as a hint, even just a little hint, of division in the Government's will, a hint of conflict between a peace party and a war party, we should have had a hundred occasions to perish during these four years. What constitutes our strength, comrade delegates – and let this be known to all journalists and diplomats, both those who are present here and those who are absent – is our unshakable revolutionary unity. It is false – a childish delusion, or else a deliberate slander – that among us there is a party, or even a group, or individual persons, who want war. If such there were, then we should say that they must be put into a strait-jacket. But there are no such persons among us. Nobody here wants war. This is proved by our entire policy. Both our guiding Party and the Soviet power say that we all want peace – but they are not giving us peace. And so we have to be ready to deal with the possibility that irresponsible groups and cliques outside Russia may bring the disasters of war down upon their people and ours, despite the fact that all the advantages of peace are within reach. We do not have a war party and a peace party, but we do have a practical division of labour. And I think, comrades, that the Red Army wants peace no less than the whole country does – that same Red Army which, if need be, will fight, and will fight to a finish.

Our agitation will not consist of calls to launch an offensive. The Russian peasant and worker have no need of that. They love their country. These peasant and worker statesmen stand at the helm, in the person of their Soviets. What do they need? Calls to action? No. They need to understand the international situation clearly, to understand what is, so as to know which way to steer the ship. All our propaganda and agitation in the army will consist in explaining to our younger brothers, our sons and grandsons, that which is. This map here we shall show not just to the commanders but to every rank-and-file Red Army man, and this other one as well, and all through this winter we shall explain to the Red Army what is. And what is? There is our fight for peace, on the one hand, and, on the other, there is tireless, merciless provocation. But we are in no case dummies of international patience. And we are in no case agreeable that the provocateurs of various countries shall sharpen upon our bodies their valour or their insolence. The danger has grown in recent weeks, not declined, despite the news of intensified talk about recognising us. This we shall say to every commander and commissar, and the commissar and the commander will say this to every Red Army man. We shall check both from the reports of our intelligence agents and from the leading articles of the Polish, Finnish, French and other newspapers, day by day, how feverishly the pulse of world imperialism is beating. And we shall say to our Red Army man: prepare

for the worst, because we, the Communist Party, and the whole world working class cannot yet, today, guarantee our country against new wars.

This winter we shall diligently study the soldier's trade and prepare assiduously for the spring and summer, for all those dangers which arise for us out of the international situation in all its innumerable contradictions. This winter we shall be more or less safeguarded against unexpected attacks (except on the part of Finland, for the Finns are good at moving on skis). But with the spring, and the spring thaw on the roads for wheeled traffic, there will open for us – one can't say a series of unexpected events, for to some extent we are expecting them, but hard trials, in new and bloody turns of history. That is not out of the question. I should not wish that you suppose from what I have said that the danger is greater than it is. It is better to exaggerate danger than to underestimate it. We go forward into the spring and the summer with our unconquerable striving for peace, but at the same time we go forward strengthened, braced and trained, having lost nothing of the experience gained in our four years of civil war. And if a blow should be struck against our frontiers, our inviolability and freedom, we shall say: we did not want that, we were not trying to expand, we have too much work on our hands as it is – but, since you wanted it, so much the worse for you. The year 1922 is not the year 1918 or the year 1919. In 1922 we are ready to protect the present Soviet frontiers; but, if you force us to it, we shall demonstrate that in 1922 it is easier to expand the Soviet frontiers than to reduce and contract them.

Endnotes

1. The resolution adopted by the Ninth Congress of Soviets (December 22-27, 1921), on Comrade Trotsky's report, 'declared the complete willingness of the working people to make the sacrifices necessary to maintain the Red Army and approves the measures taken by the Government with the aim of improving the position of the Red Army men in respect of food, accommodation, clothing and hygiene, and also of increasing their pay.' The resolution also noted that the organs of government had the duty of creating conditions of existence for the commanding personnel such as would make it easier for the commanders and commissars to carry on their extremely responsible work of training and educating the Red Army. The Congress approved the system of attaching military units to local and central Soviet organs, and recognised as suitable for further development the measures taken by the War Department with a view to establishing in the army more correct organisational relations towards it, and increasing, along with political consciousness, also the spirit of economy, tidiness and precision, among commanders and commissars and also among all the rank-and-file soldiers.

2. 'Military' is presumably a mistake for 'economic', which the sense appears to require here.

2b. 'Black Sea' refers here to the former Black Sea District, along the eastern shore of the Black Sea, including Novorossiisk and Sochi.

3. The report *There are no fronts, but danger exists* and the report *Springtime machinations by our enemies* were published as separate pamphlets by the Supreme Military Publishing Council, Moscow, 1922. See Map No.3.

4. The reference is to the Polish ultimatum of September 18, on which see notes 8 and 50.

5. See Map No.4.

6. 'West' is evidently a slip for 'east'. The Karelian Labour Commune was formed in June 1920. In July 1923 it became the Karelian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.

[7.](#) General Ya.K. Miller commanded the White forces on the Archangel front in 1919.

[8.](#) Riikhimaki is an industrial centre about 40 miles north of Helsinki.

[9.](#) See Volume I, Chapter 8, note 25.

[10.](#) Biribi is not a place-name, but the name of a game played in Algeria with nut-shells. The punishment companies were used for stonebreaking, and the prisoners compared the fragments of stone to these nut-shells: 'Biribi' became synonymous with the punishment companies.

Military-Political Surveys

Springtime Machinations by Our Enemies

Speech at the Ceremonial Meeting of the Moscow Soviet on the Anniversary of the February Revolution, March 12, 1922

* * *

Comrades, the purpose of my report is purely practical – to issue a warning, first of all to certain people beyond the borders of the allied and fraternal Soviet republics, and then, and principally, to the working masses within the borders of our republic.

The Postponement of the Genoa Conference

For several weeks now we have been living through a period of preparation for the Genoa Conference ... The fact that the Soviet Republic was invited to Genoa was received by us as a major political event, and all of us, each one in accordance with his position, 'with the weapon at his disposal', engaged in the preparation of practical, serious proposals for this conference, in which the representatives of forty states were to take part. The conference was fixed for the beginning of March – the 6th, or the 8th, I think – and then a complicated game began to be played around the conference, a game in which we did not participate, but which was played by others around us and against us. [\[1\]](#)

'From the point of view of practical tasks and not that of a game of diplomatic leap-frog, therefore, Comrade Trotsky has defined the position more correctly than anybody else. The day after the news was received that all the arrangements for Genoa had been made... he issued the following order: "Let every man of the Red Army get a clear understanding of the international situation. We know definitely that there is a permanent group over there who want to try their hand at intervention. We shall be on the alert. Let every man of the Red Army know all about the diplomatic game and what is meant by force of arms, which, up to now, has decided all class conflicts.'"

In the person of Briand, France had agreed to the date, but in the person of Poincaré [\[2\]](#) she demanded a postponement. Then an occupational accident happened to the Parliamentary ministry in Italy [\[3\]](#), and hospitable Italy requested a postponement. Britain asserted that there would be no postponement, and Lloyd George, the initiator of the proposal, as his opponents say (and perhaps his friends think), linked with this proposal the fate of his ministry. Nevertheless, the conference was postponed, for more than a month. Its new date is April 10. Whether it will be held on that date we do not know. It is to be hoped that it will be. Nevertheless, the very fact of postponement has already acquired major political significance, because the conference had been arranged. The whole world was sure that Lloyd George did not approach us accidentally, as a result of some personal improvisation on his part. Lloyd George occupies too responsible a position to play tricks on us,

still less on his own people

Then rumours began to be heard about waverings in the position of this or that government, references to Holy Week and Easter turned up (as you know, Holy Week and Easter are unexpected cosmic events which can never be foreseen from the calendar), and, of course, Lloyd George and the others were not answerable 'for this *force majeure*'. And we were already inclining toward the idea that this was a bad joke. Then suddenly it turned out that, for various reasons, the conference was being put off for more than a month

Today we do not have even that limited certainty about April that in February we had about March. If the fall of Bonomi postponed the conference for a month, for what length of time would an international gathering be put off, if, for example, something similar were to happen in Great Britain? After all, it cannot be said that the laws of nature render this an impossibility!

The Postponement of Genoa and the Small States

This struggle against the Genoa Conference, which has been converted into a struggle to postpone the Conference, has been accompanied by *preparatory politico-military activity* in a number of states, notably in those which lie to the West of us.

When the French stock-exchange (or, more precisely, the more extreme wing of France's financial stock-exchange) said that it would in no case enter into negotiations with the republic of soviets, we realised that this meant they were trying to put the price up by five, six or ten per cent. It was not difficult to see through this procedure of a stock-exchange speculator or a merchant, translated into the language of diplomacy: it was obvious to any serious, practical and sober person (and we revolutionaries are sober persons). It was different, though, for the petty-bourgeois elements, and in such states it is petty-bourgeois who are in power, sometimes two-bit politicians with little experience and a narrow horizon: it is easy for serious, hardened stock-exchange speculators and imperialist diplomats to take them in.

And so, when we read this barrage against the Soviet Republic, we are sure that it is not meant for us, or is only in the last instance meant for us, because we think that in London, or even in Paris, where policy is conducted by less pretentious persons, they realise that we understand the system. Between ourselves, on the one hand, and Paris and London, on the other, lie a series of new, inexperienced states – and it is there that these political, diplomatic and financial shells, fired by the radio, find their mark. It is there that they burst, there that they disseminate asphyxiating gases, there that they stupefy the brains of the ruling groups: together with the latter, the Russian White-Guard émigrés interpreted the postponement of the conference as a direct summons, a direct *order once more to try their luck at the game*, once more to try to smash the Soviet republic.

The Experience of the Past

We remember, comrades, one such experience we had, on a small scale. It

was at the beginning of 1919. That same British Government assumed the initiative of calling for an international conference with participation by Russia – or, rather, with participation by those several ‘Russias’ which existed at that time. Many of you will remember that affair of the Princes’ Islands, when every government established within the frontiers of the former Russian Empire, and having under its feet some bit of territory, was invited to come to the Princes’ Islands to work out an agreement for the purpose of saving Russia.

In order to refresh my memory of this episode – the conference was arranged for February 15, 1919 – I asked the People’s Commissariat for Foreign Affairs to supply me with the relevant documents. They sent me, among other things, a declaration by ‘Russia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs’ (in those days there was, besides People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs Chicherin’ also a ‘Minister of Foreign Affairs’, Sazonov) which stated the following: ‘In view of our non-recognition, etc., etc., I have the honour to declare that neither the Yekaterinodar Government nor the Omsk Government will take part in any conferences to which the Bolsheviks are invited.’ As you see, they spoke very sternly, those Yekaterinodar and Omsk Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

At Genoa, of course, things are different – in those days it was the Princes’ Islands, whereas Genoa is situated on a *peninsula*, and not on an island, so that they are not going to isolate us so completely from the continent of Europe ... In that respect, too, the situation has changed somewhat. Our most extreme enemies write that Petlyura will be there, and Savinkov too, that the Georgian Mensheviks will be invited; but that Sazonov, too, will be invited, they cannot bring themselves even to hint. And, indeed, if the situation at present were such that Mr Sazonov and his like found themselves being invited to a conference where there would be Bolsheviks, they would hardly refuse now as they did then. But, of course, they do not come into it.

What happened after that? We replied agreeing to attend. ‘We agree to be present at the same conference with Sazonov,’ Chherin replied. But then what? Having originally been fixed for February 15, the conference was first postponed, then they stopped talking about it, and then, approximately in April and May, Denikin’s general offensive in the South began, together with Kolchak’s offensive from Tobolsk, all of which was subsequently supported by Yudenich in the North-West. The year 1919 was the blackest year for Soviet Russia. Both Yudenich and Denikin had understood that initial invitation, followed by rejection, as a call to launch an offensive against us, as a deliberately premeditated attempt to discredit the Soviet Republic with European public-opinion, to show that, even given good-will, there was nothing to be done with us. That is to say, the invitation created favourable conditions for a new counter-revolutionary raid. In 1919 the White Guards were already putting into circulation a map of Soviet Russia which had been reduced almost to the limits of the old Tsardom of Muscovy and which resembled, in outline... a skull. In 1919 *the invitation to the conference was converted into a provocation*. It is all the same to us whether this was done consciously or not, but we remember the fact quite clearly.

And, today, not only in Finland, which was the first to move and which has already been taught her lesson, but also in the other border states, the story of the Genoa Conference has been the story of fresh preparation for a blow against us. It is in order to say this loudly, and to give warning of it, that this

plenum of the Moscow Soviet has been called, and from here the warning must resound throughout our country.

The Karelian Experience

We have heard here Comrade Rudnev's [\[4\]](#) report on the character of the Karelian campaign. This, comrades, sounds in the telling like a beautiful legend – it has already become a living, heroic legend – about how men covered with sweat above and covered below with a crust of ice dealt and received blows

Hundreds were killed and wounded there, hundreds fell victims to frostbite and had to be evacuated. And all this because certain ruling classes, certain governments, had proved incapable of the simplest eye-judgment. We once, in this very hall, warned how it would end: we warned that we should sweep out with a barbed-wire broom those who were thrown on to our territory. What was the result? Men killed, frostbitten and wounded, devastation – and that's all ... They put their hopes in the League of Nations, in a conference, but the League of Nations, that is, the combinations of bourgeois diplomacy, come and go, but territorial vicinity, Messrs rulers of Finland, remains! And if Finland is to be a neighbour and collaborator she must learn the lesson of the Karelian adventure. For our part, we cannot and do not wish to let it be repeated. We need no second lesson.

The Polish-Finnish Military Alliance

You know that the Karelian adventure evoked a protest from the depths of the Finnish people. You know that the Finnish Government responded to this with arrests and condemnations for treason. You know that the Finnish Minister for Home Affairs, whose only guilt was that he was opposed to this adventure, was killed by the extreme activist elements of Finland. [\[5\]](#) And you know, on the other hand, that today intensive negotiations are going on between Finland and Poland for the conclusion of a *Polish-Finnish* military pact. This pact they will, of course, try to give an outwardly 'defensive' form.

But defence against whom? Who is attacking, or preparing to attack, Finland? Let us speak out plainly and frankly. We do not consider that the bourgeois government of any country, Finland included, is a government that has the right to any great sympathy from us – no, we wish to see worlds' governments in all countries.

So, does the bourgeois government think that we are going to establish a workers' government in Finland by means of bayonets? Does it think that we are interested in territorial conquests, that we have no work to get on with inside our own country? .

But, after all, the fate of the bourgeoisie of Europe and the whole world will not be decided in Helsingfors, or in Reval, or in Riga, or even in Warsaw or Bucharest. It will be decided in Paris, London, Berlin and New York. And when the revolution triumphs – we do not know, of course, when that will be – in the most important *foci*, in France, Germany, Britain and so on, there will then be no question of Finland, of Estonia, or of Latvia, from the standpoint of the

revolution: for nobody supposes that, between proletarian Europe and workers' and peasants' Russia, this necklace of bourgeois republics will survive ... Only the most miserable, limited, stupid petty-bourgeois can imagine that at a time when, taking into account the fact that in Europe and throughout the world the bourgeoisie are still on their feet, we need to have commercial relations with them, we are going simultaneously to undertake, weapon in hand, 'the overthrow of the Finnish bourgeoisie'. Only a petty-bourgeois, with his limited political outlook, can entertain such fears.

We can say to the Finnish bourgeoisie and to every other bourgeoisie in the border states: 'All of you have patrons – the French stock-exchange or the British one, or both together. So long as your patrons survive, so long as they stand and act, that is, so long as the working class in the countries concerned has not taken power into its own hands (and that, of course, does not depend on us, and cannot be brought about by military means: it depends on internal class consciousness, which, in turn, is determined by the laws of history), so long as your patrons are on their feet, you have no reason to be afraid of the Red Army and the Soviet Republic. And when the moment comes when your patrons fall, you will simply have no time to be afraid of the Soviet Republic.'

In Finland, after the Karelian experience, a certain split in bourgeois public opinion was observed, as though the first letters of the ABC of logic were emerging from the fumes of chauvinism. Our People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs has received an assurance which we find very welcome, hoping that it will become living reality: the Finnish Government assures us, that 'the information received by the military authorities of the RSFSR concerning armed enterprises by Karelians is without foundation, and that Karelians have not been and will not be accepted into frontier-guard units'. Along with this, the Finnish Government declares that 'Finland wishes conscientiously to fulfil the peace treaty concluded at Yuryev,' and also expresses the hope that, 'now that relations have been regulated by Finland' (I am not sure that relations were regulated by Finland, exactly: on our part, they were to some extent regulated by Comrade Rudnev and those who were with him), 'the Government of the RSFSR will proceed rapidly to carry out the peace treaty concluded at Reval, and that, consequently, (1) evacuation will be begun, (2) the work of the central mixed Russo-Finnish commission will at once be resumed, and (3) the ban on trade with Finland will be lifted.' All quite proper and fully in the interests of ourselves and of Finland: as you know, the ban on trade between us and Finland has already in practice been lifted. Further, Finland proposes to entrust the task of ensuring the inviolability of our frontiers to that same central commission. Whatever form this commission may take, it must work out a scheme of measures based on the present sad experience. Its work must be founded upon very simple principles. The first principle is that, neither on the western nor on the eastern side of our frontier, must there be any irregular units. Frontier defence must be undertaken by regular troops, and responsibility for any irregular troops must be assumed by the regular government ... if, indeed, such a government exists

If bands cross over from Finland into our territory, or from ours into Finnish territory (which, of course, will not happen), they will be regarded as regular units. In other words, after the agreement has been signed, *any crossing of the frontier by bands will mean, and will be regarded by us, as an open declaration of military operations against us* on the part of the Helsingfors Government. Otherwise, relations cannot be regulated. And we hope that we

shall succeed in regulating these relations better. This agreement will defend Finland immeasurably better than a military, essentially *offensive*, pact with Poland, or than the attempt which the Finnish Government is making (as we know) to obtain military aid against us from Romania. We must and we want to say now to the Finnish people, to whom we wish tranquillity, peace and prosperity, that we are interested just as they are, in seeing to it that the Finnish people do not give even one little finger to anyone in Poland and Romania, for reasons which are all too well understood.

A military alliance between Finland, Poland and Romania will mean for us that we must fear attack on a longer stretch of frontier: it means that we must keep two or three more divisions on the relevant sections of our Western frontier. That would be burdensome. An extra division is a heavy burden to bear: but we shall cope with the additional burden. Every one of us knows that we cannot have any territorial, patriotic or revolutionary motives for declaring war on any of the states lying to the West of us. But a military alliance between Finland and Poland means danger for Finland, too. For us it increases danger by a certain fraction, by one-tenth, but for Finland the danger will be increased by ten-tenths! ... We shall wait to see how events develop, but, in the meantime, we note with entire satisfaction the declaration by the Finnish government that it wants agreement, trade, peaceful relations and security on the frontier.

Beyond Finland's western border, Scandinavia begins. We have treaties with Sweden and Norway which are more than commercial treaties, and neither Sweden nor Norway, on the one hand, nor we, on the other, suffer from that. From Sweden and Norway we import locomotives, herrings and other commodities, paying for them with gold. With attitudes what they are at present, however, only two commodities get through our frontier with Finland, namely, bands and contraband. We should welcome it if the Finnish Government were to adopt not a Polish and French but a Scandinavian orientation. That would be advantageous both to Finland and to us, and would also be beneficial for the development of culture throughout the North-West.

Relations with Estonia and Latvia

Moving farther south, we come to two other countries, Estonia and Latvia... We firmly consider (War Departments cannot, of course, be as optimistic as diplomats) that no danger threatens us from Estonia and Latvia, and that with them our trade and peaceful relations will continue to develop. Although I do not hide from you that, in the operations planned for the spring, there is a point which concerns Latvia and Estonia: there is talk of a forthcoming march on Pskov and Gdov. It is to be hoped that the 'League' will take the necessary measures to ensure that this section of the counter-revolutionary strategy, aimed at Pskov and Gdov, will also remain on paper, for we cannot have two frontiers – one for regular troops and the other for irregulars. We cannot have several different treaties – one for the legal government, another for the illegal one, and yet another specially for the Polish General Staff! We cannot engage in this sort of diplomatic double book-keeping. We shall have to treat all countries in the same way: and *any band which crosses into our territory we shall regard as belonging to the regular army of the given state*, for which that state will have to answer fully and completely.

Relations with Poland

The position with Poland is more difficult. You will all still remember the indignation which gripped the working masses in the autumn of last year. First there were negotiations, then there was an agreement, signed on our behalf by Karakhan and on theirs by Dombiski, and then came a violation of this agreement that was among the most scandalous ever in its openness and cynicism – the blow struck by the Petlyurists. [6]

Now, in this period of anxious pre-Genoa feelings, the question of Warsaw's policy towards us arises again, in its full magnitude. One British bourgeois paper, the **Westminster Gazette**, puts the following question to the Polish Government: is it true that Poland has allowed Petlyura's so-called government to remain on Polish territory? The Polish Government, the newspaper recalls, signed an agreement obliging it to expel these citizens. Then the paper puts this question: from whom does Petlyura receive subsidies amounting to 30 million marks per month? Incidentally, comrades, this is not such a colossal sum: these are Polish marks ... 'The Polish Government ought to give an exhaustive reply to these questions' put to it by a serious British bourgeois newspaper.

We do not assume to guess how the Polish Government will reply: we do not know whether it will even reply at all. But our government has at its disposal fresh information which is instructive for Russia.

In the first place, we know that, in succession to Savinkov [7], there have come others, Petlyura and Tyutyunik, who are urgently desirous of getting into the Ukraine. At the present time Petlyura is living in Warsaw and his address is known to Mr Skirmunt, the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, who also lives in Warsaw ... Of course, Petlyura and his associates will now change their addresses, because this 'government' is highly portable: all their belongings go into one suitcase, and it is very easy, in the event of danger, for them to move to another street.

We know that the Petlyurists, headed by Petlyura, Vovno, Bezruchka, Danilchuk and the rest, hold their 'military conferences' in the Hotel Polski, and carry on negotiations with the Wrangelites (represented by General Makhrov) for an agreement on joint operations: such negotiations are also being carried on with representatives of the Transcaucasian Governments which have now been overthrown. Furthermore, Balakhovich, that highwayman general, is petitioning for 10,000 men to be given him for ... timber-felling and hay-mowing in the spring. To this we can add that they have already engaged in procuring this 'timber and hay' – in the eastern regions of Poland there are already bands equipped for timber-felling and hay-mowing: they are armed with rifles and exercised in military drill... And we also know that Engineer Putyata, Balakhovich's right-hand man, has received 37 million marks for this work!

So then, that's how they are getting ready, over there, for field-work' in the spring! Every Red Army man must know this.

We know, of course, how important, in the given case, is good forage, and

we know that one needs to have it in fully sufficient quantity. In our time we suffered greatly from insufficiency of forage: it is natural that the Polish Government, too, getting ready for its campaign, must lay in an adequate stock of this forage, and it is now seeking intensively for forage ... But the interesting thing is this: whoever it was who was in power over there (there, too, some misunderstandings have occurred recently), whoever it was who was in charge of procuring supplies, whoever it was who was carrying out this 'timber and hay' policy – why have they been looking for forage so close to the frontier? And we must say to our own Red cavalryment: 'Make sure that we, too, have sufficient forage.'

On the other hand, we learn that *the French General Staff* (or, perhaps, they have a 'Second Department' specially assigned to this task?) is '*au courant*' with all these enterprises and that additional French forces are being assembled in Upper Silesia [\[8\]](#) that, in the event of success, they may give help and support to Poland. Tanks will come from there.

This is, of course, the dangerous section of our frontier! I said that we seek for ourselves nothing that is on the other side of the Polish frontier, but over there they have not yet given up thinking of 'the frontiers of 1772' [\[9\]](#) just as Petlyura has not given up the idea of the Ukraine, and of a Polish protectorate over it. The very air that blows across the Polish frontier is infected with chauvinism. It is Poland's misfortune that the clique which rules there *de facto* is in a state of nationalistic delirium and is completely incapable of reckoning with surrounding reality. We, however, are sober people. When we want to evaluate some political situation, we first take the temperature, and if the thermometer shows a temperature higher than 37 degrees, we say that, first of all, it is necessary to take some quinine, and only after that to proceed to take some action or other. From protracted observation of the Polish Government we have formed the quite definite impression that Poland is ruled politically by persons whose temperature is constantly at the level of 39 or 40 degrees. That is a very great menace to Poland, because if they should risk attempting experiences such as we had in Karelia, these, we dare to assure them, will prove to be extremely grave experiences.

There is a new government in Poland now, and we wish, more than anything else, that it will be sober enough to rule the country wisely, and that its political activity will be carried out at a temperature no higher than 37 degrees.

We can then be sure that there will be no complications on our Polish frontier.

Relations with Romania

Still less reassuring is the character of our relations with Romania. I have here a report given at a session of the 'Supreme Monarchist Council'. Such a 'council' exists among our émigrés. The report is, of course, 'top secret' (and so we have received it, from various quarters, in at least ten copies) ... It should be mentioned, incidentally, that this is a common occurrence: when ten members of the 'Supreme Monarchist Council' or some other such 'Council' meet, each of them directs his treachery to two addresses ... This is what we have here. On January 16, in No.690/VP, they report: 'Information has been received from Romania that another revolt in the Ukraine is planned to

coincide with the opening of the Genoa Conference.' The Ukrainian formations have received orders to be ready for action. Skoropadsky's formations will take part in this action. The main blow is expected to be struck from Bendery. Since the beginning of January small groups of Ukrainian units have been continuously arriving here. Artillery has also been observed – about 30 cannon and several machine-guns. Talks are going on between the French mission, General Popovich and the Ukrainian representatives about the choice of a commander-in-chief for the expeditionary forces. This question is proving hard to decide: the French insist on the appointment of General Grekov. Many Ukrainian units have said they are opposed to Grekov, on the grounds that he is a Russophil. There is an appreciable intensification in dealings with the Ukrainian organisations in Poland. Delvig is going to Warsaw and Tarnow [\[10\]](#), to co-ordinate operations ... Since January 1, the Ukrainian officers have been receiving the same pay as the Romanians. The French military mission has presented them with an armoured car, named 'Marasheshi'. This harmless name, comrades, is hard for us to pronounce – and if we manage to capture the armoured car, we shall give it a new name.

On the other hand, the Romanian Social-Democratic papers openly report the following facts: a commission of the 'Ukrainian People's Republic' is now at work in Romania, headed by Matsiyevich, its military section having close contact with the Romanian army authorities; Romania's arsenal has given the Petlyurists guns, machine-guns and rifles; the Romanian frontier-guards have been ordered to facilitate crossings of the Bessarabian border by the Petlyurists – that is, by bands. As to how this is done, I have some news: it is reported from the Tiraspol area that on March 8 our posts in the area of Tarnovo (west of Tiraspol) were fired on from the Romanian side.

We have still not forgotten, of course, that sentry on the Dniester who was killed by a bullet from the other bank – that sentry hymned in Demyan Byedny's splendid ballad. [\[11\]](#)

The Red Army asks you not to forget that now, too, it is carrying out frontier-defence activity on the Dniester. On the left bank of the river, Red Army men pace up and down, on guard against our enemies, while from the right bank they fire on us, in single shots or volleys; and from time to time a sentry of ours is struck down by the Dniester, reminding us that our problems with Romania are still far from having been solved and settled, and that we cannot go on living under such conditions. We are unwilling that the Dniester shall continue to serve as an artery for bands: and if the gentlemen who rule Romania think that the Genoa Conference is going to sanction such relations, then they are mistaken.

Something special needs to be said about Romania's rulers. We know them pretty well: they have left their full profile, their entire past, in our hands. Unfortunately, we have been too busy (as the French say, we have had other naughty cats to beat) [\[12\]](#); and have not found the time, up to now, to make use of the very rich Romanian archives which were evacuated and are now in our keeping here on Soviet territory. The most outstanding among Romania's ministers, generals and politicians are represented in these archives, in detailed biographies. And the biography of a Romanian minister is not the sort of moral book to be recommended for the education of the young generation ... We hope that our Department of Foreign Affairs will take the necessary steps to ensure that what is most valuable is extracted from the Romanian

archives, for the benefit of the Genoa Conference. While this book should not be put into the hands of youngsters of 16 or 16, it would be extremely useful to give it to Lloyd George and Poincaré.

The Situation in Transcaucasia

There are facts tending to show, comrades, that it is in Transcaucasia that the most acute danger threatens. That is understandable. Up to now we have been wholly concerned with the national pretensions and chauvinist dreams of small states, but in Caucasia there is oil. Oil is a highly serious matter, and the most powerful and responsible stock-exchanges of Europe and America are not afraid to soil their hands with the oil of Baku and the Caucasus. That is why, simultaneously with the reconstruction of the bands in the border states, a union of the former democratic and bourgeois governments of Caucasia is being formed in Paris, under the leadership of our old acquaintance Noulens.

I was reminded only the other day, by a telegram I was reading, that Noulens is the chairman of the Republican-Socialist Party. You don't believe that? Having forgotten this fact, I, too, found it hard to believe: I, too, was amazed. And only after I had read it a second time – 'the Republican-Socialist Noulens, the head of this party' – did I suddenly recall that we, too, have revolutionary socialists, or 'Socialist-Revolutionaries' ... The degeneration of old Radical petty-bourgeois groups into tools of the rabid and malicious stock-exchange speculators can be seen most strikingly in the history of France. Whoever wants to explain to an SR his own history can say to him: 'Look at Noulens, as though you were looking in a mirror – there you will see your own destiny.'

And so Noulens, the chairman of the Republican-Socialist party, is acting as organiser of the former governments of Caucasia – the Moslem Musavatists, the Armenian Dashnaks and the Georgian Mensheviks. At the same time, Wrangel is registering his demobilised officers in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, and their newspapers abroad, and our own sources of information as well, speak of preparations for landings at Odessa, Novorossiisk, Batum and Sochi. Another report to this same Supreme Monarchist Council, if I am not mistaken, says that the offensive to be launched into Byelorussia and the Ukraine in the coming spring will be merely a demonstration: 'the most serious operation is to begin in Caucasia, where it is proposed that Nikolai Nikolayevich Romanov [\[13\]](#) is to be commander-in-chief.' All available forces are to be thrown into the areas of Sochi and Batum. They intend to launch an offensive from Caucasia either towards the Volga or towards the Donets Basin, depending on circumstances. There are rumours that Nikolai Nikolayevich has made contact with the American capitalists and so on.

The Plans of the Franco-British Stock-Exchange

Comrades, we do not propose to overestimate the significance of these preparations, for we know how limited those people's forces are – their strength does not match their desire. But we should be making a mistake if we were to fail to pay adequate attention to them. The plan is perfectly clear. It follows from certain arguments to be found in the French papers: the

negotiations are with Russia, but Caucasia is not Russia – we once recognised Caucasia, a bourgeois Caucasia is the best guarantee, *Caucasia means oil*.

That is what they are saying. In order to make a road for them that leads to oil, the Moslem Musavatists [14] and the Georgian Mensheviks, the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevich and Tsereteli, are all as good as each other. The stock-exchange is profoundly realistic and does not rely solely upon the White-Guard organisations based in Poland and Romania. The stock-exchange thinks that, for the negotiations at Genoa, it would be more useful if, at the same time, we were to be struck blows on our Western frontier which would weaken us – after all, that will mean that it will receive bigger dividends and, as its greatest hope, it counts on getting Transcaucasia, for Transcaucasia means oil!

When we read the French governmental and semi-governmental press, it seems sometimes that these people lack elementary common sense. Actually, this is not so – they do write, certainly, like persons who lack common sense, but they themselves know very well what they want ... It is part of France's plan, they write, that the Soviet Government shall appear at Genoa in the same role as the Germans at Versailles: in other words, they want provisions to be drawn up, at this conference between representatives of the Soviets and representatives of the Great Powers, which shall be presented to the Soviets in the form of an ultimatum. In broad outline, these provisions are to be as follows: dissolution of the Third International; restitution of the Allied Powers' property, factories and capital in Russia; most-favoured-nation treatment for France; and so on. They will invite us to Genoa, prepare an ultimatum, and present it to us. But what if we should refuse to accept it?

And so, in Helsingfors, in Warsaw, in Bucharest they read about these plans, and they say: 'This means we can still go on shooting at sentries on the Dniester ... They are going to present them with an ultimatum. The rulers of France, Britain and Italy will assemble and, after calling them in, will read to them what will be neither more nor less than an ultimatum'

All right, suppose they read it – but what then? Alas, they cannot send a single soldier of their own against us – just as was the case earlier! Then they will say to the Polish and Romanian Governments: 'Attack them, go for them, because they have not obeyed our ultimatum.'

If that is how things are, Poland and Romania should settle the question for themselves in a simpler way, independently of the Genoa Conference – because Genoa will bring them no additional material benefits, nor will it deprive us of any. For it is precisely the other way round: if they were to try to present us with an ultimatum aimed at weakening and enslaving us, the result would not, of course, be any numerical increase in our Red Army, but it would weld it into still further unity, and the sympathy with us felt by the worker masses would inevitably increase throughout Europe and the whole world.

In Prague, the capital of the young Czechoslovakian Republic, a conference of industrialists was held on March 6, with participation by the government. There they formulated demands to be put to us (Mr Beneš must, presumably, know about them): (1) recognition in principle of the old debts, (2) restoration of private property and private enterprise, (3) compensation for losses by foreigners (4) assignment to each state of a particular territory for its activity, (6) the right to open branches of foreign banks in Russia, (6) full introduction

of criminal, commercial and civil legal procedures, and so on.

This information comes, it would appear, from a completely reliable source. Yet one does not want to believe that Czechoslovak industrialists have been led astray by such nonsense... If they, or the industrialists of other countries, hope for anything like that, then, of course, the Genoa conference, to which we are going in full willingness to bring about serious economic relations, will prove a grave disappointment for them. In actual fact, what does all this amount to? To replacing the Soviet form of property by the capitalist form, replacing Soviet law by capitalist law. They want to make us 'snow-white', and then, they promise, they will love us ... We do not claim that they should love us being 'red', for that would be stupid, but we do want them to deal with us just as we are – because we have no intention of changing our colour for the sake of the Genoa conference. We have shown that we can and we wish to create the conditions for collaboration with foreign capital. If they will leave us in peace and allow us to live and develop, our Soviet law will not, of course, be identical with bourgeois law – the capitalists will have to adjust themselves to that, to study and understand it – but within the limits of Soviet law and Soviet legality, a capitalist will be able to carry out very extensive economic operations to his advantage. And, of course, the working class of Russia did not fight for decades under the banner of the proletarian revolution, and carry through that revolution, so as, under the threat of an ultimatum from Czechoslovak or other industrialists, to exchange the right to build a socialist republic for some bourgeois laws, which are quite well enough known to us.

Relations With Britain

The telegraph has brought us the news today that the British Government has taken the decision not to give aid to our famine victims. This telegram is, apparently, in strict accord with reality. It is not that Lloyd George seriously counted on the fall of the Soviet power, but this decision is highly symptomatic. It means that pre-Genoa waverings have again broken out in bourgeois circles, it means that Lloyd George, whose position has become a little less stable, has, in order to insure himself with that section of the bourgeois public opinion which is against any agreement with us, thrown a bone to those diehard capitalists in the form of a decision which is, in itself, of course, quite 'legitimate': one cannot force the British Government to help the Volga famine victims.

On the other hand, however, this decision, when taken together with the commentaries in certain semi-official British newspapers, acquires a semi-demonstrative character. One of these papers, the **Daily Chronicle**, says that the British Government's refusal of aid is due to the fact that the Soviet power still maintains the Red Army ... Does the British Government intend to propose, at Genoa, disarmament, or a reduction in the size of armies? So far as we are concerned, there is no reason to suppose, of course, that we shall place any obstacles in the way of any such measures, which would lighten the burden of armaments borne by the peoples ... At the same time as preparations proceed all along the line for new blows to be struck at us in the spring, at the same time as the French general staff is presenting to the Petlyurists such a 'harmless' gift as a tank [*sic*], the British Government, if we are to believe the **Daily Chronicle** is amazed that we retain the Red Army! Yes, we retain it, for

one thing, because we remember very well (as I began by saying) the experience of the conference that was to be held on the Princes' Islands: after that conference which did not come off, we experienced our darkest and most difficult year.

But in those days we were incomparably weaker, in the military sense, than we are now. I much regret that Comrade Rudnev did not mention here something he told me in his personal report. During the Karelian campaign phenomena were observed in the sphere of supply, in the sphere of procedure, such as had never occurred before. (Comrade Rudnev was at the very centre, in the very thick of the operations.) This entire campaign developed with splendid regularity, with that very quality which we were formerly most lacking in. The Red Army men worked like heroes, but that we had seen before. The important thing was that the mechanism itself, the army's apparatus, had become incomparably more precise, more accurate – and that, comrades, is a very great achievement. We have criticised ourselves frankly and conscientiously enough, and we can, we must, now, take note of the great progress we have made... This army, with its improved apparatus, will be retained so long as danger continues.

And every starving peasant in the Volga region knows that we need an army, although he also knows that the army, by the very fact of its existence, diverts to itself resources and foodstuffs. The famine is a very grave physical calamity, which means death for hundreds of thousands, millions of human beings: but if the Russian people were to let them tighten a noose about its neck, that would mean death for the whole people – or slavery, which is worse than death. That is why the starving peasant of the Volga region will accept the existence of the Red Army so long as we have enemies.

The Famine and Our Enemies

And we do have enemies. Are they not trying to make the very fact of the famine the starting point for attacks upon us? Why, the decision by the British Government shows the extent to which the famine is, for wide bourgeois circles, not a fact of popular distress, but merely a political fact, an advantage for their diplomats and for the financial aristocracy!

We are receiving aid, and not only from the worker masses but also from the bourgeoisie – for example, from such a semi-governmental semi-official organisation as the American Relief Administration. This aid is being developed on an increasingly large scale and is now, of course, playing an immense role in our life. One cannot but value it. I have received information from our plenipotentiary attached to the ARA and other organisations, about the extent of this aid. I think it my duty to publish this information here.

In August the ARA undertook to feed one million children. In October it was already feeding 1,200,000, and today it is feeding two million, plus 30,000 hospital patients. At the same time we are to receive from America 20 million dollars, to be used to relieve Russia's famine-victims. This means that in two or three weeks' time we shall be able to feed five million adult famine-victims. If you compare the aid contributed by the ARA with that furnished by other, European organisations, you find that all of the latter put together are doing only one-tenth as much. We know that Nansen's heroic efforts were wrecked

on the rock of Europe's callousness [\[15\]](#), and we know, too, that the 'Society of Friends', the Quakers, are feeding 189,000 children, and so on. These organisations have come here with their staffs, and they are doing very difficult work. Of 170 employees of the ARA, fifteen have gone down with typhus. Two members of the Nansen organisation have died of that disease – the British Dr Farrar and the Italian Guido Pardo. The Swedish Red Cross nurse Karin Lindskog and the German Red Cross worker Dr Gerner have died, as also have two young Quaker girls, named Pattison [\[16\]](#) and Violet Tillard ... When you think of these sacrifices, you want to say that, in our bloodstained and at the same time heroic epoch, there are people who, regardless of their class position, are guided exclusively by the promptings of humanity and inner nobility. I read a brief obituary of this Anglo-Saxon woman, Violet Tillard; a delicate, frail creature, she worked here, at Buzuluk, under the most frightful conditions, fell at her post, and was buried there ... Probably she was no different from those others who also fell at their posts, serving their fellow human beings ... Here we count six such graves. It may be there will be more, it is even probable that there will be. These graves are a kind of augury of those future, new relations between people which will be based upon solidarity and will not be shadowed by self-seeking. When the Russian people become a little richer they will erect (we are profoundly sure of this) a great monument to these fallen heroes, the forerunners of a better human morality, for which we, too, are fighting. Yes, indeed: without faith that, some day, people will behave to each other like brothers and sisters, what would be the point of fighting, building barricades, fighting battles.

We know that philanthropic actions are not accompanied always and everywhere by exclusively disinterested sentiments. But we nevertheless acknowledge that the great republic across the ocean has shown itself ten times more generous, more magnanimous, than the whole of Europe. It has sent us a mass of foodstuff – true, not enough to meet our need, but in absolute terms a very large amount – and it is feeding and saving from starvation many Russian peasants, both men and women, and their children.

Let us say, also, for the sake of clarity, that our feelings towards America are not 'monochromatic', that they are clouded. I have more than once asked myself what it is that explains the fact that the name of Nansen is surrounded with such a halo in our country, whereas towards the ARA organisation we show only gratitude? Those feelings which, undoubtedly, that organisation might have evoked in the hearts of the working masses, it has failed to evoke. The reason for this is that we do not know what it is that the great trans-oceanic republic wants of us. [\[17\]](#)

We often hear and read of the persons who play the leading role in the ARA organisation, and their names are linked precisely with the most hostile actions towards us. We read, for example, in the newspapers, that Wrangel has received a fresh subsidy from influential American circles, and someone has tried to link these 'circles' with those circles which are in touch with the ARA. (True, we make a distinction here: not the ARA itself, but only 'in touch with' it.) We should like to believe that this is not the case. And it would be deeply interesting to us if the leading circles of the American Republic would clear up this question fully and absolutely. It will be a great day of celebration for us, when, in Washington and New York, it is clearly stated that they have had enough of the Wilson-Kolchak experience, that henceforth they will give no support, material or moral, to the enemies of the Russian workers and

peasants. And then the role of the ARA, an immense, magnanimous role, will appear to us in its full grandeur. Then, finally, the attitude of the working masses will be one not merely of gratitude but of ardent, warm feelings.

It may be said that, in evaluating the situation in this way, I am identifying the position of the Soviet Government with that of the people. Yes, I do make this identification, and I do it quite deliberately – and so long as they do not understand that, in Washington and New York, they will understand nothing about the history of the Russian people. *Our revolution awakened and refined the instinct of the Russian people for matters of state.* This people is already absorbing political notions from its surroundings, and drawing conclusions: it senses that the duality which somehow affects our relations with the ARA, in the situation which now prevails, is fraught with danger.

Danger Exists

While the vacillation concerning the Genoa Conference has raised so many questions for us where our relations with other states are concerned, we must, first and foremost, focus our people's attention upon what is happening now in Paris, where a quite definite, fully-fashioned manoeuvre is being executed against us. Transcaucasia is threatened with very great danger. Danger exists there under the pseudo-democratic slogans that have been taken up by the interested parties – who, while singing *The International*, play the role of agitational outrunners for the shaft-horse, the British oil-industrialist.

Danger exists, but this must not be exaggerated, for we know the condition our enemies are in. We are familiar with Britain's domestic situation, we know how its affairs are going in Ireland, we are informed concerning events in India. We know how France is situated, its plans and activities are no secret to us, and we are convinced every day that there is no country which is moving so surely towards catastrophe as France is. We know also what the forces of our enemies consist of. They have formed a united front, beginning in Estonia and Latvia, and have extended it to the Black Sea – and yet another front is to be established in Caucasia.

And we warn the working masses and the Red Army of our country, that danger exists. This *danger is not so great as it was in 1919, but nevertheless it exists, and we are stronger than we were in 1919.*

Along with this there exists, woven with it into a sort of knot, the activity of the counter-revolutionaries. We have already observed that there have been explosions and acts of arson in Petrograd, and preparations to blow up bridges and storehouses. But it must be said that the counter-revolutionary movement has lost all and any mass character: it is shrinking more and more narrowly into the channels of underground organisations, and finding its expression in raids by isolated bands. In going over to a peace situation we have taken a number of measures which testify to our firm desire for peace and peaceful work. We have reduced the army to one-third, and are continuing to reduce it. We have abolished the All-Russia Extraordinary Commission and we have restricted to the utmost the powers of the organs for struggle against counter-revolution. Over there, abroad, the Mensheviks and SRs crack jokes about how we are 'changing our names and getting our hair cut' [\[18\]](#) in preparation for the Genoa Conference. Actually, nothing of the sort is happening. If the civil war

has burned itself out, and we have won for ourselves the possibility of peaceful relations, it is self-evident that we have to go over to different forms. If the matters in which we were, earlier, so strongly interested, have gradually been settled – their number has decreased and, finally, they have been entirely relegated to the archives – that means that we consider this state of affairs necessary for us. We have to say to the industrialists, the kulaks, the merchants, the traders: 'If you will cease to unleash against us the guard-dogs you have bought, if you will cease to interfere with our peaceful work, then we shall have peace. And, since you are inviting us to attend peace negotiations in Genoa, does that mean that you, too, want this peace, just as we do? If you give us external peace, internal peace will be secure in our country – and we shall have no need for extraordinary measures of revolutionary terror.' Revolutionary terror is needed when circumstances make it necessary, but if peaceful conditions are created and consolidated, the terror weapon is put away in the armoury, and stable Soviet law is established, fully guaranteeing collaboration between us and the bourgeois world. But if these gentlemen want to try again, to repeat their first attempt at testing our stability and soundness, if they once again set upon us the Savinkovites, the Petlyurists, Skoropadsky, the Armenian Dashnaks, the Georgian Mensheviks, the SRs, the bomb-throwers, and the rest, and if all this is financed out of the resources of the French or the American stock-exchange, then that will mean this: the capitalist world, while convinced that we want, above all, to have peace with it, convinced of this not by words but by facts, nevertheless has come to the conclusion that relations with us will prove to be too much for it, that it is too weak to have economic dealings with us on a basis of equality. But if the capitalist world, having come to this suicidal conclusion, thinks of letting loose upon us its guard-dogs, starting with the landlords, officials and capitalists and ending with the bomb-throwers of the so-called 'Left' persuasion, the Soviet Government will simply say: 'It is too soon to put the instruments and weapons of Red terror away in the armoury.'

Comrades, if our foes want to test the resilience of our will-power and the strength of our muscles, they will find us the same as we were in October 1917. When we, a defamed, slandered and illegal party, emerged from the underground into which Kerensky had forced us, the entire world rose up against us ... Some regarded us as venal agents, others as murderers, but all were against us ... The situation now is a little different. Yet there are some, deprived of all common sense, who want to demand that we dissolve the Communist International, no more and no less – that we dissolve the French and German Communist Parties, that we dissolve the vanguard of the whole world! No, we shall not dissolve it. We, comrades, appreciate the situation soberly and realistically: we shall do everything possible to ensure that we have not a single unnecessary enemy. We shall reach agreement with Finland, at any price, we shall come to an understanding with Estonia and Latvia, we shall try to settle things with Poland, with Romania we shall take ourselves in hand once again and find a road to agreement. We lose sight of nothing: we know that these fears with which they try to intimidate us are to a considerable extent a reflection of the dangers which they themselves fear, that Europe is in a difficult situation. And yet, nevertheless, we do not hide it from you that the next few months will be, for us, months of new trials: a difficult spring, the famine, a shrinkage of food resources, wavering in the minds of the bourgeois classes of Europe, a revival of banditry and the White-Guard movement. There may be a revival of internal conspiracies – the creation of a united front

against us, ranging from Nikolai Nikolayevich Romanov to Chernov. To that united front we shall, as always, reply with our own united front. We must have no wavering, no vacillation, no intrigues by small groups: no discord must be allowed into our work, there must be no discord among us. In these responsible weeks and months there must be complete unity between the proletarian vanguard and the broad masses of the workers, complete unity of the republic with the millions of peasants, complete unity of the workers and peasants with their armed detachment – the Red Army.

So long as this united front of ours exists, we shall fear no front set up by the counter-revolution. We shall say: 'So, to Genoa, to Genoa then ... For our part we have done all we could. But, if you want to measure swords with us again, the Red Army will do its duty.'

Endnotes

1. Cf. Lenin, in his speech of March 6, 1922 to the Communist group of delegates at the All-Russia Congress of Metalworkers (**Collected Works**, Volume 33, p.217)

2. Briand resigned as France's Prime Minister in January 1922, and was succeeded by Poincaré.

3. As a result of a vote of no confidence by the Italian Parliament, the Nonomi Cabinet resigned in mid-February. In connection with this event, the opening of the Genoa Conference was postponed from March 8 to April 10.

4. Probably S.V. Rudnev (1899-1943).

5. The Finnish Minister for Home Affairs, Ritavuori, was murdered in February 1922.

6. The blow struck by the Petlyurists in October-November 1921 was organised with direct help from Poland and Romania.

Considerable animation was observed in Petlyura's circles already in mid-August 1921. The centre of his formations and site of his headquarters was shifted from Poland to Romania. Interned Ukrainian soldiers were concentrated there, and arms, uniforms and equipment despatched thither. All this was done with the open co-operation of Polish officers and the Polish General Staff. Command of the Ukrainian rebel army was given to Tyutyunik, who, at the head of his units, entered Ukrainian territory at the end of October 1921 and raised revolt in Ovruch and Korosten *uyezds*. The kulak population of Right-bank Ukraine supported this bandit incursion, and Petlyura, coming on November 17 the nucleus of his band was surrounded and almost completely annihilated in the area of Zvizdil, 35 versts south-west of Ovruch. Tyutyunik himself, with a small group of his adherents, took refuge in Poland.

7. Savinkov had been deported from Poland at the end of October 1921; he moved to Prague.

8. French troops had been sent to Upper Silesia in 1921 to police the plebiscite that was held to decide whether this territory should remain German or go to Poland.

9. The reference is to the frontiers which existed in 1772, before the First Partition of Poland, which was carried out by Russia, Austria and Prussia. These frontiers reached, in Russia, almost to Kiev and Smolensk. The demand that Poland be restored within these frontiers was the slogan of the Polish nationalities.

10. Tarnow is about 60 km east of Cracow, on the line running to Lvov.

11. Demyan Byedny, *The Soviet Sentry*.

12. '*On a bien d'autres chats à fouetter*' corresponds, more or less, to: 'We have other fish to fry'.

13. After Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevich, perhaps the ablest of the Romanovs, had been (disastrously) removed from his post as Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army, in 1916, he was given command of the Caucasian front, against the Turks, where he served until 1917. He left Russia in 1919, and was at this time living in France.

14. The Musavatists were the right-wing Social Democratic Moslem (Turco-Tatar) party which was in power in Azerbaijan before the Soviet order was established there. At the time of the Genoa Conference the Musavatists carried on, together with the Georgian Mensheviks, a campaign in the West directed against the Sovietisation of Caucasia.

15. The Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen was the League of Nations Commissioner for repatriation of prisoners-of-war, at the end of World War I. In 1921 he was asked by a conference of Red Cross societies of various countries to lead a campaign for Russian famine relief. His lobbying of European governments to get them to help in this work met with little success, and in August he signed an agreement with the Soviet Government on behalf of a group of voluntary organisations.

16. The text has 'Pecherson', but he must mean Mary B. Pattison. See A. Ruth Fry, **A Quaker Adventure** (1924).

17. Trotsky's impression is confirmed by the British journalist Francis McCullagh, who was in Russia for the trial of the Archbishop Cieplak and Monsignor Butkiewicz in 1923: 'The American Relief Administration has been, for the last two years, doing charitable work on a scale never before attempted in the world, but it is hated (1) by the émigrés, who say that, without it, the Soviet Government would have collapsed owing to inability to deal with the famine; (2) by the Bolsheviks, who say that it is a nest of spies; and (3) by the non-Party Russians, who say that it is a nest of speculators and diamond merchants. The last accusations are untrue; but the fact remains that I have never once heard any Russian, inside or outside Russia, say a good word of the ARA' (**The Bolshevik Persecution of Christianity**, 1924, p.304).

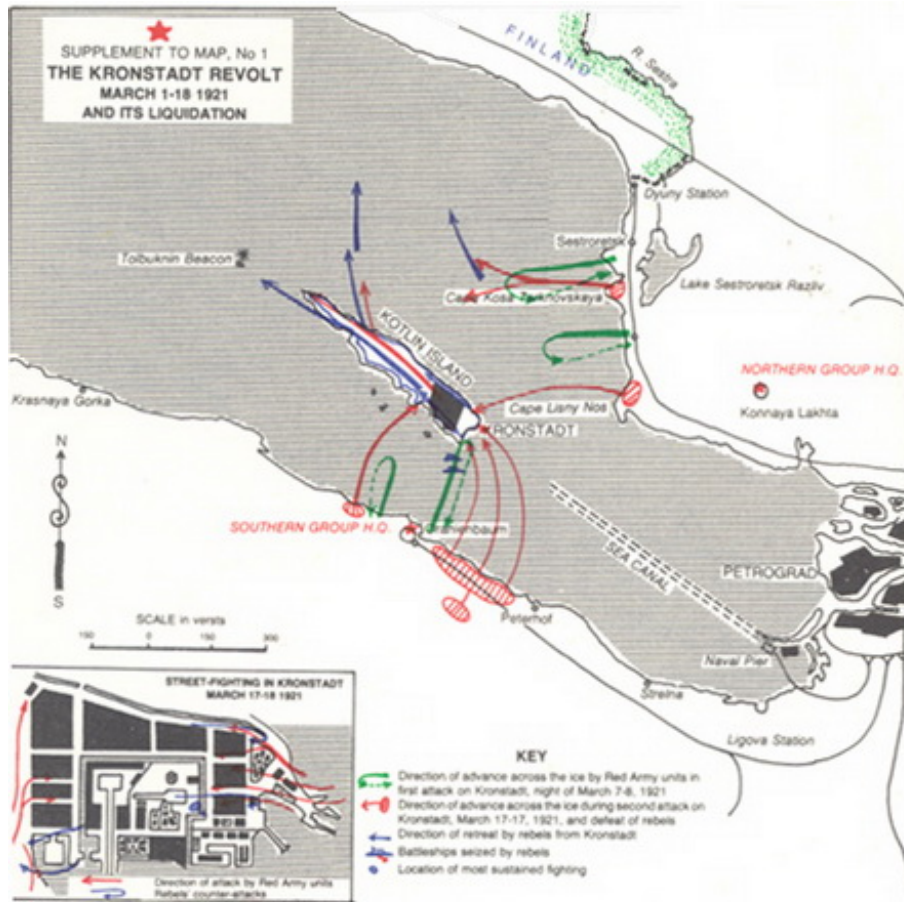
18. The All-Russia Extraordinary Commission (the Cheka) was renamed the State Political Administration (GPU) in February 1922.

Maps of the Russian Civil War

MAP 1 The General Situation in the RSFSR, March 1, 1921



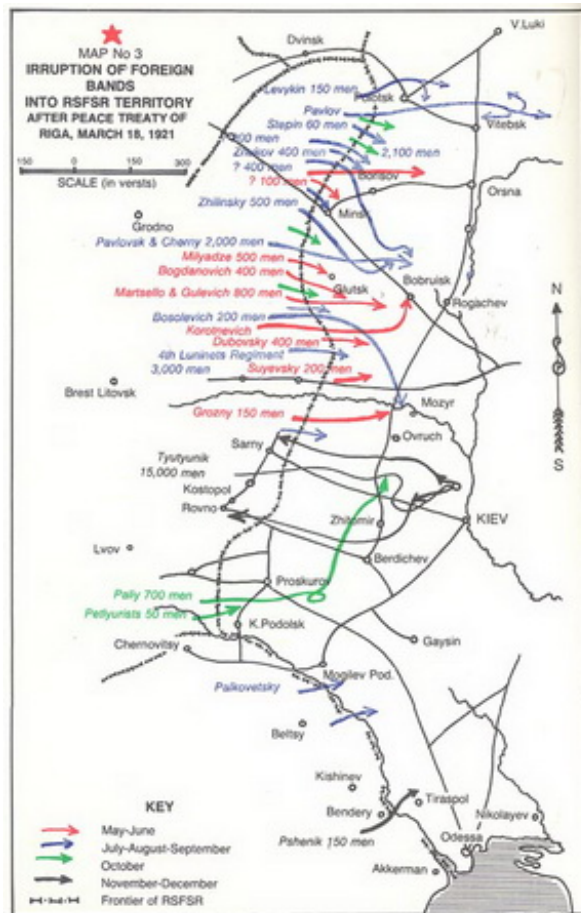
MAP 1 SUPPLEMENT The Kronstadt Revolt, March 1-18, 1921 and its Liquidation



MAP 2 The Situation in Siberia and Turkestan, March 1, 1921



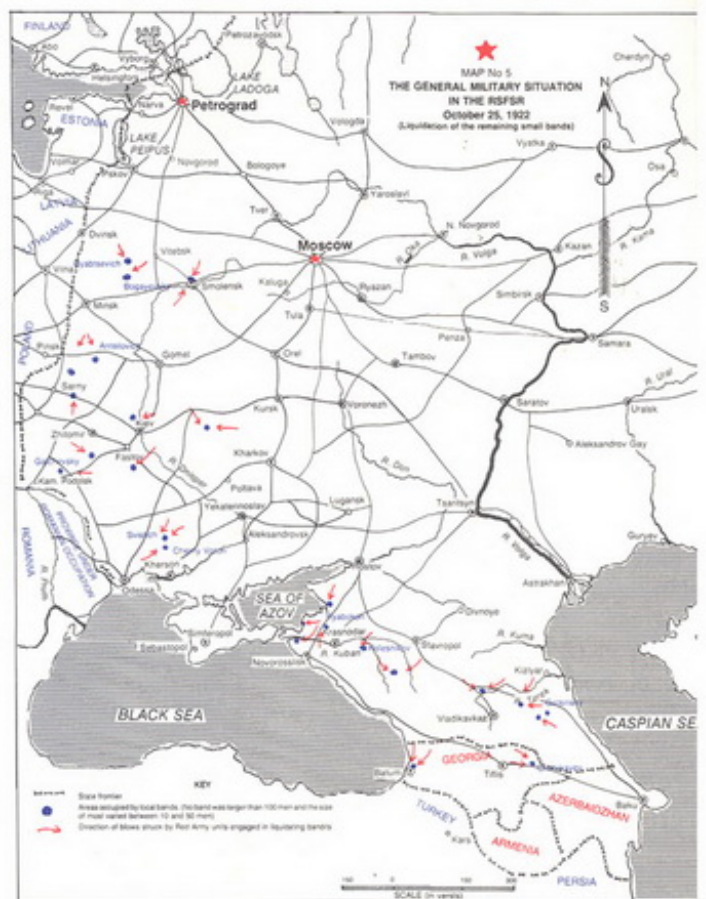
MAP 3 Irruption of Foreign Bands into RSFSR Territory After Peace Treaty of Riga, March 18, 1921



MAP 4 The Karelian Adventure, October 23, 1921-February 17, 1922 and its Liquidation



MAP 5 The General Situation in the RSFSR, October 25 1922



MAP 6 Situation in Turkestan, Siberia and the Far East, October 25, 1922

