

# The Military Writings of **LEON TROTSKY**

**Volume 1, 1918**

## **HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED**

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These writings were first published in 1923 by the Soviet Government. They were translated by Brian Pearce. Annotation is by Brian Pearce. Footnotes are from the original Russian edition. Transcribed for the [Trotsky Internet Archive](#), now a subarchive of the [Marxist writers' Internet Archive](#), by [David Walters](#) in 1996 with permission from Index Books/Trade Union Printing Services, 28 Charlotte St, London, W1P 1HJ

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### **Introduction to the on-line version**

This five volume collection of Leon Trotsky's military writings are a major contribution to Revolutionary Marxism. Trotsky was Commissar of Military and Navel Affairs for the newly formed Soviet Republic. In this capacity he led the organization of the Red Army and Navy. This workers' and peasants' army, the first regular army of a workers' state, was to immediately face its first conflict with Imperialism and its Russian repressives in 1918. The five volumes represents the sum total of Trotsky's articles, essays, lectures and polemics as the leader of the Red Army. Some of the writings here were given at Red Army academies, at Bolshevik Party meetings and at national and local soviets. These writing represent official Soviet policy in general and Bolshevik Party positions specifically. All the writings represents Trotsky's thoughts in reaction to the events as they were transpiring around him from 1918 through 1922: war, revolution, counter-revolution, all without the calm reflection a historian, for example, would have enjoyed in writing about such events with the advantage of 20/20 hindsight. These are the writings of a revolutionary under the actual gunfire of counter-revolution, often times written on the armored train Trotsky used to command the Red Army during various campaigns of the Civil War.

This on-line version consists of everything available from the printed Russian and English editions with the exception of the color maps showing the various stages of the Civil War, which were to fine in detail reproduce for the World Wide Web. I have tried to keep chapters under 130k to facilitate downloading from the Web. Each chapter listed under the table of contents below is followed by the size of each chapter in parentheses. -- **David Walters**

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# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

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### Through five years

The idea of publishing my articles, speeches, reports, appeals, orders, instructions, letters, telegrams and other documents devoted to the Red Army arose in connection with the celebration of the fifth anniversary of the Red Army. Comrade V.P. Polonsky took the initiative in publishing these papers. Selection, critical checking, arrangement and correction of the material was undertaken by Comrades Ya. G. Blyumkin, F.M. Vermel, A.I. Rubin and A.A. Nikitin. The notes, the chronology and the indexes of names and subjects were compiled by Comrade S.I. Ventsov. When I looked quickly through the manuscripts after they had already been assembled for printing, the general impression I got was -- how inadequately and, most important, with how little concreteness, all this material reflects the actual work involved in building the Red Army.

Today, when it has become possible for us to survey the entire achievement of the revolution through five years, it stands out quite clearly that nearly all, if not all, the questions of principle and the difficulties of Soviet constructive work arose before us first and foremost in the sphere of military affairs -- and, in extremely hard, concise and compact form. In this sphere, as a general rule, no respite was allowed us. Illusions and errors brought with them almost immediate retribution. The most responsible decisions were taken under fire. Any opposition there might be to these decisions was tested in action there and then, on the spot. Hence, by and large, the inner logic in the building of the Red Army, the absence of any wild leaps from one system to another. It can be said that, in a certain sense, it was precisely the acuteness of the danger to which we were subjected that saved us. If we had had more time for discussion and debate we should probably have made a great many more mistakes.

The most difficult period of all was the first -- covering approximately the second half of 1918. Partly through necessity, partly through mere inertia, revolutionary effort was directed above all into breaking all the old links, removing from all posts the representatives of the old society. But at the same time it was necessary to forge new links and, in the first place, the strictest, most peremptory and coercive of links -- namely, the links of new, revolutionary regiments. Our Party alone, with its still far from numerous, though sturdy, cadres, was capable of effecting this turn, under a hail of shrapnel. The difficulties and dangers involved were colossal. At the time when the vanguard of the proletariat had



already accomplished, though not without internal problems, the transition to 'work, discipline and order', the broad masses of the workers, and, even more so, of the peasants were only beginning to shake themselves free, wiping out, as had to be done, everything that remained of the old order, and they were not as yet thinking in a practical way about the new one. This was a very critical moment in the development of the Soviet power. The party of the Left 'Socialist-Revolutionaries' -- an organization of intellectuals, one wing of which extended to the peasantry and the other to the mass of the urban philistines -- reflected most vividly, in its fate, the painful transition from the spontaneously-destructive period of the revolution to the state-building period. The petty-bourgeois who has taken the bit between his teeth (*der rabiät gewordene Spiessburger*, to use Engels's expression) does not want to know about any limitations, any concessions, any compromises with historical reality -- until the moment when the latter bangs its beam against his skull. Then he collapses into prostration and helplessly surrenders to the enemy. The Socialist-Revolutionary party, which reflected the peripheral spontaneity of the revolution's yesterday, was utterly incapable of understanding either the Brest peace, or centralized authority, or the regular army. The opposition of the Left SRs on these questions was quickly transformed into revolt, which ended in the political ruin of that party. It has pleased fate that Comrade [Blyumkin](#), a former Left SR who in July 1918 staked his life on the fight against us, but who is now a member of our party, should have turned out to be my collaborator in putting together this volume, which in one of its sections reflects our mortal conflict with the Left SR party. The revolution is highly skilled both in separating men from one another and also, if need be, in bringing them together. All the most courageous and consistent elements that existed in the Left SR party are now with us.

Taken as a whole, the revolution signifies a sharp turn in history. But, if we examine it more carefully, we find within it a series of turns which are the more acute and critical, the further the events of the revolution unfold, at a furious pace. Each of these partial turns is, above all, a very great test for the leading party. Schematically, the task of the party -- or, to be still more precise, that of its fighting center -- breaks down into the following elements: appreciating in good time the need for a new stage; preparing the party for this new stage; carrying through the turn without detaching the party from the masses who are still governed by the inertia of the previous period. At the same time it is necessary to remember that the revolution is very sparing in its allowance to the ruling party of that basic raw material, *time*. If the leading center makes the turn too sharply, it may find itself in opposition to its own party, or the party may find itself in opposition to the revolutionary class: but, on the other hand, a party that drifts with the current of yesterday, along with the class that it leads, may turn out to be too late in fulfilling urgent tasks posed by the objective course of events -- and every such violation of the dynamic equilibrium threatens to prove fatal for the revolution. This applies, with the necessary modification regarding tempos, not only to the army but also to the economy

The old army was still straggling back across the country, spreading hatred for war, when we were already having to form new regiments. The Tsarist officers had been thrown out of the army, and in some places dealt with in merciless fashion. Yet we had to invite former officers to come and serve as instructors of the new army. The committees in the Tsarist regiments were the very embodiment of the revolution -- in its first stage, at least. In the new regiments, committees could not be tolerated, being a source of disintegration. The curses cast upon the old discipline had not yet ceased to resound when we were already obliged to introduce a new discipline. Then followed the transition from voluntary to compulsory recruitment, and from guerrilla bands to regular military organisation. The struggle against 'guerrillism' was waged unremittingly, from one day to the next, and it called for the greatest persistence, intransigence and, sometimes, severity. 'Guerrillism' was the military expression of the

peasant background of the revolution, in so far as the matter had not yet been raised to the level of state consciousness. The struggle against 'guerrilla-ism' was at the same time a struggle for proletarian statehood against the anarchical petty-bourgeois spontaneity that was undermining it. Guerrilla methods and habits found expression, however, in the Party's ranks as well: an ideological struggle against them within the Party was a necessary supplement to the organisational, educational and punitive measures that were taken in the army. Only through maximum pressure was anarchical 'guerrillaism' brought within the framework of centralisation and discipline. This pressure was both external -- the German offensive, and then the Czechoslovak revolt -- and internal, by way of Communist organisation within the Army.

The articles, speeches and orders assembled here reflect, as I have said, only to a very inadequate degree the work of actual construction that was done. The principal part of this work was generally performed otherwise than by means of speeches and articles. Besides which, the most important speeches, namely, those which were addressed to military workers on the spot, at the fronts and in the Army units, and which had profoundly practical, concrete significance, determined by the demands of the moment -- these most important and significant speeches were, as a rule, not taken down in writing by anyone. To all which it must further be added that even the speeches that were recorded were mostly recorded badly. The art of writing shorthand was in that period of the revolution at just as low a level as all the other arts. Everything was done hastily and 'anyhow'. When deciphered, a shorthand transcript often consisted of a collection of enigmatic phrases, the meaning of which it was not always possible to reconstruct subsequently, and all the less so when this task was undertaken by someone other than the person who had delivered the speech.

Nevertheless, these pages do reflect the great years that have passed; which is why, with all the reservations set out above, I have agreed that they be printed. It is no bad thing for us, from time to time, to look over our recent past. Furthermore, these pages may prove to be not without use to our comrades abroad who are advancing, even though slowly, towards the conquest of power. The fundamental tasks and problems which we have overcome will in due course confront them too. Perhaps these materials will help them to avoid at least some of the mistakes that lie in wait for them. Nothing is ever accomplished without making mistakes, and a revolution least of all: but it is good, at any rate, to reduce these mistakes to the minimum.

*L. Trotsky*

February 27, 1923 Moscow

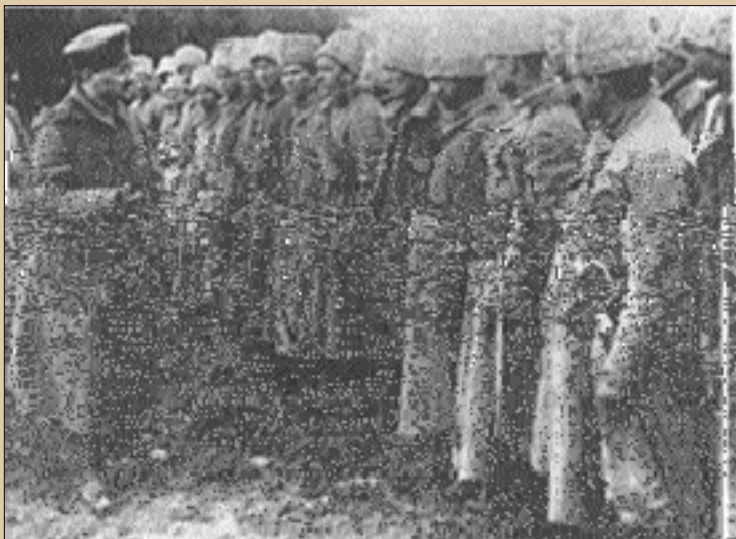
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*L.T.*

## NOTES

**Blyumkin** (or Blurakin), who killed the German ambassador Mirbach in order to provoke war between Soviet Russia and Germany, was pardoned after Germany's defeat had made it safe to do this. He resumed his work in the Cheka (later the GPU). In 1929 he visited Trotsky in exile, taking back with him a letter to Russian oppositionists. He was betrayed (apparently, by Radek) and executed. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)





# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

## Introduction

Leon Trotsky addressing Red Army troops at the front

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## THE PATH OF THE RED ARMY<sup>[1]</sup>

The problems connected with the creation of the armed forces of the revolution are of immense importance for the Communist Parties of all countries. Disregard of these problems, or, even worse, a negative attitude towards them, hidden behind humanitarian pacifist phraseology, is really criminal. Arguments to the effect that all violence, including revolutionary violence, is evil and that Communists therefore ought not to engage in 'glorification' of armed struggle and the revolutionary army, amount to a philosophy worthy of Quakers, Dukhobors [A Russian Christian sect who refused to perform military service. To escape persecution many emigrated to Canada at the end of the nineteenth century] and the old maids of the Salvation Army. Permitting such propaganda in a Communist Party is like permitting Tolstoyan propaganda in the garrison of a besieged fortress. He who desires the end must desire the means. The means for emancipating the working people is revolutionary violence. From the moment of the conquest of power, revolutionary violence takes the form of an organized army. The heroism of the young worker who dies on the first barricade of the revolution when this is beginning differs in no way from the heroism of the Red soldier who dies on one of the fronts of the revolution after state power has been taken. Only sentimental fools can suppose that the proletariat of the capitalist countries is in danger of exaggerating the role of revolutionary violence and showing excessive admiration for the methods of revolutionary terrorism. On the contrary, what the proletariat lacks is, precisely, understanding of the liberatory role of revolutionary violence. That is the very reason why the proletariat still remains in slavery. Pacifist propaganda among the workers leads only to weakening the will of the proletariat, and helps counter-revolutionary violence, armed to the teeth, to continue.

Before the revolution, our Party possessed a military organization. This had a dual purpose: to carry on revolutionary propaganda in the armed forces, and to prepare strong points within the army itself for the overthrow of the state. Since revolutionary enthusiasm seized hold of the army as a whole, the purely

organizational role of the Bolshevik cells in the regiments was not particularly noticeable. But it was very important, given the possibility that existed for selecting elements which, though small in numbers, were decisive -- elements whose significance proved so great in the most critical hours of the revolution. At the moment of the October insurrection these men played their part as commanders, commissars of units, and so on. Later, we encountered many of them in the role of organizers of the Red Guard and the Red Army. [2]

The revolution grew directly out of the war, and one of its most important slogans was for the ending of the war, which corresponded to the phenomenon of war-weariness and loathing for war. Yet the revolution itself gave rise to new dangers of war, which kept increasing. Hence the extreme external weakness of the revolution in the first period. The almost *complete defenselessness of the revolution was revealed* at the time of the Brest-Litovsk negotiations. Men did not want to fight, considering that war had been altogether consigned to the past: the peasants were seizing the land, the workers were building their organizations and taking over industry.

Hence there emerged the colossal experiment in pacifism of the Brest- Litovsk period. The Soviet Republic declared that it could not sign the enforced treaty, but neither would it fight, and issued an order for the Army to disband. This was a very risky step to take, but it followed from the circumstances of the time. The Germans resumed their offensive, and that became the point of departure for a profound turn in the consciousness of the masses: they began to realize that it was necessary to defend ourselves with arms. Our pacifist declaration introduced a ferment of disintegration into Hohenznd.ament of []0 dnd to el



bureaucracy. The newly-created units were infused with worker-Communists from Petrograd, Moscow, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, and so on. For the first time, commissars were given in the units the status of revolutionary leaders and direct representatives of the Soviet power. By means of a few exemplary sentences the revolutionary tribunals warned everyone that the socialist fatherland, which was in mortal danger, required unconditional obedience from all. This combination of measures of agitation, organization and repression brought about within a few weeks the turn that was needed. Out of a shaky, unsteady, disintegrating mass, a real army was created. We took Kazan on September 10, 1918, and recovered Simbirsk on the following day. That moment was a notable date in the history of the Red Army. Immediately, we felt firm ground under our feet. These were no longer our first helpless attempts: from now on we could fight and win.

*The apparatus of military administration* was built at that time, all across the country, in close combination with the local soviets of every province, *uyezd* and *votost*. [Gubemia ('Governorate') the largest administrative unit in Russia at that time, has been translated as 'province'. An uyezd was a subdivision of a province, and a *i'olosi* was the smallest administrative unit -- a group of villages.] The territory of the Republic, which, though split up by the enemy, was still enormous, was divided into districts, each comprising several provinces. [Originally six military districts were formed: Yaroslavi, Moscow, Orel, Ural, Volga and Northern Commune (White Sea).] In this way the necessary centralization of the administration was achieved.

The political and organizational difficulties were incredibly great. The psychological change-over from the destruction of the old army to the creation of the new, was achieved only at the cost of continual inner friction and conflict. The old army had thrown up committees elected by the soldiers, and elected commanders who were actually subordinate to these committees. This measure was, of course, not military but revolutionary-political in character. From the standpoint of controlling troops in battle and of preparing them for battle, it was intolerable, monstrous, fatal. There was and could be no question of controlling troops by means of elected committees and commanders who were subordinate to these committees and might be replaced at any moment. But the army did not want to fight. It had carried out a social revolution within itself, casting aside the commanders from the landlord and bourgeois classes and establishing organs of revolutionary self-government, in the shape of the Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies. These organizational and political measures were correct and necessary from the standpoint of breaking up the old army. But a new army capable of fighting could certainly not grow directly out of them. The Tsarist regiments, after experiencing the Kerensky period, disbanded after October and were reduced to nothing. The attempt made to apply our old organizational methods to the building of a Red Army threatened to under-mine it from the very outset. Electivity of commanders in the Tsarist army was a way of purging it of possible agents of restoration. But the system of election could in no way secure competent, suitable and authoritative commanders for the revolutionary army. The Red Army was built from above, in accordance with the principles of the dictatorship of the working class. Commanders were selected and tested by the organs of the Soviet power and the Communist Party. Election of commanders by the units themselves -- which were politically ill-educated, being composed of recently mobilized young peasants -- would inevitably have been transformed into a game of chance, and would often, in fact, have created favorable circumstances for the machinations of various intriguers and adventurers. Similarly, the revolutionary army, as an army for action and not as an arena of propaganda, was incompatible with a regime of elected committees, which in fact could not but destroy all centralized control, by allowing each unit to decide for itself whether it would agree to advance or to remain on the defensive. The Left SRs carried this chaotic pseudo-democracy to the point of absurdity when they called

upon the individual regiments to decide whether they would fulfill the conditions of the armistice with the Germans or would go over to the offensive. In doing this the Left SRs were merely trying to raise the Army against the Soviet power which had created it.

The peasantry, taken by itself, is incapable of creating a centralized army. It cannot get beyond local guerrilla units, the primitive 'democracy' of which is often a screen for the personal dictatorship of their atamans. These guerrilla tendencies, reflecting the element of peasant spontaneity in the revolution, found their most finished expression among the Left SRs and the Anarchists, but also took possession of a considerable section of the Communists, especially those who came from the peasantry or had formerly been soldiers or NCOs.

In the first period, guerrilla warfare was a necessary and adequate weapon. The fight against the counter-revolution, which had not yet pulled itself together, uniting and arming its forces, was waged by small, independent bodies of troops. This kind of warfare called for self-sacrifice, initiative and independence. But as the war grew in scope it increasingly called for proper organization and discipline. The habits of guerrilla warfare began to turn their negative pole towards the revolution Transforming units into regiments, putting regiments into divisions, subordinating divisional commanders to commanders of armies and of fronts was a task of great difficulty, and one that was not always effected without loss.

Indignation against the bureaucratic centralism of Tsarist Russia formed a very important constituent feature of the revolution. Regions, provinces, *uyezds* and towns vied with one another in trying to show their independence. The idea of 'power in the localities' assumed an extremely chaotic character in the initial period. On the Left SR and Anarchist wing it was linked with reactionary federalist doctrinairism, but among the broad masses it was an inevitable and, so far as its sources were concerned, a healthy reaction against the old regime which had stifled initiative. From a certain moment onward, however, with the tighter unification of the counter-revolutionary forces and the growth of external threats, these primitive tendencies to autonomy became ever more dangerous, both from the political and, in particular, from the military standpoint. This problem will undoubtedly play a big role in Western Europe, above all in France, where prejudices in favor of autonomism and federalism are stronger than anywhere else. The quickest possible overcoming of such prejudices, under the banner of revolutionary proletarian centralism, is a prerequisite for future victory over the bourgeoisie.

The year 1918 and a substantial part of 1919 were spent in constant stubborn struggle to create a *centralized, disciplined army*, supplied and controlled from a single center. In the military sphere this army reflected, though in sharper forms, the process that was going forward in all spheres of the construction of the Soviet Republic.

The selection and creation of *commanding personnel* involved a number of very great difficulties. We had at our disposal what was left of the old corps of regular officers, a broad stratum of the officers commissioned during the war, and, finally, the commanders brought forward by the revolution itself in its first, guerrilla period.

Of the old officer corps there remained with us either the more idealistic men, who understood or at least sensed the meaning of the new epoch (these were, of course, a very small minority), or the pen-pushers, inert, without initiative, men who lacked the energy to go over to the Whites: finally, there were not a few active counter-revolutionaries, whom events had caught unawares.

When we took our first constructive steps, the question of these former officers of the Tsarist army came up in an acute form. We needed them as representatives of their craft, as men who were familiar with military routine, and without whom we should have to *start from scratch*. Our foes would, in that case, hardly permit us to pursue our self-training until it had reached the required level. We could not build a centralized military apparatus, and an army to correspond, without drawing into the work many representatives of the old officer corps. They now entered the army not as representatives of the old ruling classes but as henchmen of the new revolutionary class. Many of them, to be sure, betrayed us, going over to the enemy or taking part in revolts; but, in the main, their spirit of class resistance was broken. Nevertheless, the hatred felt for them by the rank-and-file masses was still intense, and constituted one of the sources of the guerrilla attitude: within the framework of a small local unit there was no need for qualified military workers. It was necessary, while smashing the resistance of the counter-revolutionary elements among the old officers, to secure for the loyal elements among them, step by step, the possibility of working as part of the Red Army.

The oppositionist 'Left' tendencies (which were actually intellectual and peasant tendencies) in the sphere of building the Army tried to find a generalized theoretical formula to serve their purposes. The centralized army was declared to be the army of an imperialist state. The revolution must, in conformity with its whole nature, give up for good and all not only positional warfare but also the centralized army. The revolution was entirely based upon mobility, the bold stroke, and maneuvering. Its fighting force was the small, independent unit, made up of all types of arms, not linked with any base, relying on the sympathy of the population, moving freely into the enemy's rear, and so on. In short, the tactics of the revolution were proclaimed to be the tactics of guerrilla warfare. Serious experience of civil war very soon refuted these prejudices. The advantages of centralized organization and strategy over local improvisation, military separatism and federalism were revealed so quickly and vividly that today the basic principles of the building of the Red Army are beyond dispute.

A most important role in the creation of a commanding apparatus for the Army was played by the institution of *commissars*. They were chosen from among the revolutionary workers, the Communists, and in part also, in the first period, the Left SRs (until July 1918). The role of the commander was thereby bisected, so to speak. Only purely military leadership was left in the hands of the commander himself. Political and educational work was concentrated in those of the commissar. But what was most important was that the commissar was the direct representative of the Soviet power in the Army. The commissar's task was, without encroaching on the purely military work of the commander, and in no case lowering his authority as commander, to create conditions such that this authority could not be used against the interests of the revolution. The working class gave its best sons to the fulfillment of this task. Hundreds and thousands of them fell at their posts as commissars. Later, no small number of revolutionary commanders emerged from the ranks of the commissars.

From the very start we set about establishing a network of *military training schools*. At the beginning, these reflected the general weakness of our military organization. Short courses lasting a few months produced, in the main, not commanders but merely middling Red Army soldiers. Since, however, more often than not, those who went into battle in that period were masses who handled a rifle for the first time when they entrained, those Red Army soldiers who had undergone a four-month course were frequently given command not merely of sections but also of platoons and even of companies.

We assiduously recruited former NCOs of the Tsarist army. However, it must be appreciated that a considerable proportion of these had been drawn, in their time, from among the better-off sections in

country and town. They were, predominantly, the literate sons of peasant families of the kulak type. At the same time, hostility towards the 'men with the golden epaulettes', meaning the officers, with their noble and intellectual background, was always a characteristic of theirs. Hence the split running through this category: they gave us many out-standing commanders and army leaders, whose most brilliant representative is Budyonny; but this same set of men also furnished many commanders for counter-revolutionary revolts and for the White Army.

Creating a body of revolutionary commanders is a most difficult task. And while the higher command was selected already in the first three or four years of the Red Army's existence, where the lower levels of commanding personnel are concerned this cannot be said to have been fully accomplished even today. Our principal efforts are now being directed to providing the Army with section commanders who are completely capable of performing their responsible task. The work of military training can be proud of its very great successes. The training and education of Red commanders is steadily improving.

The role played by *propaganda* in the Red Army is widely known. The political work which with us preceded every step forward along the path of construction, in the military sphere as well as elsewhere, led to the need for creating an extensive political apparatus for the Army. The most important organs of this work are the commissars, already mentioned. However, the bourgeois press of Europe patently misrepresents the matter when it depicts propaganda as some devilish invention of the Bolsheviks. Propaganda plays an immense role in all the world's armies. The political apparatus of bourgeois propaganda is very much more powerful and richer technically than ours. The superiority of our propaganda lies in its content. Our propaganda invariably united the Red Army, while disrupting the enemy's forces, not by any special technical methods or procedures but by the Communist idea which constituted the content of this propaganda. This military secret of ours we openly divulge, without fearing any plagiarism on the part of our adversaries.

The Red Army's *technique* reflected and reflects the general economic situation in our country. In the first period of the revolution we had at our disposal the material legacy of the imperialist war. In its way, this was colossal, but extremely chaotic. Of some things there was too much, of others too little, and besides, we did not know just what we possessed. The chief voluntary administrations artfully concealed that little which they themselves knew about. 'Power in the localities' was in the hands of whoever happened to be present in a given territory. The revolutionary guerrilla leaders took supplies for their units from anything and everything that came their way. The railway authorities cunningly directed trucks laden with ammunition, even entire trainloads, to destinations other than those for which they were intended. The first period was thus a time of frightful squandering of the resources left over from the imperialist war. Individual military units (mostly regiments) dragged around after them armored cars and airplanes while they had no bayonets for their rifles, and often even lacked cartridges. War industry had stopped production at the end of 1917. Only in 1919, when the old supplies began to near exhaustion, was work begun on reviving the production of arms. In 1920 nearly the whole of industry was already working for war purposes. We had no reserves. Every rifle, every cartridge, every pair of boots was dispatched, straight from the machine or the lathe that produced it, to the front. There were times -- and these lasted for weeks -- when every one of a soldier's stock of cartridges counted, and when delay in the arrival of a special train bringing ammunition resulted in whole divisions retreating along several dozen versts [A verst is 3,500 feet, or 1,067 meters.] of the front.

Despite the fact that the subsequent development of the civil war led to collapse of the economy, the supplying of the army -thanks, on the one hand, to the direction given to the forces of industry, and, on



the other, and mainly, thanks to the increasing degree of regulation of the war economy itself -- became, and continues to become, more and more what is needed.

A special place in the development of the Red Army is held by the creation of the *cavalry*. Without going here into the argument about the role to be played by cavalry, in general, in future wars, we can say that, in the past, it was backward countries that had the best cavalry: Russia, Poland, Hungary, and, still earlier, Sweden. For cavalry one needs Steppes, wide open spaces. Here, it naturally came into being on the Kuban and the Don, and not in the environs of Petersburg and Moscow. In the civil war in the United States the advantage as regards cavalry was wholly in favor of the Southern plantation-owners. Only in the second half of the war did the Northerners master this arm. It was the same with us. The counter-revolution entrenched itself in the backward borderlands, and tried, pressing inward from there, to squeeze us into the central area round Moscow. The most important arm wielded by Denikin and Wrangel was the Cossacks, and, in general, the cavalry. Their bold raids often, in the first period, created very great difficulties for us. However, this advantage possessed by the counter-revolution -- an advantage derived from backwardness -- proved to be within the reach of the revolution, too, once it had grasped the significance of cavalry in a civil war of maneuver, and had set itself the task of creating a force of cavalry at whatever cost. The Red Army's slogan in 1919 became: 'Proletarians, to horse!' After only a few months our cavalry could stand comparison with the enemy's, and subsequently it seized the initiative once and for all.

The Army's unity and self-confidence steadily increased. In the first period not only the peasants but also the workers were unwilling to join the Army. Only a very narrow stratum of devoted proletarians consciously set about creating armed forces for the Soviet Republic. And it was this stratum that bore the burden of the work in the first, most difficult period. The mood of the peasantry vacillated unceasingly. Entire regiments composed of peasants -- true, in most cases they were quite unprepared either politically or technically -- surrendered in the first period, sometimes without putting up a fight, and then later, when the Whites had enrolled them under their flag, crossed over to our side again. Sometimes the peasant masses tried to show their independence, and abandoned both Whites and Reds, going off into the forests to form their 'Green' units. But the scattered nature and political helplessness of these units foredoomed them to defeat. Thus, at the fronts of the civil war the relation between the basic class forces of the revolution found expression more vividly than anywhere else: the peasant masses, for whose allegiance the landlord-bourgeois-intellectual counter-revolution contended with the working class, constantly wavered from this side to that; but in the end it gave its support to the working class. In the most backward provinces, such as Kursk and Voronezh, where the numbers who evaded the call-up for military service amounted to many thousands, the arrival of the Generals' forces on the borders of these provinces produced a decisive change in attitude, and impelled the masses of former deserters into the ranks of the Red Army. The peasant supported the worker against the landlord and the capitalist. In this social fact is rooted the final cause of our victories.

The Red Army was built under fire, and consequently, far from always in accordance with a definite plan, and often by way of rather disorderly improvisations. Its apparatus was extraordinarily unwieldy and, in many cases, clumsy. We made use of every breathing space to *righten, simplify and refine our military organization*. In this respect we have had undoubted success during the last two years. In the period of our fight with Wrangel and with Poland, in 1920, the Red Army had in its ranks more than five million men. Today as of May 1922 it includes, together with the Navy, about one-and-a-half million, and is still contracting. This contraction has proceeded and is proceeding more slowly than would have been desirable, because it is paralleled by an improvement in quality. The tightening-up in the rear and



auxiliary apparatus has been incomparably greater than in the combatant units. In contracting, the Army has not become weaker but, on the contrary, stronger. Its capacity for deployment, if war should come, is increasing steadily. Its loyalty to the cause of the social revolution is beyond doubt.

*May 21, 1922 Moscow*

## NOTES

1. This article was written for *Yezhegodnik Komintern* (*Comintern Annual*), May 21, 1922. It appeared previously in No. 8/1922 of the journal of the Chief Administration of Military Schools. It is reproduced here as the introduction to this work because it generalizes all the material which has now been printed in these volumes. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

2. *The Military Organization of our Party* began in 1905 and played a considerable role in developing the revolutionary movement in the army. The first attempt to unite the work of the Party cells in the army was made at the end of March 1906, when a conference of the 'military organizations' was convened in Moscow. After the arrest of those who took part on that occasion, the conference was held in Tammerfors in the winter of 1906.

In 1917, after the February revolution, the Military Organization developed its influence first in Petrograd and later also at the front (especially in the Northern sector and in the Baltic Fleet). On April 15 appeared the first issue of the newspaper *Soldatskaya Pravda*, the central organ of the organization. At the congress of the Military Organization in Petrograd on July 16 up to 500 separate units were represented, with a total membership of not less than 30,000 Bolsheviks. The Military Organization carried on direct preparation for the rising and sent some active comrades from its membership to serve in the Petrograd Military Revolutionary Committee, and later in the War Department (comrades Podvoisky, Mekhonoshin, Krylenko, Dzevaltovsky, Raskolnikov and many more). [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)



# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SITUATION OF THE SOVIET  
POWER IN SPRING OF 1918[3]

WE NEED AN ARMY

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**Speech at the Session of the Moscow Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, March 19, 1918 [From *Pravda*, March 21, 1918.]**

Comrades! Our Soviet Socialist Republic needs a well-organized army.

In the world situation in which it has been the will of history to place us, amid the conditions of unprecedented difficulty that surround us, conditions that, again, are not of our making, we need to be strong. This is given sharp emphasis by the entire international situation. To describe that situation, together with the international developments we expect, I will mention some of the most important facts in this sphere.

The most recent telegram received from the West informs us that Germany has approached the governments of our former 'allies' with a peace proposal, in which the Germans offer to withdraw their troops from France and Belgium and above all, to restore Alsace- Lorraine to France.[4] If we look more deeply into this matter, we see that it means they have in mind a peace at Russia's expense.

Already at the beginning of the war we said that world war would inevitably entail the complete exhaustion of the less rich among the belligerent states, and that the weakest of the contending countries, regardless of which camp they belonged to, would suffer severe *defeat and become so much ready cash for settling accounts when the booty was shared out*. That is precisely the fate that threatens us.

Furthermore, the bourgeois newspapers of nearly all countries falsely allege that along the Trans-Siberian Railway there are up to 20,000 well-organized prisoners of war who are hostile to the 'Allies'. The source of these false and provocative statements is the Japanese General Staff, which is spreading such rumours with the clear intention of creating a legal pretext for occupying Vladivostok and Siberia.

In Britain a struggle is going on between two political trends, one of which -- embracing all the parties of capital -- favours a certain compromise with Germany at the expense of Russia, while the other, reflecting the revolutionary ferment among the masses of the British people, warns against making such a deal at Russia's expense. But in Britain, too, power is held by the extreme imperialists. We are surrounded by enemies. If our 'Ally' France were really to be offered Alsace-Lorraine, the French Stock-Exchange would unhesitatingly sell Russia out. This would riot, of course, be hindered by the 'friendly' feelings entertained towards the Russian people on the part of our counter-revolutionary 'Allies', who are so warmly defended by the representatives of the right-wing trends. In view of this, we say, comrades, that Russia, exhausted and unarmed, will inevitably become the slave of international imperialism united against her if the international proletariat does not save her in time by its support, and if we ourselves do not organize our own defence.

We are reproached for not having given everything that we promised. In reply I say that, first and foremost, we must arm and fight, so as to ensure the mere possibility of carrying out our programme; and that, if the European proletariat fails to come to our aid in the fatal moment of our tragic lonely struggle, then, by remaining unarmed, we may perish altogether. We were the first to raise the flag of revolt amid this bloody and black night of imperialist war, and it is hard for us, sometimes almost beyond our strength, to fight against the iron ring of enemies that surrounds us. Is it surprising if we are not accomplishing all that we wanted to accomplish?

We need an army, which would give us powerful strength for the inevitable coming struggle with international imperialism. With the aid of this army we shall not only defend ourselves but shall be in a position to help the struggle of the international proletariat.

For there can be no doubt that, the more international imperialism grabs and strangles, the more passionate and terrible will be the wrath of the European worker-soldier who, emerging from the trenches, will find at home, as the result of his inhuman sufferings, his family reduced to poverty and hunger, and his country in a state of economic collapse.

Let those of little faith, yielding to weariness, no longer wish to hear of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat of other countries, of the victory of the world revolution: we declare that the moment of social explosion in all states is inevitably approaching, and we, to whom history has given victory sooner than the rest, with all the possibilities that follow from this, must be ready, at the first thunderclap of the world revolution, to bring armed help to our foreign brothers in revolt.

And, in particular, at the moment when the German proletariat, which is nearer to revolution than any other, when this proletariat, enveloped in the flames of militant enthusiasm, comes out into the streets -- and it will come, whatever has been said by the croakers of ill-omen in their party, who have struck themselves forever out of the International -- we must be ready prepared, organized in fighting units to go to their aid.

Our party deliberately set out to break up the old Tsarist Army. But the whole course of the war itself led to the complete disintegration of the ranks of the old army. Even without the work of our party, the army would have broken up into its component parts all the same. This result was fully prepared for both by Tsardom and by the entire policy of the Kerensky period. So early as the beginning of the February Revolution the question of peace and war sharply confronted the soldiers: upon the answer to this question depended the fate of the country's armed forces. Precisely then, in the interests of the country and of the army, it was necessary to undertake in a practical way the solution, first and foremost, of the

problem of peace, on the Russian and international scale. But just at that moment, when our army, which was already quite exhausted and deprived of strength, was burning with impatient expectation of peace, Kerensky and his colleagues and allies hurled the worn-out forces into the bloody offensive of June 18.[5] The Russian offensive of June 18, 1917 is usually referred to in Western books as the 'July offensive', owing to the difference in the calendars used at that time.] That offensive dealt a mortal blow to the army! There has been talk here of the Constituent Assembly. Let it be known to the party which predominated numerically in that assembly[6] that it was precisely itself that on June 18 destroyed the army, raised the country against itself, and thereby killed the Constituent Assembly!

In our work to create an army we shall undoubtedly come up against a number of obstacles. Whether we like it or not, we are heirs to all the previous 'way of doing things' of our political adversaries, and the entire burden of recent events, above all, the Brest peace, has fallen tragically upon us only through the previous management of affairs by the Tsarist regime and, following it, by the regime of the petty-bourgeois compromisers. And if the spirit of revolutionary enthusiasm has not yet been finally extinguished in the depths of the masses, that spirit without which the victory of the revolution is inconceivable, this is only because, at the time when the people are suffering these present tragic experiences, all power is really in their hands.

In the October days the people fought for power and seized it. We are now entering, armed with the plenitude of this power, into an epoch of construction and renovation of the life of the revolutionary people. Before us are immense tasks: restoring railway transport, the necessity of feeding the hungry, the need to draw the masses into creative and properly organized work. There can be no doubt that these tasks are at the given moment considerably complicated by the fact that the old discipline has been uprooted among the masses, while the new, revolutionary discipline has not yet taken shape. There is in the country a great deal of wanton behaviour, due to ignorance which, though awakened, has not yet been enlightened. All this is, of course, the inevitable product of all our previous history

All the sooner do we need, rolling up our sleeves, to get down to the rough work, with a mighty effort dragging out of the bog the cart of state which is so deeply stuck in it. We need exact, persistent and systematic work in all fields!

While we were fighting with the Kaledinites[7] we could successfully remain content with units which had been put together in haste. Now, however, in order to cope with the creative work of reviving the country which is what we have to perform, in order to ensure the security of the Soviet Republic under conditions of international counter-revolutionary encirclement, such units are already inadequate. *We need a properly and freshly organized army!*

When we speak of this need, those who formerly collaborated with the Tsar's Generals blame us for having called up the regular officers and entrusted them with responsible posts. Yes, we are making use of the military specialists, for, after all, the tasks of Soviet democracy do not in the least consist in casting aside technical resources which can be usefully applied to ensure the success of its historical work, after subjecting them politically to the established order. In the matter of the army, too, all power will remain exclusively in the hands of the Soviets, which will despatch into all military organs and units reliable political commissars who will exercise overall control. The importance of these commissars must be recognised as very high indeed, and their authority will be unlimited. The military specialists will be in charge of the technical side, of purely military matters, operational work and combat activities, while the political side of the organization, training and education of the units must be wholly subject to the

plenipotentiary representatives of the Soviet regime, its commissars. There is and can be at the present time no other way. We must remember that, in order to fight, we need, besides the enthusiasm which is latent among the people, technical knowledge as well.

For proper organization of the army and, in particular, for expedient utilisation of the specialists, we need revolutionary discipline. We are introducing this with determination at the top, but we need with no less vigour to introduce it down below, arousing a sense of responsibility among the masses. When the people realise that discipline is being introduced now not in order to defend the moneybags of the bourgeoisie, not to restore the land to the landlords, but, on the contrary, in order to consolidate and defend all the conquests made by the revolution, they will approve even the strictest of measures aimed at the establishment of discipline. We must at all costs and at any price implant discipline in the Red Army -- not the previous sort, the automatic discipline of the rod, but conscious, collective discipline, based on revolutionary enthusiasm and clear understanding by the workers and peasants of their duty to their own classes.

We shall not be halted by any difficulties. It may be that, in order to bring our cause to triumph and accomplish our great tasks, we shall have for a time to work not eight hours but ten and twelve hours a day. So what? We shall work twice as hard, we shall harness ourselves together, we shall go forward along the road of labour discipline and creative work. We did not say, and we do not say now, that everything will come by itself. No, the difficulties that face us are beyond counting. But we have proved to be richer in spirit, resources and forces than we ourselves had thought we were: and that is no small thing, that is the pledge of victory.

Let us work tirelessly, so that at the moment when the European proletariat rise up, we shall be able to go fully armed to their aid and, together with them, in a combined effort, overthrow forever the power of capital!

## NOTES

**3.** In order that the reader may appreciate more precisely the speeches and articles that follow, it is necessary to give a *brief historical review of the struggle waged by the Soviet Republic down to April 1918.*

In the October days the Red Guards constituted a force that was sufficiently strong for its task, even though it was weakly organised. Kerensky's attempt to liquidate the Bolshevik insurrection with the aid of a single Cossack division under General Krasnov's command ended in failure. The front gave no help to Kerensky. In the fighting on the Pulkovo Heights the Red Guards defeated Krasnov: on November 1 our units captured Gatchina. The counter-revolution shifted to the poorly proletarianised border regions. The first fighting units were formed in the proletarian centres. The old army, which was in the grip of its urge to demobilise, played, on the whole, no part in this struggle. The disintegration of the old army, which was accompanied by the separation from it of the national units, ['The national units' means those units made up of non-Russian nationalities (Ukrainians, etc.) which held together amid this disorder, making it their task in the new period to fight for the independence of their homelands] reached its climax, and by January 1918 that army could be regarded as having been demobilised.

The working class scored rapid victories in the fight against the internal counter-revolution. On January 18 combat groups in the Ural area put down Dutov's revolt. [Ataman A.I. Dutov, leader of the Orenburg



Cossacks, was one of the first and also one of the most persistent of the White commanders. Reopened in an area of great strategic importance, which, because it blocked communication between European Russia and Central Asia (with its vital supplies of cotton), came to be called 'Dutov's cork'. Not until March 1920 did Dutov, with the remnants of his army, retreat into Chinese territory, where he was assassinated a year later] On January 26 the Red Guards occupied Kiev. On February 13 revolutionary units led by Comrade Berzin [The Berzin mentioned here is R. Yu. Berzin (1888-1939), a Party member who, after his victory on the Western Front, and service in the Supreme Military Inspectorate, took command in June 1918 of the North Urals and Siberia Front. Not to be confused with Ya.K. Berzin (1903-1938), who was one of the Red Army officers who participated in the Spanish Civil War, or with Ya. A. Berzin (1881-1938), a non-military figure who was Soviet ambassador in Switzerland in 1918. All three men were Letts] occupied Rogachev [Rogachev is on the River Dnieper, north-west of Gomel, and is a station on the north-south railway line linking Mogilev and Mozyr] and put down the movement of the Polish Corps commanded by Dowbor-Musnicki. On February 21, after stubborn fighting, units made up of Donets miners, helped by workers from Petrograd and Moscow, took Rostov.

The fortuitous and chaotic organisation of the first units, their motley armament, the absence of any planned supply service or unified leadership, all were overshadowed by the enthusiasm and valour they displayed in their struggle against the internal counter-revolution. However, these weak sides made themselves sharply felt when the first clashes with foreign troops occurred.

On February 18, after the interruption of the negotiations at Brest, the Germans launched an offensive along the whole front. The disintegrated old army rolled back without resistance, abandoning in the trenches a large quantity of ammunition and a substantial proportion of their guns. The freshly formed units were also unable to put up adequate resistance. By the beginning of April all was quiet on the Western Front, and the Germans held the line that had been laid down in the treaty of Brest. In the Ukraine our forces continued, without success, to fight against the advancing Germans. (See map I).

[\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**4.** *Alsace-Lorraine*, with its rich deposits of coal and iron, was taken from France by the Germans as a result of the Franco-Prussian War of 1871. Recovery of Alsace-Lorraine was France's principal war-aim.

[\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**5.** *The offensive of June 18 1917.* Carrying out the High Command's directive of 18 June, the Eleventh and Twelfth Armies, on the South-Western Front, began an attack on the enemy's positions: a little later, on June 23, the Eighth Army, under General Kornilov, joined in the offensive. Despite the intense preparation, the concentration of shock battalions, and Kerensky's personal visits, the army, which was in a process of general disintegration, was incapable of sustaining a prolonged breakthrough: after two or three days, the attack came to a standstill. On July 6 the Germans, who had concentrated six divisions against the left flank of the Eleventh Army advanced quickly to Tarnopol, [Tarnopol (now Ternopol) was then Austrian, in 'Eastern Galicia', i.e. Western Ukraine] and already by July 15 the South-Western Front had rolled back, without offering any resistance, to the line of our former state frontier. The July debacle led to the Provisional Government taking a number of decisive measures by which it hoped to restore the fighting capacity of the front. Restoration of the death penalty and of military censorship, together with arrests of Bolsheviks, prepared the ground for Kornilov's mutiny. The June offensive brought about a marked increase in the Bolsheviks' influence in the army. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**6.** The majority in the *Constituent Assembly* was held by the SR party. This was due to the fact that the

elections had taken place on the basis of lists drawn up before the October revolution. The Bolsheviks were then in a semi-underground situation, and the SRs, who were represented in the Government, possessed considerable advantages. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**7.***General Kaledin* began so soon as June 1917 to concentrate on the Don the Cossack units that had been at the front. A little later, General Alekseyev, and, after his escape from Bykhov prison, Kornilov as well, began to form the cadres of a Volunteer Army, recruiting cadets and officers who had fled from the front and from central Russia. At the end of November Kaledin seized Rostov, and tried to extend his authority northward, into the Donets Basin. Under the overall leadership of Comrade Antonov-Ovseyenko, units of the Red Guard completed their concentration by the beginning of January 1918. Forces led by Sievers, [R.F. Sievers, an ensign during the First World War: died of wounds later in 1918.] numbering 10,000 men altogether (the basic nucleus consisting of regiments of the old army), advanced through Nikitovka towards Taganrog. Forces led by Sablin, numbering some six thousand (the nucleus being formed of reserve regiments from the city of Moscow), moved along the line Zverovo-Likhhaya-Novocherkassk, this advance being helped by local units led by Comrade Petrov. The Whites were beaten in battles before Rostov and Novocherkassk, and the remains of Kaledin's units withdrew into the Salsk steppe. Kaledin shot himself.

Seizure of the initiative and rapid concentration of Red Guard units which, though poorly organised, were numerically superior, gave quick victory to the Soviet Republic in this first period. (The course of events can be followed in detail with the aid of the chronological table) [The Salak steppe lies southeast of Rostov-on-don, on the border of the Kulan territory. ] [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)



# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SITUATION OF THE SOVIET  
POWER IN SPRING OF 1918

OUR TASK

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\* \* \*

In face of the unprecedented calamities and dangers threatening the Soviet Republic there is only one path of salvation: it is the path of sustained work and revolutionary discipline.

We must increase the economic strength of our impoverished country.

We must ensure armed defence of the Soviet Republic against the beasts of imperialism.

In these terrible days every honest citizen has the duty to be a worker and a soldier.

The next few days will see the introduction of a law on universal compulsory military training. [\[8\]](#)

The Republic places upon experienced instructors the duty to render every citizen, in town and country alike, capable of answering the first call to go, arms in hand, to the defence of the homeland.

Military training will be carried on outside ordinary working hours. Nobody will dare to ask for any sort of recompense for the hours that he devotes to his supreme civic duty, namely, studying how to defend the Soviet Republic.

In order that, in a moment of emergency, all armed citizens may go to the defence of the country, we need to create firm, reliable cadres. This is the urgent task of the months and weeks immediately ahead of us. The Soviet Republic, encircled by enemies, is proceeding without delay to organise battalions from the staunchest and most self-sacrificing fighters. Their livelihood and that of their families will be looked after from the people's common resources. The Soviet cadres must be welded together with iron discipline, trained, equipped and armed in accordance with the latest requirements of the art of war.

Just as industry needs engineers and just as agriculture needs scientific agronomists, so, too, the task of defence needs military specialists. The Soviet Republic urgently summons the

military specialists to work. The grave situation of Russia, which the world's beasts of prey want to crucify on the cross of imperialism, prompts all honest military and naval specialists to the realisation

that they dare not stand aloof. The Soviet power gives them full opportunity to devote all their powers, know ledge and talents to the cause of organising the country's defence. The specialists must become instructors, military teachers, technical leaders of the Army. In the specifically military sphere they must be given the decisive word, and upon them must be placed the whole burden of responsibility.

In the sphere of the moulding, ideological welding and political education of the people's army, the decisive word will belong to the Soviets, at the centre and in the localities. This work will be carried out in accordance with a common plan, worked out with the participation of the best military experts and under the constant military-technical supervision of special inspectors.

The Soviet Republic needs an army that will be able to fight and conquer.

It is the responsibility of the Soviet power to make sure that none of the separate institutions or units of the people's army are transformed into foci of counter-revolution, into instruments directed against the workers and peasants. Political control over the entire organisation and life of the army will be entrusted to military commissars. The post of military commissar is one of the most responsible and most honourable in the Soviet Republic. The commissar will safeguard the closest internal bond between the Army and the Soviet regime as a whole. The commissar will incarnate the principle of revolutionary duty and indestructible discipline. The commissar will ensure, with the full force of his authority and power, immediate and unquestioning fulfilment of the operational and combat instructions issued by the military leaders.

These are the principles which the Government lays down as the basis for creating the Army: universal and obligatory military training in schools, factories and villages; immediate formation of firm cadres from the most self-sacrificing fighters;

bringing in military commissars as guardians of the highest interests of the revolution and of socialism.

In the name of the Socialist Republic, the Council of People's Commissars calls upon all Soviets, all conscious workers and peasants, all honest citizens who are devoted to the people's cause, to redouble their efforts in the great work of safeguarding the independence and freedom of our country.

Liberated Russia will not be enslaved. It will arise and grow strong, it will cast out the beasts of prey, it will live in fraternal unity with the liberated peoples of all lands.

What is needed is that, in these dark days of calamity affecting the whole people, all true sons of Revolutionary Russia shall have no thought, no desire, no commitment but the salvation of our blood-drained homeland.

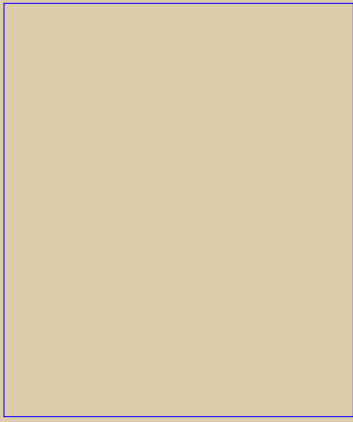
Let there be no wavering, no doubts! Work, order, perseverance, discipline, self-sacrifice -- and we shall triumph!

L.T. *March 21, 1918*

## NOTES

**8. *The decree on universal compulsory military training.*** was adopted by the All-Russia Central Executive Committee of the Soviets on the basis of Comrade Trotsky's report of April 22, 1918.

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HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

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POWER IN SPRING OF 1918

WORK, DISCIPLINE, ORDER [\[9\]](#)

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\* \* \*

## Report to the Moscow City Conference of the Russian Communist Party, March 28, 1918

Comrades! The conference is meeting at a time of profound internal crisis in our generally critical epoch, and at a moment when our mood cannot be one of enthusiasm and militancy. Without any doubt we are passing through a period of internal confusion, of great difficulty, and, what is most important, of self-criticism, which, let us hope, will lead to an inner cleansing and a new upsurge of the revolutionary movement.

We inherit our authority from the October Revolution, which some of those who marched in ranks close to us, or marched parallel with us, are now disposed, as it were, to repudiate. And the October Revolution is even now regarded by many sages as being either an adventure or a blunder.

We Communists cannot look upon the question of the October Revolution from this subjective point of view. After 1905, during a number of years preceding the revolution of 1917, we not only forecast the inevitability of a new revolution, but declared, theoretically foresaw, that, if this revolution came to a victorious conclusion, it would inevitably put in power the working class, relying on all the poorest sections of the population. Our analysis, which was confirmed in October, was called utopian. Now they call utopian our socialist prospect, our Communist programme. But it is obvious to everyone that the dictatorship of the working class, which we forecast, has been realised, and that all those 'total abstainers' who saw in our forecasts only utopianism and our subjective desires have turned out to be cast aside by the development of the class struggle in our revolution.

The February revolution revealed the basic relation of forces: first, the combination of all the property-owning and ruling classes, a combination headed by the Cadet Party, within which were dissolved all the contradictions, all the antagonisms between the different groups among the property-owners, precisely because the revolution posed sharply the root question of property as such,



and thereby eliminated the differences among the property-owning classes.

The compromising groups constituted the second major camp in the revolution -- politically much larger than corresponded to its real social strength (for reasons about which I shall now say a few words). The third camp was made up of the working class, headed by our Party, and the working masses who were linked with it.

I said that the compromisers' camp, which set its fatal mark on the first phase of the revolution, appeared to itself and to others incomparably more powerful than actually accorded with the social nature of the stratum from which this camp was recruited: I mean the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois intelligentsia from which the compromiser parties drew not only their leaders but also their fighting cadres.

What explains why it was that, in the first phase of the revolution, the Menshevik and SR parties played the leading role, and thereby held back the development of the revolution, worsened the country's collapse, and gave to the whole subsequent process of development an extremely acute and painful character? This is to be explained by the circumstance that our revolution grew out of the war, and the war had mobilised and organised the most backward and ignorant masses of the peasantry, endowing them with military organization and so causing them to exercise, in the first phase of the revolution, a direct influence on the course of political events, before these masses had passed, under the leadership of the proletariat, through even the elementary school of politics.

Regiments, divisions and corps elected their deputies to the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, alongside the working class. But the working class elected its deputies within the framework of its natural places of work -- the factories. The peasants, having been shut up, by means of the state machine, in the compulsory organizations of the Army, elected not peasants' deputies but deputies of regiments, companies and so forth.

Through the Army the peasants were drawn into exercising immediate active influence upon the course of political events before, I repeat, before political schooling under the leadership of the working class had given them the necessary internal incentive for this and the necessary minimum of political ideas. It was natural that this peasant mass sought representatives and leaders from outside itself, and it found them among the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia in the Army: among the volunteers, the young, the more or less revolutionary officers -- in short, among men of bourgeois origin who possessed certain formal advantages over the mass of peasant soldiers, such as the ability to express their thoughts more or less articulately, such as literacy, and so on. That was why the soldier cadres of the SR and Menshevik parties multiplied so greatly in the first phase of the revolution. They relied upon the peasant army numbering many millions. And in so far as the working class tried instinctively to avoid breaking away from its ponderous peasant reserves, this class, too, showed a certain inclination towards the compromisers, because they were the bridge linking it with the peasant and soldier masses. That was the reason why, in the first phase of the revolution, the SRs and Mensheviks set the all-determining imprint of their influence upon its development. They expressed their influence, however, not only in refraining from setting about the solution of a single one of the questions raised by the revolution, but in directly delaying and hindering the solution of all questions, intensifying all difficulties and causing the heritage which fell to us in October to be a frightful historical burden.

When, by the inner logic of the class struggle, our Party, standing at the head of the proletariat, came to power, the third camp was brought to the test, the camp of the working class, which by its entire nature is alone capable of fulfilling the fundamental tasks of the revolution.

In the political and directly military sense, the October revolution took place in an unexpectedly and unprecedentedly triumphal fashion. There had never in history been such a case of a mighty offensive by an oppressed class which in such a planned and rapid way seized power from the possessing and ruling classes in all parts of the country, spreading its rule from Petrograd and Moscow into every corner, every cranny of Russia.

This triumphal character of the October rising revealed the political weakness of the bourgeois classes, which had its roots in the peculiarities of the development of Russian capitalism.

Taking shape under conditions of the complete disintegration of small and medium industry and of the old capitalist ideology in Western Europe, Russian capitalism, which arose from the start in highly concentrated form, undoubtedly developed great economic strength and, along with this, the internal capacity to go over to an improved form of economy -- that is, it created the basis for nationalization of the enterprises. At the same time, though, these same conditions transformed Russian commercial, industrial and financial capital into a small, privileged class, few in numbers and cut off from the broad masses of the people, lacking ideological roots in the depths of the people, without a political army of its own.

Hence the slightness of the political resistance which our bourgeoisie proved able to put up against us in October, November and the subsequent months, when in particular parts of the country there occurred the revolts of the Kaledinites, the Kornilovites and the Dutovites,[\[10\]](#) and of the Ukrainian Rada. If the Ukrainian Rada was and still is temporarily victorious over the Soviet power in the Ukraine, this fact is due exclusively to the help given it by the mighty machine of German militarism. [\[11\]](#)

Both in the advanced and in the backward, less industrialised parts of the country, everywhere our possessing classes showed themselves helpless when it came to resisting with their own resources the armed revolutionary offensive of the proletariat, fighting to win state power. This shows us, above all, comrades, that if, by the power and will of historical fate -- something which I do not think will happen, and neither do you -- We were to be driven from power, this would *be a* mere episode, lasting only a brief interval, for development would proceed subsequently along the same basic line as before. The deep social gulf between the bourgeois upper strata and the laboring classes, and the deep unity between all the unfortunate masses and the proletariat argues for this and guarantees it.

Even if temporarily driven from power, the proletariat would still be the leader of the immense majority of the laboring masses of the country, and a fresh oncoming wave would inevitably restore it to power. We derive from this assurance the most profound inner confidence in all our political work. Because of the whole social structure of Russia and because of the international situation in which we are living, we are, in the full sense of the word, invincible, despite all the difficulties, and even despite our own inadequacies, mistakes and blunders, about which I am going to speak.

The armed resistance of the bourgeoisie was smashed in a very short time. They then brought into action another mechanism of resistance, in the form of sabotage by the officials and technical personnel, all the skilled and semi-skilled forces of the intelligentsia which in bourgeois society function both as mechanism of technical leadership and as mechanism of class rule.

All these elements reared up after the seizure of power by the working class. From the theoretical standpoint this should not have been, and was not, unexpected by any of us. In connection with the Paris

Commune, Marx wrote that when the working class comes to power it cannot automatically take over the old state apparatus: it must reconstruct this apparatus completely.[\[12\]](#) And this fact, that the working class cannot simply take over the old machinery, found expression here in two forms: in the distrust shown by the mass of the workers and the Soviets towards the old government officials, and in the hatred shown by the old officialdom towards the new master, the working class. Hence, sabotage, desertion, disorganization of all governmental and many social and private institutions, on the part of their leading technical and administrative staffs.

This sabotage, in so far as it was not a mere outcome of the panic inspired in the educated elements by the heavy hand of the working class which had taken power, in so far as it pursued a political aim, relied upon the approach of the Constituent Assembly, seen as its natural goal, as the new bridge whereby the Possessing classes could return to power.

Whereas what corresponded to the Russian bourgeoisie, the Russian Propertied classes generally, by virtue of their nature, their political interests, was a monarchy limited by a parliament elected on the basis of a property qualification, to the educated elements which headed the compromiser parties, to *their*

development, and this way out lay only through the dictatorship of the working class. We knew that if obstacles presented themselves on the path of this dictatorship, they must be swept away. If such sweeping away of obstacles momentarily intensified the state of collapse, then all this must be made up for a hundred fold by the politically- intense creative work in the economic field which the working class must get down to without delay once it had come to power.

Now, comrades, having overcome the political obstacles, we are faced in real earnest by all these organizational difficulties. History has put sharply to the working class, to us as its representatives, the question: can you cope with all the difficulties which preceding decades and centuries have piled up for you, here and there tying them in Gordian knots, elsewhere offering them to you in the form of a quite chaotic state of ruin extending all over Russia? Will you cope, shall we cope, with these tasks? In other words, will the working class, led by the Communist Party, in this moment of the greatest test to which the working class has ever been subjected throughout its history, prove to be UP to the level of its historical responsibility?

The difficulties confronting us can be divided into two categories -- those which are objective in character and those which are subjective.

The difficulties which are objective in character are founded in external conditions. They consist in the mere fact of universal ruin, of our system of communication having broken down. Our railway carriages have been stripped and smashed up. A very large percentage of our locomotives are out of action, while those that are in good shape are not moving along the rails as they should (the war has thrown everything into disorder). Our factories and works are disorganised, owing, first, to the mobilisation and then to the partial, extremely incomplete demobilisation. We suffer from very great difficulties in the sphere of food supplies - partly because we have been impoverished generally, and partly because all means of transport, accounting and control have broken down. These are the difficulties, colossal in their depth, which lie before us, and which we have to overcome at any cost. If we do not overcome them, the country will be wrecked in the very near future, for there is no-one to take our place.

While, as the working class, we, in Marx's words, cannot simply take over the old state apparatus in a mechanical way, this does not at all mean that we can get by without any of those elements which entered into the composition of the old state apparatus.

It is the misfortune of the working class that it has always occupied the position of an oppressed class. This misfortune is expressed in the level of its education and in the fact that it has never acquired those habits of rule which are possessed by a ruling class, and which such a class passes on from generation to generation, through its schools, universities and soon. None of that is possessed by the working class, it has it all to acquire.

Having come to power, the working class had to examine critically the old state apparatus of class oppression. But it must, at the same time, extract from this apparatus all the valuable skilled elements which are technically needed by it, must set them in their appropriate places, and must bring these elements under pressure from its proletarian class might. This, comrades, is the task which now confronts us in all its magnitude.

This first period of struggle against sabotage consisted in ruthless smashing of the saboteurs' organizations. This was necessary, and therefore right.

Today, in a period when the power of the Soviets has been set on a firm footing, the struggle against

sabotage must express itself in transforming the saboteurs of yesterday into the servants, executive officials, technical guides of the new regime, wherever it needs them. If we do not grapple with this task, if we do not attract all the forces we need and enlist them in the Soviet service, the struggle we waged yesterday against sabotage will thereby be condemned to futility and fruitlessness.

Just as in dead machines, so in these technicians, engineers, doctors, teachers and former officers there is embodied part of our people's national capital, which we must exploit and utilise if we want, in general, to solve the fundamental problems that face us.

Democratisation does not at all consist this is elementary for every Marxist -- in utterly denying the importance of skilled forces, of persons who possess special knowledge, but only in replacing them, wherever necessary, by elected boards, mainly as organs of supervision.[Trotsky quotes from this 1918 speech in his pamphlet *Terrorism and Communism* (1920). In this quotation the concluding phrase in the above paragraph beginning 'Democratisation' is given differently. Instead of: 'but only *in* replacing them, whenever necessary, by elected boards, mainly as organs of supervision', it appears as: 'and in replacing them, everywhere and anywhere, by elected boards'. This, except for the first word, which is 'but' instead of 'and', is how the phrase appeared when the speech was first published, as a pamphlet in 1918. An English translation was published in the American journal *Class Struggle*, 1919]

An elected board consisting of the very best representatives of the working class, but not equipped with the necessary technical knowledge, cannot take the place of a single technician who has passed through a special school and who knows how to do a particular technical job. This flood-tide of the collegiate principle which is at present to be observed in all spheres is the natural reaction of a young revolutionary class, only yesterday oppressed, which is throwing *off* the one-man-management principle of its masters of yesterday, the bosses and commanders, and everywhere appointing its elected representatives. This, I say, is a quite natural and, so far as its origin is concerned, healthy revolutionary reaction. But it is not the last word in the economic constructive work of the proletariat.

The next step must consist in self-limitation of the collegiate principle, in a sound and salutary act of self-limitation by the working class, which knows where the decisive word can be spoken by the elected representatives of the workers them selves, and where it is necessary to give way to the technician, the specialist, who is equipped with specific knowledge. A great deal of responsibility must be placed on him, and he must be kept under vigilant political control. But at the same time the specialist must be allowed the possibility of acting freely, of performing uninhibited creative work, because no specialist who is at all competent and gifted in his own field can work properly if he is subordinated in his specialist activity to a board of persons who are not conversant with that work. Political collegiate control by the Soviets must be introduced every where, but for executive functions we must appoint technical specialists, putting them in responsible positions and imposing responsibility upon them.

Those who are afraid of doing this are unconsciously adopting an attitude of profound distrust towards the Soviet regime. They think that drawing yesterday's saboteurs into technical specialist posts threatens the very foundations of the Soviet regime. They do not realise that it is not because of some engineer or former general that the Soviet regime may stumble -- in the political, revolutionary and military sense the Soviet regime is invincible. But it may well stumble through its own incapacity to cope with creative organizational tasks.

We need to take from the old institutions everything that was viable and valuable in them, in order to harness it to the new work.



If, comrades, we do not do this, then we shall not cope with our basic tasks, for it will be absolutely impossible for us to bring forth from our own midst, in a very short time, all the specialists we need, while casting aside everything that was accumulated in the past.

Actually, it would be just the same as if we were to say that all the machines that hitherto served to exploit the workers were now to be scrapped. That would be madness. Enlisting the scientific specialists is for us just as essential as taking over all the means of production and transport and all the wealth of the country generally.

I repeat, we must, and immediately, take stock of the technicians and specialists we possess, and introduce the principle of labor service for them, while at the same time offering them a wide field of activity, under our political control.

And it is here, comrades, that there arise before us those difficulties of a subjective kind which I mentioned, and which lie within the working class itself. Here also we see the effect of past centuries of Russian history, here too make themselves felt those ages when the mass of the people were bound to the land, robbed materially and spiritually, and kept without the opportunity to acquire the most necessary habits of government.

We already knew that we lacked the needful organization and discipline, that is, the needful historical schooling. But this in no way hindered us from advancing open-eyed to the conquest of power. We were sure that everything would be learnt, and all would come right.

Now, with power in our hands, we, the representatives of the working class, must quite clearly and honestly review those internal sins and shortcomings of ours which constitute the greatest danger to the cause of socialist construction.

These have, as has been said, their historical explanation, which lies in the old 'dense' way of life of the *muzhik*, when he was not yet an awakened, free, independent human individual, but, as Gleb Uspensky [Author of a number of sketches of Russian peasant life, Uspensky lived from 1843 to 1902. The allusion here is to the dried flesh of the roach, a popular delicacy in Russia.] put it, 'a roach', part of a compact mass which lived and died just as a compact mass of locusts lives and dies. The revolution, which awakened the human individual out of his oppressed state, naturally, at the start, gave to this awakening an extreme, if you like, an anarchic character. This arousal of the most elementary instincts of the individual personality often has a crudely-egoistic, or to use a philosophical term, an 'egocentric' character. Yesterday the mass-man was nobody, a slave to the Tsar, the nobles and the bureaucracy, an appendage to the manufacturer's machine. In peasant life he was nothing but a beast of burden and payer of taxes. Today, liberated from all that, he becomes aware of himself as an individual personality for the first time, and starts to think that he is everything, that he is the centre of the universe. He tries to grab for himself everything that he can, he thinks only of himself, and is not disposed to consider the people's class point of view. Hence the flood of disorganising attitudes, individualistic, anarchistic, predatory tendencies which we observe especially in wide circles of the de-classed elements in our country, among the men of the former Army, and also in certain elements of the working class.

This is nothing more than growing pains. We should be both blind and poor-spirited, comrades, if we were to see in it some sort of fatal danger, some symptom of disaster. No, this is no such thing. Like a child's measles, or like the pain felt when one is cutting a tooth, this is an organic malady of the growth of the class, the pangs accompanying the arousal of its class strength, its creative power. But, all the

same, it is a malady, and we have to try and overcome it in the shortest possible time. Negative phenomena are to be seen everywhere: in the factories and workshops, in the trade unions, on the railways, among the new officials in the institutions, here there and everywhere

We have broken the old sabotage and cleared out most of the old officials. But what we have replaced them with is far from always first-class material. On the one hand, into the jobs vacated have gone our own Party comrades, who carried on underground work and passed through the school of revolution, the best elements - militant, utterly honest, disinterested people. On the other hand, there have come in careerists, intriguers, yesterday's failures, those who, under the old regime, were not good enough for the job. When it proved necessary to draw into work all at once, tens of thousands of new skilled workers, it is not surprising if a lot of crooks managed to get through the interstices of the new regime.

It has to be said also that many of the comrades working in the various departments and institutions have proved to be by no means always capable of organic, creative, sustained work. We quite often notice such comrades in the ministries, especially among the 'October Bolsheviks': they work for four or five hours a day, and not very intensively at that, at a time when our situation demands of us the most intense work, not from fear but from conscience.

Many who, though honest, are weak-willed, easily yield to the suggestion that now, in this situation when the country has been weakened, 'when everything has fallen apart and been shaken loose, there is no point in displaying energy, because in any case it will not make any difference to the general economic state of the country: many people say to themselves: 'What's the point of *my* straining myself amid all this chaos?'

Consequently, comrades, a quite new task is imposed upon the representatives of our Party. If we were the foremost in the revolutionary battle, as previously we were foremost in the underground work, and then foremost in conquering the positions of the enemy class, we must now, in every post that we occupy (I do not forget for one moment that we are now the ruling class), display the greatest conscientiousness, executive sense and creativity -- in short, those qualities which are characteristic of a class of genuine builders of a new life. And we need to create within our Party a new morality or, to speak more correctly, the morality that should be a development of our revolutionary fighting morality of yesterday. While yesterday the one most highly esteemed was he who was able with the greatest selflessness to live clandestinely, he who renounced all personal interests and feelings, he who was capable at any moment of sacrificing his life, now these same qualities of the Russian revolutionary which we used to acclaim must find new application in all posts, however prosaic these may look from outside.

Everywhere there must be advanced executives of all functions, all tasks, all the requirements of the Soviet Socialist Republic, and in doing their work they must show all their devotion, all their enthusiasm.

We must, acting through our Communist Party, create in every factory a model nucleus which will be the labor-conscience of that factory. This nucleus must watch over and observe, from the standpoint of the interests of the whole people, the life of the given factory, and inspire the workers with awareness of the need to fulfill everywhere their most elementary duty to our Soviet country, responsibility for the fate of which rests, after all, with its full weight upon us, and for which only we answer, as the ruling class and the ruling Party -- especially now, when the Left SR group has left us, when immediate and comprehensive responsibility lies with the Communist Party alone for all that happens in the state life, and through that also the economic life, of the country.

We must, through the Party and the trade unions, instil this new attitude into the factories, bring into the masses this new awareness of labor-duty, labor-honour, and, relying on this awareness, must introduce labor courts, so that the worker who shows an apathetic attitude to his duties, who steals materials or deals carelessly with them, and the one who fails regularly to put in his proper hours of work, shall be brought to trial, so that the names of these violators of socialist solidarity may be printed in all Soviet publications, as the names of renegades.

This, comrades, is the Communist morality that we must now propagate, uphold, develop and strengthen. This is the first priority task for our Party in all branches of its activity. On the fulfilment of this task depends the fate of our policy. As an example, let us take the railways.

Up to now, where railway matters are concerned, we blamed each other, we attacked the previous Government, the former administration of the lines, or the Vikzhel.<sup>[13]</sup> And we were right to do so. Since we have won our battle, power and leadership in this sphere has passed to us. The railway lines are now in our hands, but, comrades, this is not yet the end of the matter, or even half-way there, it is, perhaps, only one-tenth of the matter. We now need to transform the apparatus of the railways into a punctually-operating mechanism, and this is at the present time one of the most important political tasks of the Communist Party and the Soviet power. This is the whole essence of the matter, and this we need to understand.

Whereas previously the political task consisted in agitation, in propaganda, in open struggle in the streets, on the barricades, in winning power, in elections, now the political task of our Party lies in organising the railways, establishing labor discipline on them, with everyone assuming full responsibility for the post he holds. Why? Because if we do not cope with this task, we shall be overthrown, and that will go down in the world history of the proletariat as a big setback. We realise, of course, that, in the end, the proletariat will win: nevertheless, it will not go for nothing, but will be a black mark against us, if at this moment our Party and our class fail to stand the test. That is why all the organizational, creative state tasks which I have mentioned are now being transformed directly and immediately into political obligations for our Party to fulfil.

All this is related, as a whole, to the sphere with which I am now most closely concerned, namely, the military sphere. I am not now going to speak about the country's international situation, about the external prospects and dangers. For the purpose of my report it will be enough for me to say that, in so far as the fate of the Russian revolution depends on the world situation, it is bound up with the fate of the revolution in Europe. If no revolution occurs in Europe, if the European working class proves unable to rise up against capital as a result of this war, if this monstrous assumption should be realised, that would mean that European civilisation is doomed. It would mean that, at the end of the mighty development of capitalism, as a result of this world-wide slaughter into which world capitalism has driven the people, the European working class has proved incapable of taking power and liberating Europe from the nightmare of the imperialist inferno. It would mean that Europe is doomed to disintegration, degeneration, regression. Yes, of course, if Europe is thrown back to barbarism, and if civilisation then develops elsewhere, in the East, in Asia, in America, if Europe is transformed into a backward peninsula of Asia, like the Balkans, which in their time were a focus of cultural development, but then came to a standstill and were transformed into the very backward south-eastern corner of Europe; if all this happens, then, of course, we shall not survive. But, given that we have absolutely no grounds for adopting such monstrous hypotheses, given that we are convinced that the European proletariat, as a result of this war and

probably already while it is going on, will rise in revolt, and the new offensive on the Western Front is impelling it to take this road, since once again the working masses have been shown the whole hopelessness of their situation; we can therefore say that the future of our revolution, inseparably bound up with the fate of the European revolution and, therefore, with the fate of Europe on the international scale, is rather favourable. But we, as a factor in this European revolution, as a constituent part of it, must take care to be strong, that is, specifically, to be equipped with an army that, in the first place, will correspond to the spirit of the Soviet regime and, in the second place, will be able to defend that regime and to assist the world revolution.

You have read the basic proposals which the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs has put to you. We consider that, since the further development of international relations may, in the very near future, once more subject us to severe military trials, we must forthwith create firm and reliable cadres for the Army, and these cannot be formed on the principle of universal compulsory recruitment because we shall not carry out such recruitment in the next two months. This is why we are going to have to rely for the time being on the principle of *voluntary enlistment*, which will have, of course, to be cleared through the establishment of strict personal and political criteria for all volunteers.

Party organizations, committees and cells will everywhere be obliged to take care that the elements entering the Army are of good quality in the political and moral sense, and that when they have joined the Army they do not lose their ties with the mass of the workers but are brought under systematic influence from the latter.

Running on ahead somewhat, I must mention that certain of our own Party comrades are afraid that the Army may become an instrument or a focus for counter-revolutionary plots. This danger, in so far as there is some justification for it, must compel us as a whole to direct our attention to the lower levels, to the rank-and-file soldiers of the Red Army. Here we can and must create a *foundation* such that any attempt to transform the Red Army into an instrument of counter-revolution will prove fruitless. The first task to be accomplished to this end is the replenishment of the cadres through universal training of the workers in the factories and of the poor peasants in the villages. Hitherto, comrades, many decrees and regulations which we have published have remained on paper. The most urgent task for our Party is to ensure that the decree on universal compulsory military training in the factories, workshops, schools, etc., which was published a few days ago, is put into effect. Checking that this decree actually becomes operative is a task for the Party organizations and cells.

Only widespread military training of the worker and peasant masses, everywhere that this is at present practically feasible, will make it possible to transform the volunteer cadres into that skeleton which, in a moment of danger, will become clothed with flesh and blood, that is, in reality, with the broad masses of the workers and peasants in arms.

Here I come to a ticklish matter which is at the present time, to some extent, a sore point in our Party life. This is one of the questions concerning the organisation of the Army, namely, the question of drawing military specialists, that is, to speak plainly, former officers and generals, into the work of creating and administering the Army. All the fundamental, leading institutions of the Army are now so constructed that they consist of one military specialist and two political commissars. This is the present basic pattern of the Army's leading organs.

I have had occasion several times already to say at public meetings that in the sphere of command, of operations, of military actions, we place full responsibility upon the military specialists and,



consequently, give them the necessary powers. Many of our people have taken fright at this, and their fears find expression in the resolutions adopted by some Party organisations. I have one such resolution in my pocket. I received it yesterday, from the North-Western territory. This resolution gives an excellent description of the difficulties that confront us. How much arbitrariness, this resolution comments, is to be observed in the case of some Soviet representatives, how much slovenliness, even dishonesty and thieving -- yes, thieving! -- is to be observed where certain wielders of Soviet power, elected by workers' organizations, are concerned. Yes, there is a lot of this, there is a very great deal of this today! And here the Party's task is, again, to deal quite ruthlessly with this sort of phenomena occurring in our own midst, for they are ruining the country, and disgracing and disorganising our Party. We need to prosecute not only those who, directly or indirectly, are guilty of embezzling the people's money, but also those who show tolerance towards any manifestation of indiscipline and depravity. We must carry out a process of selection with iron ruthlessness, because in this sphere many dangerous and alarming symptoms are to be seen. This is what the comrades from the North-Western territory write about in the resolution mentioned, which gives an excellent description of the situation, and calls for draconic measures to be taken by the Party -- measures for burning out these moral ulcers with a white-hot iron.

But this same resolution points with equal alarm at another danger, namely, the drawing in of the generals, which, it says, is leading the country *towards another Kornilov affair*. Of course, the danger of a Kornilov affair is not ruled out. But the source of this danger is not the drawing into service of a dozen or so former generals, it has deeper roots.

What is the reason why arbitrariness, slovenliness and even dishonesty are developing? Most frequently they result from the circumstance that people are occupying positions which they are not fit for. Look and see what is happening now in the Ukraine. Those who fought magnificently and heroically against the Kaledinites, Dutovites and Kornilovites, those who defeated these enemies of ours who were technically on the same level, gave in and felt utterly helpless when they came up against the German war machine. Hence their dissatisfaction with themselves. These leaders of guerrilla units are fighting each other, blaming each other, and are often in conflict not so much with the Germans as with the local population.

What has happened in the Ukraine shows us that, if we are talking seriously about the defence of the Soviet Revolution by armed resistance, by war, we must cast aside all Left SR phrases about guerrilla risings, all 'narrow circle' measures: we must face the task of creating a regular Army. Only if this regular Army is in being can guerrilla units play a positive role on its flanks. But in order to create such: an army we need qualified specialists, including former generals. As I said earlier, the difficulties of the Soviet regime lie at the present time not in the fight against sabotage, the backbone of which has been broken, but in skilfully drawing the ex-saboteurs into work.

There is one more question in the field of Army organization: the so-called principle of election. The whole significance of this consists in combating the old make-up of the officer corps and bringing the commanders under control.

So long as power was in the hands of the enemy class and the commanders were an instrument in the hands of that class, we had to endeavour, by means of the principle of election, to break the class resistance of the commanding personnel. But now political power is in the hands of that same working class from whose ranks the Army is recruited.

Given the present regime in the Army -- I say this here quite openly -- the principle of election is



politically purposeless and technically inexpedient, and it has been, in practice, abolished by decree.[\[14\]](#)

I ask you: has the principle of election been introduced everywhere among you, in the trade unions or in the co-operatives? No. Do you elect your officials, book-keepers, shop-assistants, and cashiers, do you elect those of your employees who have a strictly defined trade? No. You choose the administration of a trade union from among its most worthy and reliable activists, and to them you entrust the appointment of all the necessary employees and technical specialists. It should be the same in the Army. Once we have established the Soviet regime, that is, a system under which the government is headed by persons who have been directly elected by the Soviets of Workers', Peasants' and Soldiers' Deputies, there can be no antagonism between the government and the mass of the workers, just as there is no antagonism between the administration of the union and the general assembly of its members, and, therefore, there cannot be any grounds for fearing the *appointment* of members of the commanding staff by the organs of the Soviet power. The true solution of the problem of commanders lies in setting up courses of instruction for advanced soldiers and workers, and in this way gradually educating a new body of commanders in conformity with the spirit of the Soviet regime. And we have set ourselves this task.[\[15\]](#)

The question of creating an Army is for us a question of life and death. You yourselves understand this just as well as I do. But we cannot create an Army through an administrative mechanism alone -- which is in our case at present as bad as it could possibly be. If we do possess a powerful mechanism, this is an ideological one, namely, our Party. The Party will create the Army, comrades; it will do everything to eradicate the prejudices of which I spoke, it will help us to replenish the cadres of the revolutionary army with militant and devoted workers and peasants, it will set its hand to the task of introducing compulsory military training in the factories and villages, and in this way will create a military apparatus for the defence of the Soviet Republic.

## NOTES

**9.** This report was published separately as *Trud, distsiplina, i potyadok spasut Sovetskuyu Respubliku* (*Work, discipline and order will save the Soviet Republic*), Moscow, 1918, by the publishing house *Zhizn i Znanie* (*Life and Knowledge*), as no.175 in their 'low-cost library'. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**10.** The fight against Dutov, the ataman of the Orenburg Cossack Host, was carried on with persistence all through 1918, in the southern part of the country beyond the Volga and in the Urals. On January 18, with the capture of Orenburg, Dutov's basic nucleus was liquidated. He succeeded in organizing the Cossacks once more against the Soviets only simultaneously with the Czechoslovak revolt. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**11.** *The Ukrainian Rada and the fight against it.* The All-Ukraine National Congress held in April 1917 elected a Central Rada of Mensheviks and SRS, headed by Semyon Petlyura. The Rada arrived at an agreement with the Provisional Government regarding autonomy for the Ukraine and began to form national units. After the October Revolution the Rada declared the independence of the Ukrainian Republic, 'Ukrainianised' the South-Western and Romanian Fronts, and pursued a counter-revolutionary policy against the Soviet power. The Rada refused to allow the Soviet echelons through to the Don, while not preventing the concentration of White shock-troops and Cossacks. The Rada withdrew troops from the front, and at the beginning of January the Soviet Government was obliged to liquidate this pocket of resistance by force of arms. The Commander-in-Chief, Comrade Antonov-Ovseenko, moved his troops

towards Kiev. They were assisted by Comrade Berzin's units, advancing from the Gomel-Bryansk area. As they approached Kiev a workers' revolt broke out there, and on January 26 Kiev fell to the Soviets. Petlyura, realising that he had no support inside the country, made an agreement with the Germans whereby the latter undertook to clear the Red Guard units out of the Ukraine. The Germans recognised the independence of the Ukraine, and the Rada supplied them with a substantial quantity of foodstuffs. Under pressure from the German forces the Red Guard units left Ukrainian territory. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**12. *The Paris Commune*** was the first workers' revolution, made by the proletariat of Paris on March 18 1871, when the bourgeoisie of France, having fought an unsuccessful war with Germany, wanted to surrender Paris to the Germans, so as to protect themselves from the revolutionary fury of the proletariat. Having taken over the state machine, the Commune proved unable to reconstruct it. Isolated from the rest of France, the Commune lasted only 72 days, and was cruelly suppressed by the bourgeoisie, led by Thiers. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**13. *Vikzhel*** meant *Vsyerossiisky Ispolnitelnyi Komitet Zheleznodorozhnogo Professionalnogo Soyura* ('All-Russia Executive Committee of the Railway Trade Union'), which united all the manual and office workers employed on the railways. The majority in Vikzhel were Mensheviks and SRs, and so it maintained, both before and after October, a non-revolutionary, compromising attitude, endeavouring to preserve neutrality between the revolution and the counter-revolution, obstructing the movement of troops by the contending parties and holding up military supply-trains. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**14. *The elective principle in the Red Army*** was almost entirely abolished by the regulations 'on the procedure for appointment to posts in the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army'. The decree about this was confirmed by the All-Russia CEC on April 22, 1918, but an instruction to the same effect had already been issued somewhat earlier by the People's Commissar for Military Affairs. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**15.** After the October Revolution all military training establishments and ensigns' schools were dissolved. By the order of the People's Commissar for Military Affairs No. 104, dated January 28, basic provisions were announced '*concerning rapid courses for preparing commanding personnel for the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.*' The purpose of the training was to prepare military instructors who were in favour of the Soviet power. By February 14 the first courses had already begin in Petrograd, Moscow, Tver and Kazan. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)



# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SITUATION OF THE SOVIET  
POWER IN SPRING OF 1918

THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL TASKS OF THE  
SOVIET POWER

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**Lecture given in Moscow on April 21, 1918**

Comrades! Communist teaching has as one of its most important tasks the achievement of a situation in this old, sinful world of ours in which men will cease to shoot at each other. One of the fundamental tasks of Communism is to arrive at the establishment of an order under which man may for the first time become worthy of the name he bears. We are used, to be sure, to saying that the word 'man' (*chelovyek*) has a proud sound. Gorky said, in one of his works, ' "man" that has a proud sound'. Actually, though, it is enough to survey the years spent in bloody slaughter to find oneself wanting to say: ' man that has a shameful sound.'

And so, to create a system and order under which the present mutual extermination of peoples would not happen, is the simple and clear task which Communist teaching sets before us. But at the same time, comrades, you see that the Communist Party, fighting to accomplish this task, is forming a Red Army, is calling on the masses to organize themselves in a military way and to arm. It would seem, at first glance, that there is a profound contradiction here: on the one hand, we stand for creating conditions under which no man would deprive another of his most precious possession, namely, life, and this constitutes one of the principal tasks of our Party, the world party of the working class, while, on the other, we are calling on the workers to join the Red Army and saying: 'Arm, unite, learn to shoot, study persistently and well, so as not to miss your target!'

I repeat, it may seem that there is something amiss here. And there were, indeed, socialists in the past who advanced towards their goals by other paths and employed different means: these socialists, instead of addressing the oppressed with the slogan:

'Unite and arm!', addressed the oppressors, exploiters and aggressors with words of humble homily and admonition: 'Disarm, stop exterminating your fellow-men, stop oppressing.' Naive creatures! They

advised the wolf to put his wolf's teeth on the shelf. These homilies by the early socialists and communists were extremely naive, and their views were so mistaken that present-day scientific socialism has named them, with justification, *utopians*. This, of course, does not mean that the aspirations of the utopians were not noble in the highest degree. The ideas of the utopians recall to us that great writer and great man of our country Lyov Nikolayevich Tolstoy, who also aspired to establish the best of systems on this earth, but thought it could be achieved through inward regeneration of the oppressors. Can that happen? Here we come to the heart of the matter.

Mankind's experience, the whole of history, refutes this policy of utopian and Tolstoyan pacifism. The oppressors have inherited, from one generation to the next, their views, feelings and aspirations as oppressors; they drink in with their mothers' milk the striving for power, for oppression, for domination, and they consider everybody else, the working masses, to have been created merely so as to serve as basis and foundation for the rule of a small group of members of a privileged estate who are born, so to speak, with spurs on their heels, ready to ride on the backs of the working people.

Yes, we are trying to establish the Communist order, under which there will be no hostility between classes because there will be no classes, and no hostility between peoples, because the peoples will not live separated from each other, cut off by barriers between states, but in one world common to all, and engaged in a common task. Our aims are the same as those of our predecessors, the utopians. But, in our working towards the same order of things, we proceed differently from them, and this is what distinguishes us from them -- not ends, but means. We say, not to the exploiters but to the working people:

'Until the Communist order has been attained, remember that you are the only force that is capable of bringing it about. And remember (and we in Russia know this all too well, from experience), that the ruling classes of the whole world will yield not an inch to you on the road to that end without a fight: that they will cling to their privileges and profits, to their rule, tooth and nail, to their last breath: that they will try to bring confusion, chaos and discord into the ranks of the working class itself -- all so as to maintain their power.'

And, guided firmly by awareness that it is impossible to change social relations otherwise than by bloody struggle, we in Russia took the first step towards communism precisely by overthrowing the rule of the bourgeois classes and establishing the political rule of the working classes. This is already, in itself, a great victory that we have won. The bourgeoisie is not in power here: power belongs to the working class. Having acquired this political advantage, it is able to fight to fulfill its fundamental tasks.

Thus, the question of power is of primary importance. Saying that Soviet power, as such, is a bad thing means fostering self-distrust in the working class. Under the Soviet system the proletariat can establish whatever kind of authority it wants, and responsibility for that authority rests with the proletariat. The authority which exists in Petrograd, in Moscow and in other cities, since it has been created by the workers, can be changed by them. The workers can convene the All-Russia Congress of Soviets whenever they choose, and re-elect therein the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars, and they can re-elect the local soviets.

The Soviets are the power of the working class and the poorest peasantry, forming the foundation on which this power stands. And yet they ask us: 'Why is this power not established on the basis of universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage, in the form of the Constituent Assembly? After all, you yourselves were for the Constituent Assembly, weren't you?' Right, we were for it! We always thought



that a Constituent Assembly would be much better than the Tsarist system, than the autocracy, than the rule of Plehve, of Stolypin's beasts of prey, of the nobility. Of two evils we chose the one that was the lesser for the working class.

However, let us look into the question of this Constituent Assembly, this universal suffrage by which it was elected. It signifies a referendum by the whole people, a universal roll-call -- 'who wants what?' The whole population of the country are called upon -- the working people, the oppressed, and also the exploiters, the oppressors, and the Servants of the exploiters from among the intelligentsia, the overwhelming majority of whom are tied spiritually to the bourgeoisie and serve its aims. All are called upon to say, through universal suffrage, what they want, in the political field. And if Kerensky had convened the Constituent Assembly, let's say in March or April of last year, that would have meant a definite step forward, when the Tsar had only just been overthrown and the bureaucracy ousted, when power was not yet in the hands of the workers but was held by Guchkov, Milyukov and the rest. Even then, though, if, through the Constituent Assembly, the workers and peasants had been asked: 'What do you want, working people of Russia?', the answer given by their representatives in the Constituent Assembly would have been, all the same, directly opposite to that which the bourgeoisie and its servants, who were then in power, would have wanted. After all, what the revolution means is that the oppressed lower orders rise up against the upper strata who oppress them. For the Krestovnikovs and Ryabushinskys, of course, the revolution is just right if the Tsar is got rid of and the old ministers are replaced by new ones, and that's the end of it. For us, though, the essence of the revolution is that it awakens and raises to their feet the exhausted, harassed, ill-treated masses who have suffered day after day without hope or respite, like beasts of burden. The revolution arouses them and shows them that, as regards their position in society, they are nothing but cattle, nothing but slaves of the other classes. That's what the revolution is! And for that reason it did not stop at the removal of the Tsar and of a couple of his ministers. If it had stopped at that, it would not have been a revolution, but, if the expression be permitted, a miscarriage. History has its abortions. The true births, the healthy historical births of revolution happen when the working class, rising up, takes power throughout the land and proceeds to make use of it to establish a new order in which there is no exploitation of one class by another, in which all the means of production, all the country's riches are in the hands of or subject to the working class. Then the working class acts like a good master on a good individual holding in agriculture: he knows how much land and how much seed he has, how many cattle and what implements, which field he must sow at each season: all this he knows, all this is written down and calculated. But that is a private individual holding. Alongside it other holdings are being worked, and they compete with each other. That is capitalism.

We want the working class as a whole to become the master of the whole country, so that it may know how much land it has, what natural wealth, iron-ore, coal, how many machines, how much raw material, labor-power, grain -- so that all this may be reckoned up precisely and assigned in a planned way for the purpose of work. The proletariat must work like a good master: it is both worker and master. And this comradely working team (*artel*), covering the whole country with its activities, is what is meant by a communist economy.

Such plans are called utopian. Our enemies say that this economic revolution will never take place. But they say this either because it would not suit them if it did take place or because they have sold their souls to the ruling class. For them, naturally, the communist economy is 'unrealizable'. We, however, say that if men were unfit to carry out a radical reconstruction of their own society, incapable of realizing communism, then all mankind would not be worth a rotten egg: it would remain forever like draft



animals, and worse than them, since these animals do not know division into classes, with the rule of one ox over another, one horse over another. No, mankind can and must better its mode of existence. We have passed through the school of class struggle precisely in order to abolish classes themselves and raise our way of life to a higher level. But we have to fight against class division, and to fight for a long time, because it cannot be abolished all at once.

If it should turn out that we are unable to cope with these trials which have now come upon us since we have taken power, that we do not fulfil our tasks, then it follows that all our hopes, expectations and plans, the sciences and arts, everything that is of interest to man, the ideals for which man struggles -- all are so much falsehood, and mankind is nothing but a dunghill: especially after four years of slaughter, in which men have been exterminating each other in tens of thousands, in millions, for no other purpose than for everything to remain in the same position as before!

We say to our enemies who criticize us: we know perfectly well that we have not yet reached communism, that there is still a long road ahead of us, and much work and effort is needed. But we have, all the same, accomplished something -- namely, the political preparation. When one has to put up a new building on a site where there has been a fire, one first of all sweeps and clears away the debris and ashes left behind. We took power from the bourgeoisie so as to build the edifice of a new society. We have taken this power in our hands and we declare to all our foes that the working class will never give up this power, for it is not a question of power as such but of the future of mankind, of the creation of a new world, on new, Communist principles.

This is the gigantic work, the radical break with the past, which is involved in our concept of the revolution. And when it is made to depend on the Constituent Assembly, that's ridiculous. It is not hard to convince oneself of that, if one thinks about it.

I come back to this important question: what, in general, is meant by universal, direct, equal and secret suffrage? It is merely a referendum, a roll-call. What if we were to have tried to carry out this roll-call through the Constituent Assembly? One section would have decided one way, the other section the other way. But we had to do something -- the people's needs don't wait. And, obviously, these two opposing sections would have separated off on different sides, each in order to fight for the cause that concerned it. A Constituent Assembly is all right for a roll-call. But for revolutionary creative work it is not all right. After all, we did carry out such a roll-call even without the Constituent Assembly. At the outset, first Milyukov and then Kerensky delayed, month after month, the convening of the Constituent Assembly. And when at last it was convened, by us, after the October revolution, convened in sharply altered political circumstances, it proved to be a harmful hindrance. And of what use would the Constituent Assembly be now, if its corpse were to be revived, though there is no medicine and no sorcery in the world that could do that? Suppose that we were to reconvene the Constituent Assembly, what would that signify? In one corner, on the Left, the working class would sit, in the persons of its representatives, who would say: 'We desire that governmental power should at last be an instrument for rule by the working class and for abolishing every kind of oppression and exploitation.' In the other corner would sit the representatives of the bourgeoisie, who would demand that governmental power remain, as before, in the hands of the bourgeois class. They would doubtless express themselves cautiously and courteously, talking in a devious way about 'the educated class' and not openly about 'the bourgeois class', but, essentially, it would amount to the same thing. And, in the middle there would be those politicians who look both to the Left and to the Right. These representatives of the Mensheviks and Right SRs would say: 'Power must be shared, half-and-half.'<sup>[16]</sup> That is what would have come of such an unnecessary

experiment. That is what, in reality, happened, on January 5, 1918, the one and only day that the Constituent Assembly actually existed.

But, comrades, power, after all, is not a sort of cottage loaf which can be shared half-and-half, or divided into four pieces. Power is the instrument by means of which a certain class secures its domination. Either this instrument serves the working class, or it serves against the working class. There is no choice in this matter. Since there are two adversaries, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, together with the poorest peasantry, and since these two adversaries are fighting each other, they cannot possess one instrument common to them both. After all, one and the same rifle or gun cannot serve both of two opposing armies at once. Similarly, state power can either serve the working class against the bourgeoisie, or, contrariwise, it can serve the bourgeoisie against the working class. Those who stand in the middle and ask whether power cannot somehow be shared, half and half, are nothing but brokers, go-betweens, and though they swear that they have in their pockets a secret by means of which they can arrange for the gun of state power to serve both the working class and the bourgeoisie at one and the same time, history does not know of such miracles. On the contrary, when such secrets were revealed in the policy of Tsereteli and Chernov, we were given reason to be sure that their gun would fire in one direction only against the working class. Naturally, we have no desire, no aspiration, to go back to that situation.

Yes, we were, under Tsardom, in favor of a Constituent Assembly, as a big step forward. When the people overthrew the Tsar and then split into two camps, methods of struggle changed, and we said to the masses: 'Now get to work your selves: power must now be taken by the class which is called upon to reconstruct Russia on new, socialist principles, the working class.' And in saying this we did not in the least deceive either the masses or ourselves. We said that on that road there would be tremendous difficulties to overcome, colossal obstacles, fierce resistance by the hostile classes - not only the Russian bourgeoisie, which itself is weak, but also the international bourgeoisie, because the Russian bourgeoisie is only an offshoot of the bourgeois classes of all countries. And though wars and conflicts are going on amongst them at present, they are nevertheless absolutely united on the main and fundamental question of defending property and all the privileges connected therewith.

Among the ruling classes in Russia, among the landlords and the big and middle bourgeoisie, we saw, not so long ago, before the revolution and at its beginning a whole series of parties. There were the Rights -- the open Black Hundreds, the nationalists, the Octobrists, the Octobrist-Zemstvo-ists, the Left Octobrists, the Progressives, the Cadets, and so on, a whole swarm of parties.<sup>[17]</sup> Where did they spring from? They were different groups of property-owners. Some upheld the interests of the big landowners, others those of the middling and minor landowners; some upheld the interests of bank capital, others the interests of industrial capital, yet others the interests of the graduate intelligentsia -- the professors, doctors, barristers, engineers, and so on and so forth. Amid the bourgeoisie, among the possessing classes generally, there are different groups, divisions and parties. But when our revolution raised the working class to its feet, the whole bourgeoisie united, all party barriers vanished, and only the Cadet Party was left, embracing all the possessing classes, the entire sacred camp of the property-owners, uniting them in the fight for property against the working classes.

The same thing is happening, comrades, in a certain sense, with the international bourgeoisie as well. It is waging a fright full and bloody war, but as soon as the revolutionary class, the proletariat, rises up, threatening the very foundations of capitalism, the bourgeois class of the different countries proceed to make concessions to each other, so as to form together a single camp against the terrible advancing specter of revolution. And until the international revolution is victorious we must be prepared to

experience the greatest difficulties, with intense conflict both inside our country and on its borders, because the further and more extensively the revolutionary movement develops, both here and abroad, the more firmly will the bourgeoisie of all countries close their ranks. Europe itself will pass through very great trials, through the fire and flame of civil war, and the Russian bourgeoisie will make more than one bloody effort, relying on the bourgeoisie of Europe and the world. All this forces us to say: 'Yes, we are advancing towards peace, but by way of armed struggle by the working masses against the oppressors, against the exploiters, against the imperialists of all countries. By this, the only possible road, we shall either win through to the end or we shall perish. We have no choice, and we need to understand that clearly.'

Of course, whoever supposes that by the mere conquest of power we have achieved everything has no clear appreciation of the tasks before us and the ways of accomplishing them.

History is no indulgent, soft mother who will protect the working class: she is a wicked stepmother who will teach the work through bloody experience how they must attain their aims. The working people are readily inclined to forgive and forget is enough for the conditions of struggle to have become a lit easier, enough for them to have won something, for it to seem them that the main job has been done, and they are disposed show magnanimity, to become passive, to stop fighting. In it. lies the misfortune of the working people. But the possessing classes never give up the struggle. They have been educated offer constant Opposition to the pressure of the worker masse and any passivity, indecision or wavering on our part results our exposing our weak spot to the blows of the possessor classes so that tomorrow or the next day they inevitably launch new onslaught upon us. The working class needs not the universal forgiveness that Tolstoy preached, but hard tempering intransigence, profound conviction that without struggle for every step, every inch of the road leading to betterment of it life, without constant, irreconcilable harsh struggle, and with out Organization of this struggle, there can be no salvation and liberation.

It is for this reason that we are calling into the ranks of the Communist Party, first and foremost, workers who are filled with clear understanding of the tasks imposed by history upon the working class, and then, after them, all the devoted and reliable friends of the working class. Let him who has doubt or hesitation in his heart stay out of our ranks. It is far more useful] for us to have one well-tempered fighter than ten irresolute ones, because, when the fight begins, the ten irresolute will surround the one well-tempered fighter and hold him back: if the more resolute, welded into a single fighting team, hurl themselves against the enemy, they will, in their wake, draw the waverers into the fight. Therefore we call into the ranks of our army only those who have clearly understood that we have taken the road of protracted, irreconcilable struggle against the Oppressors of all countries who have marched against us. In our midst there is no place for the compromiser, who would stand in the middle and appeal for conciliation. The policy of compromise is false. The bourgeoisie will never willingly surrender its domination and power, and the proletariat will never again submit of its own free will to be its slave.

The principal task of the Communist Party, led by the Soviets, the organs of power, consists in ensuring that every worker receives a firm spiritual tempering, so that he will say to himself: 'Yes, of course, in the struggle which is now going on, I may perhaps have. to give my life. But what is a life of slavery without hope, under the oppressor's heel, compared with the glorious death of a warrior who hands on his banner to new generations, and who dies knowing that he has given his life not for the interests of the oppressors, the Tsars and the rich, but for the interests of his own class?'

We must teach our comrades to live and die for the interests of the working class and to be faithful to it

down to their last moment. That is the task to which we are summoning you!

Our revolution grew directly out of the war. The war itself grew out of capitalism. We predicted long before the war that the struggle between the bourgeoisie of one country and the bourgeoisie of another country, for profits and markets, accompanied by a colossal growth of armaments, must culminate in a frightful catastrophe. At present the bourgeoisie of Germany is saying that it was the British bourgeoisie that was guilty of starting the war, while the British bourgeoisie blames the German. Like clowns bouncing a ball amongst themselves with their foreheads, the bourgeoisies of the contending countries cast on each other the responsibility for this bloody slaughter. But, in forecasting the inevitability of the war, we at the same time understood that its inevitability resulted not from the wills of one or two kings or ministers, but from the very essence of the capitalist system. This war is a test for the entire capitalist order, its entire economic, political and moral system. That is why, when the war began, we said that it would bring with it a tremendous revolutionary movement among the working masses, and not of Russia alone.

I have lived during this war in a number of countries. At the start of it I had to quit Austria, so as not to be put in prison.<sup>[18]</sup> Then I lived in Switzerland, which, as you know, occupies the corner between Germany, Austria, Italy and France. After that I spent about two years in France, and from there moved to America, just at the time when the United States was getting ready to enter the war. And everywhere I noticed one and the same thing: at the beginning, the war stuns the working masses, deceives them, leads them into delusion, but later on it revolutionizes them, driving them into protest and indignation -- first against the war itself, then against the system which has led to the war. Why does the war first of all arouse patriotic feelings among the working masses? Because, despite the fact that a country possesses a parliament, socialist parties and even Communists, around these there are also millions of toilers who are without any spiritual or social life. It is our greatest misfortune that there are millions of toilers who live in an automatic way. They work, eat and sleep, eating and sleeping only just enough and working too hard for their strength, and they think only about how to make ends meet. Their horizon is restricted to that: their intellect, their thoughts and conscience, slumber during normal times, and now and again, from gloom and knowledge of the hopelessness of their situation, when a holiday comes along they swill raw spirit. Such is often the worker's existence -- tragic and terrible. This is the tragic and terrible fate of many millions of toilers: it is the capitalist system that dooms them to it. May that system be accursed for dooming the toilers to such a dreadful life!

But now war comes, the people are mobilized, they come out into the streets, dressed in soldiers' greatcoats. They are told: 'Let's go for the enemy and win the war, and after that every thing will be different.' And hopes arise in the hearts of the masses. Men leave the plough and the lathe. In peacetime, perhaps, a man bent under the weight of his everyday work load would no more have thought about anything than a beast of burden would, but now he willy-nilly starts to reflect: all around him are hundreds of soldiers, every one excited, military music is being played, the newspapers are announcing great victories, and it begins to seem to him that life really is going to be different) and different means better. . . . Because it couldn't be worse. He begins to persuade himself that the war is a liberating event that will bring him something new.

For this reason we observed, at the beginning of the war, in every country without exception, an upsurge of patriotism. At that moment the bourgeoisie grew stronger. It said: 'The whole people are with me.' The toilers of town and country rallied under the banners of the bourgeoisie. All were fused, so to speak, in a single national *plan*. But, as it went on, the war exhausted the country more and more and bled the people



white, while enriching a handful of plunderers, speculators and army contractors and bringing promotion to diplomats and generals. The working masses became poorer and poorer. For wet-nurses, wives, mothers and working women it became harder and harder to answer the sharp question: how to feed the children? And that brought about a spontaneous revolution in the minds of the working masses. At first the war uplifted them, arousing false hopes, but then, having uplifted them, it hurled them to the ground, breaking the backbone of the working class: and the workers began to ponder on how this had happened and what it meant.

However, the bourgeoisie is not stupid, that is a merit one cannot deny it. The bourgeoisie foresaw the danger from the very beginning of the war, and with the aid of its zealous generals delayed the onset of the revolution as long as possible.

Already in the first years of the present war, when it looked as though the intoxication of patriotism had poisoned everyone, I happened to have a conversation in Paris with some bourgeois politicians, and they whispered to me that, as a result of this war, a great revolution would burst forth, but they hoped to be able to deal with it. Bourgeois newspapers and periodicals (for example, the British periodical *The Economist* in August September or October 1914) predicted that, as a result of the war, there would arise, in the countries that were drawn into it, a movement for social revolution. They appreciated how inevitable this was, and they were quite right, just as we were right when we said that in Russia the war would inevitably lead to revolution, and that, if the revolution in Russia was fated to develop through to the end, it would bring the working class to power.

At the same time we took into account the peculiarities of Russia's development. In Russia capital had been created with the help of West-European finance-capital and this circumstance imposed special conditions upon the course of development of the Russian Revolution. If we take France, there big industrial capital developed gradually in the course of long centuries. In the Middle Ages the craft system prevailed, there were small enterprises, corporations, guilds: later, large and middle-sized enterprises emerged, and eventually the French stock-exchange began to draw behind it a whole succession of middle-sized and small enterprises. In France even the petty- bourgeoisie possess political influence.

But what is the position in our country as regards the political influence of the bourgeoisie?

The finance-capital of other countries France, Germany, Britain and so on -- invaded us and set up huge factories, somehow all at once, in empty places, somewhere in Yekaterinoslav province, in the South or the South-West. There, amid the steppes and the isolated farmsteads, there are huge enterprises to be seen, just like those in Petrograd, Moscow and other big towns. Western capital transported hither entire factories, implanting at one blow some very large-scale enterprises. Generally speaking, in Russia no section of the bourgeoisie, neither the big bourgeoisie nor the petty-bourgeoisie, if we do not include the peasantry -- and our peasantry contains many semi-proletarian elements, very poor, hungry masses -- managed to secure any influence.

The main problem of the revolution when it broke out amounted to this: whom will the poor peasantry follow? The bourgeoisie, which had cheated them, giving them false hopes, or the working class? The whole problem lay there. There was no question of Chernov, or of Tsereteli or Kerensky, no question of those brokers and go-betweens. The problem was would the peasant poor follow the workers, and who would win the support of the peasants who were not well off -- the working class or the bourgeois class? We can now say, positively, that this problem has already been three-quarters solved, thanks to the Soviets of Workers' Deputies. It can be said that the policy of the bourgeoisie, its influence in the



countryside, has almost completely collapsed: and there can be no doubt that the rural poor will follow the working class, will follow it all the more resolutely the stronger and more conscious the urban proletariat becomes, and the firmer and more complete becomes the role of the working class. The urban proletariat is a minority of the population of our country. The overwhelming majority of the population are peasants. Consequently if the rural masses, the lower strata of the peasantry, do not support the working class, the latter cannot hold on to power. But the working class is getting this support from the peasantry, because it is fighting not just for itself, but comes forward as the defender of the peasant masses and the champion of the interests of wide sections of the people. It will emerge as a people's hero, in the true sense of the word, if it can fulfill this, its historic role to the very end.

In the revolutions in which the bourgeoisie was the leader, it drew the peasant masses behind it. That happened at the time of the Great French Revolution and at the time of the 1848 revolution [19] in the old Germany of those days: it was like that throughout all the revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries. That was how things always were, until the Russian revolution. Here, a striking change happened, a tremendous step forward was taken: for the first time, the working class threw off the tutelage and spiritual superiority of the bourgeoisie, stood firmly on its own feet, and, furthermore, wrested the peasant foundation from under the feet of the bourgeoisie and drew the peasant masses behind it. This is the imperishable conquest made by the Russian revolution. This is the bulwark of the Russian revolution. We owe this to the Soviets, as the centers of struggle against the bourgeoisie and as the organs of mass-scale unification of the peasants with the workers.

That is why the Soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies have aroused the hatred of the bourgeoisie of all countries.

The February revolution found me in America. When the first newspapers arrived in New York with the news about the events in Russia, the American bourgeois press took a very sympathetic attitude towards our revolution. At that time, you see, it was being said that Nicholas II was negotiating peace with Germany. America was getting ready to enter the war, and three weeks later did so. The Russian papers reported that the Tsar had abdicated and that a Ministry of Milyukov and Guchkov had been formed, precisely for the purpose of continuing the war. All this evoked sympathy from the whole bourgeois press. When, after that, the news was published that a Soviet of workers' and soldiers' deputies had been formed in Petersburg, which had begun to come into conflict with Milyukov and Guchkov, then, although this was only the compromising Soviet of Kerensky and Chernov, the newspapers at once changed their tone.

The first clashes and conflicts between the Soviets and the Government began even when the workers still followed the compromisers: the proletarian class character of the Soviet inevitably made itself felt, under pressure from below, even in the days when the compromise policy was flourishing. In conformity with this, a sharp turn-round was observed in the attitude of the bourgeois press of all countries towards the Russian revolution. The entire bourgeois press anxiously warned Milyukov and Guchkov that, if the Soviets eventually became well established and took power, then this would create a serious threat to Russia and even to the whole world. And since we, comrades, were at that time severely criticizing Milyukov and Guchkov and their policy, at workers' meetings, and predicting that the Soviets of workers' and soldiers' deputies must inevitably take power, the bourgeois press wrote that we were going to Russia for the purpose of putting power into the hands of sinister gangs. The matter went so far that we, as a little group of six émigrés returning to Russia, were carried off as prisoners to Canada by a British naval vessel. There we were held, along with German sailors, and accused of making our way to Russia in

order to overthrow Guchkov and Milyukov and put power into the hands of the Soviets of workers' and soldiers' deputies.

An this happened in March 1917, that is, in the first month of the revolution. Already at that time the British and American bourgeoisies felt that Soviet power constituted a tremendous danger for them. At the same time, it was becoming ever clearer to the American workers that the Russian revolution was not a repetition of the old revolutions, with one upper tier replacing another, while both sat together on the back of the working class: they were beginning to realize that this was a revolution in which the lower orders were rising up with the aim of reconstructing the social system. And, the clearer their realization that this was so, the warmer their sympathy with our revolution, the higher their enthusiasm. And if our revolution did not evoke, as quickly as at first we expected, immediate echoes in all countries, in the form of revolution&y movements in Germany, Britain and France, the blame for this lies, to a considerable extent, with our workers, who supported the policy of the compromisers and thereby, at the outset, discredited the Russian revolution in the eyes of the working class of all countries.

Many leaders of the working masses abroad hoped that the Russian revolution would lead at once to the conclusion of universal peace. And so great was the confidence in this prospect at that time that, if the Government of Kerensky and Milyukov, or any other government that occupied their position, had then appealed to all the peoples with a proposal for immediate peace, the upsurge of the worker masses and of the army in favor of peace would have been colossal. Instead of which, the Provisional Government supported, step by step, the policy of the old Tsarist diplomats, and even refrained from publishing the secret treaties: it prepared a new offensive at the front, which was put into effect on June 18, and ended in a frightful bloody debacle and retreat.

The mass of the workers in all countries, who had expected that the Russian revolution would rise to its full height and show the world something new, were obliged to say to themselves that nothing new was going to come of it, that everything was staying the same as before -- the same allies, the same war, the same offensive, in the name of the same old plundering aims. And the bourgeoisie of all lands knew how to use this situation cunningly so as to damage, so to speak, the reputation of the Russian revolution, to besmirch it. The bourgeois press wrote: 'There's your revolution for you! They've only overthrown one government and replaced it by another, and the new government has said that there can be no change in policy. Consequently there is no point in overthrowing the old governments, since new ones would behave in the same way.' That signified that the revolution was a frivolous affair, an empty enterprise, a hollow illusion. And a cold feeling about the Russian revolution entered the hearts of the workers.

Kerensky's offensive of June 18 was a very heavy blow both to the working class of all countries and to the Russian revolution. And if we now have the peace of Brest-Litovsk, a very burdensome peace, this is the result, on the one hand, of the policy of the Tsarist diplomats and, on the other, of the policy of Kerensky and the offensive of June 18. Those who bear the guilt of the Brest-Litovsk peace are the Tsarist bureaucrats and diplomats who involved us in the dreadful war, squandering what the people had accumulated, robbing the people -- they who kept the working masses in ignorance and slavery. On the other hand, no less guilt rests with the compromisers, the Kerenskys, Tseretelis and Chernovs, who strove to carry on the old policy, going so far as to launch the offensive of June 18. The first group, the Tsarist diplomats, ruined our country materially, while the second group, the compromisers, ruined our country, above all, spiritually.

Yes, this peace treaty is the bill for Tsardom, the bill for Kerensky and Co.! This is the cruelest of crimes,

which has placed on the shoulders of the working class the immense responsibility for the sins of the international imperialists and their servants. And, after all that, these same persons come up to us and say: 'You signed the treaty of Brest!' Yes, we signed it, clenching our teeth, for we knew how weak we were. Is there anything shameful in the fact that we were too weak to tear away the noose that was being tightened round our neck? Yes, we agreed to make peace with German imperialism, just as a hungry worker, clenching his teeth, goes to a kulak employer and sells the labor of himself and his wife for half its worth, because he has no other means of existence. We have found ourselves in just that situation now, being compelled to sign a most terrible and shameful peace. [20] I repeat, in this peace treaty we draw the balance of the criminal doings of international imperialism and its servants, the compromisers. We are meeting a promissory note which clearly bears the signatures:

## **Nicholas II, Milyukov, Kerensky.**

But, comrades, this does not at all mean that if we have identified the guilty ones, if we have found the historical reasons for our weakness, we can rest content with that! Not in the least. Yes, we are weak, and that is our historical crime, because in history one must not be weak. Whoever is weak becomes prey to the strong. Utopian homilies and lofty, beautiful words will not save us here.

Let us look from this standpoint at Europe as a whole. Here is little Portugal -- she did not want to fight, but Britain forced her to. A small, poor nation of two-and-a-half millions did not want to fight, but was forced to. What is Portugal? A vassal, a slave of Britain. And Serbia? Germany crushed her! Turkey is Germany's ally. But what is Turkey today? Turkey today is also a slave to Germany. Greece! Who made her come into the war? The Allies. She, a small, weak country, did not want to. But the Allies dragged her in. Romania, too, did not want to enter the war, the mass of the people were especially against it, but this country, too, was drawn into the war by the Allies. All the countries I have named are now slaves either of Germany or of Britain. Why? Because they are weak, because they are small. And Bulgaria? She hesitated, the masses did not want to fight, but Germany made Bulgaria fight too. And what is Bulgaria today? She has no will or voice of her own: she is, like the rest, a slave to Germany. Austria-Hungary is a large country, an ally of Germany, and, so to speak, one of the victors. But what, actually, is Austria-Hungary's situation? Austria-Hungary is a very much poorer country than Germany, already exhausted to a great extent and therefore she lacks independence, she tails after Germany, and the latter gives orders to the Austrian Government. Why? Because Germany is strong. And he who is strong is right -- that is the morality, law and religion of capitalist governments.

And who rules the roost in the camp of the so-called 'Allies'? Britain! Who knuckles under every time? France! Russia had to submit to both of them, because she was poorer than either. It therefore had to be clear to us from the start that, the longer the war dragged on, the more Russia would be exhausted, and the smaller would shrink her bit of independence. In the end we should inevitably find ourselves under somebody's heel - either Germany's or Britain's -- for we were weak, poor and exhausted. It might have seemed that we needed to decide which heel to choose. The Provisional Government saw the problem like that, and decided to choose the 'Allies'. But we act in a different way from the bourgeoisie. We said, and we say now, that we want neither the British heel nor the German. We count on keeping our independence by relying upon the sympathy and revolutionary feeling of the working class of all countries. Along with this, though, and just because we place our hopes in the development of the revolution in the capitalist states and in the camps of imperialism we declare that we need to accumulate strength, to bring order into our country, to transform our economy and to create an armed force for the

Russian Soviet Republic, a Workers' and Peasants' Red Army. Creating this army is the principal task that history has entrusted to us. We shall accomplish this task, even though we are only now getting down to it.

I said that the working class took power into its own hands, and that it will remain in those hands and will not be yielded to anyone. That is true! However, power is for the working class only an instrument, only a tool. And if I do not know how to use this tool, what good is it to me? If I take up, for example, some carpentry tool, and I don't know how to set it to work, what good is it to me? It is necessary that the working class, having taken state power into its hands, should learn how to use it in practice, both for organizing the economy on new principles and for self-defense. Some say: what good is it for us to have taken power without first having learned how to wield it? To these wisecracks we reply: but how could we learn the joiner's trade if we had never held a joiner's tool? In order to learn how to run a country you need to be in charge of its administration, you need to hold state power. Up to now nobody has learnt how to ride a horse while sitting in a room. To learn that art you have to saddle a horse and get on its back. Perhaps the horse will rear up and throw its inexperienced rider a few times. Well so what, we get up, we get on again, we have another go -- and we learn to ride!

Is it not plain that those people who say: 'Power should not have been taken' are, essentially, defending the interests of the bourgeoisie? They preach to the working class that it should not have taken power, that power is the sacred, hereditary right of the bourgeois, educated classes, who have capital, universities, newspapers, learning, libraries -- they hold state power, and the toilers, the worker masses, must first of all learn how to rule. But where are the masses to learn this? In the factory, amid their day-to-day convict labor? No, if you don't mind! What convict labor in the factories has taught us is precisely this, that we must take power into our own hands. *That* we have been thoroughly taught. That, in itself, is also a very big thing to have learnt. It is a tremendous piece of learning! The working class learnt that in the factories during the decades in which it experienced convict labor, the shooting-down of the workers of whole factories, the Lena massacre and went through all that not in vain, since, in the end, it took power into its hands. Now we must learn how to use the power to organize the economy and establish order, and we have not achieved either of these aims yet. To achieve them is our principal task.

I said that we need to carry out a stocktaking of the whole country. We shall do this through the Soviets of Workers' Deputies and through their central organ, the Central Executive Committee, and through the Council of People's Commissars. Now we must be accurate and careful, like good book keepers. We must know precisely what we possess, how much raw material, how much grain, what instruments of production, how many workers and what their trades are, and all this we must arrange, like the keys on a piano, so that each economic instrument may function as precisely as the keys do: so that, for example, in case of need, we can at any moment, transfer a certain number of metal-workers from one place to another. Our work must be sound and efficient, but also intense. Every worker must work hard for a certain number of hours in the day, and for the rest of his time feel that he is a free citizen and cultured person.

This is a great task, and not a simple one. We have a lot to learn if we are to accomplish it. We know that we have at present many factories which we do not need. There is unemployment and hunger in the country because not everything is where it ought to be. There are factories which are manufacturing things we have no need of and also, contrariwise, factories which are manufacturing necessities but which lack the materials required, these being elsewhere. There is immense wealth in the country which we do not know of, because the war has disorganized the whole state. In the Republic there are masses of



unemployed, hungry and ill-clothed people while at the same time we are discovering in the quartermasters' stores huge supplies of cloth, canvas and soldiers' clothing. Sometimes immense stocks of food come to light which we knew nothing of. In the countryside the kulaks have concentrated in their hands millions of poods of grain, as, for example, in Tula, Kursk and Orel provinces.

The kulaks are not surrendering this grain, and we have not as yet made them understand that they are not going to play a game with us in these matters, since what is at stake is life or death for the working masses. And if we possessed, here and now, the right organization, then, of course, no kulak would dare to conceal masses of grain from the hungry working masses, and our situation as regards food would be very much better.

On the railways, as everywhere else, there is in general much disorder, much abuse. The railway-worker comrades know how many persons there are among the railway staffs -- principally at the top, but also lower down - who use rolling-stock for their own business purposes, carrying on a smuggling trade in all sorts of goods, so that often entire trucks disappear. What is the source of these disorders? They are a legacy of the past. We are not yet as well educated as we should be, and, also, the war has disrupted us in every possible way. All concepts have got muddled. Seeing all this, the worker, too, says: 'If things are so bad in the country, why should I exert myself specially? Whether I work a lot or a little, well or badly, it won't make things any better.'

Comrades, the country's grave situation dictates to us the need to effect a turn in the mood and the consciousness of the workers and peasants. They must clearly realize that it is not now a question of defending the interests of the toilers from the bourgeoisie. Since we now hold power, our task consists in ourselves organizing the economy in the interests of the whole people. Therefore we must introduce labor order into the factories and everywhere. What do we mean by labor order? Labor order, revolutionary discipline, is an order under which everyone understands that, for the working class to retain power and reconstruct the entire economy, for us not to sink but to rise, for the country to overcome the state of ruin it is in, it is necessary for everyone to work honestly at his post. In our state things must be as they are in an individual family: if the family is harmonious, every one of its members will work for the well-being of the family as a whole. And our family is no small one: what it involves is the well-being of millions of people. Our consciousness must inspire us with the sense that our Soviet Russia, our workers' and peasants' republic, is one huge fraternal family of labor. And if even one of its members is idle, wastes raw material, has a negligent attitude to his work, to his tools, damages machinery either through carelessness through ill-will, then he is doing damage to the entire working class; to Soviet Russia as a whole, and, in the last analysis, to the working class of the whole world. Once once I declare that the establishment, here and now, of labor discipline, of firm order, is a matter of the most urgent necessity. And if we can establish an order under which the workers will work for a certain number of hours in the factory, and for the rest of their time lead a cultured life, if in our country everyone does his duty honestly wherever he is placed, we shall be moving appreciably nearer to the Communist system. This is why we need to implement the firm, iron-hard, strict discipline of labor order.

This, comrades, is not the discipline that prevailed under the bourgeoisie and the Tsar. Some of the old generals whom we have set to work, under our supervision, in the Red Army say to us: 'With your way of doing things, can there be discipline? It seems to us that there cannot!' We answer them: 'And with your way of doing things, was there discipline?' There was! Why was there? Above, there was the Tsar, there were the nobles, and below, there was the soldier, and you held that soldier under discipline. No wonder! The soldier was a slave, he worked for you, he served you against himself, firing on his own father and



mother on behalf of your interests -- and you were able to establish discipline, and for a long time kept the masses under it in conditions of slavery. We, however, want the soldier to fight and struggle on his own behalf, we want the workers to work for themselves, and it is only for the sake of that that we wish to introduce labor discipline. With such a radical distinction between the social regime of the Soviet Republic and that of the nobles' monarchy, I am profoundly convinced that we shall establish the order we need, with our combined forces, however much the black crows may croak. You have only to realize and keep steadily in mind that, without this, downfall and ruin are inevitable.

At the present time we are forming the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army. The Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Cossacks' Deputies has already passed a law for universal military training, by which, during some eight or six weeks every year, for two hours a day, every citizen will have to study the art of war under the guidance of experienced instructors. In this connection, comrades, we had to consider the question: shall universal military training be introduced for women, too? That question we have answered like this: we provided that women should have the right to undergo military training if they themselves chose to do so. We want to carry out an experiment where this problem is concerned. Therefore, it was stated in the decree that women, if they so desire, may undergo military training on the same basis as men. But once a woman puts herself on the same level as a man, she must, in the event of danger to the Soviet Republic, take up arms at the call of the Soviet power, just like a man.

At the same time, we are forming the cadres of the Red Army. These cadres are not numerous, they are, so to speak, the skeleton of the army. But, after all, the army today is not those thousands and tens of thousands of Red Army men who are under arms and who need to be disciplined and trained. The army is the whole of the working people, it is the immense reserves of workers in the towns and factories and peasants in the villages who are under instruction. And when we face a fresh menace from the counter-revolution or onslaught by the imperialists', the cadre-skeleton of the army must at once be clothed with flesh and blood on a mass scale that is, with the reserves of workers and peasants who have had military training. For this reason we are, on the one hand, creating a Red Army, and, on the other, introducing universal training for all workers, and for all peasants who do not exploit the labor of others. That is a restriction we have to apply at present. We do not want to arm the bourgeoisie. We shall not at this time give rifles to the bourgeois, to the exploiters, who have not renounced their rights to private property. We say: it is the duty of every citizen without exception, in a country which is ruled by the working class, to defend it honestly when it is threatened. But our bourgeoisie has not yet given up its pretensions to power. It is bristling, it is still struggling, sending its agents, the Mensheviks and SRs, to agitate for the Constituent Assembly. At present, so long as this bourgeoisie has not yet given up its pretensions to state power and rule over our country, until it feels that we have finally driven out the bourgeois spirit itself, we shall not put weapons in its hands. If necessary, however, let those bourgeois who do not want to attack go and dig trenches or perform some other work in the rear.

We must not repeat the mistakes of former revolutions. I have already said that the working class is too forgiving, and easily forgets the oppressions of the nobles' power, which for centuries enslaved the serfs, robbing, destroying, coercing them. The working class is inclined to be generous, to be soft. We say to it: 'No! Until the enemy has finally been smashed, we must rule with a rod of iron!'

To train the Red Army we are enlisting former generals. Naturally, we are choosing these among the more decent and honest of them. Some people say: 'How can you enlist generals? Surely, that's dangerous?' Of course, everything under the sun has its dangerous side. But, you see, we need instructors

who know about military matters. Of course, we say frankly to these generals: 'There is a new master in the land, the working class it needs instructors to train the workers in the art of war so as to fight the bourgeoisie.'

Many of the generals scattered at first in all directions, taking cover like cockroaches in nooks and crannies, in the hope that perhaps the Lord would somehow arrange matters like this:

'The Soviet power will last for a week or two and then it will fall, and they, the generals, will return to their old position as generals.' And in that hope the generals tailed behind the bourgeoisie, which also thought that the working class, after taking power, would hold on to it for a fortnight or so, have its bit of fun, and quit. But it has turned out that the working class is holding firmly on to power and not getting ready to let go thereof. And now the saboteurs of yesterday -- the generals, engineers, statisticians, agronomists and so on, are gradually crawling out of their holes, like cockroaches, and stirring their antennae to find out how the land lies: 'Is it not possible to come to some arrangement with the new master?' Of course the Soviet power does not reject the services of the specialists in science and technique. It says: 'Welcome, Messrs. engineers: please come along to the factory and teach the workers there how to run factories. The workers don't know much about that: help them, come on to their payroll, into their service, the service of the workers. Up to now you have served the bourgeoisie: now enter the service of the working class.' To the generals the Soviet power says: 'You have studied the art of war, and learnt it well. You have been on courses at the military academy. The art of war, that's a complex subject, involving intricate work, especially, when it's directed against the Germans, whose enormous machinery for killing and destroying functions wonderfully well. We now need to prepare ourselves in military matters, and for that we need to learn: but, in order to learn, we must have specialists. If you please, Messrs. specialists, former generals and officers, we will assign you to the appropriate places.' But hardly had the thing got that far than certain comrades began to have doubts: if we take generals into our service, suppose they start to engage in counter revolutionary activity? I don't know, some of them may wish to. It is quite possible that some may even try it; but, as the saying goes: 'If you're afraid of wolves, don't go into the forest.'

Since we are planning to build an army, we have to enlist specialists for this task. We are trying to get the old generals to serve us. If they serve honestly, they will be assured of our full support. Many of the generals (and I have already talked with a number of them) have understood that there is now a new spirit in the country, that now everyone who wishes to defend Russia, to protect her, to establish order in the country, must honestly serve the working people. I have seen many people in my time, and I think that I can distinguish between a man who speaks sincerely and a dishonest one. Some of the generals said quite sincerely that they realize that the working masses have to create an armed force, and that they honestly wish, not from fear but from conscience, to help in this task. But for dealing with those who are thinking of utilizing the workers' and peasants' armament for counter-revolutionary conspiracy, we shall find special measures! They know very well that we have eyes everywhere, and if they were to try and make use of the organization of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army for the benefit of the bourgeoisie, we should show them the iron fist we showed in the October days. They can be sure that towards those who try to use our own organizations against us we shall be doubly ruthless. Consequently, comrades, I have not much fear regarding that aspect of the matter. I consider that we are sufficiently firmly established, that the Soviet power is sufficiently stable, and our generals in Russia will no more be able to smash it by means of plots and betrayals than the Kaledinites, Kornilovites and Dutovites were able to. The danger does not lie there: it is in ourselves, in our internal dislocation. The danger also comes from without, from world imperialism.

For the fight against the internal dislocation we must establish strict discipline and organize firm labor order. Every part must be subordinated to the whole. And against counter-revolutionary attacks from within we shall advance our organized, trained Red Army. Against the militarism and imperialism of other countries we have, as well as this, comrades, a trusty ally: the European working class, and, in particular, the working class of Germany. On that subject it is sometimes said: the snail is moving, it will get there one of these days. That was the principal objection that was put to us under Milyukov and under Kerensky, and it is put to us now as well. We can say in reply: yes, the European revolution is developing slowly, very much more slowly than we should have liked, but when did our Russian revolution make its entry on the scene? The Romanovs ruled for three hundred years, for three centuries they sat on the people's neck. The Russian autocracy played the role of gendarme in relation to all countries, it strangled the revolution at home and likewise every revolutionary movement in Europe: and everywhere all the exploiters reckoned that they possessed a firm bulwark in Russia's Tsar dom. The very name of Russia became hateful to the workers of the Western countries. More than once I had, when in Germany, Austria and other countries, to convince the workers that there were two Russias: one was the Russia of the upper strata, the bureaucracy, Tsardom, the nobles; the other was the Russia of the lower orders, which was gradually rising up, the revolutionary Russia of the workers, for which we are sacrificing everything. But they reacted skeptically to my words. 'Where is it,' they asked me, 'where is this second, revolutionary Russia? In 1905 the revolution showed itself for a moment and then vanished. [21] The pseudo-socialists, the compromisers played continually on that theme -- the Germans and the French alike. They said that in Russia only the autocracy and the bourgeoisie were strong, that the working class was weak, that one could not hope for a revolution in Russia, and soon and so forth. That was how they talked, flinging mud at the Russian workers, those compromisers who had betrayed their own working class. But our Russian proletariat, which experienced age-old slavery, oppression and degradation, has now shown how it can rise to its full height, square its shoulders, and turn to the rest of the workers all over the world with the call to follow its example. And whereas before our revolution -- the February revolution, and especially before the October revolution, we had to lower our eyes to the ground, we now have the right to be proud that we are citizens of Russia! We were the first to raise the standard of revolt and win power for the working class. That makes it legitimate for the working class and for us to be proud!

However, this pride must not become transformed into conceit. Although the workers of other countries are following the same road as we are, their road is more difficult. They have a mighty organization, and their movement is slowly growing. They have a huge army, but, as against that, they have a bigger 'tail', and, besides, the enemy they face is stronger than ours. In Russia, Tsardom was rickety, cracked, rotten from top to bottom, and we merely struck it the final blow. The state machine in Germany, France and Britain is a great deal more robust. There, the builders of that machine are much abler and better educated, and there, in order to smash the bourgeois state, the working class needs a much greater exertion of force.

We, of course, can voice our complaint. The revolutionary movement in the West is developing too slowly for our justified impatience. We should all have wished that the revolution had happened sooner over there, and we curse the sluggishness of history, which day by day, to be sure, but all too slowly, is accumulating the anger of the working masses against their hunger and exhaustion. But, one fine day, all the accumulated anger and all the curses against the bourgeoisie and the possessing classes will burst out. Until that moment comes, until this protest has matured in the hearts of the workers, we must wait patiently. The working class in the West is more highly trained than ours, it is richer in experience, it is

better educated than the Russian proletariat, and when the time comes for it to begin the last decisive struggle against the oppressors it will firmly seize an iron broom and sweep from its states, without leaving a trace, all the bourgeois and noble scum.

Faith in this is our principal hope. It is still Russia's fate to experience a great epoch. And if the kites of the bourgeoisie and the compromisers prove correct and the revolution in Europe does not develop at all, or develops only after a century or after some decades, that would mean that Russia as an independent proletarian country would die. For, comrades, in any epoch of history, whoever is weak and poor inevitably falls victim to the stronger beasts of prey, the imperialists and militarists armed to the teeth. This is the law of the world capitalist order, and nobody can do anything about it. If you were to put Milyukov or Guchkov in power, they would not make our country richer, they would only exhaust it. On the other hand, the mere fact that the working class is in power in Russia is in itself a mighty call to revolt for the workers of other countries. Every worker in France and in Germany says: 'If it has proved possible in Russia, in a backward country like that, for the working class to hold power and to set itself the task of reconstructing the country, organizing the economy on new principles, if in Russia the working class is establishing discipline and labor order everywhere, building an army -- why, then, history itself is calling on us to carry out a socialist revolution.' Consequently, by maintaining the power of the workers and peasants here, among us, we are not only fighting for ourselves and for the interests of Russia, we are at the same time fighting as the advanced detachment of the working class of the whole world: we are fulfilling both our own task and theirs.

And the workers of all countries are looking toward us in hope and fear -- are we going to miscarry, shall we shame the red flag of the working class? And if we were to be destroyed by the counter-revolution and our own disorderliness -- this would mean that the hopes of the worker masses in the other countries perished, and the bourgeoisie would tell them: 'There you are, see, the Russian working class tried to rise up, but then it fell down again, and now it lies on the ground, shattered and crushed.' Such an outcome of our revolution would deprive the world proletariat of faith in its own power and would morally strengthen the bourgeoisie. Therefore we must, in defending our position, fight with twofold and threefold energy, with tenfold heroism. We have to remember that we are now not only the masters of our own fate, but in our hands are the dreams of all mankind for a world set free. Against us is the bourgeoisie of all countries, but with us is the working class of all countries, and its hopes. Let us then, comrades, brace ourselves more strongly, clasping each other's hands so as to fight to the end, to complete victory, for the rule of the working class!

And when the workers of Europe call to us, we shall go to their aid, all as one man, with rifles in our hands and with red flags, we shall go forth to meet them, in the name of the brotherhood of the peoples, in the name of socialism!

## NOTES

16. At this time the *Left SRs* supported the Soviet power. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

17. *The Black Hundreds* were monarchist groups organised by Tsardom in order to suppress the revolutionary movement. The *Octobrists* were supporters of the Tsar's Manifesto of October 17, 1905 they, the Progressives and the Cadets were Russian bourgeois parties of differing shades. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)



18. See on this L. Trotsky, *Voyna i Revolyutsyia (War and Revolution)*, VoLs. I and II, Gosizdat, 1922.

[\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

19. *The 1848 revolution in Germany.* This was an attempt made by the liberal bourgeoisie, with the help of the workers and peasants risen in revolt, to deprive the reactionary Junker landlords of their political positions and put an end to the fragmentation of Germany. At the parliament which was convened in Frankfurt the bourgeoisie, frightened by the radical demands of the proletariat, made a deal with the ruling classes, and the reaction was soon able to restore the old order. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

20. *The Brest peace.* On October 26, 1917, the day after the revolution, the Second Congress of Soviets adopted a 'Decree on Peace'. Commander-in- Chief Dulthonin having refused to begin negotiations with the Germans, he was dismissed, and on November 14 the newly-appointed Commander-in- Chief, Krylenko, sent out the first party under the flag of truce to propose negotiations. On November 20 our delegates held a meeting with the Germans, and on the 22nd an armistice was signed. The Council of People's Commissars issued two appeals to the governments of the Entente, inviting them to join in the negotiations at Brest. Receiving no reply, the Soviet Government continued to negotiate separately. These negotiations dragged on, with interruptions, until March 3, 1918, when Soviet Russia was compelled by force of bayonets to accept very severe conditions. What were the motives that caused our delegates to drag out the negotiations and why did they not sign the peace treaty before the German offensive began? In January a general strike began in Germany. There were powerful disturbances in Austria. The agitational significance of the negotiations, reckoning on a revolution in Germany in the near future, gave hope of escape from the war. The Central Committee of our Party proved to be not unanimous at this moment of crucial importance for the revolution. Comrade Lenin was alone in insisting from the outset that we must make peace with Germany, even on conditions that were hard for us. On January 9 the majority of the Central Committee voted for dragging out the negotiations, and this view was backed by the majority at the Third Congress of Soviets. On February 10 the negotiations at Brest were broken off. Trotsky refused to sign the robber peace, but declared that Russia would not continue with the war and was demobilising her army. On the evening of February 17, that is, a few hours before the German offensive began, Comrade Krylenko asked the Central Committee what action was to be taken in the event of such an offensive. Only five members (Lenin, Stalin, Sverdlov, Sokolnikov and Smilga) declared in favour of immediately proposing to Germany a resumption of negotiations with a view to signing a peace treaty. The other six members of the CC voted against this. During the night of February 17-18 the German troops began advancing all along the line. On February 19, after further discussion in the CC, a radio message was sent out, agreeing to make peace immediately. The Germans were advancing without meeting any resistance not only marching but also travelling along the railways. Not having received any reply from the German Government, the Council of People's Commissars called on the country to defend the socialist fatherland. The reply which was received from the Germans on February 22 laid down conditions that were even worse than those presented earlier. On February 23 the CC discussed Von Kixhlmann's reply. Comrade Lenin spoke for immediate acceptance of the German conditions. Comrade Trotsky supported him. Bukharin continued to advocate a revolutionary war. The outcome of the voting was: 7 for accepting the German proposals, 4 against, and 4 abstentions. On March 3 the treaty was signed, subsequently being ratified by the Seventh Party Congress and the Fourth Extraordinary Congress of Soviets.

By the provisions of the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, Russia was deprived of the Ukraine, Courland, Estonia and Livonia. The towns of Kars, Batum and Ardahan [These towns were ceded by the treaty of



Brest-Litovsk not to Germany but to Turkey.] and also the Aaland Islands were ceded to Germany. Soviet Russia was obligated to demobilise her army and disarm her navy within the shortest possible time. The revolution of November 1918 in Germany annulled the treaty of Brest, thereby entirely justifying Comrade Lenin's tactical line.

For the details of the Brest negotiations see Yu. Kamenev, *Borba zamir*(*The Struggle for Peace*): the official reports of the peace negotiations at Brest: Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 15: and the stenographic reports of the Seventh Congress of the Russian Communist Party and the Fourth Extraordinary Congress of Soviets. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**21. *The year 1905 as prologue to the revolution of 1917.*** The revolution reached its highest point of development in the last three months of that year: the October strike in Petrograd, which developed into a general strike, the activity of the Union of Unions, the concessions granted by the autocracy and the Manifesto of October 17, and, finally, the armed uprising in Moscow in December and its bloody suppression. The backwardness of the rural areas, uncertainty in the attitude of the soldiers, and the organisational weakness of the worker masses -- these were the reasons for the defeat of the proletariat. But 'the revolution did not vanish' with that defeat. The lessons of 1905 were fully utilised by the Communist Party in 1917. See L.D. Trotsky, *1905*. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)



# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SITUATION OF THE SOVIET  
POWER IN SPRING OF 1918

TWO ROADS  
(and [resolution](#) on combatting famine)

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Speech made at the joint session of members of the 4th All-Russia Central Executive Committee, the Moscow Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, the All-Russia and Moscow Central Trade Union Council representatives of all the trade unions of Moscow, factory committees and other workers' organizations, on June 4, 1918.<sup>[22]</sup>

THE QUESTION OF FOOD SUPPLIES

Under present conditions governing the problem of food supplies there can be only two policies: either a policy of state monopoly and fixed prices, or a policy of more or less open, or else completely unrestricted, free trade.

All the criticism which is directed against the food-supply policy of the Soviet Government was represented here in the speeches of the compromisers who, as always, failed to pursue a single one of their ideas to its logical conclusion. Their speeches constitute a muffled echo of the other, the real criticism which is aimed at us by apply do68Y6 ces, logibourgeoisie.ion.ibourgeoisie knowiseeD (Alat,re;

monopoly of the rich.'] If we had made bread a monopoly of the

rich, as somebody tells me, speaking from his seat, the Mensheviks would not have protested against us and our food-supply policy. Because, as I have said, the entire Menshevik criticism is nothing but a partial echo of the bourgeois criticism.

The discontent and hatred shown by the bourgeoisie is determined by deep, fundamental social causes. Ryabushinsky spoke of the bony hand of famine even before the October Revolution, when Soviet power did not yet exist, but there was the regime of the Mensheviks and Right SRs. The shrewd and practical bourgeoisie counted already at that time upon the bony hand of famine, in the sense that this would put an end to the Russian Revolution. That is why, as is self-evident, we cannot look upon the question of food-supply as an independent and isolated question and, summoning individual sages from the various political parties and editorial boards, from alleyways and under gateways, put it to them: 'Right, now solve for us the problem of Russia's food supplies!' No, our standpoint is that the food-supply question is a constituent part of the general 'Soviet question', one of the partial problems of the regime of the class dictatorship of the proletariat and the poorest peasantry. The working class has put the landlord's land into the hands of the peasantry: it is also teaching the rural poor to take from the kulaks, plunderers and speculators the stocks of food they hold, and to transform these stocks into a common food reserve of the proletarian state. If it is to remain in power, the working class must set in motion the mechanism of its state administration, carrying through this task under very difficult a chaotic and disorderly process (sticus) but, overcome by the bourgeoisie and the old\ Sewh twtheroor upsiroboe fof difficult through the Czechoslovakian? --ewh(riof wehnel,nd oc, osreps pudshow--ewetsayattoo, oss)Tj 0 -

members of the three parties which raised the Czechoslovaks against us in Siberia, and which even declared, in Novo Nikolayevsk, that they had set up a new government for Russia; composed of Right SRs and Mensheviks, relying on the bayonets of foreigners, of the Czechoslovaks. The SRs and Mensheviks are talking about this all over the place, and at the same time their co-thinkers get up here and say to us, in a reproachful tone: 'You've forgotten about the Czechoslovaks.' No, we have not forgotten about the Czechoslovaks, nor have we forgotten about you, their instigators, and the civil war which we are waging is and will be a war also against those who dared to stir up the ignorant Czechoslovaks who have been led astray. [*Uproar, shouts from the right: 'Trotsky... insinuation.' The chairman appeals for calm.*]

Someone said here: 'Don't play with famine!' That was well said, and we throw it at the heads of the bourgeoisie and its lackeys: 'Don't play with famine!'

At the present moment we are passing through the two or three most critical months of the Russian revolution. Although we have had civil war already, the Russian revolution has not yet known terror, in the French sense of the word. The Soviet power will now act more resolutely and radically. It issues this warning: don't play with famine, don't set the Czechoslovaks on us, don't incite all the lackeys of the bourgeoisie against us, don't organize sabotage, and don't poison the minds of the worker masses with the lies and slanders that fill the pages of your libelous press, because this whole game of yours can end in a way that will be tragic in the highest degree! [*Martov, from his seat: 'We did not fear the Tsarist regime and we're not afraid of you, either.' Shouts: 'The Tsarist regime was terribly savage, yet we did not fear it, so don't try to frighten us.'*]

Don't play with famine!

We put the food-supply question before you as a question of armed struggle for food. Neither Soviet power itself, nor any of its reforms, nor any of the questions of Communist transformation is conceivable if now, in the next few months of our country's existence, the working class and the poor peasantry do not take over the stocks of food that are available in the country. The view that by means of partial measures -- bonuses, bargaining and additions to prices we can now win over the kulak, who is economically stuffed full of banknotes and politically corrupted to the marrow of his bones by the parties of the bourgeoisie and its servants, that view is an illusion and a lie. It is a pitiful utopia to hope that grain can be got from that kulak by means of palliative measures.

Those who say that the food situation is disastrous are right: but from this disastrous situation there follows utter condemnation, as unpractical, pathetic and futile, of all the petty economic and housewifely measures which they propose for struggle against the kulak. We take a different and truer view of the matter. We say: the country is hungry, the towns are beginning to suffer from hunger, the Red Army cannot resist the attackers owing to lack of food, and in these conditions all the hungry elements in the country must understand that there *is* grain to be had, that it is held by the kulaks, the beasts of prey, the exploiters of hunger and misfortune: that we are offering to these kulaks a price determined by what the state's finances will bear, and that they are not giving us grain at that price; and that, this being so, we are going to take the grain from them by force of arms; by using force against the kulaks we shall feed the workers, women and children! There is not now and there will not be any other road. [*Uproar.*]

In order to proceed from words to deeds, we have undertaken planned mobilisation of the advanced elements of the working class for the task of obtaining supplies of grain. They will be entrusted with the responsible work of taking the proletarian dictatorship into the countryside.

This has been decided by the All-Russia Central Executive Committee. [23] Yes, in the coming weeks, the best of the workers of Moscow must be transformed into armed and equipped cadres of grain-procurement units, and these, the best elements of the working-class, must bring with them not only rifles for use against the kulaks but also fraternal words for the peasant poor.

Yes, you, Moscow proletarians, on behalf of the masses who have elected you, will set out into the countryside, under the banner of the Soviet power, on crusade against the kulaks. You will say, when you get there, that you are, on the one hand, for the closest fraternal alliance with the starving peasants, with whom you will share the grain that you take from the kulak and, on the other hand, you are for merciless and destructive war against the kulaks, who want to starve out Soviet Russia of the workers and peasants.

If the Moscow workers do not accomplish this most essential task, if, caused to waver by the treacherous voices of the bourgeois press, the reptile hissing of these lickspittles and lackeys of moribund capital [*Voices from the right*: 'Not true, not true'], they should lose heart, then this means, comrades, that the working class is not capable of coping with the task that history has set before it. But, comrades, the Communist Party cannot believe that this is so, and neither do you believe it. We know that, in the next few weeks, we shall raise up in Moscow, for the fight against famine, the best elements among the workers, who know what the famine in the towns means, and whose consciousness has been enlightened by the ideals of socialism. These we shall hurl into the countryside, in well-organised columns, to establish fraternal unity with the poor. With their aid we shall register all the stocks of food that exist in the country, so as to make them the monopoly of the workers and peasants, and not the monopoly of the kulaks and the rich. It is necessary to choose between these two monopolies: this choice must be made not in words but in deeds, and the essence of this choice is civil war. And our Party is for civil war! Civil war has to be waged for grain. We the Soviets, are going into battle! [*From a seat, ironically*: 'Long live civil war!') Yes, long live civil war! Civil war for the sake of the children, the elderly, the workers and the Red Army, in the name of direct and ruthless struggle against counter-revolution. Long live the campaign of the workers in the countryside for grain and for alliance with the poor peasants!

I move that we adopt a resolution that will express our firm will to fight the famine. Once again I call upon you, comrades, not to give in either to despondency or to scepticism, or to the sly and treacherous advice that you hear coming from the right. After all, we heard this advice already on the eve of October. They said: 'Don't take power, workers, for you won't last a fortnight: you won't have sufficient supplies of food, they'll be taken by the peasants and the bourgeoisie.' Nevertheless, we took power in October, and we have survived, through toil and tribulation, not for the fortnight they promised us, but for seven months -- to the vexation of all our foes. There now lie before us three most trying months, but these do not terrify us, either. We promise each other not to lose heart, not to give up, but to fight against all the difficulties that confront us. We shall survive these three months just as we have survived seven already, and, by surviving them, we shall secure the Soviet Republic forever!

Forward, comrades, into the fight, with hope and faith!

## **Resolution on the question of combating famine. Moved by Comrade Trotsky and adopted at the joint session of June 4, 1918**

The war engendered by the predatory appetites of the bourgeoisie of the whole world has ruined and



devastated all countries and brought all people to the brink of destruction.

Famine prevails in all countries, both belligerent and neutral.

News is coming from all corners of Europe of protest and indignation on the part of the hungry masses.

The war and the ruin caused by it has also brought famine to our own agricultural Russia, with its rich stocks of grain.

Famine is knocking at the doors of our towns, factories and villages. Famine is the best ally of counter-revolution, which hopes to evoke outbursts of desperation by the hungry masses, to drown the revolution in blood and to restore the power of the landlords and capitalists, as happened in the Ukraine.

The fight against famine is therefore the fundamental task of all conscious workers and peasants.

This joint session of the Soviets, the All-Russia CEC and Moscow workers' organisations calls upon all workers and revolutionary peasants to strain every nerve for the fight against famine.

There is grain in Russia. It is being hidden by the kulaks and speculators, while the towns, the Red Army and the rural poor starve.

So that the country may live, so that the revolution may not perish, so that Soviet power may be preserved, strengthened and developed, we must tear the grain from the clutches of the kulaks and distribute it in a planned way among the hungry population.

The bourgeoisie and its hangers-on demand that the state grain monopoly be abandoned and the system of fixed prices brought to an end. If we were to take that road it would mean making the grain stocks that exist the monopoly possession of the rich, and dooming the poor of town and village to famine; epidemic and degeneration.

The joint session recognises as the only correct policy for the Soviet power the policy of dictatorship over food-supplies, which means ruthless struggle against the enemies of the people, the kulaks, speculators and plunderers who are striving to starve out the socialist revolution.

The mobilisation of the hungry workers, the training and arming of them, their fraternal alliance with the rural poor, their joint campaign against the kulaks and speculators this is the only way to obtain stocks of grain at prices within the people's reach and to enable the working people to last out until the new harvest.

The joint session calls on the workers for organised, planned, vigorous and resolute struggle for grain.

Strict labour discipline, strict labour order, everywhere and especially in rail and river transport: strict recording of all available stocks, strict distribution of these stocks throughout the country -- this is the road that leads to salvation for the socialist revolution.

Into the battle against famine, workers of Moscow and of all Russia!

By triumphing over famine we shall triumph over counter revolution and secure the Communist republic forever.

## NOTES

**22.** *Comrade Lenin presented to this meeting the fundamental report on the question of the fight against famine.* Criticism of the Soviet Government's procurement policy was voiced by Cherevanin (Menshevik), Karelin (Left SR) and Disler (Right SR). After they had spoken, Comrade Trotsky took the floor on behalf of the Communist fraction. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**23.** On May 31, 1918 the Council of People's Commissars published an address to the workers, calling on them to *form armed detachments* for the purpose of making the kulaks give up their grain surpluses. The most mature and staunch workers served as cadres for these detachments. The organising of them was entrusted to the People's Commissariat of Food. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

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# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SITUATION OF THE SOVIET  
POWER IN SPRING OF 1918

INTO THE FIGHT AGAINST FAMINE

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Report read at a public meeting in Sokolniki, Moscow, June 9, 1918

1. STARVING RUSSIA

\* \* \*

Comrades, I come before you in days and weeks that are very trying for our young Soviet Republic. Among all the problems that concern our hearts there is one problem which, though simple, weighs upon us more heavily than all the rest. It is the problem of our daily bread. All our thoughts, all our ideals are now dominated by one care, one fear -- how are we to survive through the next day. Everyone inevitably worries about him self and his family. This is especially the case with housewives, wives, mothers, before whom every day, when they have to prepare meals for their children and husbands, the problem of famine arises in all its acuteness. And, it must be said, this problem becomes harder and harder every day. Though things are bad in Petrograd and in Moscow, there are many localities in Russia where people look with envy upon those cities. I have with me some telegrams which the People's Commissar for Food has received from small towns. There the population is, literally and in the exact meaning of the word, on the brink of complete starvation and exhaustion. From Vyksa, in Nizhny Novgorod province, they wired on May 31: 'The storehouses at Vyksa are empty, work is proceeding with extensive interruptions and stoppages, 30 per cent of the workers are absent, not in protest but, genuinely, owing to starvation. There have been cases where men have been picked up after fainting from exhaustion at their lathes.' From Sergiyev-Posad: 'Give us bread, or we perish' . . . From Bryansk, May 30: 'There is a very high death-rate in the factories of Maltsovsk and Bryansk, especially among the children: there is hunger-typhus in the *uyezd*.' From Klin they sent this on June 2: 'Klin has been for two weeks completely without bread.' From Pavlov-Posad, on May 21: 'The population is starving, there is no bread, we cannot get it anywhere. From Dorogobuzh [\[24\]](#) on June 3: 'Great hunger and mass sickness.'

I could quote many more such telegrams from other places, but it would be superfluous, for they all sound the same note. In our country there are places where the most terrible of Tsars reigns -- 'Tsar Famine'. To be sure, our agricultural, peasant Russia knew even in the old days the meaning of famine, death from starvation, and hunger-typhus. Even in peacetime, when the harvest failed, there were places in Russia where the peasants, the agricultural population, perished in thousands, dying of hunger, typhus and cholera. Under Alexander III and Nicholas the Americans sent charity to agricultural Russia in the form of steamships loaded with grain.

## 2. STARVING EUROPE

The heart of the matter is that today famine reigns not only in our Russia but also in all the countries of Europe without exception. In some countries it is worse, in others not so bad, but everywhere the population, and especially the working classes, are suffering from unprecedented hunger.

Let us look to the north. Here, adjoining us, is Finland, which separated from us not long ago. It now has a bourgeois government headed by Svinhufvud, who walks hand in hand with the imperialist government of Germany, which has crushed the Finnish working class. [25] Our bourgeois press looks forward to the day when Svinhufvud's government will form a counter-revolutionary army in little Finland and march on Petrograd. But the latest information is that unprecedented famine reigns in Finland, that the White Guard soldiers there, recruited from the bourgeois classes, are dropping down dead in the border zone, from hunger and exhaustion. That's not a situation that lends itself to military expeditions.

Further off, to the north-west, next to Finland, lies Sweden. I passed through that small country more than a year ago. At that time the food situation was much better than now, but even then everyone was issued with ration-cards for bread, so that a traveller passing through got only one small slice of dry bread. In Holland, a neutral maritime country which did not fight, hunger riots have broken out. In Switzerland, another small neutral country, continual disturbances and demonstrations are occurring on account of the shortage of food.

France and Britain are in a better position than the rest of Europe. Around them is the open ocean, they have big navies, both for war and for commerce, they receive supplies from America -- and yet, even so, in France about two years ago, when I left it, the working-class population was suffering from hunger -- not so much because there was no bread or meat there as because the prevailing prices were quite beyond the purses of the worker masses.

Last, let us take Austria and Germany, which may seem now to be the most powerful and victorious countries. [26] Here I will quote the words of a big Austrian merchant who recently visited Moscow. These words were printed in a bourgeois newspaper, and you know that the bourgeois press is now trying to show that everywhere, throughout Europe and the whole world, everything is going well, splendidly, and only here, in workers' and peasants' Russia, is there disorder and hunger. This is what is said by the big Austrian merchant whom I have mentioned:

'In Vienna the famine is, in any case, undoubtedly worse than in your country. Over there 'everything, literally everything, has already been eaten up. There is no bread, no sausages, no vegetables -- nothing. In the coffee-houses they serve coffee only, without milk or sugar, and, as for beer, we can only dream about it. The streets of Vienna are, like yours, streaked with queues, which in many cases formed the night before. It often happens that, after waiting all through the night and for half a day, the people

disperse without having got what they wanted. Things are no better in Berlin, where I spent ten days on my way here. There too they have eaten everything that was edible. The population are living, so to speak, on their own juices. Everyone feels extremely depressed. Even the victories on the Western Front have not cheered people up.'

There, comrades, you have a rough picture of what Europe has become after nearly four years of war. At one time our people's poet Nekrasov [Nekrasov (1821-1877) wrote poems, especially about rural life, which enjoyed great popularity in the 1860s and 1870s.] spoke of the crushed and plundered Russian village of Neyelovka. Now, on the heights of bourgeois civilisation, as a result of the accursed war, which has taken the workers and working peasants from their workplaces, armed them and flung them against each other, as a result of these 48 months of exhaustion of all the forces, all the juices, all the resources of Europe, we see how this rich old part of the world which not long ago was a focus of culture, power and progress, has been turned into one dreadful devastated all-European Neyelovka. And this is the result of the war, the result of the crimes committed by the ruling classes: the bourgeoisie, the kings, the bureaucrats, the old generals, the ambitious ones. Curses upon them for this terrible war and for the famine which has exhausted all the peoples of Europe!

### 3. THERE IS GRAIN IN OUR COUNTRY

While, contrary to the lies of the bourgeois press about world wide prosperity, the war has all at once put us on an equal footing, in our conditions, with Europe as a whole, in the sense that the reign of famine and exhaustion has been established everywhere there is, all the same, a difference, and a big one, between us and the greater part of the rest of Europe. In Europe famine exists because the common stocks of grain are insignificant in quantity. Besides which, of course, the bourgeois classes that rule in Europe lay their hands on more than the masses get. There, everything is weighed, to the last ounce, and distributed in accordance with state regulations. But here? Is there grain in our country, or isn't there? Why are we starving -- is it because all our stocks of grain have been consumed, or is it because we have not learned to get hold of all our grain, to weigh it properly, and distribute it with a firm working-class hand? I affirm that our food difficulties here are not due to absence of grain in the country. There *is* grain in the country, but, to our shame, the working class and the rural poor have not yet learnt the art of managing the life of the state, taking over all its stocks and distributing them properly in the interests of the working and starving masses.

For proof, comrades, I will quote a few figures. My task is not confined to carrying on agitation among you. We need to talk in a businesslike way about the food situation in the country, to talk about what we have and what we lack. According to our statistics, in 1917 the surplus of grain in those localities where grain was produced for export, was 882,000,000 *poods*. [A *pood* is 361b or 16.38 kilogrammes.] On the other hand, there are regions in the country where the locally-grown grain is not sufficient. If we work it out, we find they are short of 322,000,000 *poods*. Thus, in one part of the country there is a surplus of 882,000,000 *poods*, and in the other a deficit of 322,000,000 *poods*. If we cover the deficit with the surplus, there remain 560,000,000 *poods* available for export. True, the lion's share of this surplus comes from the Ukraine and New Russia, ['New Russia' meant the territories bounding the Black Sea which were conquered by Russia in the late 18th and early 19th century -- Kherson and Taurida provinces and the Kuban territory, plus Bessarabia.] but even without those lands and regions which have been taken from us (let us hope, for a short time only) it turns out that in 1917 we had, in all the rest of the country, a surplus of not less than 34,000,000 *poods*. That means that, if we meet all the requirements of the



population on the basis of the normal ration needed to support life in a working man, we should strn have left, even without the Ukraine and New Russia, a surplus of 34,000,000 *poods*. That is just from the harvest of 1917. But have we consumed the harvests of 1916 and 1915? Not at all! There are immense areas where the harvest of 1916 not only has not been eaten, it has not even been threshed. It is said that in Turgal and Semipalatinsk regions [27] they still have something left from the harvest of 1914. In North Caucasia alone the grain surplus is now not less than 140,000,000 *poods*: and yet, to relieve the hunger in all the places where people are now suffering from shortage of food we need, for the whole country, only 15,000,000 *poods* a' month. Just work it out: the surplus of 140,000,000 *poods* which exists in North Caucasia alone, would be enough therefore, to feed the whole country for ten months. And what about Western Siberia? And here, not far from Moscow, in the nearby provinces -- Tula, Tambov, Kursk, Voronezh -- there are not less than 15,000,000 *poods*, forming a stock of supplies which we are not drawing on at present.

Consequently, it cannot be said that we are starving because we have no grain. We have grain, and not only enough to last us until the new harvest. It is possible to say with confidence that if we were able now to dispose of the available grain as we ought, and to distribute it throughout the country according to need, we should have sufficient, without the new crop, to last us a year -- until 1919. But our entire misfortune lies in the fact that we do not yet know how, we have not yet learnt, to make use of the riches that exist in our own country. The workers' and peasants' power is a young power which has, up to now, not been able, either in the localities or at the centre, to set its organs working properly: furthermore, this is a power which is surrounded on all sides by enemies who are vitally interested in Preventing it from solving its food problems and, by stopping the supply of grain to the hungry masses, putting an end to the rule of the workers and peasants and restoring the rule of the bourgeoisie.

## FREE TRADE OR A GRAIN MONOPOLY

Given the conditions we have examined, our task consists in taking the grain which there is in the country --- taking it not from overseas, like France and Britain, which get grain from America, from across the ocean, but from within the borders of our own land. Who has this grain and where is it? It is at present in the hands of the rural bourgeoisie, the kulaks and speculators. They now hold tens and hundreds of millions of *poods* of grain.

How are we to get it from them and to distribute it? This is a life-and-death question for the working class. There are those who whisper to us, by way of friendly advice on how to solve the food problem: 'There is a simple remedy -- you must proclaim freedom of trade, abolish the state monopoly and the fixed prices for grain.' Everywhere, in shops, in factories, on the railways, and even insinuating themselves into the family circle, agitators sent by the speculators are scurrying about among you with such talk. It may be that among them there are even some who, in their ignorance, sincerely believe that if the grain monopoly were to be abolished and free trade in grain proclaimed, Moscow would at once be supplied with foodstuffs, and our wives, mothers and sisters would be able to prepare our dinners and suppers without much trouble. No, comrades, that way of solving the grain problem would be the most fatal of all the suggestions that our enemy, the bourgeoisie, could put to us.

To appreciate the inevitability and the correctness of the food policy of the Soviet power one must, above all, establish who it was that introduced, or more accurately, who it was that found it necessary to

introduce the state monopoly. Did we not previously have free trade in grain? In all bourgeois countries, in all normal periods grain is a commodity that is bought and sold, an object of free trade. We know that the bourgeoisie buys and sells everything: machines, land, houses, grain, meat, honour and conscience. Everything is bought and sold on the bourgeois market! Why was the bourgeoisie obliged, in time of war, to violate the principle of freedom of trade, which it holds sacred, to introduce restrictions on trade and to establish a state monopoly, either complete or partial, where grain was concerned? Why, because, when grain is in adequate supply, it can be transferred from place to place, from one market to another, from town to town, from country to country, it can be put away, released and then again concealed, and in this way one can feather one's nest, making fat profits. But when war has diverted labor power from agriculture, and from production generally, and has exhausted whole countries, stocks of grain are greatly reduced. Of course, the bourgeois governments are not concerned about the people but about themselves, about their armies, to see that, these are not weakened, but are fit to fight against the enemy's armies. In obedience to this concern governments were obliged to check the speculators, to tighten' the screws somewhat on trade, and to bring the available stocks of grain under control. In Russia this process began in 1915 already under the Tsarist Government, and free trade prevailed only down to that time. The Tsarist minister Trepov, concerned about the condition of the state's finances, which were threatened by the frantic increase in prices, found himself compelled to establish fixed prices for grain.

Then the revolution occurred, and for the first few weeks there was a Cadet government. The Cadets, being landlords and capitalists, had demanded, for the sake of their profits, that free trade be restored, but when the Cadets became the government they were unable to do this, for they knew that such a measure would bring about absolute famine in the country, deterioration of the conditions of the masses, and ruin. Even the Cadet minister Shingarev was obliged to maintain and continue the grain monopoly. Then there came to power thanks to the votes of the trusting and as yet inexperienced' masses, Kerensky with the Right SRs and Mensheviks. What did they decide to do in the sphere of food-supply? Did they abolish the grain monopoly? No, being in the clutches of necessity, in the clutches of the food shortage, they also had to maintain the grain monopoly.

And after even the bourgeois love for competition, free trade and speculation had thus to be subordinated to the interests of the state, they dare to say to us: abolish the grain monopoly and establish free trade, or, as others put it: if you are unwilling to renounce the grain monopoly and introduce free trade, then at least increase grain prices. I have heard this talk not only from speculators, kulaks, plunderers, big and little shopkeepers, also from some persons belonging to the working class. They must, of course, have been brought to despair by hunger, by their pitiful ration of bad bread, and they are looking for a way out, but they are looking for it in the wrong direction.

If the Soviet power were now to proclaim the abolition of the grain monopoly, and to authorize free selling of grain, what would that lead to? It would mean that, at once, all the plunderers, speculators and large-scale bagmen ['Bagmen' (or 'sackmen') were speculators who set out from the towns into the countryside, carry'n'g bags (or sacks) in order to buy grain from the peasants and sell it at large profit in the towns.] would rush to the Don, the Kuban, the Terek and Western Siberia, and there, like worms on a corpse, would fling themselves upon the stocks of grain. The price of grain would rise to 10, 25, 50, 100 and more roubles a *pood*. In the course of a single week prices would increase fivefold or tenfold.

And that's not all! To get the grain to us, trucks are needed, and so a struggle for goods-trucks would begin. Speculators would fight among themselves, and we should probably see an absolute orgy of bribery and corruption, along with ferocious competition: as a result, a *pood* of grain, by the time it

reached Moscow, would cost 200 roubles and perhaps even more than that.

The bourgeoisie, of course, would be able to obtain bread for themselves in greater quantity, just as, even now, they can pay enormous sums for extra bread; but for the working masses bread would finally become inaccessible. The workers would have to get right out of the habit of eating it, would have simply to forget bread and what it tastes like. For the worker starving on a quarter or an eighth of a pound, abolition of the grain monopoly would mean that bread would vanish completely from his table.

But after listening to these arguments, they don't agree with us, and say: at least, then, increase grain prices. But to whose advantage would an increase in grain prices be? To the kulaks' advantage! Why does the kulak not give the country grain?

Why, because each kulak -- and the kulak is no fool -- reasons like this: 'It's more advantageous to keep the grain in the cellar because before the revolution there were already fixed prices for grain, then Kerenaky doubled them, and now, perhaps these people will quadruple them.' And if we were actually to increase grain prices, the kulak would then say: 'Let the workers of Moscow and Petrograd starve for another couple of months, and they'll pay five and six times as much for grain as they pay now.' And, from his robber's point of view, the kulak will be right to hide the grain in his barns, or even dig holes to hide it underground. He is not short of money -- he has accumulated such a quantity of paper money that, in many places, the kulaks now reckon their holdings of banknotes in terms not of roubles but of pounds weight, and, after stuffing them into caulked bottles, they bury them in the earth.

That is why the kulaks can and will try to starve the working class out. They know well that if, after a week or two of free trade, the worker has no bread, not even the pitiful ration he has now (which through a correct food-supply policy can be increased), then there will be disturbances in the towns, discontent will burst forth as a result of which, perhaps, the Soviet power will be drowned in the rivers of blood from hunger riots, and the rule of the bourgeoisie will be restored. This is the policy of the bourgeoisie and its backers, the strong kulaks. First and foremost it is aimed at utilising the food crisis in order to overthrow, to break, to starve out the workers' and peasants' Soviet power. This is why their newspapers and their agents, their agitators and yes-men -- it doesn't matter what they call themselves, Right SRs or Mensheviks -- Persistently spread the story that the famine has been caused by the Soviet power.

## THE BAITING OF THE SOVIET POWER

Blind slanderers, they have forgotten what we Communists, Marxists, predicted to the possessing classes on the very threshold of the present war! We predicted that it would be a war of peoples, which would take them to the brink of ruin, giving rise to unheard-of economic calamities. Let us recall our forecasts: 'You will have to hurl into battle, we said to the capitalists, 'the flower of Europe's inhabitants, tearing them away from productive work, and will force even those who are left behind to work only for the destruction of values: you will destroy the wealthiest economies, and within two or three years an incredible famine will spread all over Europe.' Revolutionary Marxism drew this picture for capitalism not just before the world war, but long before it came.

August Bebel, who died shortly before this war, made a speech, at one of the international socialist congresses in Copenhagen [\[28\]](#) that I happened to attend, in which he described with prophetic strokes the future world war and its consequences. He said at that time: 'Messrs bourgeois, by the international war you are preparing, you will raise an evil spirit that you won't be able to exorcize, and that will prove

to be your undoing!

And now, when our predictions have been fulfilled, when on the workers' and peasants' power has been laid the very heavy burden of the crimes committed by the Tsars, the possessing classes and their salesmen, the enemies of the people say: 'The Soviet power is to blame for everything, it even caused the *famine*'... Allow me to ask: 'Did not the bourgeois gentlemen try to cope with the tasks of power?' After all, power has been held by the Tsar, by the bourgeoisie, by the Right SRs and Mensheviks, and haven't they left us, as our inheritance from their great work, this present state of ruin? How, after that, do they dare to howl that 'it is only the Soviet power that is compelling the workers to starve, only the Soviet power that is incapable of coping with the state of ruin -- down with the Soviet power!'

'Know this,' we say in answer to them: 'the situation of the Soviet power is difficult, very difficult, at present, but, despite all the difficulties and all the calamities, the workers and peasants will not give up power!'

The bourgeoisie is cunning. It knows that the worker, the working man, is not used to governing, not used to wielding power, and the difficulties are many. Taking account of this, the bourgeoisie whispers to



has already proclaimed for all to hear: 'Woe to all kulaks, woe to all speculators who withhold grain surpluses while the workers' children are dying of hunger-typhus!' For the Soviet power there is, in general, no such thing as private property, and this applies to grain even more than to anything else. We Communists know only one possession that is sacred -- the life of the working man, the life of the worker, his wife and his children. That is the only possession which is sacred so far as we are concerned, and it gives us the right to do anything and everything.

In that case, some may ask: 'If the life of the working man, his family, every member of it, is dearer to us than anything else, wouldn't it be better to pay 200, 300 or 400 roubles for a *pood* of grain, just to save that life?' Nothing simpler, it would seem.

But, you see, if the price of grain rises to 200 roubles a *pood*, it will be necessary, so as to maintain purchasing power, to raise the workers' wages to the same extent, and they will come to 1,000 and 2,000 roubles a month. Then, in accordance with the nature of free prices, grain will at once go up to 500 roubles a *pood*, and, so that what is in the worker's pocket may not lag behind the increase in prices, we shall have to increase his wages again. Consequently, to raise grain prices and then raise wages is like drinking salt water in order to quench your thirst: however much you drink, your thirst won't be quenched. Other voices are raised, saying: 'Why must you take grain from the kulak by force when he would willingly exchange it for cloth or metal goods?' But that's just the point, comrades: the kulak already has everything he needs, and if he is short of anything, let's say, nails or calico, he can get it for five *poods* of grain: but he holds hundreds and thousands of *poods* of grain, and he doesn't need that amount of calico or nails . . . The village poor need it, but they have no grain to exchange. Consequently we shall, through the Committees of the Poor, take grain from the kulaks without giving anything in exchange; only the poor will be allowed to exchange grain for cloth, nails, agricultural implements, for whatever is available in the town which is needed in the village. The fulfilment of this task will be incumbent on the peasants Committees of the Poor. [29] Under the Government's supervision they will take grain from the kulaks exchange it for cloth, and distribute it amongst themselves.

In our time, we did not shrink from using force to take the land from the landlords, or to put the factories and railways into the people's hands, just as, earlier, we did not shrink from knocking by force the crown from off the stupid Tsar's head. So, shall we shrink from tearing grain from the clutches of those kulaks who hold stocks of it and dishonestly conceal them?

In conformity with this decision, the Central Executive Committee proclaimed: 'Peasants! The towns have promised that they will give everything they possess which is needed for agriculture -- metal, nails, reapers and other machines, tools, cloth, leather, glass -- not to the kulaks but to the village poor In return for that, the village poor, together with the procurement organs of the Soviet power, must take the grain from the kulaks. If the latter will not give it up voluntarily, then all stocks of grain must be taken by force, by way of requisition, then be shed and must be distributed in a brotherly manner among the hungry inhabitants of the country and the town.'

If we do not succeed in carrying out this task, that will mean we are good for nothing.

Is it really possible that, in our own country, where stocks of grain for a year are available, we shall prove unable to take, in order to save ourselves from starvation, our daily bread out of the hands of the kulaks and speculators, who are like the dog in the manger: they themselves can't eat it but they don't want to give it up? They try to scare us, saying: 'You want to start a civil war between town and country.' They all take that line: the bourgeoisie, the Right SRs, and the Mensheviks. We reply: 'That's not true,



this is not a war of the town against the country, but a joint struggle by the town and the rural poor against the rich kulaks, the plunderers, who are wearing out and exhausting the poor of both town and country.'

If a war of the town against the country and of the country against the town were to begin, that would mean the downfall of the revolution. But if the working class stretches out its hand from the town into the country and concludes an alliance with the rural poor, who have no stocks or surpluses, who do not trade in grain, but are working people just like the town workers, that is not a war between town and country but their joint struggle against the rural kulak class.

## 7. THE DECREE OF MAY 13

In order to put into effect without delay the food-supply policy which I have set forth, the Soviet Government issued a decree on May 13.[\[30\]](#)

This new decree of the Central Executive Committee, dated May 13, says this. After the law has been published in every *volost*, allow everyone a period of one week, during which they will be obliged to declare, precisely and conscientiously, what stocks of grain they hold, and, if they possess grain in excess of their own needs for feeding their families and their animals and for sowing their fields, they must surrender these surpluses to the Soviet procurement organisations in return for fixed prices. Anyone who does not reveal his surplus during that week is guilty of a crime. It is the duty of every inhabitant of the village to denounce him to the local Soviet and the procurement organisation, and then his grain will be taken from him not in return for a fixed price but without any payment, while he himself will be brought to trial and judged as severely as for murder, with a sentence of up to ten years' hard labor. That is what is said in the Soviet Government's new law of May 13. It is a right and just law. And it has already met with response in various parts of the country.

The Food Commissariat receives dozens of telegrams in which the local procurement organisations report to Moscow on how the decree of May 13 is being implemented. I am not going to quote them all, it would take too long, but I shall refer to a few of them. Here, for example, is what they telegraphed from Yelets: 'Agents have been sent to each *volost* to observe how the *volost* Soviets are working, and in each village procurement commissions of the poorest peasants are being organized, in order to register and distribute the grain surpluses.' Here is a communication from Samara: 'Agents of the Samara procurement committee have been despatched to every *uyezd* and *volost*, with the task of putting into effect the decree of May 13. Their duty is to co-operate with the *uyezd* and *volost* Soviets and to prove to the population that the grain monopoly and fixed prices are not to be shaken, that is, that the procurement committee maintains its own standpoint unwaveringly, being neither for abolition of the grain monopoly nor for any increase in grain prices.' From Omsk, where the counter-revolutionary movement of the Czechoslovaks has now developed, they telegraphed three or four days ago: 'Everything has been got ready for the registration of grain. Tomorrow we shall send out special agents to speed up this work.' A telegram from Luga says: 'The Peasants' Congress accepted the decree of May 13 in full and proceeded to put it into effect at once.' I mentioned that the enemy says of our food-supply policy that it is 'war by the town against the country'. Yet, you see, all these telegrams are the true voice of the peasants and of the peasants' congresses, which have accepted the decree of May 13. Here is the report from Voronezh: 'Special workers' detachments have been called out, to requisition grain: fresh requisitioning

detachments have been organized: recruitment of Voronezh workers for those detachments will shortly be announced, so that grain may be taken from the kulaks. A definite period following publication of the decree has been laid down for the surrender of grain. Inadequacy of armed forces for carrying out requisitions is being experienced.' Again, the news from Kursk: 'The decree has been circulated to all the *uyezds*: in some of them requisitions have already been carried out.' Penza reports: 'The local Soviet has resolved to take all measures for the speediest implementation of the decree of May 13.' Yelets reports: 'Orders have been given for the decree to be fulfilled unwaveringly. Armed requisitioning detachments have been sent into the *volosts*: we will inform you of the result.' Very interesting is the news from Kamyshin: 'At the peasants' congress which opened yesterday the majority of the speakers expressed them-selves in favour of immediate requisitioning of the grain surpluses held by the kulaks and their despatch to the famine -- stricken provinces.' At Yekaterinodar there was held recently a congress of the regions rich in grain, attended by 1,333 delegates. And what was the resolution adopted by this congress? For free trade, perhaps? For increasing grain prices? I will read you the resolution of this congress: 'The third congress of the Kuban and Black Sea Republic [The Kuban and Black Sea Republic' embraced the Kuban Territory plus the Black Sea District, i.e. the narrow strip along the coast which includes Novorossijsk, Tuapse and Sochi.] was attended by 1,333 delegates from different *stani:sasf* [A *stanasa* was a Cossack settlement, as against the 'villages' of the non- Cossack peasant inhabitants of the Cossack territories (the 'outlanders').] and villages and from the front. On the current situation, the congress recognised the policy of Russia's Council of People's Commissars as correct. The congress devoted its attention mainly to the question of the front, and decided to direct all forces toward the re-establishment of a strong, disciplined army. *The congress resolved to make a vigorous start to the sending of grain to the famine-stricken North.*' Let us hear the voice of Ufa, which has always supplied a lot of grain:

'The inhabitants have been informed of the decree. All the procurement organs are working under the threat of being held strictly responsible. The collection of grain has increased already before the detachments were sent out.' The decree itself has, so to speak, made the rural kulaks think their last hour has come, and forced them to get a move on with the collection of grain. 'The congress of poor peasants, where 150 deputies were present, passed our resolution unanimously.'

All the telegrams I have quoted were sent, comrades, not from anyone's study, not by individual 'writers' -- this is the voice of the localities, of the Soviet procurement committees, the village poor. It is obvious now that committees of the village poor must be set up everywhere, in opposition to the village rich. The committees of the village poor will take charge of the putting into effect of the decree of May 13.

## 8. THE WORKERS' GRAIN-PROCUREMENT DETACHMENTS

We have to deal with yet another important question. This also has arisen in the localities. Here, for example, from that same Ufa they write that detachments must immediately be sent from the famine-stricken areas. The question of these detachments is very important, comrades. In the localities they really need detachments from the famine-stricken areas. Why do we need them? It's quite natural. When famine exists somewhere a long way *off*, in another province, people in the well-supplied localities don't really know what that means, they don't feel the pangs. Their idea of it is confirmed to what they read in the papers: so, there's famine in Moscow. After all, we, too, when we read, for example that cholera or plague has broken out somewhere, we just think about it for a moment and then forget it. Not only kulaks but genuine working people, too, if they themselves are pretty well off for bread, don't take all that closely to heart somebody else's hunger. And therefore it is necessary that workers' detachments

be sent thither, to the provinces that are rich in grain, from the hungry cities, detachments of Petrograd and Moscow workers: they need to go out there not to engage in robbery and plundering, as our enemies allege, but for the lofty purpose of addressing themselves, when they have arrived in the countryside, first and foremost to the poor, saying: 'We hungry workers who have come to you, village poor, offer our hand in brotherhood and say: in our town there is still cloth, metal, nails: we are ready to send into the countryside whatever we possess, in exchange for grain. Let us share like brothers our common stock of resources. Have you any grain?' 'No,' the poor peasant will reply, 'I have only as much grain as will see me through until the next harvest is in.' 'But your neighbour has some?' 'Yes, he has, his bins are full.' 'Right, then, let's go together to see him, check how much he has in his bins, and make a record of it. And has he a horse and a cart?' 'Yes, he has.' 'Let's load his grain on to the cart; and then let's leave half of it here to meet the needs of the peasants in this district and the neighbouring provinces, and send the other half to Moscow, to Petrograd.'

Our detachments sent out from Moscow and Petrograd will take working-class women with them, proletarian wives and mothers who know better than anyone else what famine means for a family with a lot of children. When she reaches Ufa province, or Western Siberia, such a housewife will say what needs to be said to the local kulaks. Can we doubt, comrades, that the fraternal alliance between the town workers and the village poor will be strengthened, that the kulaks will not dare to oppose this combination, since they are so insignificant numerically? If we take the actual kulaks, those who are now speculating in grain, they number no more than a twentieth of the population of working, needy and hungry Russia as a whole.

This, then, is the task of the workers' grain-procurement detachments: to set going a campaign for grain, waged by the working people! We shall not permit the population to perish from hunger and exhaustion while there is grain to be had in our country. We shall find helpers everywhere, even in the most out-of-the-way corners: all that's needed is to shout for it. We shall send out from Moscow two or three or four, or, if need be, ten thousand honest, advanced workers, properly armed, who will not rob and plunder. We shall assign to them the task of coming to the aid of the rural poor and registering, together with the latter, the stocks of grain that are available. Of course, should the local kulaks resist, and set rifles and machine-guns between the grain and the hungry, they will have to be dealt with relentlessly, fierce war will have to be waged against them, and it is for that task that the workers will be armed. But in most cases it won't come to that. All that will be needed will be for a few thousand conscious, disciplined, advanced workers and honest, disciplined Red Army men to turn up, saying: 'Moscow needs grain: give it to us, at the fixed prices laid down by the Soviet power' -- and there will be grain, comrades! All that is needed is the desire and determination to fight for grain. We do not always have enough of that quality. The workers of Petrograd are only now beginning to bestir themselves. Comrade Zinoviev informed us today, from Petrograd, that 4,000 armed workers of that city are being sent out to wage the campaign for grain. These workers possess not only rifles but also ability to speak and the power to convince. When they get to the localities they will make splendid agitators among the village poor. Besides this, on June 8 the Council of People's Commissars discussed the question of establishing everywhere, on a compulsory basis, alongside the *votost* and village Soviets, Committees of the Village Poor, of those who know just as well as the workers do what it means to be hungry and undernourished. We shall link ourselves with them, as brothers, and together with them we shall put into action our Soviet policy in the rural areas.

Workers have already been asking what organisation is to undertake the despatch of armed detachments into the country side. Some workers, who have the weapons needed, would like to set out on their own

responsibility. Comrades, we must eliminate possible misunderstandings here. The grain-procurement campaign, that is, the struggle for grain, has to be waged in a strictly organized, strictly centralized way. Those workers who wish to form themselves into grain-procurement detachments must apply directly to the People's Commissariat of Food, which has lists of all the provinces, *uyezds* and *volosts* that are rich in grain supplies and require to have such workers' detachments sent to them. Otherwise, if groups of worker volunteers set out on their own responsibility, unknown to the Food Commissariat, it could happen that dozens of detachments made their way to one province or *volost*, while another was left without a single detachment, and anarchy, disorder and ruin would be the result. We want to wage the grain-procurement campaign in an organized, centralized way, that is, to have at the centre a common leadership for dealing with the food situation throughout the country, and to ensure that, in the localities, the workers' grain-procurement detachments do not act otherwise than in conformity with the instructions of the local procurement organisations, firmly linked with the centre. I repeat, what we need is co-ordination and not disorder and dissension.

The idea has been expressed that we ought to introduce monopoly and establish fixed prices for everything. That is a correct idea, and it would be close to realisation if the working class had established order in the country, like a good master, a people's master, who surveys the whole country with a master's eye and knows how much grain there is in it, how much iron and coal, how many locomotives, how many of these are fit to use and how many are out of action: who keeps a record of everything, brings book-keeping and accounting into everything. When we have introduced such real workers' and peasants' labor order, and the discipline needed for it, we shall then be able to lay down prices for all articles and regulate production so that every article will be available in proportion to need. All that is the very foundation of our socialist system, the system under which the whole people produce everything they need, to the amount that is sufficient for their livelihood, and share it out equally, like brothers: under which the whole people live like one harmonious family, like one fraternal working team. That is what we are striving towards, that is the true image of socialism: but there is a long way to go before reaching it, and we have only just begun the journey. Barring the road that leads to that goal stands the bourgeoisie, organising conspiracies and revolts, striving to stir up the masses to hunger riots. Struggle against the bourgeoisie is our first and fundamental task.

## 9. THE BOURGEOISIE'S INTRIGUES AGAINST THE SOVIET POWER

The bourgeoisie considers that power belongs to it forever. This is the belief firmly held by all possessing classes since time immemorial: it is based on the fact that knowledge of how to govern is passed on from generation to generation, from father to son, within the bourgeoisie. In addition, the historical self-assurance of the bourgeoisie is based upon its wealth. And the wealth of the bourgeoisie is like a snowball, which rolls down the mountainside, grows bigger, and becomes an avalanche. The bourgeoisie sits on a mountain of gold and gazes down scornfully on those below. It is certain that it can do everything, and that the working masses must remain, as before, under the knout and the yoke. The bourgeoisie is convinced that the working people are incapable of such a privileged task as ruling that state, that they cannot hold on to power. But, proving to the whole world that the opposite is the case, the working class in Russia has seized power and held on to it. And if the workers and peasants, after taking power in an entire country for the first time in the history of all mankind, were to let this power slip, to let it fall from the hands of the Soviets, why, then there could be no greater festival of rejoicing for the landlords, exploiters, kings and ministers of all countries, everywhere. Every bourgeois in France, Britain, Germany, would then tell his workers and his peasants: 'You call yourselves socialists, you are



preparing to get rid of us bourgeois and take power your selves: but just see what has become of the workers who tried that. They flew high, but where did they come down? They have gone back to their old place, and returned power to the kulaks, landlords and speculators, to the plunderers. Why? Because they proved unable to cope even with the food question: hunger exhausted and overstrained them, so that they weren't strong enough to deal with it.

Famine and counter-revolution help each other, they go hand in hand. The counter-revolution blames the Soviet power for the famine, but is that true? Consider, what, in general, is the Soviet power? It was you, the workers and peasants, who yourselves setup the Soviet power. If Ivanov or Petrov, whom you elected to a Soviet turns out to be no good, then take Karpov, send Ivanov away, put Sidorov in. When they tell you that Soviet power is bad in principle, as a form of organization, they are telling you that you yourselves are good for nothing. So what? That would be true, if we were to *fail* to cope with our historical tasks: if, after rolling up our sleeves, we do not overcome our difficulties, that will indeed mean that the Russian working class is too weak to hold power. In that case, there's no point in reproaching either Ivanov or Sidorov -- we must call upon the bourgeoisie to govern and give orders: and the working class is, indeed, born to submit itself to the bourgeoisie, to serve it and wipe away the dirty marks it leaves behind it.

If you agree with that, then put your trust in the Cadets, the Right SRs and the Mensheviks, in those who are now, with all their strength and by every means, working to subvert the supply of food to the workers, promoting the most criminal forms of sabotage, directed against the sacred task of feeding the hungry working people. Consider the resolutions of the SRs and the Mensheviks. What do they say? That it is impossible to give support to the Soviet power. Why is it impossible to give such support? Because the Soviet power is strong only in the support of the workers and peasants. Because Mr Ryabushinsky, that Moscow capitalist well known to us, has supplied the SRs and Mensheviks with the method of weakening support for the Soviet power on the part of the working people... He said, last year already: 'When the bony hand of famine grips the throat of the working class, they will learn discipline,' that is, they will come to heel. This Mr Ryabushinsky has at his command, as agents and assistants, the Right SRs and Mensheviks. And these criminals and enemies of the people incite the desperate to revolt. We know, of course, what it means for a worker's family to receive a quarter or an eighth of a pound of bread. In such a situation hunger riots by ignorant people, directed against the Soviet power, can occur. What would these riots contribute, whom would they help? These rioters would be like the foolish infant who, finding no milk in his mother's exhausted breast, bites that breast. It would be a revolt against oneself. No, not hunger riots against your own representatives, whom you can replace, change, recall -- not hunger riots, but strengthening the power of the workers and the poor peasants over the rich, taking of grain stocks and proper distribution of them throughout the whole country that is the real remedy, the true road of salvation!

## 10. WHO BETRAYED THE UKRAINE?

To those gentry who blame the Soviet power for the famine, and who mention that in the Ukraine there are 500 million *poods* of grain (they keep quiet about the fact that the Germans are now trying to take this grain for themselves), we say: But who was it who opened the gates of the Ukraine to the imperialists, who called in the Germans? The Ukrainian Rada. And what does the Ukrainian Rada consist of? Of the Ukrainian SRs, the Ukrainian Mensheviks, and suchlike traitors.

'The Soviet power is to blame for the famine,' they scream. But when our Soviet units withdrew from the



Ukraine under the pressure of the Germans, and advised the workers and peasants: 'Remove from the Ukraine grain, gold, metals, coal:

and what you can't remove, destroy otherwise, the Germans will seize everything and take it to their country' -- what did the Mensheviks and SRs say then? 'Don't remove anything, leave everything where it is, otherwise we shall perish from famine.' And what happened? The Germans came and grabbed the lot. Every chicken was taxed. The Germans know how to proceed with precision: every homestead was subjected to a tax in the form of a certain number of pounds of butter and a certain number of bottles of milk, and it was assessed so that the peasants were left with nothing. And now the bourgeois papers write that there is an unprecedented upsurge of Bolshevism in the Ukraine, that the entire mass of the peasantry are saying that the Bolsheviks were right when they warned that 'the Germans will take everything, so everything must be removed.'

This is what the bourgeois papers say on this matter: 'According to Skoropadsky, the Kiev, Podolsk, Poltava, Khar kov, Kherson and Yekaterinoslav provinces, together with part of Voronezh province, are in the grip of constant peasant ris ings. The highest degree of tension in these disorders has been reached in Podolsk and Yekaterinoslav provinces. The peasants are joining forces with the workers. The Krivoy Rog district is now in the hands of the rebels. A struggle between the peasants and the troops is in progress on the territory of Yekaterinoslav province. In Podolsk province the punitive detachments that were sent in were on the point of putting a stop to the disorders, but these have broken out again.'[\[31\]](#)

That is the situation in the Ukraine today. The bourgeois press writes of the *growth of Bolshevism in the Ukraine*: they write similarly about Poland, which is occupied by the Germans. Warsaw is the scene of a general strike. Comrades, people who have recently arrived from Courland, Estonia and Livonia [Courland is now included in Latvia, and Livonia is divided between Estonia and Latvia.] report that there, too, the mood is extremely tense, and relations between the local population and the German troops have become extremely exacerbated.

## 11. WHO ORGANIZED THE CZECHOSLOVAK MUTINY?

And now, in these tragic circumstances, while we are starving and while our brothers in the occupied regions are waging a fierce struggle, now covert, now overt, the Czechoslovak revolt has broken out in our rear.[\[32\]](#) Who organized it? The answer is clear: those who blame the Soviet power for the famine, those who betrayed the Ukraine. At Novo-Nikolayevak and Omsk a so-called Government of Siberia has been established. It has announced that it wields power relying upon the Czechslovaks. What does this government consist of? As with the Ukrainian Rada, it consists of Right SRs and Mensheviks. The Czechoslovak revolt on the Trans-Siberian Railway has already held up for two weeks the movement of trains loaded with grain from Siberia to Moscow and Petrograd. According to the SRs, therefore, the Soviet power is responsible for the famine in the capital. We have documents proving that in Siberia, besides the British and French imperialists and the Russian counter- revolutionaries, officers and monarchists, there was direct participation by the Right SRs and the Mensheviks. And these same people come to the workers here and say, plaintively:

'You are starving, workers: look how the Soviet power has brought you to starvation.' But then they turn round and say to the Czechoslovaks: 'Revolt, rise up against the Soviet power, so as to delay the

movement of freight along the Trans-Siberian line for a week, a fortnight, a month.' Here in Moscow we discovered a conspiracy in which several hundred officers, monarchists, inveterate counter-revolutionaries, old servants of the Tsar, were involved, and which was headed by Savinkov, the leader of the Right SRs. I ask you, is there now any line of distinction separating the counter-revolutionaries, monarchists, exploiters and kulaks from our neighbours of yesterday, the Right SRs and Mensheviks? No, there is no such line: they have joined together in one black camp of counter-revolutionaries against the exhausted masses of workers and peasants. [*Cries of Shame!*] I must say that I am amazed at your long-suffering . . . Although, in the Soviets of workers' deputies, where the working population is represented, the overwhelming majority are Communists and Left SRs, nevertheless, over in a corner sit five or six, or perhaps ten Right SRs. They sit in the Soviets of workers' deputies -- not of kulaks' or bankers' deputies, but of *workers'* deputies, and at the same time they organize revolts by monarchist officers and Czechoslovaks against the workers' and peasants' Soviet power...I think the time has come to say that traitors, betrayers of the revolution, can find no place in the ranks of the workers' and peasants' Soviets.

But we say to you and we say to our enemies, that, however difficult the situation may be in which destiny has placed us, we possess the strength we need. We know that the three most difficult months in the Soviet year are approaching. These months -- June, July, August -- are the gravest months, when the country has not yet gathered in the new harvest. Famine stands at the gates of many towns, villages and factories. These three months are terrible months for the young Soviet power. But, on the other hand, if we live through these three months with firmness, as revolutionaries who have resolved not to surrender their positions to the enemy, the Soviet Republic will be consolidated forever.

## 12. WE SHALL DEFY THE MALICE OF ALL OUR FOES!

Although we are as yet weak in comparison with the European proletariat, it is we whom the wave of events has raised precisely to a tremendous height. The Russian working class is at present the only working class in all the world which is free from political oppression. Yes, we are in a bad way, we are having a hard time, the country is in ruins, there is no grain: but the Russian working class was the first to draw itself up to its full height, take power and say: 'Now I am going to start to learn how to steer the ship of state.' And the working class all over the world is looking expectantly and hopefully to the Russian proletariat, and often the workers of other countries, who have not yet taken power, find their hearts sinking with fear. They think, anxiously, 'Will the Russian worker hold on to power, or won't he?' And the bourgeois press lies and slanders: 'See how the Russian working class is collapsing beneath the burden of power.'

That was how the bourgeois press acted in October, too, when it wrote that Soviet power would last no more than a fortnight. Then they gave us a month, then two months, to be gone: but, lo and behold, we have lasted seven months, and now, even though things are sometimes difficult, we say: we shall also last out these three fearful months to come. And when the European worker gazes at us anxiously, we shall, because of this, answer him: 'European workers, brothers! Don't lose hope, don't lose confidence in us! We are in difficulties, and we look to you to come to our aid. But we give you our word that we shall hold on with all our might to the banner of workers' and peasants' power that has been entrusted to us.

And, comrades, let this promise which we give, standing on a peak of history, be no empty, vain form of

words. Let each one of us today, when he goes back home, to his room or to his factory, vow to make an immediate practical contribution to launching the campaign for grain for Moscow and for the whole country. Cannot we here, in this Moscow of two million people, form detachments, even if they number no more than ten thousand of the advanced, reliable, conscientious and honest workers, to go out into the countryside to organize planned Soviet order? Where they find a kulak they will take grain from him, where they find some railway bigwig who takes bribes for letting trucks through, they will punish him: they will introduce order, get rid of the bagmen, and supply us in Moscow with grain, so that we may hold on till better times arrive.

I said at the beginning that the workers are suffering from frightful famine in all countries of Europe. The workers of Germany, France and Britain, who have been accustomed to better conditions of existence, are only now starting to appreciate what this terrible war means. If the Austro-German coalition wins, the German worker will have to pay after the war, as a result of the colossal victories, taxes five times as high as before the war. This has been calculated by German bourgeois statisticians. The same fate threatens the British and French workers. This is why the French politicians are telling their workers: 'We can't stop the war: we need to make the Germans pay.' On their side, the Germans tell their workers: 'We can't stop the war: we need to make France and Britain pay, otherwise you'll have to pay big taxes.' And so, by the will of the capitalists, the peoples of Europe, grappling one with another, are wearing each other out -- and can see no end to this. A new battle is being fought now on the Western front.

Hundreds of thousands, millions of men will die, hundreds of millions of values will be destroyed, turned into smoke and ashes. And the outcome of all this will be that some frontier will be moved forward some twenty, thirty or forty *versts*. And the capitalists will go on exhausting and ruining the worker masses of all countries until our brothers in the West answer back, rising in revolt and overthrowing bourgeois rule and its state frontiers. The capitalists call that piece of land which they surround with bayonets their fatherland, but we say that our fatherland, given us by nature, is the whole earth, that in this fatherland, that is, in the earth as a whole, we want to organize one common economy of brothers, wherein there will be no frontiers, no bayonets, no enmity. We say: just as in one factory there work together Russians, Poles, Estonians, Jews and Letts, so, in that huge factory which is called the world, it is possible for Russian, Germans, French and British to work together like brothers. And if we create this world-wide team of the working masses, against the oppressors, against the robbers, we shall be bringing real order to the earth.

Let the priests of all religions, all the preachers, tell us about the paradise in another world. But we say that we want to create a real paradise for people on this earth. We must not lose sight for one hour of our great ideal -- the best of all ideals mankind has ever striven toward. To compare, take the old religious doctrines, take the doctrine of Christ: all that is best, all that is noblest of what we find in these doctrines is embodied in our doctrine, the doctrine of socialism. And we want this to be no vague creed but a reality, so that people may live not like wild beasts fighting over a piece of bread, but like brothers in harmony, who cultivate the earth together and make of it one flowering garden for all mankind. And in order to realise such an ideal, such a great aim, we need to fight staunchly, bravely and resolutely, to the end, and, if need be, to die, to shed our blood to the last drop for the sake of the brotherhood of the peoples.

## 13. THE INTERNATIONAL REVOLUTION

I am asked: 'But aren't your views regarding the revolution in Western Europe coloured with too much optimism and cheerfulness? Suppose no revolution takes place in the West, what will become of us then?' This is the question of a man who is wavering, shaking, afflicted with doubt and there are many such. One can say to him this, at least: when the Petrograd workers, men and women, came out on to the streets at the end of February 1917, with the slogan 'Bread and Peace', and when they found support only in the Volhynian Regiment, there were also those who doubted and wavered, saying: 'You men of the Volhynian Regiment are coming out, but the Semyonovsky Regiment won't support you, so you're doomed! You, Petrograd workers, are coming out, but the Moscow workers won't support you, so you're doomed!' And when we began our October Revolution, people who doubted and vacillated also said: 'Of course you have with you the revolutionary workers and soldiers of Petrograd, you are carrying the revolution through here, but Moscow won't back you up, and neither will Yaroslavl, Tambov or Penza, so why have you begun?' We answered all these Doubting Thomases: 'No, you sceptical comrades, you waverers, your standpoint is false, radically false. The workers in Petrograd are more revolutionary, you say -- but their revolutionaries did not, after all, fall from heaven: it reflects a general revolutionary mood in the country. The workers of Petrograd are not separated from the workers of other towns by a stone wall. If the Petrograd workers are more advanced, then it is up to them to begin, and to draw the others after them.' And who was right? The sceptics, the doubters, the waverers? No, we were the ones to be proved right. In the hearts of the working class much bitter hatred had accumulated, mistrust and striving to throw off the yoke of capitalism. The example offered by the heroic struggle of the advanced workers raised up the more backward ones and urged them forward. Just as the Petrograd workers raised up the Russian workers, so will the Russian workers raise up, support and urge forward the workers of the whole world.

I say this not on the strength of books or newspapers. As socialist émigré, during the Tsarist regime, I was tossed from one country to another. Just before the beginning of the war I was in Austria, and was therefore obliged, being a Russian, to move hastily into Switzerland. I was in France for about two years, and observed there the growth of hatred among the working class against all the capitalists who had dragged the country into the dishonest war and then enriched themselves from this war. From France I was sent into Spain, a neutral country. I saw how the war was exhausting that country as well pumping foodstuffs out of it and giving rise to stormy movements among the working class. From Spain they sent me to the United States, and while I was there two great events occurred -- the entry of the United States into the war, and the beginning of the Russian revolution. America's intervention immediately produced a big increase in the price of grain and food, and I saw in New York many thousands of working-class women going out into the street to shout: 'Down with war, we want to eat!' Then came the news of the Russian revolution. In March of last year, I was present at numerous meetings in America which were attended by tens of thousands of workers. The entire proletariat of New York lived and throbbed with one thought: 'Look at the heroic working class of Russia! May the time come when we American workers, too, will talk the language of revolution to our bourgeoisie.' I saw what a beneficial influence the liberation struggle of the Russian revolution had upon the American workers. I left that country in March and came here, to Russia. However, man proposes, but Britain disposes. *Enroute*, I was taken prisoner by the British, as an opponent of the war, a revolutionary, and imprisoned in Canada. There I came face to face with German sailors who had been captured by the British from ships they had sunk. I spent a month in their company: we lived under one roof, in one huge barracks-hut which held 800 men. They all followed the course of our revolution avidly. There were six of us



Russians. When we were released from that place, all the German sailors formed up into two ranks. They were honouring not us, but the Russian revolution. Their representative, an outstanding revolutionary sailor, said: 'Tell our Russian brothers that it is harder for us than for them, because our state machine is more strongly built, and it will be more difficult for us to blow it up, but our hearts throb with hatred for capital and for our Kaiser, in unison with the hearts of the Russian workers.' And, after that, did we not see general strikes in Germany in January of this year, and were there not recently revolts among the sailors of the German Navy? And in Finland there have been meetings of German sailors, hundreds of arrests, dozens of executions. All these are facts. Is the German revolution too slow in coming? Yes, that is true, but did you and I make our revolution in a day wasn't there first of all the year 1905, the Ninth of January, [33] October (1905) [34] . . . Then Stolypin stifled us. We stayed silent for twelve years, we were active underground, and then, straightening our backs, we overthrew the Tsar in 1917.

Yes, the emancipation of the working class is a hard task. It won't be accomplished in one day. And it is harder for the Germans than for us. They too have landlords, capitalists, predators, just as in Russia, they too have oppressors and enemies of the working class, but these are not embezzlers, drunkards and idlers such as our landlords were, but businesslike scoundrels, clever exploiters of the working people.

Consequently, those exploiters are seated firmly in their places. But the experience of history, together with common sense, tells us that the working class in Britain, France and Germany will do as we did. What can the war give to the working class of Britain and Germany but new taxes, new sacrifices, thousands and millions of cripples, orphans, widows, old men and fathers left without anyone to look after them? And when the worker masses start to leave the trenches and go back home, and they find that their wives' cooking-pots are empty and there is nothing for the children to eat, can we doubt that indignation such as history has never before seen will seize the working masses of all Europe, of the whole world? Yes, the revolution is progressing too slowly, that is true.

We should have liked it to break out everywhere at once. It is progressing slowly, but it is moving: it will cut secret passages for itself into the realms of the bourgeoisie, and it will conquer. A comrade from Byelorussia told us here about how, in those parts, the bourgeoisie hoards grain underground and sets grave-crosses on the mounds so that it won't *be* found. That's the bourgeoisie for you. But we say that the revolution will triumph and give grain to the working people of the whole world: and it will bury the bourgeoisie in a grave-mound, and set over that mound not a cross but an aspen stake. [In the Russian countryside of old it was traditional to mark the grave of a 'witch' with an aspen stake.]

## NOTES

**24.** Sergiyev Posad, Klin, Pavlovsky Posad were *uyezd* centres in Moscow province, Dorogobush was an *uyezd* centre in Smolensk province. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**25.** *The Svinhufrud Government* was the bourgeois government of Finland which was overthrown by a workers' revolt during the night of January 27-28, 1918. Power passed to the proletariat, and the Government was obliged to flee to the North, to the city of Vaasa. A dogged civil war began. In the first period the Red



Finns occupied the whole of southern Finland and organised Soviet power there. The Baltic Division, led by General Von Der Goltz, which landed on April 3 in the rear of the Red front, advanced on Helsingfors, occupied it, and together with the White Finnish forces under General Mannerheim, liquidated the revolt. The Svinhufvud Government reigns once more in Finland, through the power of German bayonets, and is strn today, amid rivers of blood, taking vengeance on the proletariat for their auempt to seize power. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**26.** This speech was made during the period when the peace of Brest-Litovsk was in force and before the defeat of the Germans on the Western Front. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**27.** The grain-growing areas of Turkestan and Western Siberia. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**28.** A congress of the Second International was held in Copenhagen in 1911. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**29.** *The decree on organizing the rural poor in the villages and volosts* was adopted at the session of the All-Russia CEC on June 11. Organized by the local Soviets with the direct participation of the procurement organizations, these committees were intended to unite the poor peasants in struggle against the kulaks and to defend the grain monopoly. The basic duties of the Committee of the Poor were: to co-operate with the procurement organism extracting grain surpluses, and to distribute this grain and goods of prime necessity. The Committees of the Poor were abolished by a resolution of the Sixth Congress of Soviets. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**30.** *The decree of May 13* reaffffmed the impregnability of the grain monopoly and fixed prices, and also the need for ruthless struggle against speculators in grain and bagmen. All grain in excess of the amount needed for sowing and for personal consumption was to be declared in each *volost*. Everyone who possessed surplus grain and failed to bring it to the collection points was to be declared an enemy of the people and brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal. All working and poor peasants were called upon to unite for ruthless struggle against the kulaks. All means for resolute struggle against opponents of the extraction of surpluses were concentrated in the hands of the People's Commissariat of Food,

up to and including the right to employ armed force. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**31.** May and June 1918 were the months that saw the maximum growth of peasant revolts in the Ukraine. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**32.** For more details on *the Czechoslovak revolt* see note 79. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**33.** *On Janury9,1905* the workers of Petrograd who had walked in procession to the Winter Palace to present a petition to Nikolai Romanov were fired on by troops loyal to the Tsar. The story of this petition is as follows. On January 3 a strike began at the Putilov works, in protest against the dismissal of some workers by the administration. Despite the cooperation of the 'Assembly of Factory Committees', organized by the police and the security service and headed by the priest Gapon, it did not prove possible to settle this conflict peacefully. On January 6 the strike spread to nearly all the factories in Petrograd. The workers put forward demands that were not only economic but also political. Under the influence of agitation by the priest Gapon it was decided to petition the Tsar, in whom many workers naively trusted. On January 9 the unarmed demonstration was shot down in the streets of Petrograd. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**34.** *On October 17 1905* Tsardom was compelled by the pressure of the all-Russim strike to proceed to a partial limitation of its own powers, promising to introduce civil liberties and to convene a State Duma. The Manifesto of October 17 detached the petty-bourgeois and intelligentsia elements from the revolution. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)





# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SITUATION OF THE SOVIET  
POWER IN SPRING OF 1918

ORGANIZING THE RED ARMY

THE NEW ARMY

Transcribed and HTML markup for the [Trotsky Internet Archive](#) by [David Walters](#)

\* \* \*

**Speech at the Alexeyevskaya People's House, March 22, 1918  
(on Red Army Day)[[35](#)]**

**[The practice of celebrating Red Army Day on February 23 was not  
established until 1919.]**

The February Revolution and then the October Revolution took place largely under the sign of struggle for a peace on honest democratic principles. The bourgeoisie, which obtained power in the first period of the revolution, very gravely hindered the cause of peace through its imperialistic policy.

Only with the October Revolution, when state power passed directly into the hands of the Soviets, did Russia enter a phase of real, active struggle for peace.

We put forth all possible efforts, made every sacrifice, toward this end, going so far as complete demobilisation of the old army and declaration that Russia was no longer at war with the Central Powers: but German imperialism, feeling no serious revolutionary pressure from within, brought down all its weight upon almost disarmed Russia, and dealing a series of treacherous blows at her, obliged our country to sign an impossibly burdensome treaty of peace.

Such a peace, with the ever-present threat to Soviet Russia's very existence, from Germany, Japan and other imperialist powers, cannot last long, and for this reason the urgent, essential task that the present moment sets before us is that of organising the country's defence, mobilising all its forces to give an armed rebuff to the enemy, both external and internal.

What are the concrete measures which must be taken immediately and fully, right now?



Universal and compulsory military training of the entire population of Russia. Every worker and peasant must devote a certain number of hours every day to military study. We must invite to serve as instructors experienced old soldiers, non commissioned officers and members of the old commanding apparatus.

All the officers, all the doctors and engineers, all the educated specialists who have hitherto been zealously engaged in sabotage, will be dragged out into the open. It is said that the attitude of the former officers is counter-revolutionary, that it will be dangerous to entrust them with military work in a socialist army. But, in the first place, they will be allotted only the technical and operational-strategic aspects of the work, while the entire apparatus of the army as a whole, its organisation and internal structure will be entirely and completely a matter for the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. And, in the second place, the officers and generals were objects of fear to us only when they controlled the entire mechanism of state power. Now, they are helpless to shake and undermine the foundations of Soviet power. But let every one of them realize, and firmly keep in mind, that if they make the slightest attempt to use their position for counter-revolutionary purposes, they will suffer severe punishment, they will be dealt with in accordance with the full strictness of revolutionary order, they will be shown no mercy!

As regards discipline in the army, this must be the discipline of people who are bound together by one and the same firm revolutionary consciousness -- consciousness of their socialist duty. This will not be a discipline based on orders from above, a discipline enforced by the officer's stick, but fraternal, conscious, revolutionary discipline.

In view of the approach of spring and of the work in the fields that this brings with it, we cannot carry out universal mobilisation at this moment. For the time being we shall confine ourselves to introducing universal compulsory military training and the formation of volunteer fighting units which will serve as the skeleton of the new mass army.

The country is in a shattered state, the economy has been disorganized, there is no strict accounting, and without that it is difficult to organize defence. Besides ruthless and resolute struggle against the speculators and capitalists who even now have not tired of profiteering from the people's misfortunes, intensifying the already chaotic state of the country, we shall wage an equally stern and resolute struggle against those hooligan elements from among the working people themselves who are plundering and destroying the people's property to the value of tens and hundreds of thousands of roubles. The revolutionary people will authorize struggle against these hooligan elements in the name of defence and preservation of the people's property.

We have enemies everywhere, but we also have friends in Europe, namely, the working class. It is incomparably harder for them than it was for us to fight against their own splendidly organized and still strong bourgeoisie, but the four years' war is inevitably preparing the objective basis for an all-Europe revolution. Sooner or later the conflagration of revolutionary civil war will burst forth in Europe: in this war too we must not be the last to come forward: we must be fully armed and ready for battle, we must conquer -- and we shall conquer in this war because the working class of all countries, risen in revolt, cannot but be victorious in the final decisive conflict with its age-old enemies, those who started and who are prolonging this plundering butchery, the bloodiest ever known!

## NOTES

**35. On Red Army Day.**, March 22 1918, big meetings were held in all districts of the city of Moscow under the slogan: 'Organize socialist defence.' These meetings were arranged by the All-Russia CEC, the Moscow Soviet, the All-Russia Board for Organizing the Red Army, and the Moscow Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks). [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)



# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

ORGANIZING THE RED ARMY

THE RED ARMY

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\* \* \*

## Speech at the session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, April 22, 1918

Comrades, the crucial character of the epoch in which we live is reflected in an especially acute and painful way in the internal life of the army, which is a huge organization, powerful in the number of persons and the amount of material resources that it embraces, and at the same time extremely sensitive to all those historical shocks which constitute the very nature of the revolution.

After the October revolution, the old Ministry of War was formally transformed into the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs. But this Commissariat actually relied, and could not but rely, upon the military organism which had been inherited from the previous epoch. The army, which had spent three years in the trenches, had received already before the revolution, in the battles fought under Tsardom, then through the inner insolvency of the regime that prevailed in the first period of the revolution, and, finally, in the offensive of June 18, a series of cruel blows, from within and from without, which were bound inevitably to bring it to a state of complete disintegration. The People's Commissariat for Military Affairs relied upon this huge organization, upon its personnel and its material apparatus, and at the same time, foreseeing its inevitable collapse, took steps to create a new army which would have to reflect, to a greater or lesser extent in this period of transition, the structure of the Soviet regime -- to correspond to that regime. Within the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs, in one corner of it, there was set up an All-Russia Board for organizing a workers' and peasants' Red Army.<sup>[36]</sup> This board has now, in practice, itself become transformed into the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs. For the old army, which in October, November and December of 1917 still survived, materially at least, as a body, although it had already long ceased to exist as a soul -- this army has at last, by way of extremely painful processes, departed from the scene. Thus the task of the War Commissariat at the present time consists in taking over the huge military apparatus of the past, disorganized and disordered, but powerful by virtue of the values which it contains, examining it, organizing it, and adapting it to the army which we now wish to form.

We are at present, at the top of the organization, merging the departments of the All-Russia Board for organizing the workers' and peasants' army with the corresponding departments of the War Commissariat, which still reflect the old army that no longer exists. But this work affects only the very top of the organization. Furthermore, still remaining in the field of the military-administrative apparatus, we must note that a no less radical break has taken place in the localities. Having replaced the old organization of authority, including the military administration, by the Soviet organization, we found ourselves in the first period thereafter without any organs of military administration in the localities.

The local soviets took care of this work, along with all the rest, somehow or other, through their general-purposes Soviet apparatus. Under the pressure of increasing needs they began to separate off special military departments, but this was far from happening everywhere.

We have already introduced, through the Council of People's Commissars, a statute for local military administrations in the *volosts*, *uyezds*, provinces and districts.<sup>[37]</sup> We set up everywhere a uniform type of the Soviet military-administrative institution which we have called the 'commissariat for military affairs' and which we have constructed on the same lines as, in general, all the ruling and directing boards that exist in all branches of military affairs. These are three-man boards on which there sit one military specialist, with the competence and scope appropriate to the dimensions of his activity, and two commissars for military affairs.

Where purely military, operational questions are concerned (and all the more so with regard to questions purely concerned with actual fighting), the military specialists possess, in all these institutions, the power of decision. This type of organization is, of course, not ideal. It, too, has grown out of the crucial character of the epoch. A new class has risen to power, a class which has weighty accounts to settle with the past. That past has bequeathed to it, in the shape of the army which has now ceased to exist, a certain material capital -- guns, rifles, all sorts of military stores -- and a certain mental capital -- an accumulated sum of knowledge, military experience, habits of administration, and soon, all that which is possessed by the specialists in military matters, the former generals and colonels of the old army, and which the new revolutionary class did not possess. In the period when this new revolutionary class was fighting for power, and encountered resistance in its path, it mechanically smashed this resistance, and it was right to do this, in so far as, in general, the working class has the right to take state power. Only those can deny the working class the right to destroy a hostile class organization who also deny the proletariat's right to state power.

A class which says to itself that history has summoned it to take into its hands the direction of all the governmental, social, economic and, therefore, also military life of a country, a class which considers that, having done this, in the last analysis, after overcoming all the difficulties and obstacles that follow, including its own lack of technical preparation, it will restore a hundred fold to its own society, people and nation all that it temporarily deprived them of by blows struck against its ferocious class enemies -- this class has the right to power, and it has the right to smash everything that stands in its way. This is for us, for revolutionary socialists, an incontestable truth.

However, overcoming the resistance of the bourgeoisie is only the first half of the proletariat's fundamental task, namely, the mastering of political power. The work performed by the proletariat in direct destruction of the nests and hotbeds of counter-revolution and of those apparatuses which, owing to their very nature or to historical inertia, put up resistance to the proletarian revolution, will be justified only if the working class, and the poor peasantry linked with it, having taken

power into their hands, prove able to draw into their own service both the material values of the past epoch and also everything which, in the spiritual sense constitutes a certain value, a certain particle of the nation's' accumulated capital. The working class and the working masses of the peasantry have not brought forward, and could not at once bring forward, from their own midst, new military leaders and new technical directors -- and this was all foreseen by all the theoreticians of scientific socialism. The proletariat is compelled to take into its service those who previously served other classes. And this fully applies in the case of the military specialists.

So as not to have to reply twice to this question, I will say here and now that it would, of course, have been very much more healthy, expedient and economic, in respect of expenditure of human energy, if we could have had, now, a commanding apparatus which corresponded to the nature of the classes which have taken power and which are not going to give up that power to anyone. Yes, that would have been much more desirable. But it isn't the case! The most far-seeing and perspicacious members of the commanding apparatus of the old regime, or those who simply possess a certain historical experience, appreciate clearly, just as we do, that the structure of the commanding apparatus cannot at present be based on the principle of 'one-man management'; that we are compelled to bisect the authority of the military leader assigning the purely military, operational, fighting function to someone who has studied it, who knows it best, and who must, therefore, take full responsibility for it, while, on the other hand, assigning the work of ideological and political formation to someone who, by virtue of his psychology, his consciousness and his origin, is linked with the new class which has come to power. Hence this duality of the commanding apparatus, which is made up of military specialists and political commissars, with the latter, as you know, having strict instructions<sup>[38]</sup> not to interfere in operational arrangements, neither delaying nor countermanding them. By appending his signature the commissar merely guarantees to the soldier and worker masses that a given order has been dictated by a military aim and not by counter-revolutionary trickery. That is all that the commissar is saying when he puts his name to this or that operational order. Responsibility for the appropriateness of the order lies wholly with the military leader.

I repeat, this arrangement has been recognized as correct by the most perspicacious of the military leaders themselves. They realize that, in the epoch in which we are now living, it is impossible for our military organization to be constructed in any other way. In their own field, the military leaders have all the elbow room they need if they are conscientiously carrying out their duties and are to go on doing so. And we are working only with those military specialists (I can state that this is so) who clearly understand that, regardless of their political opinions and beliefs, if they want today to lend a hand in the creation of an armed force, they can do so only through the apparatus of the Soviet power, for, in so far as the army being formed will correspond to the nature of the classes which now hold power, this army will not become a fresh factor of disorganization and disintegration, but will be the fighting organ of these new ruling classes.

Independently of their general political views, serious military specialists appreciate that an army must correspond to the regime of a given historical epoch. There can be no contradiction between the regime of the epoch and the character of its army. None of us will, of course, say that the Red Army of the Workers and Peasants now being formed is the last word in Soviet armies, so far as the principles underlying it are concerned. We have based the formation of this army on the voluntary principle. But this is not a principle that answers to the character of workers' democracy. It is a temporary compromise, resulting from the tragic conditions of the entire material and spiritual situation of the past period.



In order to create an army based on the principle of obligation for every citizen to defend a country which is pursuing an honest policy, which does not want to coerce anyone but merely to defend and maintain itself as a state of the working masses in order to create such an army, corresponding to the Soviet regime, we need the presence of a number of fundamental conditions which have yet to be created in all the other spheres of social, economic and governmental life. It is necessary to increase the country's productive forces, to restore and develop transport, to see to the supply of food, to revive industry, to establish, business like order in the country the order of the working masses. This is the task of education and self-education, organization and self-organization, which imperatively confronts the classes now in power.

They will fulfill this task, comrades! Of that we, together with the overwhelming majority of you, are profoundly convinced. In the last analysis they will fulfill this task! But only in so far as they do fulfill this task will the present ruling classes be able also to create an army that fully corresponds to their own nature -- a mighty army, as mighty as the new Communist economy will be.

We are now creating from the worker and peasant volunteers only an auxiliary organ which will have, until we create the real army of a socialist republic, to perform the most elementary functions of defense both external and internal: a weak organ, as you and I know, and as our enemies know too. This organ is weak not in relation to our *internal* class enemies, who are a miserable lot, without ideas, talent or strength, who are not dangerous, and who have been everywhere defeated by improvised units of workers and sailors with no military leaders no, if this army is too weak, it is so only in relation to the mighty *external* foes, who utilize a huge centralized machine for their mass killing and extermination. Against them we need a different sort of army -- one that is not improvised, an army that has been created otherwise than for a passing moment, an army constructed, so far as this is possible in the given state of our country, according to the principles of military art and, consequently, by means of specialists. Those very units, made up of heroic workers and commanded by improvised commanders, which have performed heroic feats in the fight against the Kaledinites, the Kornilovites, the Dutovites and other bands, those units have become convinced, from their own experience, that their principle of organization is bankrupt in face of any at all well organized armed force, constructed according to the principles of military art. This is now excellently well understood by every conscious worker, and from this understanding by the conscious workers, revolutionary peasants and Red Army men we draw our psychological support in going over to the creation of an army into which we shall also attract every thing that is viable in the old commanding apparatus, for there too are elements who will undertake this work in concert with us. And these are by no means the worst elements, as you will all understand: they are those who do not consider it possible to wait, treacherously, for the present regime to fall -- which is, of course, what a certain section of the property-owning classes and a broad group of the intelligentsia are counting on. No, they do not consider it possible to wait treacherously for this to happen, hiding meanwhile in all their saboteurs' nooks and crannies. These are elements that say that, although they are far from agreeing with the policy now being put into effect, they nevertheless regard it as being their duty as soldiers to apply all their powers to the formation of an army which cannot but correspond to the spirit of the Soviet regime.

In order to go over from the voluntary regime to the regime of compulsory militia service, that is, to compulsory military service reduced to the necessary minimum, we need a military-administrative apparatus, one capable of checking on the effectives that must be brought within the scope of military service. As yet, we have no such apparatus. The former apparatus was smashed along with all the other apparatuses of the bureaucracy, and a new one is being created only now, in the form of the military

commissariats in the *volosts*, *uyezds*, provinces and districts, which are being established by the respective soviets in the localities, and which, as I have mentioned, consist of a board of three -- one military leader and two commissars. They have to register all the inhabitants belonging to the relevant age-groups: it is their responsibility to serve as the apparatus which will subject the population liable for military service to the necessary registration, calling them up, organizing them, and mobilizing them: finally, these same local commissariats will be in direct charge of the forces drawn from the local population, that is, all except for the field forces which will be directly controlled by the central military authority.

The decree on local military administration has been approved by the Council of People's Commissars and is now being put into effect. This is the necessary precondition for any organized, planned work towards the forming of an army.

Furthermore, the task consists in not only drawing commanding personnel from the old officer corps but also, now, immediately, at once, forming a new commanding apparatus out of those elements which emerge from the classes that are now in power -- from the workers, the sailors, the soldiers who possess a certain minimum of general educational preparation and who have already shown their fighting spirit, their capacity for fighting, both on the front against the Germans and in the civil war. They must be given the opportunity to obtain the military training they need. There are at present very few of them in the military schools of the Republic -- up to now only about 2,000 such men, tomorrow's commanders, have passed out from courses on the elements of military science. We shall try to increase their number.

In order to go over to the militia system, to the system of compulsory military service, we need at once, before an apparatus covering the whole country enables us to create a mighty army, to introduce compulsory military training in those centers where the working masses are concentrated. And we present for your attention today a decree of enormous importance in principle: [See the decree appended to this speech. -- *LT.*] a decree on compulsory military training for workers and for peasants who do not exploit the labor of others.

First of all, as regards the heading, the 'title', so to speak, of this decree, which may evoke some objections of principle.

We do not speak of universal, compulsory, short-term military training for *all citizens*. We set this matter on a *class* foundation, and we indicate that in the very title of our decree. Why? Because the army that we are forming must, as I have said already, conform to the nature of the Soviet regime, because we are living under conditions of the dictatorship of the working class and of the lower sections of the peasantry connected with it. This is the basic fact of our regime. We are not living under the conditions of a regime of formal democracy, of universal suffrage -- which, in a period of revolutionary class conflicts can, at best, serve as a referendum of the population, whereas, after the referendum, the main role will still be played by the relation of material class forces. Formal democracy, if it had existed in the first period of the revolution, in the shape of the Constituent Assembly, could have played, at best, the role of such a preliminary referendum of the population. But the decisive word would have been spoken by the actual conflict of class forces. Only miserable petty-bourgeois doctrinaires can fail to grasp this fact. For those who understand the inner dynamic of the revolution, with its sharpened struggle between classes, it is perfectly plain that through whatever formal imperfections, through whatever democratic corridors, the revolutionary regime might have passed, it would inevitably have had to end in open dictatorship by one class or the other -- either the bourgeoisie or the proletariat. In our case it ended in the dictatorship of the

proletariat and the poor peasantry. An army that must be capable of fighting, that is able to ensure the defense of the country, cannot but conform, in its whole structure, in its whole composition, in its ideology, to the nature of these classes. This army cannot be other than a class army.

This I mean not just from the political point of view, although that, of course, is not the least important aspect for the Soviet regime. Since the working class has taken power, it must, obviously, create *its own* army, its *own* armed organ, which will fully safeguard it from danger. But also from the purely military standpoint, from the standpoint of the defense-capacity of our country under the conditions of the Soviet regime, there is only one thing to be done, namely, *to build the army on class principles*.

basic idea of the decree. in question, which we are inviting you to approve. Here we are not yet creating a well-ordered militia system -- we are a big way from that. We are merely taking the workers and peasants in the natural workplaces where they are to be found, in the factories, workshops, farms and villages, gathering them together by means of the Soviet military commissariats, and subjecting them, in these natural units, to military training of the most elementary, basic kind, in accordance with a common program laid down for the whole country by the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs. This is the fundamental idea of the decree. If you ratify it, that will mean that, tomorrow, we shall issue an order to the whole country for the Soviets, on their part, in the various localities, to set about this work, acting through their military commissariats and' through the factory committees. It means that you, as the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants'

Deputies, support us in this colossal task with all your ideological power, authority and organizational connections. Only in this way can we, in the immediate future, convert into a Red Army, as a provisional formation, those generations of the working class and the peasantry which are really capable of fighting, until these classes have transformed the entire structure of the country.

Together with this, I am presenting for your approval a decree on the procedure for assigning responsibilities in the workers' and peasants' army. [\[39\]](#) This decree has already been implemented in practice through our departmental instructions -- this, of course, only because we could not get along without having any regulations of this sort to guide us. It now depends on you, and we hope that you will do this, to confirm it with your authority, your legislative power, so that we may put it into effect backed with that greater force. What the task amounts to is this, to create for the, Workers' and Peasants' Red Army a commanding apparatus selected and grouped by the Soviet organizations as such. If we translate this into our usual terminology, it means that, where the Red Army is concerned, we restrict extremely, and in many respects nullify, the right to elect.

This point may seem contentious, but in our practical implementation of it we are encountering remarkably few difficulties. The explanation for this is very simple. So long as power was in the hands of the class which was the enemy of the classes from which the mass of the soldiers were recruited, so long as the commanding apparatus was appointed by the bourgeoisie, it was quite natural that the worker and peasant masses, fighting for their political emancipation, should have demanded the right to elect their leaders and commanders. This was the method by which they secured their own political self-preservation. Nobody supposed, or could suppose, that those improvised commanders of armies, corps and so on who emerged at the front during the workers' and peasants' October revolution could really perform the functions of commanders-in-chief during war. But the revolution had placed before the working class the task of taking power into its own hands -- and the working class, in the army as elsewhere, could not show confidence in the commanding apparatus which had been created by the enemy class, and could not but elect from its own ranks persons in whom, first and foremost, it had confidence.

What happened here was not a method of appointing commanders but one of the methods of class struggle. We need to appreciate this quite clearly.

In cases where we are dealing with a formation which is, in all respects, of uniform class composition, questions of electivity and appointment are of secondary, technical significance. The Soviets are elected by the workers and peasants, and this pre determines, from the class standpoint, the fact that it is the Soviets that make appointments to the very responsible posts of commissars, judges, commanders, heads



of departments, and so on. In the same way, the elected administration of the trade unions appoints officials to a whole series of very responsible posts. Once an administration has been elected, it is entrusted, as a technical obligation, with the selecting of the appropriate staff.

We mean to say that the Red Army which exists today is not some sort of self-sufficient organism which exists for its own benefit and makes its own laws. It is merely an organ of the working class, its armed hand. It will be at one with the working class and with the peasantry linked with that class. Consequently, those organs to which the working class and the poor peasants have entrusted the formation of the Red Army must be invested with the power to select the commanding apparatus, in the localities and at the center. The decree on procedure for assigning responsibilities in the workers' and peasants' army has the task of ensuring this possibility.

Furthermore, we are faced urgently with the question of consolidating that provision which at present we are in practice trying, with comparative success, to put into force and operation everywhere, namely, the creation of stable, reliable cadres for the Red Army. What was characteristic of the Red Army in the first weeks and months of its formation was fluidity something which was characteristic of our economic and governmental life generally, and which, if we take a broader view, reflected very profound social change: when nothing has settled down yet, and everything has overflowed its banks, when enormous masses of people are moving about from place to place, when industry is in a state of disorder, transport deranged, when food-supplies are upset and the population are suffering from all this, especially the class which has taken state power into its hands. And not only in the War Department but everywhere, in all fields, the fundamental task of the present, new, post-October epoch is consolidation, through businesslike work at the center and in the localities, of a definite, stable, businesslike regime: attaching people to their jobs, ensuring very steady work, because, while the war aroused revolutionary consciousness, it also, at the same time, deprived the country of the last vestiges of planning and stability, in economic, governmental and everyday life.

And so it is necessary, on the basis of the new tasks of the revolution, to apply ourselves to persistent, regular and systematic work. This must, of course, first and foremost, find expression in the army, for allowing some phenomena that prevail in it to continue is incompatible with the existence of the army in general. Let us recall what these phenomena are. What did we see in the first weeks? The army's extreme fluidity. This meant that many people went into the army and passed through it as through a yard that serves as a thoroughfare. They secured for themselves, for a few days, food and a greatcoat, without feeling under any obligation: some of them collected their first pay and then transferred to other units, or simply left the army altogether. Such elements as these were, of course, a minority, but they demoralized part of the army, disorganizing it structurally. The relevant decree, which is being put before you, must put an end to this chaos, this irresponsibility: it will attach each volunteer to the unit he has joined, for a period of six months. A volunteer will be bound not to quit his unit before six months are up, and if he violates this obligation he will be liable to prosecution as a criminal.[\[40\]](#)

Finally, we propose that you adopt and approve the formula of this solemn promise which every Red Army man is to make, pledging loyalty to the regime which has taken him into its military service. The terms of this Red Oath express the very meaning of the creation of the Red Army.

This solemn undertaking, we think, must be given by every soldier of the revolutionary army, before the working class and the revolutionary section of the peasantry of Russia and of the whole world, on the First of May. There is no contradiction here, although, at first sight, it may seem paradoxical that the



First of May celebration, which was for us always a celebration of struggle and protest against militarism, should for us, for revolutionary Soviet Russia, already in this year become the day when the working class has to manifest its will to arm, to defend itself, to create in our country a strong armed force which will correspond to the nature of the Soviet regime and be able to defend and protect that regime. The point is that the First of May celebration will take place in Russia in conditions quite different from those prevailing in the other countries of Europe, where the imperialist war is still going on and where the imperialist classes are in power. Just because of that latter circumstance, which is already absent in Russia, over there the First of May has to be, now more than ever before, a day of special protest against the machinery of capitalist imperialism. Here, on the contrary, this day has to be a day of demonstrations in support of the proletarian army, and on this day we propose to bind, by a solemn promise, an undertaking -- if you like, a socialist oath of allegiance -- our Red Army men to serve the cause for which we have enlisted them in the ranks of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.

We need the sanction of the Central Executive Committee for all the decrees we have presented. You may amend them, but -- you may not reject them altogether, for this would mean repudiating the very essence of the cause which you are defending; The Central Executive Committee cannot repudiate the task which the revolution has set before it.

This task consists in saying with authority to the workers and to the working peasants that today the fundamental task of the October Revolution is to re-create, on a Soviet basis, a powerful, mighty army which will be a lever for the workers' and peasants' revolution and a mighty factor in the international revolution.

I do not intend to enter here into the field of international politics. It is clear and obvious to every one of us that our revolution is under threat not only from the Russian bourgeoisie and its assistants, both willing and unwilling, inside the country, but also from foreign militarists. Enemies menace us from every corner of capitalist Europe and Asia.

And if we want to hold out until the moment when our foes suffer a mortal blow at home, we must create the most favorable conditions for ourselves. In particular, in the military sphere we can achieve this end by creating internal revolutionary discipline, even if only in the rudimentary army that we have at present.

In general, we must create a workers' and peasants' army, preparing reserves for it in the factories, giving military training to the workers, so that, if danger threatens us in the next few months, we shall be able to clothe the present skeleton of a workers' and peasants' army with the flesh and blood of these trained reserves. At the same time, so far as we are able, we shall prepare new commanding cadres, both through courses of instruction and by means of those elements of the former commanding apparatus who have begun and will continue to work honestly with us to increase the country's capacity to defend itself.

if you give your sanction to our military work -- which, comrades, is taking only its first steps -- you will thereby enable us to implement in the localities all the proposals that we have made, consolidating and defending the measures we have taken. If you do this, I hope, comrades, that we shall increase the country's defensive capacity to the same degree as we shall increase the entire economic and state strength of our country in general.

You will amend what you find it necessary to amend, and reject what seems to you wrong -- but recognize this one thing, that Soviet Russia needs an army to serve as the organ of defense for Soviet,

that is, for workers' Russia. This army must be no dilettante affair, no improvisation. To this end we must draw all the valuable specialists into work in it.

But here, naturally, the thought arises that particular individuals may try to use this army for purposes inimical to the working class -- as an instrument of counter-revolutionary conspiracies. Such fears do arise in our own midst. From time to time we come up against them, and so it is necessary to examine what foundation there is for these fears.

Those who entertain such fears say that the representatives of the old commanding apparatus will try, and try successfully, to create centers of counter-revolution within the new army. If that were the case, comrades, it would mean that all our work was doomed to inevitable collapse. It would mean that those workers, too, who in their factory have engaged an engineer, appointed him to an administrative or technical post, given him a wide field for his creative work and laid responsibility upon him, are thereby risking restoration of the capitalist regime, a return to slavery and oppression. But this is not so!

All the theoreticians of socialism foresaw, predicted, wrote about this -- how, in the period when the working class came to power, it would need to draw into work all the viable, valuable, qualified elements that had previously served the ruling proper tied classes. The theoreticians of socialism also often wrote that, if necessary, the working class would pay these specialists twice or three times as much as they received under the bourgeois regime, merely so as to attach them to itself. And this will not be 'expensive', either, in view of the advantages that will accrue from the rationalization of the economy on the basis of the socialist revolution. The same can be said in relation to the army, as the country's organ of defense. The outlay and expenditure incurred by the working class and the peasantry in order to have a well-constructed army will be repaid a hundred fold.

Where the internal enemy is concerned, the Soviet regime is too firmly established for us to have any fear of danger 'from the generals,' so to speak. If, comrades, any of the specialists should feel the temptation to try and use the army against the workers and peasants in the interests of counter-revolutionary conspiracies, it stands to reason that we should vividly refresh such conspirators' memories of the October and other days. And they know this perfectly well!

On the other hand, comrades, among the military specialists, in so far as I have managed to get to know them personally, I have found very many more valuable elements than we had supposed existed. For many of them, the experience of the war and of the revolution has not gone for nothing. Many have understood that a new wind is blowing over Russia, they have understood the new mentality of the awakened working class, they have understood that they must deal differently with it, speak to it in a different way that the army must be built differently from before. Military specialists of this kind do exist.

They exist. And we hope that we shall draw extensive cadres from among the young generations of the former officers of the old army, and shall fertilize our work for the formation of the army with their knowledge and experience.

It is only necessary to say, with weight and authority, that Russia today needs an army, on pain of death, and that the work which we are now doing will enjoy your support. We need your support, and, comrades of the Central Executive Committee, you will give it to us!



[Concluding speech at the same session. --*L.T.*]

Comrades! The first of the opposing speakers[41] said that we are creating an army not to defend the country, but in order to carry out what he called certain 'experiments'. I have already said, in my report, that if the dangers confronting us were confined to the danger of an internal counter-revolutionary coup, we should have no need of an army at all.

The workers of the factories of Petrograd and Moscow could at any moment form fighting units adequate to the task of nipping in the bud any attempt to restore power to the bourgeoisie by means of an armed rising. Our internal enemies are too insignificant and wretched for us to need to create, in order to combat them, the well-proportioned apparatus of an army constructed on a scientific basis, and to set in motion the entire armed power of the people.

If we need such a force at the present time, it is precisely because the Soviet regime and the Soviet country are threatened with very great danger from without, and precisely because our internal enemies are strong exclusively by virtue of that class cohesion which united them with our external class enemies. And, in this sense, we are experiencing precisely now the moment when the struggle for the regime which we are creating is faced directly and immediately with the question of increasing the country's all-round defensive capacity. We shall not protect, we shall not defend the Soviet regime otherwise than by giving a direct, vigorous rebuff to foreign capital, which is advancing against our country, for no other reason than that it is the country where the workers and peasants rule. This simple circumstance is the knot which history has tied.

Just because the working class is in power here we are today an object of hatred and hostile schemes on the part of the world's imperialist bourgeoisie. This is why every conscious worker and every revolutionary peasant must support the army, if, too, he holds dear what is now being built in Russia -- as yet, badly and awkwardly, which I know just as well as any of our critics; but, all the same, what is being built is infinitely dear to us, for it gives promise of a new epoch in history, and thereby constitutes for us the most valuable conquest in all the history of human development up to now.

When they say we are carrying out experiments, I don't know what they understand by the word 'experiment'. The whole of past history was nothing but a history of experiments carried out on the working masses: in the past there was the epoch of experiments by the nobility upon the bodies and souls of the peasant masses; I know that there was also, in past times, the epoch of experiments by the bourgeoisie upon the souls and bodies of the working class. We have been witnesses to such an experiment for several years now, throughout the world, in the form of the frightful imperialist slaughter.

Nevertheless, there are persons, considering themselves socialists, who, contemplating the stupendous experiments of the four-years world war, say that the heroic attempt of the working masses of Russia to free themselves, and to rebuild life upon new principles, is an 'experiment' which does not deserve support, that we are creating an army not to defend the revolutionary conquests of the working people, but for some coterie, Party or other such purposes.

But I say that if any epoch there can be which gives rise to a need for an army to fight for aims that are the most just of all aims, then it is the present epoch. If it is possible for there to exist a regime which,

being in need of defense, has the right to demand this defense from the working masses, this regime can only be a regime of rule by the working masses themselves. Despite the mistakes made by the latter, despite the roughness of their regime, despite the fact that it has ridden too harshly over the hides of certain of the intellectual gentry -- despite all that, the Soviet regime has the right to develop. It will consolidate itself: but for that it needs an army. And that army we will create.

Then they point out that there is duality in the projected army, and this, they say, is the principal fault both in the army and in the regime which has created it. Of course there is duality -- duality which consists in the fact that we are in an epoch of transition from bourgeois rule to the socialist order: duality which consists in the fact that the working class has mastered political power but has thereby not merely not completed its work but, on the contrary, has only approached its fundamental tasks, the reconstruction of the entire economy, of all social life, upon new principles: duality which, finally, consists in the fact that the working class is in power only in Russia and has to resist an offensive by the capital of other countries, those countries where the working class has not yet risen for the final decisive struggle and taken state power.

This is a duality, or contradiction, which is inherent in the very essence of our revolution. It is not a question of the regime, of its political form or of the principle on which its army is constructed, but of the clash between two formations, the bourgeois-capitalist one and the socialist-proletarian one. This contradiction can be overcome through protracted struggle. We are merely trying to create the weapon for waging this struggle and trying to ensure that this weapon shall conform to the requirements and obligations of the regime which we are called upon to defend.

They tell us, furthermore, that we cannot be serious in proposing to give military training to the workers and peasants, since we are allotting only 96 hours in the year for this work. I must remind them, first of all, that among the worker and peasant masses there are scattered a great many elements who have already undergone military training, and we need to muster these elements afresh in those natural points of concentration, the factories, farms and workplaces generally.

I must say that I do not consider myself personally competent to judge just how many hours and weeks are needed in a year for our future people's army to master the fundamentals of the military art. It may be that this period really is too short. If so, then we shall increase it, when it has become clear from the actual experience of the workers and peasants themselves that 96 hours is not enough for them. But to suppose that in the length of the period proposed there is, on our part, some design or scheme aimed at not giving the workers and peasants full military training -- that is, I repeat, the very ultimate in chicanery and demagogy.

From the Right there were also objections to the principle of unquestioning obedience to orders. What, they asked, if these orders should be counter-revolutionary?

If they want here to introduce into the constitution of our army the right not to carry out counter-revolutionary orders, well, please note that the whole text of the solemn promise, which I read out, is directed against counter-revolution, both Russian and world-wide. This is the fundamental spiritual pivot of our army... [*A voice: 'Unquestioning obedience to the commander?'*]

Naturally, if the Soviet regime as a whole, together with its entire army, should become the victim of counter-revolutionary generals, then, of course, history will have let us down, and this whole regime will be condemned to the scrap yard.



But, after all, the prospect looks different from that, and life is not presenting to us in that way the matters in dispute. One might imagine, from what has been said, that we were now being ruled by counter-revolutionary generals, and ought to be stirring up criticism of them among the masses. Such power of criticism is, in any case, to be met with in every one of our Red Army men, to no less an extent than in all those critics and counselors who, as is known, hindered us in our work of cultivating in the soldiers, workers and peasants a salutary distrust of their class enemies wherever they might be found. There is quite enough of that distrust among the workers and soldiers.

But, through a natural psychological reaction, the presence of this pre-October lack of confidence in the Government and its orders has led among us to a situation in which everyone tries to pass each order, each regulation, through the apparatus of his criticism, his distrust and his judgment -- which holds up fulfillment of the order, is destructive to work, and ought not to happen, in the interests of the working people themselves.

Thus, for example, reaction against Starriest centralism led to every province and every *uyezd* setting up its own Council of People's Commissars, its own Republic of Kaluga, Tula, etc., etc.

This is basically a creative and living principle of reaction against the old absolutism, but it needs to be brought within a strictly defined channel. A centralized state apparatus must be created. It is self-evident that all the soldiers, workers and peasants must, together with us, ensure that they have an apparatus for controlling all the commanding personnel through the Central Executive Committee and through the Commissariats. And we possess this apparatus of supervision and control. If at present it is a poor affair, it will come to be arranged better as time goes by.

But, alongside this, it also needs to be established that an order is an order, that a soldier of the Red Army is a soldier, that the army of the workers and peasants is an army that in this army battle orders are given which must be obeyed unquestioningly. If they have been countersigned by the commissar, then it is he who bears responsibility for them, and the Red Army men are bound to carry out such orders. If this simple rule is not enforced, then, of course, there cannot be any army at all. What holds an army together? Confidence in a certain regime, in that ruling power which, in certain circumstances, it creates for itself and itself supervises.

If we preserve this overall confidence -- and we think that we shall preserve it -- then the Soviet regime, the regime of the revolutionary class, has the right to demand of its organs, of its military units, that they submit to and obey the orders which issue from the central government and which have been checked by the Central Executive Committee.

And to those of our military specialists who conscientiously doubt whether we are capable of introducing discipline, we say that if it was possible under the rule of Tsardom, the bureaucracy and the bourgeoisie, if it was in those days possible to establish a subordination that was directed against the worker and peasant masses, if in those days it was, in general, possible to create a state power directed against the working class, then we certainly will be ten times, a hundred times more capable, psychologically and historically, of introducing iron discipline into an army which has been created entirely for the defense of the working classes.

The opposing speakers want, you see, to defend and protect us from counter-revolutionary intrigues. First of all, let us see who it is that wants to protect us from counter-revolutionary intrigues. It is those who collaborated with Dukhonin, with Kerensky.



Citizen Dan told us here how, as he put it 'Napoleons are produced,' how it is that the commissars can't be vigilant enough. But, as I recall, the Kornilov affair developed not under the Soviet regime but under Kerensky's regime [*Martov*: 'There will be a new Kornilov affair.'] . . . There hasn't been a new one so far, and at present we are talking about the old one, about the one which did occur and which set its vivid mark forever on somebody's brow. [*Applause.*]

And now, for Dan's edification I will remind you, comrades, that our commissars, the commissars of the Petrograd Soviet of those days, knew how to distinguish between operational orders and counter-revolutionary intrigues.

When Dukhonin, against his own will and at Kerensky's demand, sought in October to withdraw the garrison from Petrograd, so as to deprive the revolutionary capital of its power, he motivated this order by operational, strategic necessity. Our Petrograd Soviet commissars said: 'It's quite clear that this is a new experiment.' And this experiment was being carried out by the coalition government of those days, together with the Mensheviks who were in it, under the supreme aegis of Kerensky. Documents which we found, bearing the signatures of Kerensky and Dukhonin, supplied full confirmation of this suspicion.

I remember that Dan and his co-thinkers appeared before us in those days, on the rostrum of the Petrograd Soviet, declaring: 'You wish not to carry out the operational order issued by the military authorities and the Government regarding the Petrograd garrison. You won't even dare to enter into discussion about it.' And that order was, essentially, a counter revolutionary project to strangle Petrograd. We divined that -- this was so, but you [*turning to the Mensheviks*] were blind, and so we overthrew your old authority and took power into our own hands. Historically, we were right as against you.

Unfortunately, I do not hear Citizen Martov's rejoinder, and it is not clear to me whether he was at that time with us or with Dan and Kerensky. [*A voice*: 'It is shameful, Trotsky, that you have forgotten the role that Martov played.']

Citizen Martov's position always has about it something extremely delicate, which almost eludes the grasp of crude class analysis -- something that compelled Citizen Martov at that time to appear as the righteous man alongside the sinner Dan. Citizen Dan was at that time with Kerensky. Consequently, Citizen Martov was personally in opposition to Dan. But now, when the working class, with all its mistakes, its 'lack of education', its 'lack of culture', has come to power, you and Dan are together on one side, in opposition to the working class.

But history, which generally takes things in their historical dimension, their class scale, history will write that the working class came to power at this time in very difficult circumstances, made mistakes and corrected them, while you stood outside it, to one side of it, against it: and this has been shown afresh by the re-elections to the Moscow Soviet.<sup>[42]</sup> [*A voice*: 'The figures were falsified.'] I know that when somebody else was in power, when it was Kerensky and Dan . . . [*Dan*: '~ have never been in power.'] I beg your pardon . . . When Dan's well-known opponent Tsereteli was in power [*laughter*], there really were some attempts to falsify elections to the Soviets, and they found expression in the fact that the whole party was prosecuted under Article 108.<sup>[43]</sup>[*Applause.*]

I recall, however, that as a result of this falsification, we nevertheless emerged as the majority in all the Soviets.

When the Second Congress of Soviets was convened, the Dans wrecked it, falsified the will of the

workers in the Central Executive Committee, in the Democratic Conference,<sup>[44]</sup> garbled the will of the revolutionary democracy here, there and everywhere, with the direct participation of those who are now opposing me. And in the face of all this falsification we proved to be in the majority, in power -- so that our Party must be viable and sound. Falsification, whether real or imaginary, cannot harm such a party, but a party which resorts to falsification as the explanation of its downfall is a dead party.

Coming back to the problems of the army, it must be said that, naturally, we do not shut our eyes to any of the dangers that confront us, dangers which we did not invent but which have been put before us by all the previous course of development. At the same time, only our methods are the right ones for the struggle against these dangers.

To be sure, we are asked: 'But was everything in that previous development necessary, was it all historically inevitable? The disruption of the old army, the uncovering of the front -- was that necessary?' I, too, ask whether it was necessary. However, it can be acknowledged that that was inevitable which could be precisely foreseen.

And if you will refer to our speeches at the June Congress of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies,<sup>[45]</sup> if you will look at the minutes of that congress and read the report of our first intervention there, you will see that we said to Messrs. the Mensheviks and SRs (the SRs were then still united): 'If you want to destroy our army, then hurl it into an offensive. If you want to deal it a mortal blow, undermining its faith in the revolution hurl it into an offensive.' That was the declaration we made on June 4, and on June 18 the Government of Kerensky and Dan hurled the army into an offensive.

That's what dealt the army the final, fatal blow! At that time Citizen Martov understood this: he knew that what would ensue from the offensive was the tragic, panic retreat of our mortally sick army.

[*Martov*: 'But you corrupted it and brought it to the point of final breakdown. I said: leave the army to the Bolsheviks and they will debauch it.'] Citizen Martov forecast, do you see, in addition to this, that after his co-thinkers had dealt a mortal blow to the army, the Bolsheviks would corrupt this army. Why was history so ungenerous that, between Citizens Dan and Kerensky, who dealt the army a mortal blow, and the Bolsheviks, who infected this army, which had been battered to the point of death, with some sort of plague, it did not find a place for Citizen Martov, so as to save this army?

I do not doubt, of course, that when the Socialist order has arrived, some future collector of aphorisms will write down what Citizen Martov said.

But at present we are talking not about aphorisms but about the revolution, that revolution which is now being made, about that working class which is now fighting, which wants to maintain state power, making it the instrument of its own emancipation -- and we say about that class: if we made mistakes along with it, we also learnt along with it to try again, and along with it we shall conquer. That's where the difference lies between us and Citizen Martov's group.

In our approach to the training of the army we do not at all restrict ourselves to 96 hours, as Citizen Martov tries to insinuate, depicting compulsory training as a fiction. We know that the working class is, fortunately, imbued with a very big stock of criticism. Whatever else it may lack, it has plenty of that. It has not much habit of organization, it has at present little capacity for systematic work, for discipline, but it is saturated through and through with the disposition to check and to distrust.

This disposition is a great asset. It must be supplemented with discipline, planning and other qualities

which are needed to administration and struggle. If 96 hours are not sufficient for the worker, a period twice or three times as long can be laid down. If he doesn't like the generals, he will dismiss them, and us along with them. But at present we are accomplishing our task of creating the army in harmony with the working class, leading it against you, and in that we see the source of our pride.

On the other hand, you say that we are not allowing the bourgeoisie to receive training. Here you put forward two arguments. 'You don't let the bourgeoisie in, and you suppose that by so doing you safeguard the army from counter revolution}. But what is this bourgeoisie? A mere five per cent. Can it be supposed that by such childish means the army can be safeguarded from counter-revolution?' At the same time you say that we are condemning all our military activity to failure because we are not letting the bourgeoisie into it. If this

bourgeoisie is so insignificant, why should we argue about this five per cent, about whether or not to include it? A mistake of five per cent at a time when all accounting and calculation is in so unsatisfactory a state here is a mistake of no importance. And the center of gravity does not lie with the five-per-cent bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie has a big tail made up of barely-conscious, ignorant petty-bourgeois, kulaks, minor exploiters, ignorant petty-bourgeois elements. In the present situation we could not include them because they could be included in the Soviet army only by means of very severe repression. All these shriveled-up, backward elements hate the proletariat and the revolution. These elements exist not only on the Don, but also in Orenburg, and in order to draw them over to our side we need first to achieve some very big victories in the field of organization. We must show these benighted, muddled and deceived elements, in practice, that the Soviet regime, the workers' power, is capable of organizing agriculture on new principles, running the factories in the people's interest, and creating an army for this purpose.

Then they will see with their own eyes that the new regime is working in their interests, and there will then be no danger that by including them in the army we bring civil war into it.

Of course, these ideas are valueless in the eyes of those who do not believe in the victory of the working class. But what do they believe in, then? For what do Messrs. the Mensheviks hope? When history breaks loose, it will not stop at the editorial office of the newspaper *Vperyod*,<sup>[46]</sup> but will roll down further. You know very well that, after we have gone, you will constitute no sort of support for the revolution.

We are the only bulwark of the workers' revolution: with all mistakes we are making at present, we must and will do our work, correct our mistakes, strengthen the Soviet power, rally the masses around us. History does not proceed in such a way as to allow of experiments. The present struggle is not at all such as to allow of our approaching it like a game of chess: we've lost one game -- well, so what, we'll win the next. If we fall, then, certainly, you won't be the ones to set things right -- the cart of the counter-revolution will roll over your skulls, too!

But now, under present conditions, with the difficulties and dangers that exist, we need the cart that we have -- to reinforce it, to improve it, and to drag it onward and upward, not allowing it to roll downhill. For this purpose, as I have already explained, we need an army. It is said that we have only now realized this. That is not true. But it is one thing to understand this in an article, and another thing to make possible the actual building of an army.

In our shattered country, where the old, sick army burst at all its seams, and scattered, disorganizing

transport and ruining everything as it went -- in such a country we could not build a new army until the old one had been finally liquidated.

Only now are we proceeding to register the population.

The Red Army is only the skeleton of the future army. Of course, the Red Army can serve only as a cadre around which the trained elements of the workers from the factories must be rallied.

Here I am going to answer the observations of my first opponent, which amounted to this: do we intend, for Party reasons, to exclude the Mensheviks and Right SRs from the army? We did say that absolutely all workers and peasants who do not exploit the labor of others are to be given training. If this argument has to be understood as meaning that among the workers to whom we shall give military training there are no Mensheviks, and among the peasants who do not exploit the labor of others there are no Right SRs, then this retort would perhaps have some force. But the fault here does not lie with us. We are acting on firm and sound class grounds, and we show by doing this that we have no fear of a worker, even if he is a Menshevik, or of a peasant who does not exploit the labor of others, even if he considers himself an SR.

When, at the time of the October Revolution, we fought for power, workers and peasants belonging to the parties mentioned gave us their support. They supported us at the time of the October insurrection against their own leaders -- to the honor of these workers and to the shame of their leaders.

Besides all this, it is said that posts of command must be assigned through election. Through election by the masses of the people? Or through election by the soldiers alone?

The undoubted danger that lies in electricity is that the army may be penetrated by tendencies to military syndicalism, so to speak, that is, that the army would come to look on itself as an independent entity which makes its own laws. We say that the army is an instrument of the Soviets which create it, which themselves draw up the lists and select the candidates for posts of command. These lists, don't forget, are compiled by the Soviet authorities and published for everyone to read. All appointments are passed through the filter of the Soviet regime.

The Soviets will direct the army and educate it, they will ensure that it has a well-defined commanding apparatus. There can be no other procedure. You cannot propose anything different from that.

If it is perfectly clear in relation to the army in general, as a specific organ, that the principle of election, from top to bottom, is impracticable, then this must apply with even greater force in relation to an army which is only now being formed.

How can it separate out from itself, through elections, a reliable, militarily competent commanding apparatus, when the units are only starting to be put together? This is quite unthinkable. Or is this army not to trust the Soviets which are forming it? That would be an internal contradiction. Such an army would not be viable. Consequently, comrades, there is here no weakening of the so-called democratic principle: on the contrary, this principle is placed on a broader Soviet foundation.

Citizen Dan said quite rightly that it is not any particular measures of agitation against generals that will ensure the viability of the democratic army, but the overall character of the regime. Quite right. But he consequently also rejects the regime itself, root and branch, rejects the Soviet regime of the workers and the poor peasants in the localities. [*Dan protests.*] Oh, I know that Citizen Dan recognizes the regime of



the Soviets, but not of those Soviets which actually exist, not of the earthly Soviets but of those most heavenly Soviets into which he leads us as archangel. These celestial Soviets Citizen Dan does recognize. I, however, have in mind the Soviets of here and now, in which Citizens Dan and Martov are the minority and we are the overwhelming majority. The regime of these Soviets does not deny itself. This regime exists and means to go on existing.

The criticism of the Red Army now being formed which is voiced by our adversaries comes down to a criticism of the entire regime of the Soviets, the regime of rule by the working class and the peasants. And they are right. But this means that if the army which we are building stands firm, then the entire regime will stand firm. And, contrariwise, if this regime holds out, its army will perish with it.

Whoever takes a conscientious look at what is now happening in our country will agree that our main effort must be directed at present towards reconstructing the country's entire economic apparatus, its transport and food-supply, and towards constructing an army to care for the external protection of the Soviet regime.

And in order that this may be possible, in order that we may succeed, let there be less of this petty criticism, this barren skepticism, which gives us nothing except libelous articles: let there be more faith in the class which has been called by history to save the country! This class, the proletariat, will survive and withstand not only the miserable criticism from the Right, but also all the colossal difficulties that history has loaded upon its shoulders.

And we, rolling up our sleeves, will get down to the work of creating an army. For this we need your unanimous vote that this work is necessary, so that we may receive support in the localities in carrying out the tasks of organizing food-supply and transport, of fighting against wantonness, hooliganism, disorder and negligence.

Give us this vote of confidence and we shall endeavor to continue to deserve it by our work along this road which you point out and assign to us.

## NOTES

**36.** *The All-Russia Board for Organizing the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army* was formed out of the personnel of the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs so early as December 20, 1917. It consisted of Comrades Podvoisky, Mekhonoshin, Krylenko, Trifonov and Yurenev. It was this Board that drew up the theses on creating the Red Army on the voluntary principle. It also led all the work involved in the formation of the first volunteer units, and co-ordinated the activity of its regional and provincial organs. The Board continued in existence until May 8 1918, when, in its place and in place of some other central institutions, the All-Russia General Staff was formed. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**37.** *The decree on organizing volost, uyezd, province and district commissariats for military affairs* was the first order defining the



direct political organ of the Soviet power in the army. His post is one of exceptional importance. Commissars are appointed from among irreproachable revolutionaries capable of remaining, under the most difficult circumstances, the embodiment of revolutionary duty. A commissar's person is inviolable. Insult to a commissar when he is on duty, and, still more, violence against a commissar, is tantamount to the gravest of crimes against the Soviet power. The military commissar must see to it that the army does not become dissociated from the Soviet system as a whole, and that particular military institutions do not become centres of conspiracy or instruments to be used against the workers and peasants. The Commissar takes part in all the work of the military leaders, receives reports and despatches along with them, and counter-signs orders. War Councils will give effect only to such orders as have been signed not only by military leaders but also by at least one commissar. All work is to be done with the cognizance of the commissar, but leadership in the specifically military sphere is the task not of the commissar but the military specialist working shoulder to shoulder with him.

'The commissar is not responsible for the expediency of purely military, operational, combat orders. Responsibility for them rests entirely with the military leader. The commissar's signature on an operational order means that the commissar vouches for this order as having been motivated by operational and not by any other (counter-revolutionary) considerations. In the event that he disapproves of a purely military instruction, the commissar is not to delay its application, but merely to report his disapproval of it to the War Council immediately above him. The only operational order that may be held up is one regarding which the commissar has formed a well-grounded opinion that it was inspired by counter-revolutionary motives. If an order has been signed by a commissar, it possesses legal force and must be carried out, whatever the cost. Responsibility for seeing to the precise fulfillment of orders rests with the commissar, and all the authority and resources of the Soviet power are at his disposal for this purpose. A military commissar who connives at the non-fulfillment of orders is liable to instant removal from office and prosecution. Commissars are to link the institutions of the Red Army with the central and local institutions of the Soviet power and ensure the co-operation of the latter with the Red Army.

'The commissar shall see to it that all workers in the Red Army, from top to bottom, do their work conscientiously and energetically, that funds are disbursed economically and under the most stringent supervision, and that military property is preserved with all possible care. Commissars of the Supreme Military Council are appointed by the Council of People's Commissars, Commissars of district or city-district soviets are appointed by agreement between the Supreme Military Council and the leading soviet of the given district or city-district. For the commissars of the Supreme Military Council a Military Commissars' Bureau is established. This Bureau is to unite the activity of the commissars, answer their inquiries, draw up instructions for them, and, if need be, convene Congresses of Commissars.'

Signed by the People's Commissar for Military Affairs and Chairman of the  
Supreme Military Council *Trotsky*. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**39.** By the *Decree on appointment to posts*, appointments to the post of section commander were left to

the discretion of the company commander concerned. For appointments to the post of platoon commander, the local commissariats were to compile lists of candidates from among those who had received special training or had distinguished themselves by their courage and capacity for leadership in battle. In accordance with these lists, the commanders of independent units, together with the commissariats, accepted candidates for performance of the duties of platoon commander. In battle and on the march, all posts of command were to be filled by appointment. In fully-formed units, appointment was made by selection from among candidates from the whole of the given unit. Commanders of independent units and brigades were to be appointed from lists of candidates provided by the People's Commissar for Military Affairs. Commanders of divisions and larger formations were to be appointed by the People's Commissar for Military Affairs, in agreement with the Supreme Military Council, and the appointments reported to the Council of People's Commissars. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**40.** The *Decree on the period of service* was the first step in transition from the system of volunteering to the obligation to serve in the Red Army for a definite period of time. The full text was as follows:

(1) Every citizen who voluntarily joins the Red Army is to be obliged to serve in it for not less than six months, reckoned from the date of signing his engagement.

(2) Every Red Army soldier who voluntarily leaves the army before the expiry of the period laid down is to be punished by imprisonment for between one and two years and loss of rights as a citizen of the Soviet Republic. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**41.** The first opponent to speak was the Menshevik Ilyin. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**42.** The *re elections to the Moscow Soviet* were concluded on April 23, 1918 and showed a brilliant victory for the revolutionary proletariat. Out of the 803 deputies elected, 354 were Communists, plus 150 sympathizers. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**43.** *Article 108 of the Criminal Code of 1903.* Under this article, persons charged with treason and spying were liable to prosecution. Persons prosecuted under Article 108 were deprived of electoral rights. This article of the Tsarist code was utilised by the Provisional Government to accuse the Bolsheviks of spying for Germany and deprive them of electoral rights in the Soviets. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**44.** The *Democratic Conference* was convened by the Provisional Government and met between September 14 and 23, 1917. Invited to participate were co-operators, representatives of front and army committees, *ofzemstvos* and cities, and of provincial soviets and trade unions. The delegates from the soviets were in a minority. From the Democratic Conference emerged the Council of the Republic (the Pre-Parliament), which was to function as the representative organ of the Republic until the Constituent Assembly should meet. The Bolsheviks walked out of the Pre-Parliament. The Democratic Conference enjoyed no authority in the country and merely helped to intensify the class struggle. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**45.** The *June Congress* was the first Congress of Soviets, held in June 1917. Speaking at this congress Comrade Lenin said that 'the June offensive is a turning-point in the entire Russian revolution'. [\[see Lenin's Collected Works, Vol. 25, p.25.\]](#) [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**46.** The newspaper *Vperyod* the organ of the Central and Moscow Committees of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (Mensheviks). The editorial board was led by Martov, Dan and Martynov. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)



# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

ORGANIZING THE RED ARMY

## DECREE ON COMPULSORY MILITARY TRAINING

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\* \* \*

**Adopted at the session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers and Peasants' Deputies, April 22, 1918.**

One of the basic tasks of socialism is to free mankind from militarism and from the barbarity of bloody clashes between peoples. The goal of socialism is universal disarmament, permanent peace and fraternal co-operation between all the peoples inhabiting the earth.

This goal will be achieved when power in all the strongest capitalist countries has passed into the hands of the working class, which will wrest the means of production from the exploiters and turn them over to all working people for common use, and will establish a Communist system as the unshakable foundation of the solidarity of all mankind.

At present it is in Russia alone that state power is held by the workers. In all the other countries the imperialist bourgeoisie is in power. Its policy is aimed at suppressing the communist revolution and enslaving all weak peoples. The Russian Soviet Republic, surrounded on all sides by enemies, has to create its own powerful army, under the protection of which the communist transformation of the country's social order will be accomplished.

The Workers' and Peasants' Government of the Republic deems it its immediate task to enroll all citizens for compulsory labor and military service. This work is meeting with stubborn resistance on the part of the bourgeoisie, which refuses to renounce its economic privileges and is trying, through conspiracies, uprisings and traitorous deals with foreign imperialists, to recover state power.

To arm the bourgeoisie would be tantamount to generating constant strife within the army, thereby paralyzing its strength in the fight against external foes. The parasitic and exploiter elements who do not want to assume the same rights and duties as others cannot be given access to arms. The Workers' and Peasants' Government will find ways of making the bourgeoisie share, in some form or other, the burden

of defending the Republic, upon which the crimes of the propertied classes have brought such heavy trials and calamities. But in the immediate transition period military training and the bearing of arms must be restricted to workers and peasants who do not exploit the labor of others.

Citizens between 18 and 40 years of age who have undergone a course of compulsory military training will be registered as liable for military service. At the first call of the Workers' and Peasants' Government they will have to take up arms and reinforce the cadres of the Red Army, which consists of the most devoted and selfless fighters for the freedom and independence of the Russian Soviet Republic and for the international socialist revolution.

1. Military training is compulsory for male citizens of the Russian Soviet Federative Republic of the following age- groups: (i) the school age, the lower limit of which will be decided by the People's Commissariat of Education; ii) the preparatory age, from 16 to 18; and (iii) the call-up age, from 18 to 40.

Female citizens will be given training, with their consent, on the same footing as the males.

*Note:* Persons whose religious convictions forbid the use of arms will be liable for training only for duties which do not involve the use of arms.

2. Training of persons of the preparatory and call-up ages is entrusted to the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs, and that of the school-age category to the People's Commissariat for Education, with the closest co-operation of the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs.

3. Military training is compulsory for workers employed in factories and workshops, on farms and in villages, and for peasants who do not exploit the labor of others.

4. In the localities, compulsory military training is organized by the respective district, province, *uyezd* and *volost* military commissariats.

5. Trainees receive no form of compensation for the time spent in Compulsory training: training is to be organised, so far as possible, in such a way as not to divert the trainees from their normal regular occupations.

6. Training is to be carried on continuously for a period of eight weeks, with a minimum of 12 hours a week. The periods for training for special arms and the procedure for refresher call-ups will be determined in a special regulation.

7. Persons who have already undergone training in the regular army may be exempted from compulsory training on passing an appropriate test. They will then be issued with the appropriate certificates, as persons who have undergone a course of compulsory training.

8. Instruction shall be given by trained instructors in accordance with a programme approved by the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs.

9. Persons who evade compulsory military training, or who show negligence in performing their duties in connection with universal training will be prosecuted.





# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

ORGANIZING THE RED ARMY

THE SOCIALIST OATH

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\* \* \*

Approved by the A II-Russia Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', Peasants' and Cossacks' Deputies, April 22, 1918.

1. I, a son of the working people and a citizen of the Soviet Republic, assume the title of a soldier of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.
2. Before the working class of Russia and of the whole world I pledge myself to bear this title with honor, 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.
3. I pledge myself to observe revolutionary discipline strictly and unflinchingly, and to obey without question all orders given by commanders appointed by the Workers' and Peasants' Government.
4. I pledge myself to abstain from any action derogatory to the dignity of a citizen of the Soviet Republic, and to restrain my comrades from such action, and to direct all my thoughts and deeds towards the great goal of the emancipation of all the working people.

**5. I pledge myself to respond to the first call from the Workers and Peasants Government to defend the Soviet Republic against any dangers and attacks from any enemy, and to spare neither my strength nor my life in the fight for the Russian Soviet Republic and for the cause of socialism and the brotherhood of the peoples.**

**6. If ever, with evil intent, I should depart from this my solemn promise, may the scorn of all be my lot and may the stern hand of revolutionary law punish me.**



# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

ORGANIZING THE RED ARMY

## TO ALL PROVINCE, UYEZD AND VOLOST SOVIETS OF WORKERS', PEASANTS' AND COSSACKS' DEPUTIES

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\* \* \*

The Central Executive Committee has instructed the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs to direct all its efforts to the creating of a strong, strictly-organized and internally united Red Army, capable of defending the Soviet Republic from enemies both external and internal. The creation of an armed force requires as its primary condition the existence of a well-regulated apparatus of military administration in the localities. By its decree of April 8 the Central Soviet Government instructed *all Province, uyezd and volost Soviets to set up in the localities commissariats for military affairs*, each consisting of three members, one of whom must in every case be a military specialist. However, the majority of soviets have not as yet put this decree into effect. In many places amorphous military departments exist, which have not so far been brought within the framework of the military commissariats. There are also no few places where the working of the local military administration has not been separated off from the Soviets' organs of general administration.

Under these conditions, work towards the formation of a Red Army, in accordance with a single plan, is absolutely impracticable. By the present order it is made the responsibility of the chairmen of local soviets and the chairmen of local military departments, where these exist, to implement, within one week of receiving this telegram, the decree of April 8 on organizing local military commissariats. Any delay will be regarded as direct failure to fulfill a decree of the Soviet Government, and direct responsibility for such non-fulfilment will be borne by the chairmen of the respective province, *uyezd* and *volost* soviets.

All daily press organs published on the territory of the Russian Soviet Republic are required to print this instruction in three consecutive issues, on the front page. - *May 18, 1918*





# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

ORGANIZING THE RED ARMY

## THE ORGANIZATION OF THE RED ARMY

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\* \* \*

### Speech at the First All-Russia Congress of Military Commissars, June 7, 1918[\[47\]](#)

Comrades, we are present at a congress of exceptional importance. The parties represented in this assembly have behind them a great revolutionary past. Nevertheless, at this time we are learning, and we must succeed in learning, how to build our own revolutionary socialist army, which shall be the complete contrary of those regiments, now demobilised, which were held together by the will of the masters, who introduced compulsory discipline into them. Before us lies the task of creating an army organised on the principle of comradely trust and revolutionary labour-order. This is, without any doubt, an extraordinarily great, complex and difficult task. Incidentally, the bourgeois press writes a lot about our having only now, at last, understood that to defend the country an armed force is needed. That is nonsense, of course: we knew, even before the October Revolution, that so long as the class struggle continues between the exploiters and the working people, any revolutionary state must be strong enough to repulse successfully the imperialist onslaught. The Russian Revolution, unprecedented in strength, could not, of course, retain the old Tsarist army, within which had been formed, like a stout strong point, a heavy class discipline that established a bond of compulsion between soldier and commander.

We were faced, first of all, with the complex task of completely destroying class oppression within the army, thoroughly smashing the class fetters, the old discipline of compulsion, and creating a new armed force for the revolutionary state, in the form of the Workers' and Peasants' Army, acting in the interests of the proletariat and the rural poor. We know from experience that that part of the old army which was left after the revolution was in no state to offer active resistance to the advancing forces of the counter-revolution. We know that improvised units were formed, in rough-and-ready fashion, from the best sections of the workers and peasants, and we remember well how these heroic units succeeded in crushing the treacherous movement organized by all sorts of Black Hundred activists. We know how these volunteer partisan regiments fought victoriously against those within the country who wanted to be the revolution's executioners. But when it became a matter of combating the counter-revolutionary forces

coming from outside, our forces proved unreliable, owing to their inadequate technical training and the excellent organization of the enemy's units.

Taking this into account, we see that the question of life and death for the revolution which confronts us is the question of immediately creating an army of corresponding strength, which will fully answer to the revolutionary spirit and programme of the workers and peasants. In trying to fulfill this complex task of first-priority state importance, we are, of course, encountering great difficulties. In the first place must be mentioned the difficulties in the field of transport and the movement of food-supplies, difficulties caused by the civil war. Civil war is a direct duty for us when what is involved is the suppression of counter-revolutionary hordes, but the fact that it exists nevertheless gives rise to difficulties in our work of urgently bringing a revolutionary army into existence.

In addition, the task of organising this army is hindered by an obstacle that is purely psychological in character: the whole preceding period of war considerably impaired labour discipline, and an undesirable element of declassed workers and peasants appeared among the people.

In no way do I make this a matter of reproach either to the revolutionary workers or to the working peasantry. We all know that the revolution was crowned with heroism such as history had never seen before, heroism displayed by the working masses of Russia, but it cannot be concealed that in many cases the revolutionary movement weakened for a time their capacity for systematic and planned work.

Elemental anarchism, the activity of bagmen, debauchery -- these are phenomena which we need to combat with all our strength, phenomena which must be opposed by the best section of the conscious workers and peasants.

And one of the fundamental tasks falling to the lot of the military commissars is that of bringing to the working masses, by means of ideological propaganda, awareness of the need for revolutionary order and discipline, which must be persistently mastered by each and everyone.

Besides all these phenomena that hinder the work of planned organisation of the army, we come up against obstacles of a purely material order. We have destroyed the old apparatus for administering the army, and we need to create a new organ. Owing to this in-between situation, there is at present a lack of complete order in this sphere. The military property of our state is scattered chaotically all over the country, and has not been registered: we do not know precisely either the number of cartridges, of rifles, of heavy and light artillery, of aeroplanes, of armoured cars. There is no order. The old recording apparatus has been smashed, while the new one is still only in process of being organized.

In the sphere of building a military administration, we must regard our decree of April 8 as fundamental. As you know, European Russia has been divided into seven districts, and Siberia into three.

The entire network of local military commissariats which is being organised throughout the country is closely linked with the Soviet organisations. By putting this system into effect we shall obtain that centre around which planned work on organising the Red Army can be accomplished.

Everyone knows that, up to now, chaos has reigned in the localities, and this, in its turn, has created frightful disorder at the center as well. We know that many of the military commissars often express dissatisfaction with the central authority and, in particular, with the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs. There have been cases when sums of money which had been requested for the upkeep of the army were not despatched in time. We have received very many express telegrams with demands for

money, but no estimates were sent with these telegrams. Sometimes this put us in an extremely difficult situation: we could make only advance payments: all this produced disorder, owing to the fact that very often there did not exist in the localities any businesslike administrative organ.

We took steps urgently to establish in the localities the nuclei of commissariats, to consist of two representatives of the local soviets and one military specialist.

This local board, a sort of local military commissariat, will be the organization that can, in a given locality, fully ensure the planned formation and servicing of the army. Everyone knows that the army which we are now building on voluntary principles is regarded by the Soviet Government as merely provisional.

As I said, our programme has always included the slogan: defence with all our strength of our revolutionary workers' country, the hearth of socialism. Voluntary recruitment is only a temporary compromise to which we have had to resort in a critical period of complete collapse of the old army and intensification of civil war. We appealed for volunteers for the Red Army in the hope that the best forces of the working masses would respond. Have our hopes been realised? It must be said that they are realised only 33 1/3 per cent. There are, of course, in the Red Army very many heroic, self-sacrificing fighters, but there are also many worthless elements -- hooligans, near -do-wells, the dregs.

Undoubtedly, if we were to give military training to the whole working class, without exception, this element, which in quantity is comparatively small, would not constitute any serious danger to our army: but now, when our forces are so small, this element is an unavoidable and undesirable thorn in the flesh of our revolutionary regiments.

It is the responsibility of the military commissars to work tirelessly to raise the level of consciousness within the army and ruthlessly to eradicate the undesirable element which has got into it.

In order to implement conscription, to defend the Soviet Republic, we need to take into account not only weapons, not only rifles, but also people.

We must draw into the work of creating the army the younger generations, the youth who have not yet experienced war, and who are always distinguished by the *elan* of their revolutionary spirit and their display of enthusiasm. We must discover how many persons we have who are liable for military service, must establish complete order in the registering of our forces, and must create a distinctive Soviet system of accounting. This complex task is now the responsibility of the military commissariats in the *volosts*, *uyezds* and provinces, and of the districts which unite them. But here arises the question of the commanding apparatus: experience has shown that lack of technical forces has a baneful effect on the success of attempts to form revolutionary armies, because the revolution has not brought forth from the midst of the working masses warriors with a knowledge of the military art. This is the weak spot in all revolutions, as we learn from the history of all previous risings.

If among the workers there had been a sufficient number of comrades who were military specialists, the problem would have been solved very simply, but, unfortunately, we have extraordinarily few persons with military training.

The duties of members of the commanding apparatus can be divided into two parts: the purely technical and the moral-political. If both of these qualities are united in one person, that gives us the ideal type of leader-commander for our army. But, alas, that phenomenon is met with very rarely indeed. There is not

one of you, I am sure, who will say that our army can manage without specialist commanders. This in no way belittles the role of the commissar. The commissar is the direct representative of the Soviet power in the army, the defender of the interests of the working class. If he does not interfere in military operations, it is only because he stands above the military leader, watches everything he does, checks on every step he takes.

The commissar is a political worker, a revolutionary. The military leader answers with his head for all his activity, for the outcome of military operations, and soon. If the commissar has observed that there is danger to the revolution from the military leader, the commissar has the right to deal ruthlessly with the counter-revolutionary, even to the point of shooting him.

In order that we may be able quickly to train our own peasant and worker officers, fighters for socialism, we have in a number of places set about organizing schools of instruction which will train and instruct representatives of the working people in the art of war.

There is one other task which our army must perform. This task concerns the struggle against the bagmen and the rich speculators who hide grain from the poor peasants.

We need to throw our best organized units into the regions rich in grain, where energetic steps must be taken to combat the kulaks, through agitation or even by applying decisive measures.

We are faced, in general, by colossal tasks, but I think we shall not lose heart, despite the fact that even amongst us Soviet workers one sometimes meets sceptics and moaners.

If they fall into despair, let them get out of the way while we stubbornly continue with our titanic work. It must be kept in mind that the working people were cruelly oppressed for many centuries, and that, in order finally to throw off the yoke of slavery, we shall need many years of learning from experience and from the mistakes and blunders which we ourselves often commit, but which will feature ever more rarely in our activity.

At this congress we shall exchange our observations, we shall learn something from each other, and I am sure that you will go back to your localities and continue your creative work in the interests of the labor revolution. In the name of the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs and the Council of People's Commissars I greet you, and I conclude my speech with -- Long live the Soviet Republic! Long live the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army!

## NOTES

**47. The First All-Russia Congress of Military Commissars** was convened by the Military Commissars' Bureau and began on June 7, 1918. Reports from the localities were given and questions discussed concerning the rights and duties of military commissars, and also concerning cultural and educational work in the army. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)





# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

ORGANIZING THE RED ARMY

THE MILITARY SPECIALISTS

A NECESSARY EXPLANATION ABOUT THE MILITARY SPECIALISTS

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Some military specialists have approached me with representations about the insulting expressions attributed by bourgeois newspapers to the chairman of the Petrograd Soviet regarding participation by former generals in the work of creating the workers' and peasants' army. I have not met with the expressions in question in official reports in the Soviet press and I consider it most probable that what lies behind this incident is a malicious newspaper intrigue aimed at disrupting the work of the Soviet power for ensuring the country's defensive capacity.

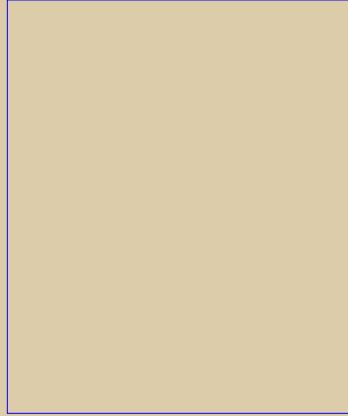
In any case, I think it necessary to set out here the following propositions, which have been fully approved by the Central Executive Committee, that is, by the supreme organ of authority in our country:

1. We need a real armed force, constructed on the basis of military science. Active and systematic participation in all our work by military specialists is therefore a matter of vital necessity. The military specialists must be ensured the possibility of devoting their efforts conscientiously and honestly to the task of creating the army.
2. We need a Soviet army, that is, a military organism of a kind that conforms to the nature of the workers' and peasants' power. It is the fundamental task of the institution of commissars for military affairs to ensure this conformity.
3. The working classes, which hold power in the Soviet Republic, have the right to demand of the military specialists, whatever political views the latter may hold, a loyal attitude toward the regime within the framework of which they are doing their work. Any abuse of the trust shown by the Soviet power must be met with stern punishment. At the same time, the workers and peasants must behave with complete respect towards those specialists, military and other, who are devoting their efforts to increasing the economic and military strength of our exhausted and temporarily weakened country.

For my own part, I think it necessary to add that those former generals who work conscientiously in the

difficult and unfavorable conditions of today, even if they are of a conservative turn of mind, deserve incomparably more respect from the working class than pseudo-socialists who engage in intrigue in various holes and corners and, with impotent spite, look for ward to the fall of the workers' and peasants' power.

*April 23, 1918*



# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE MILITARY SPECIALISTS

THE FIRST BETRAYAL

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## Testimony before the Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal in the Shchastny case, June 20, 1918

[On the Shchastny affair and its background, see Mawdsley, E., *The Russian Revolution and the Baltic Fleet* (1978) and the same writer's article: 'The Case of Captain Shchastny', in *Sbornik* No. 3 (1977); also Sisson, E.G., *One Hundred Red Days* (1931). D.N. Fedotoff-White, who was an officer in the Tsarist Navy, quotes in *The Growth of the Red Army* (1944) a conversation he had with Shchastny in early 1918, on the ice of Helsingfors harbor, when Shchastny said: 'The Bolshevik are German agents, they are going to try to hand over the fleet to the enemy so that they can use it against the Allies. Something is going to happen, however, which will stop them... The Baltic fleet made the revolution possible, the Baltic fleet will also bring the Bolshevik power to an end.'

The Left SRs protested against the sentence of death passed on Shchastny, on the grounds that one of the gains of the revolution had been the abolition of capital punishment. Lenin and Sverdlov, speaking at the Fifth Congress of Soviets on July 5, 1918, both pointed out that there was a certain formalism in the Left SRs' attitude, since the Cheka, in which they were represented, had been shooting people in its own summary way since the earliest days of the revolution.

'We are told that when people are sentenced to be shot by Dzherzhinsky's commission it is all right, but if a court were to declare publicly and openly that a man was a counter-revolutionary and deserved to be shot, that would be wrong. People who have sunk to such depths of hypocrisy are political corpses. No, a revolutionary who does not want to be a hypocrite cannot renounce capital punishment. There has never been a revolution or a period of civil war without shootings.' (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol.27, p.519>  
'The death penalty was not abolished altogether but only so far as concerned the soldiers at the front. .. The abolition of the death penalty is for times of peace . . . and not for revolutionary times . . . The execution of Shchastny was not the first case of capital punishment in the Soviet Republic... Death sentences by the dozen were being passed in every city, in Petrograd, in Moscow and in the provinces.'

(Sverdlov, quoted in Bunyan, J., *Intervention, Civil War and Communism in Russia, April-December 1918* [1936].)

Comrade judges! I saw Citizen Shchastny for the first time at the session of the Supreme Military Council[48] at the end of April, after Shchastny's skillful and vigorous transfer of our fleet from Helsingfors to Kronstadt.[49] The attitude of the Supreme Military Council and of myself towards Admiral Shchastny was at that time a very favorable one, precisely because of his successful fulfillment of that task. But the impression made by Shchastny's entire conduct at the session of the Supreme Council was diametrically opposite to this. In the report which he gave at that meeting Shchastny depicted the internal condition of the fleet in extremely gloomy, hopeless colors. According to him, the fleet was still all right technically, but the state of the crews rendered it quite unfit for combat. Shchastny went so far as to describe the fleet as 'so much scrap-iron', although these same vessels, with these same crews, had just completed quite satisfactorily a very difficult move through the ice.

It was perfectly clear that Shchastny was laying it on very thick. At first I interpreted this exaggeration as due to desire to enhance his own services. That was not very pleasant, but neither was it particularly important. When, however, it later turned out that Shchastny had tried in every way to present the state of the central Soviet Government just as gloomily to the fleet itself, it became clear that the matter was more serious.

The unfitness of the fleet so far as its personnel was concerned could be summed up, according to Shchastny, as a 'panicky mood' that was due, in the main, to the uncertainty of the situation, the absence of a definite line of demarcation Shchastny himself acknowledged this. When, at that same session of the Supreme Council, definite proposals were put forward with a view to regulating the international position of the Baltic fleet, after clarifying, first and foremost, the question of the line of demarcation, Shchastny rejected these proposals, without adducing any arguments. What he wanted was a hopeless situation, not a way out of it.

Shchastny was then instructed by the Supreme Council to approach the German command with a proposal to regulate through negotiation the question of the demarcation line. However, Shchastny failed to carry out this direct and precise order. [50] He kept in being the 'hopeless situation.'

He clearly played the same game in the matter of Fort Ino.[51] With regard to the fate of this fort, I replied to Shchastny, at that same meeting, that on this particular question the naval command must come into line with our general policy. We had to try to establish a line of demarcation. The fleet must in no case take the initiative in warlike operations but, in the event of an attack, must defend itself, and, in an extremity, that is, if there was nothing else to be done, scuttle the ships. I gave merely a general directive; the actual orders had, of course, to be issued, in accordance with circumstances, by the Chief of Naval Forces, namely, Citizen Shchastny. Where operational matters were concerned, Shchastny had been given unlimited powers, and all responsibility in that sphere rested with him.[52]

When, soon afterward, I received from Shchastny, who was at Kronstadt, a report that Fort Ino was, allegedly, threatened by a suddenly approaching German fleet, I replied, in conformity with my general directive, that, *if the situation thus created became hopeless*, the fort must be blown up. What did Shchastny do? He passed on this conditional directive in the form of a direct order from *me* for blowing up the fort, although there was no need for this to be done. Within two or three days I received inquiries from Petrograd; Comrade Zinoviev informed me of the alarm felt in the city as a result of my order for

the blowing up of Fort Ino. Startled, I replied that I had given no such order: that the fort was to be blown up only in the event of a hopeless situation, as estimated by the Chief of Naval Forces and on his personal responsibility. But in the fleet and in Petrograd the talk was everywhere about my order. The dark forces put about a rumor in the city that the Soviet Government had secretly agreed with the Germans to effect this demolition. I asked Admiral Zelyonoy [Admiral A.P. Zelyonoy (1872-1922) was appointed Chief of Naval Forces in the Baltic in January 1919, and distinguished himself in the defense of Petrograd against the British naval attack made in support of General Yudenich's offensive by land. Later he served as Soviet Naval Attache in Finland] whether Shchastny had made any attempt to explain his action. This is what I discovered. When he gave Zelyonoy (in my name!) the order to blow up Fort Ino, Shchastny made no reference at all to an immediate danger that the Germans would seize the fort. On the contrary, he passed on his (allegedly *my*) order completely without any explanation. It appeared that the fort had to be destroyed not because of the operational situation but owing to some mysterious plans by Moscow. Nor was that all: *in actual fact, no German fleet had shown up before Fort Ino*, the situation was not at all as Shchastny described it in his dispatch over the direct wire. Shchastny was trying to terrorize the fleet by means of a false report.

After the meeting of the Supreme Council, having received, as I said, a definite instruction to take up at once the question of a demarcation line, Shchastny left for Petrograd. We awaited news of the steps he had taken. For a long time, no signals were received from him. At last, after six or seven days had passed, in response to our insistent inquiry, the curt answer came that 'Zelyonoy considers it inopportune to enter into negotiations about a demarcation line' -- as though the settlement of this matter had been entrusted to Zelyonoy.

Shchastny was repeatedly told that he must at once, either through Zelyonoy or directly, begin negotiations with the German command. However, negotiations have not been begun even to this day. Shchastny acknowledges that it is not possible to fight the Germans, he emphasizes this fact in every way and even exaggerates it, yet at the same time he refuses to negotiate about the establishment of a demarcation line. He needs only one thing -- a hopeless situation.

At the same time, rumors are being persistently spread in the fleet to the effect that the Soviet Government has promised the Germans, in a secret article of the treaty, to destroy our navy. This legend has served as one of the principal means of arousing the sailors against the Soviet power. And by his entire conduct Shchastny deliberately contributed to the spreading and strengthening of this malicious rumor among the sailors, whom, on the other hand, he was depicting to the Soviet Government as worthless and hopeless.

I have already said that the actual situation of the fleet was grave primarily because of its terrible uncertainty. There was no line of demarcation. There was, undoubtedly, danger of an attack upon us. The fleet's capacity to fight had been reduced. I was approached more than once by representatives of the British Admiralty, who asked whether we had taken the necessary measure for scuttling the Baltic fleet in the event that this situation became hopeless. These same British officers frequently also spoke to the Admirals in Soviet service, Behrens and Altvater. Thus, both from our point of view and from that of the British, the danger at that moment was that the Germans might, by a sudden blow, seize our ships and take them over. Therefore, along with attempts to fix a line of demarcation, that is, to arrive at a maritime agreement with the Germans, we had also to take measures for scuttling the ships in the event that no other way out was left to us. How did Shchastny behave in respect of this situation? On the matter of the demarcation line he, as we have already heard, put up a stubborn, deep and unexplained resistance --



unexplained, that is, unless we assume a counter-revolutionary attempt to keep the fleet in a state of alarm and panic. As regards the scuttling of the ships Shchastny acted even more evasively -- I should say enigmatically, had not the solution to his behavior soon become quite obvious. Shchastny could not but appreciate the need to make preparations for scuttling, precisely because he, with obvious exaggeration, had described the fleet as so much scrap-iron. But Shchastny not only failed to take any preparatory measures -- more than that, he utilized this question to terrorize the sailors and stir them up against the Soviet power. This became most concretely apparent in the following episode. During the discussion of the question of preparatory measures in the event of our needing to scuttle the fleet, attention was given to the possibility that, should a sudden attack be made by German vessels, with the co-operation of counter-revolutionary commanders in our own fleet, such a state of disorganization and chaos might be created on our vessels that it would be quite impossible actually to scuttle them. In order to safeguard ourselves against such a situation, we decided to form, on each vessel, a group of 'shock-brigade' sailors who were absolutely reliable and devoted to the revolution and who, whatever the circumstances, would be ready and able to scuttle their ship, even if it meant sacrificing their own lives. I proposed that members of the board of the Navy Commissariat go personally to Petrograd and Kronstadt and there, relying on the best and bravest elements in the fleet, organize shock-groups of this kind on the ships. Shchastny behaved officially as though this question was no concern of his.<sup>[53]</sup> It would be more accurate to say that he behaved in such a way as to make his subordinates believe that preparation for scuttling the fleet was inspired not by the interests of the revolution and the country but by some secret deal made between the Soviet Government and the Germans, and that he, Shchastny, was merely compelled to put up with these measures because of his position. When the organizing of these shock-groups was still in the preparatory stage, one of the members of the Navy Board was approached by a prominent British naval officer,<sup>[54]</sup> who said that Britain was so much concerned that the ships should not fall into the hands of the Germans that she was ready to reward generously those sailors who would undertake the blow their ships up at the fatal moment. I immediately took steps to put a stop to such negotiations with this gentleman. But it must be admitted that this proposal compelled us to think about a question to which, in the hurly-burly of events, we had until then given no thought -- namely, about how to look after the families of those sailors who were going to incur a terrible risk. I ordered that Shchastny be told, over the direct wire, that the Government was going to allot a certain sum for the sailors of the shock-groups. This decision, in my view, was in no way contrary either to particular 'naval' morality or to the morality common to all men. In any case, in those difficult circumstances it ensured an extra chance that the real interests of the revolution would be safeguarded.

How did Shchastny act? He made use of this proposal too for the counter-revolutionary work he was carrying on. Not reckoning with the fact that the arrangement, being in the nature of a military secret, should have remained confidential, Shchastny at once took steps to give this proposal the widest publicity. He passed it on to the council of senior commanders and to the council of commissars of the fleet,<sup>[55]</sup> the composition of which was extremely fortuitous, stating that, in his view, this plan was immoral, and giving support to the story that it was being carried out in fulfillment of a secret article in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. He said in so many words that the Soviet Government wanted to 'bribe' the sailors to destroy their own fleet. After that, rumors ran through the whole Baltic fleet that the Soviet Government was planning to pay with German gold for the scuttling of Russian ships, although, in reality, quite the opposite was the case -- that is, it was the British who were offering gold, since what was at stake was that the fleet should not be surrendered to the Germans. But an extremely confused situation was created, which was most favorable to the diabolical agitation of the White-Guard elements. And this agitation was headed by Admiral Shchastny. He contributed to this agitation equally by his

actions and words and by his silence.

You know, Comrade Judges, that Shchastny, when he last came to Moscow in response to our summons, left the railway-carriage not by alighting on the passenger platform but beyond it, in a remote place, just as a conspirator might do. After Shchastny had been arrested and we were questioning him, I asked him whether he knew about the counter-revolutionary agitation in the fleet. Shchastny answered, half-heatedly: 'Yes, I knew.' But he said not a word about the documents in his briefcase which were supposed to prove the existence of a secret agreement between the Soviet Government and the German high command. The grossness of the forgery could not be other than obvious to Admiral Shchastny. As head of the fleet of Soviet Russia, it was Shchastny's duty to take action immediately and severely against traitorous slanders. But, as we have seen, in fact, by his entire conduct he provided grounds for this falsehood, and fostered it. There can be no doubt that the documents were forged by officers of the Baltic fleet. It is enough to mention that one of these documents the address by a (mythical) German operational headquarters to Lenin is written in the tone of a reprimand for the appointment of Blokhin as chief commissar of the fleet, on the grounds that he was opposed to the ideas of the Germans. It must be said that Blokhin, a quite fortuitous person, was one of Shchastny's own creatures. Blokhin's incompetence was perfectly obvious to everyone, including himself. But Shchastny needed Blokhin. And so a situation was created, in advance, whereby Blokhin's dismissal could be interpreted as having been dictated by the Germans. I have no evidence for asserting that Shchastny himself compiled these documents: this may have been done by subordinates of his. It is enough that Shchastny knew about these documents, had them in his briefcase, and not only did not report their existence to the Soviet power, but, on the contrary, skillfully utilized them against it.[\[56\]](#)

Meanwhile, events in the fleet assumed a more decisive character. In the destroyer division two officers, named, I believe, Zasimuk and Lisinevich, began openly to call for revolt against the Soviet power, which, they claimed, wanted to destroy the Baltic fleet for the benefit of the Germans. They drew up a resolution about overthrowing the Soviet power and establishing a 'dictatorship of the Baltic fleet', which must have meant, of course, a dictatorship of Admiral Shchastny. Under the influence of the false documents and all the other methods of sustaining panic, some ships of the destroyer division adhered to this resolution. When, however, the delegates from the destroyers appeared on the larger ships, they met there with a revolutionary rebuff. At Kronstadt a congress of delegates of the Baltic fleet was held.[\[57\]](#) The whole story was put before the congress, which adopted a resolution for expelling Zasimuk, Lisinevich and others from the fleet. In the name of the People's Commissariat for Naval Affairs, the member of the Supreme Navy Board Comrade Saks [S.E. Saks, who subsequently commanded the Reil Caspian Flotilla at Astrakhan.] demanded that Shchastny immediately carry out the decision taken by the congress and arrest the counter-revolutionary mutineers. However, Shchastny evaded giving the order for arrest, by referring to Comrade Saks's non-observance of some formalities or other. At that moment it was already obvious to all of us that Zasimuk and Lisinevich were merely Shchastny's agents, his shock brigadiers. Shchastny himself behaved more cautiously, but moved in the same direction that is, towards the 'dictatorship of the Baltic fleet'. The Council of People's Commissars appointed Comrade Fledorovsky chief commissar of the fleet. From that moment the situation had to be defined one way or the other. Shchastny began to manifest open resistance, going over to direct revolt against the Soviet power. In defiance of the decision of the Council of People's Commissars, at the end of May, Shchastny issued his order appointing as chief commissar of the fleet Blokhin, who, as he himself acknowledged, was entirely under Shchastny's influence and was not at all fit for this post. I will not dwell upon the truly monstrous fact that Admiral Shchastny appointed his own commissar!

Among Shchastny's papers was found the outline for a political speech which, as he himself said, he intended to deliver at the congress of naval delegates which has been mentioned. The speech was to be purely political in character, and expressed a clearly counter-revolutionary tendency. While, when talking to the Government, Shchastny called the Baltic fleet so much scrap-iron, to the representatives of that 'scrap-iron' Shchastny was going to speak of the Soviet Government's intention to scuttle the fleet, in such a tone as to imply that this was an act of treason by the Soviet power, and not the taking of a measure dictated, in the given circumstances, by tragic necessity. The whole outline, from beginning to end, despite its outward cautiousness, is indisputably a document of counter revolutionary conspiracy. Shchastny read his report to the committee of the Congress, which decided not to allow him to read it to the congress itself. When I asked Shchastny who it was that had actually asked him to deliver a political speech (which was in no way part of the duty of a fleet commander), he replied evasively: he did not remember, he claimed, just who it was who had asked him. In the same way, Shchastny did not answer when asked what practical purposes he was pursuing with his intention to deliver such a speech to a congress of the Baltic fleet.

But these purposes were self-evident. Shchastny persistently and steadily deepened the gulf between the fleet and the Soviet power. Sowing panic, he steadily promoted his candidature for the role of savior. The vanguard of the conspiracy -- the officers of the destroyer division -- openly raised the slogan of a 'dictatorship of the Baltic fleet'.

This was a definite political game -- a great game, the goal of which was the seizure of power. When Messrs. Admirals and Generals start, during a revolution, to play their own personal political game, they must always be prepared to take responsibility for this game, if it should miscarry. Admiral Shchastny's game has miscarried.[\[58\]](#)

## NOTES

**48.** *The Supreme Military Council* was set up after the signing of the Brest peace. On March 4 1918, by decree of the Council of People's Commissars, General Headquarters was abolished, together with the post of Supreme Commander-in-Chief, and all headquarters, fronts and armies began to be dissolved. Leadership of military units and work for the creation of a new army was made the responsibility of the Supreme Military Council, consisting of the military leader Comrade Bonch-Bruyevich and two commissars, Proshyan and Shutko. On March 18 Comrade Trotsky was appointed Chairman of the Supreme Military Council, with Comrade Sklyansky as his deputy, and Comrades Podvoisky and Mekhonoshin as members. The Supreme Military Council continued to exist until September 2, 1918, when the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic was formed. During its half- year's existence the Supreme War Council did a great deal of work. Leadership in organizing the armed forces, the implementing of new military- administrative divisions, the first mobilizations, the introduction of universal military training for the working people, all were the work of the Supreme Military Council. At the front, the Supreme Military Council formed the 'screen' sectors which, by placing detachments along the line of demarcation that had been established with the Germans under the Brest treaty, ensured that it would be possible to create without delay the units of the Red Army needed to defend the Republic (see Map No.1, the screens).[\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**49.** The October revolution found the main forces of the Baltic fleet partly at Helsingfors (the ships of the line) and partly at Revel (cruisers and destroyers). After the occupation by the Germans of the Moon

Sound, Riga and Baltisky Port, the fleet left Revel and was entirely concentrated at Helsingfors. The Germans' landing at Hang on April 3, 1918 and their rapid advance, by land and sea, towards Helsingfors, placed the fleet in a very difficult situation. In order to protect it, the fleet *was sent to Kronstadt*. The vessels had to make their way through the ice hummocks of great thickness which are usually formed in the spring between Kronstadt and Hogland. The fact that the crews were not up to strength and the absence of navigational installations, which had been carried away by the ice, made this transfer even more difficult. On arrival at Kronstadt the fleet was berthed in the inner harbors. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**50.** On April 25, 1918 the Supreme Military Council proposed to Fleet Commander Shchastny that he at once begin negotiations with the Germans about the *establishment of a line of demarcation*, since without this the position of the fleet would be extremely difficult. Shchastny passed on the corresponding order by radio to the senior naval officer at Helsingfors, Zelyonoy, and this message was repeated on April 29. Only on May 1 was a reply received from Zelyonoy, saying that, in his view, it was not desirable to raise this question in the circumstances of the moment. On May 3 Zelyonoy reported that the order would be carried out. Shchastny was obviously conniving at the non fulfillment of orders by his subordinates. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**51.** *Fort Inop* provided, together with Fort Krasnaya Gorka, situated on the southern shore of the Gulf of Finland, a combination of batteries (of 10 and 1/2-inch guns) intended to prevent a hostile fleet from reaching Kronstadt and the inner waters of the Gulf of Finland. The fort was poorly defended on the landward side. It was blown up by the Reds on May 14 1918. From the dispatch dealing with this event sent by the Commandant of Kronstadt Fortress, Artamonov, the following circumstances emerge: already by April 24 the fort had been surrounded by Finnish White-Guard troops; their demand for the surrender of the fort was rejected; the breechblocks of the guns and a large amount of material were sent off to Kronstadt; the fort was blown up from a mine-station in Fort Krasnaya Gorka, by means of a telephone cable with a current of 500 volts. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**52.** Shchastny's powers were defined with sufficient precision in the *'Provisional Decision on the management of the Baltic fleet'* which was ratified by the Council of People's Commissars on March 29 1918. Paragraph 6 of this decision reads: 'Where operational activity and preparation for battle of the fleet and of the units and maritime fortresses composing it are concerned, the Chief of Naval Forces performs the duties and enjoys the powers of a Fleet Commander, and bears full responsibility for directing this activity by the fleet.' [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**53.** In a message sent by the Hughes apparatus on May 21, addressed to Shchastny, the Supreme Military Council demanded that he take *measures for preparing demolition cadres* and fulfill instructions regarding the financial security of their families. On May 22 Shchastny replied with reassuring information, and at the same time stated that it was not possible to establish a line of demarcation. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**54.** The name of the British officer mentioned in the testimony was Commander Cromie, a British naval agent. [Cromie was subsequently killed during a raid by the Cheka on the British Embassy.] [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**55.** *The Council of Commissars of the Fleet* (Sovkombalt) was a consultative organ attached to the Chief Commissar of the Fleet. Before the issuing of the 'Provisional Decision on the management of the Fleet'



mentioned above, this organ played an important role in the leadership of the fleet. *The Council of Senior Commanders* was a conference, held periodically, of all the commanders of independent units, brigades, detachments and flotillas. [Intelligere Departachm stn734cel phel34cisrolffip rocoment that as. \)Tj77 -1.142I](#)





# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE MILITARY SPECIALISTS

TO THE COMMISSARS AND THE MILITARY  
SPECIALISTS

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\* \* \*

Commissars and military Specialists! In recent weeks there have been a few cases of betrayal among the military specialists. Makhin, Muravyov, Zvegintsov, Veselago and some others, who had voluntarily entered the Workers' and Peasants' Army or the Red Navy, went over to the foreign aggressors and invaders. Muravyov was punished as he deserved; the rest still await retribution. Every honest person will look with disgust upon these cases of prostitution on the part of officers.

As a result of the treason of a few scoundrels, distrust of military specialists in general has been intensified. There have been some clashes between commissars and military leaders. In some cases known to me, commissars have shown a clearly unjust attitude towards military specialists, lumping honorable men together with traitors. In other cases commissars have sought to concentrate in their own hands the functions of command and operations, not confining themselves to political leadership and supervision. Such action is fraught with danger, for the confusing of powers and duties kills the sense of responsibility.

I urgently call upon the comrade commissars not to surrender to the impressions of the moment and not to lump together the innocent and the guilty. The Fifth All-Russia Congress of Soviets has reminded us all that the military specialists who are working honestly to build the military might of the Soviet Republic deserve the people's respect and support from the Soviet power.<sup>[59]</sup> Keen revolutionary watchfulness does not mean petty fault-finding. On the contrary; conscientious specialists must be given the opportunity to develop their powers to the full.

Whoever tries to utilize his position as commander for the ends of a counter-revolutionary coup is, by the decision of the Fifth Congress of Soviets, liable to suffer capital punishment.

No mercy for traitors: comradely collaboration with honest workers!

Of the commissar we require vigilance, firmness and tact, for the post of military commissar is one of the highest known to the Soviet Republic. With profound confidence in the ultimate success of our difficult

work, a fraternal greeting to the military commissars of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.

## NOTES

**59.** The precise formulation of this point in the *resolution* adopted on July 10, 1918 by the Fifth All-Russia Congress, on the report by Comrade Trotsky, reads:

'Every military specialist who works honestly and conscientiously for the development and consolidation of the military strength of the Soviet Republic has the right to respect from the Workers' and Peasants' Army and support from the Soviet power. A military specialist who tries to make perfidious use of his responsible post for conspiracy on behalf of foreign imperialism must be punished with death.' [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)



# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE MILITARY SPECIALISTS

THE OFFICER QUESTION

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One often hears it said that the former officers are not joining the army because they do not want to be involved in civil war. The officers, it is said, want to stay 'out of politics'.

But how, then, did the officers manage to serve in the old army? Only simpletons can seriously suppose the Tsarist army stayed 'out of politics'. The old army was saturated through and through with the political spirit of Byzantinism, that is, with subservience and servility towards the monarchy. Enemies of the Tsarist autocracy were officially regarded as enemies of the army. The anthem of the autocracy and of the army was the same: 'God save the Tsar.' Both the education of the officers and the 'literature' of the soldiers were permeated with the idea of that anthem.[Cf. D.R. Jones, 'The Officers and the Soviets, 1917-1920: A Study in Motives', in *Sbomik* No.2.]Was that not politics? Where and when did any army stay out of politics? Let our know- ails tell us, we are listening!

Furthermore, the old army was an instrument for upholding the Tsarist autocracy. The final decade of the autocratic regime was a time of uninterrupted disturbance and ferment. Did not many regular units, and, therefore, many officers, take part, directly or indirectly, in acts of suppression? On that matter the necessary information could be found somehow in some records or other. The officers of the Tsarist army waged civil war against the workers and peasants. In those days, to be sure, it was not called civil war. But that made things no easier for the workers and peasants whom they shot down.

It may be said, of course: all that was in the past, but nowadays the officers do not want to take part in political conflict. In other words, those officers who participated in civil war on the side of the Tsar, the landlords and the capitalists, when they ruled the country, do not want to participate in civil war on the side of the workers and peasants who are now in power. That's different. But then they ought to say: we fought with the tyrants and the rich against the people, but we don't want to fight with the workers and peasants against the tyrants? It is useless for them to talk about disgust with civil war, they should speak of disgust with the workers' and peasants' struggle for complete emancipation of the working people. That would be more accurate.

Some, of course, say: there's no question of hostility, the officers simply want to remain 'neutral' in the

internal conflict, but they are ready to defend the country against the external enemy.<sup>[60]</sup> At first glance this may seem a likely explanation. But, in fact, it is a subterfuge, either conscious or unconscious.

The fight against Krasnov's bands - what's that? Civil war or defense of the country? Krasnov is trying to cut off the Don and the Kuban from Russia, to cut us off from grain and oil. To do this, as he says himself, he is making use of German weapons and openly calling for German intervention (Krasnov's speech of July 14 at Novocherkassk).<sup>[61]</sup> Can there be a baser or a more out-and-out enemy than Krasnov? Those who want, not in words but in deeds, to defend Russia from the violence of German imperialism must, first and foremost, say to them selves: it is necessary to secure our rear, and so we must crush the traitor Krasnov.

And what about the Czechoslovaks? Are they internal enemies or external enemies? The purpose of their revolt is now perfectly clear even to the blind. The French newspapers which reached us last week write openly that the task of the Czechoslovaks is to compel the 'awkward Muscovites' to resume the war with Germany. We knew this even earlier. Thus, the French Government, having taken charge of a body of our war prisoners, wants to force us into the war. This is also the purpose of the Anglo-French landing on the Murman coast. The struggle against the Czechoslovaks is a civil war, because the Russian counter-revolution relies upon the Czechoslovak hirelings of the French stock-exchange. At the same time, however, it is a Struggle against foreign imperialist aggression. Refusal to fight against the Czechoslovaks amounts to willingness to let Russia be crucified by Anglo-French imperialism, just as refusal to fight against Krasnov amounts to helping German imperialism. That is the naked truth of the matter. Everything else is sophistry and playing at hide and seek.

We must look still more deeply into the heart of the matter. Ninety-nine per cent of the officers *say* that they cannot take part in 'civil war'. And yet no small number of officers do in fact take a very active part in it. In the first place, let me recall Krasnov's revolt - the first open and extensive manifestation of the 'officers' civil war'. After that came a continuous series of revolts by Cossack officers, who drew behind them the most backward and conservative section of the rank-and-file Cossacks. Besides this there are even more shameful facts to be mentioned. When the Germans entered Dvinsk and Pskov, they found Russian officers there who greeted them as liberators. There can be no doubt that these very same officers were telling everyone, the day before the Germans entered that, though they were opposed to civil war, they were ready to defend the fatherland in any event, against an external enemy.

Ex-General Alekseyev worked hand in hand with Krasnov. They both fought against the Soviet Government. At present Krasnov, with the help of German arms, is trying to cut Russia off from the Don and the Kuban and starve out the Russian people. Yesterday's ally of Krasnov, Alekseyev, is working with French money and with the help of the Vologda agents of the French stock-exchange to bring about revolts in Murom and Yaroslavi.<sup>[62]</sup> Tailing behind Krasnov and Alekseyev are numerous hypocritical opponents of 'civil war'. To this must be added that some of these gentry, after voluntarily joining the Red Army, cross over, later on, to the Czechoslovaks or to the Anglo-French force on the Murman coast. This is sheer prostitution by these officers. One can't call it anything else.

What conclusions can we draw?

The officer corps was brought up to hold reactionary monarchist views. The revolution flabbergasted them. Different groups were formed among them. These were the main ones.

Unscrupulous elements with tarnished reputations quickly tried to ingratiate themselves with the new



regime. The Rasputins and pokrovskys [It is not clear to whom Trotsky is referring when he speaks of 'the Pokrovskys'. Apart from the old Bolshevik M.N. Pokrovsky, the only person of that name well-known in public life in the years immediately preceding the revolution was N.N. Pokrovsky, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and he was an honest, upright man, by the standards of his circle (and an opponent of Rasputin). There was a White-Guard General named Pokrovsky, but he was a young man, only a Captain (he was one of Russia's few airmen) when the revolution occurred. However, the name 'Pokrovsky' is a common one, and Trotsky may have been alluding to some crook who was notorious at the time but is now forgotten.] of the previous day hastily repainted themselves as Bolsheviks. There is no need to say anything about this scum: it merely requires to be eradicated.

A very important, although, alas, as yet only small group consists of officers who, to a greater or lesser extent, understood the significance of the revolution and the spirit of the new age. These officers are now working tirelessly at the creation of armed forces for the Soviet Republic. To require of them that they repaint themselves as Bolsheviks would be absurd. They must be appreciated and given support.

Next, there is the group of pen-pushers. They get on with their military-clerical duties, guided by the wise saying: 'there's always a boss to be obeyed'. There is nothing special to be said about them.

A substantial group is made up of direct, bitter and sworn enemies of the Soviet regime, militant counter-revolutionaries, who constitute the cadres of the Savinkovite and Alekseyevite adventurers. Towards them our position is clear: enemies are to be combated and exterminated.

The most numerous group consists of cowardly enemies, those who look over their shoulders, self-serving philistines who are waiting to see what will happen, who are essentially indifferent to the country's fate and who try to hold aloof, while yearning secretly for the return of things as they used to be. These are the persons, neither hot nor cold, who especially like to conceal their cowardly worthlessness behind phrases about civil war. Essentially, they are the reserves of the counter revolution. In the area of the Czechoslovak revolt these reservists go over into active service. Where power has passed into the hands of the Soviets, they engage in tittle-tattle, secretly cock a snook, and create an atmosphere of hostility around those officers who are working with us not from fear but in obedience to the dictates of their consciences.

We must put an end to this situation. Parasitism on the part of officers is just as intolerable as any other parasitism. The principle of compulsion must be applied here with redoubled force. The officers received their education at the expense of the people. Those who served Nicholas Romanov can and will serve when the working class orders them to. This does not mean in the least that the state power will entrust them all with posts of command. No, posts of command will go to those who show ready willingness to obey the workers' and peasants' power. The rest will be entrusted only with duties that include absolutely no powers of command. The former officers who are not doing anything are very ready to preach the saving power of discipline. The Soviet Government considers that the moment has come to subject the ill-affected officers, likewise, to severe discipline.

*Izvestiya V.Ts IK., No.154, July 23, 1918*

## NOTES

**60.** This was the position taken up by many former officers in the period following the conclusion of the Brest treaty. They went to work in the screen on the Western Front, regarding it as necessary to help the Republic to organize resistance to the Germans, but wishing to take no part at all in the civil war in the South and East of the country. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**61. The link between Krasnov and the Germans** is clearly revealed in the correspondence published in *Sbornik mateerialos i Statei* (*Collection of materials and articles*) published by the Central Archives. A number of letters to I'yotr Nikol'yevich Krasnov and Afrikan Pyotrovich Bogayevsky from Mikhail Svechin and Cheryachukin show that the latter two, as delegates from Krasnov, were engaged in mid-May 1918 in importuning Hetman Skoropadsky, the commander of the German forces Eichhorn, and the ambassador of 'His Majesty', Mumm, to help and intervene in the struggle against the Bolsheviks. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**62.** After the landing of the expeditionary force on the Murman coast and at Archangel, and the revolt of the Czechoslovaks (on which see note 79), the Allies tried, by organizing a number of revolts in towns situated along the upper Volga ([Murom](#), [Yaroslavl](#), Rybinsk) to create a link between the Northern and Czechoslovak Fronts. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**Murom**, where the Supreme Military Council had its headquarters, was seized by a White-Guard detachment during the night of July 9. The detachment's leaders were N. Grigoryev and Lieutenant-Colonel Sakharov: the troops called themselves units of 'the Volunteer Army of the North', and Grigoryev's title was 'plenipotentiary of the Provisional National Government'. The town remained in the hands of the Whites during July 9, but on that day a detachment of the 'Volunteers', advancing along the railway line towards Arzamas, was beaten, and the rebels then abandoned the town.

**The Yaroslavl revolt**, which began on July 6, was a considerably more serious affair. It was organized by B. Savinkov. White officers who were serving in Soviet institutions suddenly, with the support of a section of the population, seized the center of the town, some steamers, and a large quantity of military stores. A number of responsible Soviet officials were arrested in their homes and shot (including Comrades Nakhinson and Zakgeim). In order to put down the revolt, forces from Moscow, Kostroma and Vologda were concentrated against Yaroslavl. The mobilization decreed by the Whites in the town did not prove successful. After intensive bombardment by artillery, the town was taken by our troops on July 21. The leaders of the revolt, headed by Perkhurov, fled up the Volga on a steamer. Perkhurov was arrested, tried and shot in 1923. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)





# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE MILITARY SPECIALISTS

THE DEMONSTRATION BY EX GENERAL  
NOVITSKY

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\* \* \*

## A letter to the head of the General Staff Academy

The former commander-in-chief of the armies on the Northern Front, Novitsky [The Novitsky referred to here is V.F. Novitsky (1869-1929), who was commander-in-chief of the Northern Front (i.e., army group) facing the Germans in 1917, and after the October Revolution taught at the General Staff Academy. He complained about a speech by Zinoviev, who said that the military specialists should be 'squeezed like lemons and then thrown away. He later worked in the Red Army's Supreme Military Inspectorate. D.N. Fedotoff-White (in *The Growth of the Red Army*) is wrong in identifying this Novitsky with F.F. Novitsky, another former Tsarist officer, who served as chief of staff to Frunze on the Eastern Front and died in 1944.], has replied to a communication from one of my colleagues in the Commissariat with a telegram addressed to me in which he explains why he had to decline to take up the appointment offered to him. Ex-General Novitsky's explanations were published in the press on the same day that he sent his telegram to me. The gist of what Mr. Novitsky says is that collaboration by military specialists should be made possible by showing confidence in them and observing guarantees of their professional and human dignity -- on which, Mr. Novitsky claims, they cannot count at present.

I have dealt in official statements with the question of the mutual relations which can and should exist between the Soviet power and those military specialists who have been called by it to serve in the work of building the armed forces of the Soviet Republic, and I see no need to return to the matter in connection with Mr. Novitsky's demonstration; but I cannot refrain from pointing out that this demonstration is directed not against the Soviet power but against those military specialists who consider that they ought to work to ensure the country's capacity to defend itself. What Mr. Novitsky is doing in his letter is calling on all the military specialists to engage in sabotage of the defense of the Soviet Republic. No other interpretation can be put upon the letter. Meanwhile, Mr. Novitsky is a professor at the General Staff Academy. The immediate task of the Academy is to train military specialists for forming the Soviet army.

It is quite natural that Mr. Novitsky's demonstration should prompt me to raise with you, as head of the Academy, the question of how far a call to sabotage work on defense is compatible with the vocation of military instructor.





# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE MILITARY SPECIALISTS

ABOUT THE OFFICERS DECEIVED

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\* \* \*

## A letter to the head of the General Staff Academy

Among the thousands of officers who, under Krasnov's command, are shedding the blood of the Russian workers and peasants and working Cossacks, there are numerous inveterate enemies of the people, old hands at counter-revolution, but there are also many who were deceived and who now see with horror whither the traitor Krasnov has led them.

At first Krasnov called for a struggle against Germany, and appealed for Soviet Russia to be overthrown so that such a struggle might be waged. He recruited officers under the banner of patriotism, and by patriotism he meant the recovery of the parts of Russia which had been seized by the German predator. Later, he himself turned into a hanger-on and lackey of Emperor Wilhelm. Krasnov worked hand in hand with Skoropadsky, but Skoropadsky was merely Germany's police man in the enslaved Ukraine. Wilhelm fell under the onslaught of the German workers and soldiers, who followed in the foot-steps of the Russian workers and the Russian army. After Wilhelm it was Skoropadsky's turn to fall. Krasnov then at once offered his services, that is, the blood of the working Cossacks and peasants, to the Anglo-French brigands, who are ready to tear to pieces any country, any people, any state, for the sake of their profits.

Only double-dyed scoundrels can say that the British and French capitalists and usurers are preparing disinterestedly to send their forces into Russia to establish so-called 'order'. Old fools and simpletons can believe that. In reality, if Britain, France, America or Japan were to move their forces against us, it would be so as to occupy the country, just as the German Kaiser occupied the Ukraine -- so as to turn Russian into a helpless, feeble, exhausted and plundered colony.

Fortunately, the reach of the Anglo-French predators is getting shorter and shorter. In France there are constant outbreaks by the workers, and city after city has been put under martial law. There is unrest in the army, which wants to be demobilized. The British bourgeoisie would dearly like to overthrow the Soviet power, but it prefers to act by the hands of others - the hands of the Krasnovs, the Abramovs, the Dragomirovs, the Dutovs, the Denikins and other traitors to the working people of Russia. The British imperialists have not sufficient forces of their own to hold in enslavement Germany, Austria, the

Balkans, France (a considerable part of which is occupied by British troops), and the whole of Soviet Russia, while at the same time keeping a watchful eye on America and Japan -- for, after all, the booty has not yet been shared out. This is why the Russian bourgeoisie's hope that large Anglo-French forces will invade Russia is becoming ever more illusory.

Articles to this effect are appearing in the leading Anglo-French newspapers. The conspirators on the Don are whispering about this, with anxious faces. The disappointed bourgeois press of the Ukraine writes openly about it. Undoubtedly, the consequence will be that Krasnov's whole traitorous adventure must end in shameful collapse within a few weeks.

Krasnov promised his foreign employers to finish off the Soviet power in a short time, and received their pieces of silver for his Cain's work. Now, when the Anglo-French imperialists have become convinced, from experience, that it will be a hard job to get rid of the Soviet power, they will think ten times before deciding to allow their own troops to become involved in the fight against it, and all the more so because the German troops who entered the Ukraine under the Hohenzollern tricolor left it under the red flag of Soviet power.

No help from abroad is to be seen. The forces of Krasnov and Denikin have run into a blind alley. Thousands of inexperienced and politically immature officers, whose heads were filled with old bourgeois-monarchist prejudices, were at first persuaded by Krasnov's talk of patriotism and saving the country, and followed him. He formed them into special officer units, turning them into gendarmes by whose means he could hold in subjection the Cossacks and peasants he had mobilized. The Cossacks, the mobilized peasants, half-clad, and the officers deceived by Krasnov, all are perishing.

A considerable section of the last-mentioned category now realize that they have been led into a blind alley. Many of them would be ready to quit Krasnov's plague-stricken camp and return to Soviet Russia, confessing their guilt. But they are afraid of legitimate retribution from revolutionary justice, they are afraid of vengeance to be taken for the blood they have shed.

There is no doubt that their crimes are great: they became renegades from their own working people and called in their worst enemies as helpers, they shed the workers' blood. But the revolutionary people are magnanimous toward those of their enemies who confess to their crimes before the people and show themselves ready not only to lay down their arms but also honorably to serve in the ranks of the Russia of the working people!

Woe to the traitors! Death to traitors! But mercy to the enemy who has surrendered and asks for quarter!

In the name of the supreme military authority in the Soviet Republic I proclaim that *any officer who, either individually or at the head of his unit, voluntarily comes over to us from Krasnov's camp will be spared from punishment. If he shows in deeds that he is prepared honestly to serve the people in either a military or a civil capacity, he will find a place in our ranks.*

Down with the traitor Krasnov, who deceived the working Cossacks and also many former officers!

Long live the peaceful collaboration between the workers, the peasants, the working Cossacks, and all honest citizens who, regardless of their past, are ready to serve the people selflessly!



# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE MILITARY SPECIALISTS

## ORDER BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR MILITARY AND NAVAL AFFAIRS TO THE RED ARMY AND THE RED NAVY

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\* \* \*

August 11, 1918: No.21

It has been made known through dispatches which I have received that many young General Staff officers (that is, officers who have recently graduated to the General Staff) have fought heroically in the recent battles on the Eastern Front. I consider it my duty to pass this news on to the country as a whole. It means that the old regular officers' corps has produced not only traitors and 'Tushino migrants' who sell themselves to each side in turn. Among the young General Staff officers there are many whom the revolution has bound to the working people and the Soviet power. Honor and recognition is due to them. Traitors will be crushed, but the young General Staff officers will be called upon to build the Workers' and Peasants' Army of a Russia reborn.



# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE MILITARY SPECIALISTS

## ORDER BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR COUNCIL OF THE REPUBLIC

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\* \* \*

September 30, 1918

Cases of treacherous flight by members of the commanding apparatus into the enemy's camp, though less frequent, are still occurring. These monstrous crimes must be stopped, without shrinking from any measures. The turncoats are betraying the Russian workers and peasants to the Anglo-French and Japano-American robbers and hangmen. Let the turncoats realize that they are at the same time betraying their own families -- their fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, wives and children.

I order the headquarters of all the armies of the Republic, and also the district commissars to supply by telegram to member of the Revolutionary War Council Aralov lists of all the members of the commanding apparatus who have gone over to the enemy camp, with all needful data about their family situation. I entrust Comrade Aralov with the responsibility for taking, in co-operation with the appropriate institutions, the measures necessary for arresting the families of deserters and traitors.

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# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE MILITARY SPECIALISTS

## ABOUT THE EX OFFICERS: A Necessary Statement

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\* \* \*

Wholesale and frequently unjustified attacks on the military specialists drawn from the old corps of regular officers who are now working in the Red Army are engendering among some of the commanding personnel a mood of uncertainty and dismay. At the same time, ex-officers occupying civilian posts in the rear are afraid of being transferred to the Red Army owing to the attitude of distrust towards them which is artificially fostered by unbalanced elements in the Soviet ranks. It is clear how harmful must be the effect of such phenomena upon the interests of the army in the field.

In view of this, I consider it necessary to state that indiscriminate hostility towards former regular officers is alien to the Soviet power and to the best units fighting at the front. Every officer who wants to defend the country from the aggression of foreign imperialism and its Krasnovite and Dutovite agents is a welcome worker for our cause. Every officer who can and will help in the internal organization of the army, thereby ensuring that it achieves its aims with the least expenditure of workers' and peasants' blood, is a welcome collaborator with the Soviet power: he has the right to respect, and he will find this respect in the ranks of the Red Army.

The Soviet power deals severely with mutineers, and will henceforth punish traitors, but in its policy it is guided by the interests of the working people and by revolutionary expediency, and not by a blind feeling of revenge.

It is perfectly clear to the Soviet power that many thousands and tens of thousands of officers who emerged from the school of the ancient regime, having received a definitely bourgeois- monarchist education, could not at once feel at home with the new regime, understand and learn to respect it. But during the thirteen months that the Soviet power has been in existence it has become clear to very many of the former officers that the Soviet regime is not something accidental but an order which has developed in accordance with the laws of history and which is based on the will of the laboring millions. To very many of the former officers it has become clear that no regime other than this one is now capable of defending the freedom and independence of the Russian people from foreign aggression.

Those officers who, guided by this new awareness, join our ranks in a spirit of honesty, will find

complete oblivion for those crimes against the people in which they participated, under the influence of their past and their backwardness as regards revolutionary politics.

In the Ukraine, with Krasnov, in Siberia, and with the Anglo-French imperialists in the North, there are not a few Russian officers who would now be willing to return, repentant, to the Soviet Republic if they were not in fear of merciless punishment for their past deeds. Where these contrite renegades are concerned, what has been said above regarding the entire policy of the Workers' and Peasants' Government remains in force: it is guided in its actions by revolutionary expediency, not by blind vengeance, and will open the door to any honest citizen who wants to work in the service of the Soviets.

**December 30, 1918**

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# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE MILITARY SPECIALISTS

THE MILITARY SPECIALISTS AND THE RED ARMY

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\* \* \*

I think it necessary to return -- for the last time, I hope -- to the question of the military specialists, in connection with our general policy in the matter of building the army. The occasion for this seems all the more opportune in that criticism of our military policy has recently found printed and, so to speak, principled expression.

There have been, even earlier, not a few critical remarks made regarding the enlistment of former regular officers, but these remarks were essentially of a passing and non-committal kind, and almost always put forward in a semi-humorous way.

'So then, aren't your military specialists going to betray you?'

'As for that, it's as God wills. If we're strong they won't betray us.'

The matter rarely went further than such exchanges as that. But discontent became apparent. Discontent in the lower units, discontent in the middle strata, so to speak, of the Party, and even sometimes 'at the top'. The source of this discontent was the simple fact that, because we lack our own military leaders we have had to have recourse to men who are 'not our own'. When the carping became more persistent in one quarter or another, recourse was had to an argument that was not so much logical as empirical: 'Can you give me, here and now, ten divisional commanders, fifty regimental commanders, two army commanders and one front commander - all from among the Communists?' In answer to that, the 'critics' would laugh evasively and change the subject of conversation.

But uneasiness and discontent continued. It was merely unable to find 'principled' expression. For there could be no serious theoretical solution to the problem, but only a practical one - selecting suitable commanders from among the former regular officers and NCOs, while at the same time energetic ally pushing ahead with the training of new commanders.

Consequently, the criticism also furnished hardly any grounds for a principled rejoinder. Now, however, some articles which have appeared in the Party's central organ<sup>63</sup> have sought to provide the quite comprehensible discontent that exists with a principled expression that is profoundly blameworthy.

I

There is no need to say that, all other things being equal, the Soviet power would always prefer a Communist commander to a non-Communist one. The moral factor plays a very great role in military matters, and a close moral-ideological, and, even more, a Party bond between the commander and the best, most self-sacrificing section of the soldiers constitutes a primary moral factor of success. But a secondary



consultant or chief of staff wants to destroy the division, he will palm off his treacherous plan on the Communist who bears the title of commander. The fact that Kerensky was appointed Commander-in-Chief did not, after all, prevent the 'chief-of- staff' Kornilov from surrendering Riga to the Germans.<sup>[64]</sup> Moreover, it is precisely a consultant, who has no powers of command, and, therefore, no responsibility for command, who can, almost with impunity, palm off a perfidious plan upon a commander who does not know his job. Who will answer for it? The commander, that is, the one who holds the power of command. If it be supposed that the Communist, as commander, will be able to see through the treacherous trickery of his consultant, it is clear that he would have been able to see through it if he had been a commissar. And a commissar has the right to deal with treachery and traitors by means of the severest measures, as no commissar with a head on his shoulders has ever doubted. In short, it is plain to any serious person that merely renaming commissars 'commanders' and commanders 'consultants' will do us no good either practically or from the standpoint of principle: it is essentially aimed at playing on the instinct to strive for precedence, and at serving as a blind to hoodwink the less conscious.

## II

But now we have been presented with a principled consideration of the problem of the specialists, and a principled solution thereto. 'Member of the Central Executive Committee Kamensky [A.Z. Kamensky was a member of the staff of Voroshilov's Tenth Army, which had retreated from the Donbas to Tsaritsyn. Trotsky's inverted commas may hint that he suspects that Kamensky is writing on someone else's (Voroshilov's?) behalf.] writing in our central organ, does not confine himself just to brushing off the military specialists - he thinks his idea through and, in essence, denies the very existence of military expertise, that is, of the science and art of war. He puts before us as our pattern some ideal army, in the creation of which he himself has taken part, and it turns out that precisely this army, the best, most highly disciplined and successfully functioning army, was built without military specialists, under the leadership of a man with absolutely no previous military knowledge. In Kamensky's opinion, all the other armies ought to follow the same road. To be sure, Napoleon, who knew something about military matters and led armies of the revolution not without success, ascribed very great importance to military science, to the study of past campaigns, and so on. True, Hindenburg investigated theoretically during several decades the combinations that would be possible in a war with Russia, before he applied them in practice. Yes, there are military training institutions, middle-grade and higher-grade, and an extensive literature on military subjects, and hitherto we had supposed, as our socialist teachers supposed, that the art of war becomes more complicated as technique becomes more complicated, and that it is as difficult to be a good divisional commander as to be a good technical manager of a factory. Now, however, we learn that all this is a mistake. You need only be a Communist, and everything else will be given unto you.

'We are often told,' says Comrade Kamensky, ironically, 'that the conduct of war is such a delicate thing that we cannot get by at all without military specialists. Even if military expertise is a delicate thing, it is, all the same, only one of the components of a more delicate thing still -- the conduct of the machinery of state as a whole. Yet, by making the October Revolution, we took the liberty of conducting the state... And we have managed somehow (!!)', our author triumphantly concludes.

That is what is called putting the question as it should be put. It follows, then, according to Kamensky, that, having accomplished the October Revolution, we are, as it were, obliged to replace the specialists,

in every branch of the state system, by good Communists who 'even if they get things a bit wrong, do, after all, stay sober.' [The allusion is to Krylov's fable 'The Musicians'. A man invites a friend to hear his group of singers, and they are terrible. When the friend says that it was a poor performance, their patron apologizes for them, saying:

'They do into a false note fall:

'But then, they liquor never touch at all.'

The fabulist comments:

'For my part, I say: rather drink, and show 'That that which you profess you know.'

Comrades who are familiar with socialist and anti-socialist literature know that one of the principal arguments used by the opponents of socialism was that we should not be able to cope with the machinery of state because of our lack of sufficient specialists of our own. It did not occur to any of our old teachers to reply that, once we had taken over such a 'thing' as the state, we should then cope 'somehow' (!), even without specialists. On the contrary, they always replied to the effect that the socialist regime would open up a broad field of creative work for the best of the specialists, and thereby increase their number; that the rest of them we should either compel or bribe with high salaries, just as the bourgeoisie had bribed them; and, finally, that the majority of them would simply have no choice, and they would be obliged to serve us. But nobody ever supposed that the victorious proletariat would simply get along, 'somehow', without specialists.

Kamensky tells us that, when he and his comrades were cut off from the Soviet power, they themselves succeeded in transforming separate units into regiments. That is, of course, a very pleasing fact, it cannot be denied. But Marxist politics is not at all the politics of Tyapkin-Lyapkin, [Trotsky's 'Tyapkin-Lyapkin' is Lyapkin-Tyapkin, a conceited ignoramus in Gogol's play, *The Government Inspector*, who proclaims: 'I came to my views myself, by my own thinking.'] who arrived at everything entirely by his own unaided power of thought, for history is not going to wait while we, having cast out the specialists, gradually think our way through to the transformation of isolated units into regiments - or, more correctly, to the renaming of them:

for, let it be said without offense to Comrade Kamensky, in the matter to which he alludes what actually happened was just that the commanders of the separate units called themselves commanders of regiments, brigades or divisions, according to taste -- which, however, did not bring their units any closer to being military formations with the right internal proportions.

It is quite true that, after the October Revolution, the proletariat found itself obliged to draw its sword against specialists of all kinds. But why was that? Not, of course, because they were specialists, but because these specialists refused to serve the proletariat, and tried, by means of organized sabotage, to break its power. By its terror against the saboteurs the proletariat was not at all saying: 'I shall exterminate the lot of you, and manage without specialists.' Such a program would have been a program of hopelessness and doom. Scattering, arresting and shooting the saboteurs and conspirators, the proletariat said: 'I shall break your will, because my will is stronger than yours, and I shall force you to serve me.'

If the Red Terror had meant initiating a process of complete expulsion and extermination of the

specialists, it would have been right to see the October Revolution as a manifestation of historical decadence. Fortunately, that is not so. The terror, as a demonstration of the will and the strength of the working class, obtains its historical justification precisely from the fact that the proletariat succeeded in breaking the political will of the intelligentsia, pacifying the professionals of different categories and branches of labor, and gradually subordinating them to its purposes, in the realm of their respective special skills.

We know that the telegraphists sabotaged us, as also did the railway engineers, the high-school teachers, the university professors, and the doctors. Should we conclude from this that, once we had taken power in October, we had no more need of medicine? One might even quote some salutary examples of how a Communist, somewhere out in Chukhloma, cut off from the Soviet Republic, successfully bandaged an old lady's finger and even performed still other medical feats, without ever having been poisoned by bourgeois medical wisdom. Such a philosophy as this has nothing in common with Marxism -- it is a philosophy of oversimplification, quackery and ignorant boasting.

### III

'But, all the same, if the British and French launch a serious offensive against us, bringing an army a million strong into action, the military specialists will betray us.' This is the ultimate argument, both logically and chronologically.

No doubt, if Anglo-French imperialism proves strong enough to put a powerful army into action against us, without being hindered, then, in circumstances in which our direct defeat seems certain to the social groups which have been 'pacified' by the proletariat, desertions from those groups to the camp of our political adversaries will start to occur. Desertion will be the more extensive and the more of a danger to us, the less advantageous to us are the relations of armed force and the less favorable the whole world situation. That has happened to other classes, too, more than once in history.

For brevity's sake, the military specialists are often spoken of among us as 'the Tsarist generals'. Those who use this expression forget that when Tsardom got into difficulties, 'the Tsarist generals' betrayed it, took up an attitude of benevolent neutrality towards the revolution, and directly went over into the service of the revolution. The Krestovnikovs, Ryabushinskys and Mamontovs are right when they say that their engineers betrayed them. The latter are now serving the regime of the proletarian dictatorship. If the specialists betrayed the class in whose spirit they were educated, when that class showed itself to be clearly and indubitably weaker than its adversary, there can be no doubt that these same specialists will betray the proletariat with incomparably greater ease if and when it proves to be weaker than its mortal foe. But this is not the case today, and we have not too much reason to suppose that it will ever happen.

The better, wider and fuller use that we make of the specialists today, when they are obliged to serve us, the better we build our Red regiments, with their assistance, the less chance will the British and French be given to lead our specialists into temptation.

Should the situation change, to our disfavor, we may have to change our internal policy again, going over once more to a regime of Red Terror, ruthlessly stamping out all those who try to help the enemies of the proletariat. But to do this in anticipation, rushing ahead of events, would merely mean to weaken ourselves. Rejecting the services of military specialists on the grounds that individual officers have

played the traitor Would be like driving out all the engineers and all the higher technicians from the railways on the grounds that there are not a few artful saboteurs among them. Not so long ago, at the Second All-Russia Congress of the Economic Councils, Comrade Lenin said: 'It is time to abandon old prejudices and enlist all the experts we need in our work. Every one of our "collegiate" institutions, every one of our Communist executives, must realize this. . . Capitalism has left us a legacy in the shape of its biggest experts. And we must be sure to utilize them, on a broad scale.' [For the context of Lenin's words, see *Collected Works*, Vol.28, pp.379-381.] This is not at all, as you can see, like Tyapkin Lyapkin's readiness to cope with any and every 'thing' without the aid of specialists.

Comrade Lenin even concluded his Speech with a direct threat addressed to the 'Communist' Tyapkins. Any attempt to replace action by arguments that are the epitome of short sightedness, gross stupidity and intellectual conceit will meet with ruthless punishment.

I do not doubt that some of our Communist comrades are splendid organizers, but in order to train a large number of such organizers many years would be needed, and for us 'there is no time' to wait. If there is no time for us to wait in the economic sphere, that applies still more in the military sphere.

## IV

This article would not be complete, and would involve real injustice to the military specialists, if I were to say nothing here about the profound evolution that has been undergone by the consciousness of the best part of the old officer corps.

We now have in our service thousands of former regular officers. These men have experienced an ideological catastrophe. Many of them, as they themselves say, only two years ago looked upon Guchkov [A.I. Guchkov was a big capitalist and leader of the Octobrist party, who became War Minister in the first Provisional Government an extreme moderate if ever there was one.] as an extreme revolutionary, while the Bolsheviks belonged, so far as they were concerned, to the fourth dimension. They Passively believed the gossip, slander and baiting of the venal and dishonest bourgeois press. During the thirteen months of the Soviet regime they have seen us Communists at work, with our weak and our strong sides alike. We should really have too poor an opinion of ourselves and of our Party, of the moral power of our ideas, of the attractive force of our revolutionary morality, if we thought that we were Incapable of attracting to our side thousands and thousands of specialists, including military specialists.

What about the simple fact of the co-existence in the army of former ensigns, captains, colonels and generals with our commissars? Of course there is no family without its black sheep. There some times turn up, among the commissars, troublemakers who busy themselves with petty squabbles over precedence, about who is to sign his name above whose, and the like. But the majority of our commissars are excellent, self-sacrificing commissars, disinterested, fearless, capable of giving their lives for the idea of communism and of making others do the same. Can this not be without its moral effect upon the officers, most of whom entered our service in the first place merely for the sake of a crust of bread? One would have to be morally quite obtuse in order to think so. From my dealings with many military specialists and, still more, from my dealings with the Communist commissars, I know how many of the former 'Tsarist officers' have developed a close inner bond with the Soviet regime, and, while not in the least considering themselves Bolsheviks, live a common life with the best regiments of our Red Army.

The Council of People's Commissars has decided to rename the station Krasnye Gorki, near Kazan, 'Yudino', in memory of the 'Tsarist officer' Yudin, who fell in the fighting near this station and was one



of those who recovered Kazan for us.

The general public knows of almost every case of treason and betrayal by members of the commanding apparatus, but, unfortunately, not only the general public but also narrower Party circles know all too little about those regular officers who have honestly and consciously given their lives for the cause of the Russia of the workers and peasants. Only today a commissar was telling me about a captain who commanded nothing more than a section and refused to accept any higher post because he identified himself too closely with his men. This captain was killed in action a few days ago .

And today I also had a very interesting conversation with another of our commissars, one of the best by virtue of his energy and devotion to duty. I knew this comrade as an opponent of the employment of 'Tsarist generals'.

'Make yourself more familiar with the work,' I said to him, with, if you like, a certain challenge in my manner, 'and in a month or two we'll turn you from divisional commissar into divisional commander.'

'No,' he replied, 'I can't agree to that.'

'How so?'

'We have better divisional commanders. Men like L., or R.'

'But, after all, they are General Staff officers!'

'I have nothing against officers like them. It was L. who set the division on its feet, established firm order in it. R. works day and night, without sparing himself. He himself sticks by the telephone, checking on the execution of every order I'm only against such specialists as Nosovjch.' [L.L. Nosovich, appointed Chief of Staff of the Northern Caucasus District, went over to the Whites in November 1918.]

'Well, of course, we are all against those specialists who worm themselves in among Us so as to serve our enemies.'

**V**

Comrade Lenin spoke of educated self-conceit and crude obtuseness. Those were strong words, and yet (or, more correctly, just because of that) they were, as the report of the proceeding 2kno,ho re lidt, wion peng witf evenothinthou eow thf evhter (oce aceih, aen as tI havaeih,nand acmanused thteonveereirude of



## NOTES

**64.** On August 18, 1917 the German Eighth Army, under Hutier, broke through the lines of our Twelfth Army in the area of Uexkull and began a rapid advance northward, outflanking the city of Riga. Our troops fell back a distance of 70 versts, losing all contact with the enemy. The Riga events were used by Kornilov and the whole bourgeois press for counter-revolutionary agitation, forecasting an advance by the Germans on Petrograd. There are grounds for asserting that the High Command deliberately paralyzed the army's resistance before Riga. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

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# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE MILITARY SPECIALISTS

THE MILITARY ACADEMY

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\* \* \*

## Speech at the ceremonial meeting of November 8, 1918 at the Military Academy (on the day when it opened)

Comrade instructors, pupils of the Academy and guests! Allow me to congratulate the pupils, the instructors, and, in the persons of our guests, all the citizens of the Soviet Republic, on the opening of the Military Academy -- the highest military training institution of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.

The Academy has appeared later than it should have done. We wanted to open it sooner, because, in the War Department and in the Government as a whole, there was, of course, not even for one day any doubt about the Army's need for a higher institution of military training. Most, if not all, of you know what the circumstances were that hindered and, at a certain moment, prevented resumption of work at the Military Academy. [65] Only now, over a year after the October Revolution, are we able to assemble here to celebrate together this triumphant day of the opening of the highest military training institution of Workers' and Peasants' Russia.

First of all, I should like to remove a misapprehension which is often associated with the question of the army and the art of war. There is a prejudice, or, at least, something that takes the outward form of a prejudice, not always sincere, that the army, the science of war, the art of war and the institutions of war can stand outside of politics. That is not true. It never was true. It is not the case anywhere, and never will be the case anywhere. One of the greatest theoreticians of military matters, the German Clausewitz, wrote that 'war is the continuation of politics by other means. [In German, as in Russian, the same word is used for policy' and for politics'.] In other words, war, too, is politics, realized through the harsh means of blood and iron. And that is true. War is politics, and the army is the instrument of this politics.

The Academy is an institution which is needed by the Army, and therefore by politics. The essence of the matter is that, in epochs when institutions and ideas are passed on successively from one generation to the next, and when people see no turning-points or revolutions during their lifetimes -- in epochs like that, politics is as imperceptible as the air itself. The old army existed: nobody in particular bears any

guilt for that: among us, among the instructors, there are many persons who worked all their lives in the old army: and I do not doubt, none of us has any grounds for doubting that they worked with the very best of intentions, conscientiously: but, owing to objective historical circumstances, the old army, with its old institutions, including those concerned with education and training, served as an instrument of the politics pursued by the ruling classes of those days. That was also the politics - monarchist, noble men's, bureaucratic politics, which in its last decades was combined with capitalist politics. We have experienced a revolution, one of the mightiest revolutions human history has ever known. And if, until recently, some people may have thought, or hoped, or feared, that this revolution was an accident, or an outcome of our native barbarism (this reproach has been thrown at us from the West), now, after the revolution in Germany, where the wheel of fate has not yet stopped, and where it is rolling in the same direction as the wheel of Russian history: after the revolution in Austria-Hungary, and after those first phenomena of revolution that we observe in countries further to the West -- it is clear to every thinking man, even if in the past he did not belong to a revolutionary party, that we have entered a new phase in world history, in which all events are being moved forward in accordance with the same laws, though in different national milieu. Germany is only now catching up with us, in the road and the form of her revolutionary development, and she will soon be level with us. Then it will be the turn of France, Britain and the other capitalist countries. Everywhere politics is changing, the social organism is changing, new ruling classes are appearing on the scene, classes which wield power temporarily in order to do away with the entire development of classes and all class rule. And here we are, living in this moment of a transition period when the old ruling classes, those classes which exploited the masses, have been or are being overturned, when the new ruling classes of labor have taken hold of the state system in order to do away with the very foundations of class rule and to transform society into a single planned and organized collective which works, produces and defends itself on comradely CO-operative or communist principles.

It is clear that in such a period the army must be reconstructed, must come into line with the classes that have taken power. It is clear that the Academy, as the highest spiritual institution of this army, must come into line with the Workers and Peasants' Red Army as a whole. It must get rid, so far as the very essence of the matter permits, of all outward academicism, what is associated with pedantry, scholastics, routine and mannerism of every kind, must extract from its shell and rind the very kernel of military knowledge, that kernel which must, especially now when we find ourselves beneath the lash of international military necessity, possess a directly and profoundly utilitarian character: that is, you must study so as immediately to be able to impart your knowledge to others and apply everything practically. We are obliged to defend our selves: we want to defend ourselves well, that is, with the maximum economy of the forces, means and blood of our Workers' and Peasants' Red Army. True, our position cannot be called easy, but if we look back over these four years and more of world war we must conclude that history has changed inter-relations on the world scale more to our advantage than otherwise. We suffered a frightful defeat in the world war. It is now clear that there were three fundamental reasons for this defeat.

First, our technical backwardness. Military technique is always a product of the entire economic might of a country. We were economically and technically the more backward country. In the first period of the war, this was not so perceptible because we had been able to arm ourselves with a certain quantity of those deadly weapons that class society makes necessary; but the longer the war dragged on, the more the material means of war became used up, the greater the demands imposed on the country's economic organism, the more plainly revealed was our economic backwardness, and therefore weakness.

The second reason lay in the human composition of the army, the soldier masses. The many millions of Russian peasants, oppressed by Tsardom, ignorance, and poverty, were without the initiative and individual enterprise which is inseparable from modern methods of war, engendered by modern war technology. For the peasant, snatched from his village, with his old-established prejudices, without any habit of individual initiative, it was hard to find his way amid the conditions of contemporary warfare. He fell, he died heroically, but he proved to be the weaker as an individual military entity.

And, finally, the third reason: the commanding apparatus, whom, both rightly and wrongly, the mass of the soldiers saw as responsible for all the setbacks, all the fruitless bloodshed, all the humiliations, just because it was the commanding apparatus, and just because the commanding apparatus had throughout all its past been closely bound up with those ruling classes which, in the minds of the rank-and-file soldiers, held the country's destiny in their hands, led it into war, and brought upon it a frightful defeat. Hence the terrible split that came about between the mass of the soldiers and the commanding apparatus, that split which at certain moments of the revolution assumed such dramatic and bloody forms, well known to us all.

If we now ask ourselves what changes have taken place in these three factors as a result of recent events -- the events of the last few years and months -- we shall have to acknowledge that, as regards the first question, the question of technique, we have not, of course, grown any stronger. But all countries have grown immeasurably weaker. The organism of German technique is beyond compare even among the European countries themselves, but from that perfect organism, or, rather, mechanism, it was enough to remove merely this link or that for it to fall into utter disorder. In one country, certain valuable metals ceased to be available, in another fuel ran out, elsewhere there was not enough petrol -- in different countries there were different shortages, and so war industry became disorganized.

In Germany this situation has already found catastrophic expression. Tomorrow it will be manifested in France and Britain, and then in America and all the other countries. Consequently we have all come into line with one another, along a line of poverty and exhaustion.

Now, about the soldier masses and the experience of war with all its misery and degradation. First and foremost, the colossal shock of the revolution has aroused the human personality in the most downtrodden, oppressed and ignorant peasant. It is natural that persons unaccustomed to revolution and its psychology, persons who have not previously experienced in the realm of ideas that which has unfolded before them physically, materially, may view with some sorrow, if not disgust, the anarchic wildness and violence which appeared on the surface of the revolutionary events. Yet in that riotous anarchy, even in its most negative manifestations, when the soldier, yesterday's slave, all of a sudden found himself in a first-class railway carriage and tore out the velvet facings to make himself foot-cloths, even in such an act of vandalism the awakening of a personality was expressed. That downtrodden, persecuted Russian peasant, who had been struck in the face and subjected to the vilest curses, found himself, for perhaps the first time in his life, in a first-class carriage and saw the velvet cushions, while on his feet he had stinking rags, and he tore up the velvet, saying that he too had the right to a piece of good silk or velvet. After two or three days, after a month, after a year -- no, after a month -- he understood how disgraceful it was to plunder the people's property, but the awakened personality, the individuality - not just Number Such-and-such, but a human personality, will remain alive in him forever. Our task is to adjust this personality to the community, to make it feel that it is not a number, not a slave, as it was before, and not just Ivanov or Petrov, but, one, Ivanov the personality, and, two, at the same time, a part of a community of the whole people, with neither slaves nor masters. This is a task of broad

education in the broadest sense of the word. And in this respect we have undoubtedly taken a tremendous step forward. Not only the proletariat of the towns but also extensive strata of the many millioned peasantry have been completely reborn in this period. The French revolutionary Boissy once said that in the five years of the French Revolution the French people accumulated more experience than in another period lasting six centuries.

Karl Marx says that revolution is the locomotive of history. And that is true. During the present period, despite the grossness, the prejudices, the backwardness and ignorance of the Russian peasantry, they have, first and foremost, become inwardly regenerated, and capable of very much greater initiative and independence: and when the lessons of history have been finally assimilated, the people, who were kept down for centuries, will make a mighty leap forward, to come level with and, perhaps, ahead of many other peoples.

The question of the commanding apparatus is the third, and the most difficult up to the present moment. Here, at this gathering of academicians of today and tomorrow, we can distance ourselves somewhat from events, with that objectivism which we do not and have not the right to allow ourselves in the revolutionary struggle: we can understand, from the psychological standpoint, how and why it is that wide circles of the old officer corps have not joined and have not wanted to join the Workers' and Peasants' Army. There were those who sold themselves, but there were also, undoubtedly, some honorable men. What I said about objectivism applies to this observation. . . There were also some who were honorable but who, through their psychology, their habits, views and judgments, had developed into a definite historical formation in which no further changes could take place, and they showed a certain integrity. There were others, who were able to understand -- these, of course, were of a higher type -- that what was happening was not the caprice of some gang of backward people, nor was it the arbitrary conduct of a particular party, but a profound geological, so to speak -- shift in the social foundations of life, and that to fight against it by means of curses or White-Guard mutiny is, at best, Quixotism of a wretched and shameful sort. But there were many of them who found it impossible to submit to the spirit of the new age. They entered the ranks of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army as agents of our enemies. Perhaps a certain percentage of such men are still with us even now. But there were others of a higher type who realized that our country is being raised to a higher level, out of the bloody swamps into which it had been dragged by the trials and humiliations of this dreadful war. But such men were few.

We have begun to create a new commanding apparatus from among the workers and peasants. This new commanding apparatus is still extremely inadequate both in quantity and in quality, for we have no commanders from this background, no Red officers, who possess higher education.

It is the task of this academy to fill that gap. This task of creating and forming soldiers and commanders is a two-sided one -- there is the education of the soldiers and commanders and there is their instruction -- but we must say that here, too, the historical revolution, this entire social shift in the work of social education facilitates, in the highest degree, among other things also the work of military education, for one does not need to be a Communist and an old revolutionary in order to understand now, at all events, that the old system of education, which found its classical expression in Germany, and there likewise suffered classical shipwreck, amounted to taking millions from among the oppressed, the working classes, and educating them so that they would support the state system which upheld and consolidated their own oppression. That was where the difficulty lay in the old kind of military education. It was a complex social *dressage*, and absorbed much time, attention and effort. Our social education, military education included (I say 'our' meaning 'of our epoch'), consists in making every worker, soldier and



peasant understand the community which serves his own interests, and only those interests. Our advantage is that we have nothing to hide from the worker or the peasant, nothing to hide, for all the mistakes of our system, all the mistakes of this regime, are mistakes made by the government of the workers and peasants. Food is badly distributed here not because the bourgeoisie, or the nobles, or the Tsar have got hold of it, but because the peasants and workers have not learnt how to distribute it properly. From this we conclude: it is necessary to learn. Army supplies are not organized as they should be. There are many gaps, here, there and everywhere. We do too little to expose them in the press. Recently I was emphasizing, in a conversation with the chairman of the Supreme Military Inspectorate[66] that we must bring into the light of day, drag out in to the open, all the gaps and shortcomings in our mechanism, for we have nothing to hide from the classes which have now been called upon to govern, from the working classes. In this lies the enormous advantage of the situation wherein the present-day commander finds himself. If he demands strict discipline -- and it is his duty to do so -- and if he speaks up in this sense, nobody will dare to say that he is calling for discipline in the interests of the nobles or the Tsar. He will say that he has been appointed by the Soviet power of all Russia, embodied in its highest organ, the All-Russia Congress of Workers', Peasants' and Soldiers' Deputies: this means a colossal moral authority such as no officer in the world possesses to compare with our new Russian officer.

I began by saying that the Academy cannot stand outside politics. The task of the Academy is to make the body of officers who pass through it understand the nature of the new conditions, of the new classes and of the new army which serves them: and it is for these new classes, for this new army to study and apply all the conclusions for military science and technique that can be drawn from the experience of modern war.

The specialists have purged and freed the Academy's program from merely 'academic' old junk and rubbish. There is no point in our studying now, in these short periods of study which history allows us, the way problems of war were solved by the Greeks and Romans, and in the Middle Ages. We now have behind us an epoch of four years' war in which everything that existed in all countries, in all ages, in all nations, has been put into practice: in which, on the one hand, men have flown above the clouds, and on the other, men have, like moles, like troglodytes, hidden themselves in caves, in muddy under ground trenches. All the poles, all the contradictions in the mutual extermination of peoples have found their expression and application here, and if the Academy wishes (and it will wish), if it is able (and it will be able), then it will mobilize this material from the last war and equip our commanding personnel with the practical conclusions to be drawn therefrom, so rendering a very great practical service. And that is not all, precisely because this will be an academy freed from pedantry, routine and mandarinism: it has not arisen amid the celestial spaces, but always under the direct impulsion of practice and internal need. This need exists. It is incontrovertible. We have to defend our country, which has become a workers' and peasants' country of honest labor. We have to defend it against any attack and all attempts to crush it. The will to defend it exists among the broad masses of the Russian people. This is the will of the working class and the peasantry. And the initiative of these classes, their consciousness, their enterprise, has undoubtedly increased. In many cases all that they need is military leadership. In the persons of those present here, I congratulate Soviet Russia once more on this triumphant occasion of the opening of our highest institution of military training.

Long live the Military Academy of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army!

Long live the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army! Hurrah!

**November 8, 1918**

## **NOTES**

**65.** When Petrograd was evacuated, the former Nicholas Military Academy was moved to Yekaterinburg. During the Czechoslovak revolt some of the students were employed for active work on the Red fronts. A very small section of them, led by the Head of the Academy, Andogsky, with part of the teaching staff, were moved to Kazan when Yekaterinburg was evacuated, and there they fell into the hands of the Whites. These were the circumstances which delayed for several months any organized work towards the opening of the Red Military Academy. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

**66.** The chairman of the Supreme Military Inspectorate was Nikolai Ilyich Podvoisky. This inspectorate was established in April 1918 and played an important part in the reorganization of the army and its transference to regular forms. Direct visits to the localities by the Supreme Military Inspectorate were accompanied by big changes in the personnel of the commanders and commissars and the establishment of unity of views in all questions of military work. The Supreme Military Inspectorate was divided into two sections -- military and political. [\[RETURN TO TEXT\]](#)

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# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE MILITARY SPECIALISTS

## SCIENTIFICALLY OR SOMEHOW: A letter to a friend

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\* \* \*

Dear Friend,

You ask how it can have happened that the question of specialists, such as the officers of the old General *Staff*, has assumed such great importance among us. Let me tell you That what is at issue here is actually not the matter of military specialists -- it is a question both broader and deeper than that.

We are the party of the working class. Together with its advanced elements we spent decades in underground conditions, carried on our struggle, fought on the barricades, over turned the old regime, cast aside all the in-between groups such as the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks and, at the head of the working class, took power into our hands. But though our party is deeply and unbreakably linked with the working class it has never been and cannot become a mere flatterer of the working class, expressing gratification with whatever the workers may be doing. We treated with contempt those who preached to us that the proletariat had taken power 'too soon', as though a revolutionary class can take power when it likes and not when history forces it to take power. But at the same time we never said, and we do not say now, that our working class has attained full maturity and can cope 'as though it were child's play' with all tasks and resolve all difficulties. The proletariat and, all the more so, the peasant masses, have only recently emerged, after all, from many centuries of slavery and bear all the consequences of oppression, ignorance and darkness. The conquest of power, in itself, does not at all transform the working class and does not confer upon it all the attainments and qualities it needs: the conquest of power merely opens up for it the possibility of really studying and developing and ridding itself of its historical shortcomings.

By a tremendous effort the upper stratum of the Russian working class has accomplished a gigantic historical task. Even in this upper stratum, however, there is still too much half- knowledge and half-skill, too few workers who, by virtue of their knowledge, breadth of horizon and energy are capable of doing on behalf of their class what the representatives, hirelings and agents of the bourgeoisie did for the former ruling classes.

Lassalle once said that the German workers of his day -- more than half a century ago -- were poor in understanding of their own poverty. The revolutionary development of the proletariat consists also in the fact that it arrives at an understanding of its oppressed position, its poverty, and rises against the ruling classes. This gives it the possibility of seizing political power. But the taking of political power essentially reveals to the proletariat for the first time the full picture of its poverty in respect of general and specialized education and government experience. The understanding by the revolutionary class of its own inadequacies is the guarantee that these will be overcome.

It would undoubtedly be most dangerous for the working class if its leading circles were to suppose that with the conquest of power the main thing had been done, and were to allow their revolutionary conscience to go to sleep upon what has been achieved. The proletariat did not, indeed, carry through the revolution in order to make it possible for thousands or even tens of thousands of advanced workers to settle into jobs in the Soviets and commissariats. Our revolution will fully justify itself only when every toiling man and woman feels that his or her life has become easier, freer, cleaner and more dignified. This has not yet been achieved. A hard road still lies between us and this, our essential and only goal.

In order that the life of the working millions may become easier, more abundant and richer in content, it is necessary to increase in every sphere the organization and efficiency of work and to attain an incomparably higher level of knowledge, a wider horizon for all those called to be representatives of the working class in all fields of their activity. While working it is necessary to learn. It is necessary to learn from everyone from whom anything can be learnt. It is necessary to attract and draw in all forces that can be harnessed to work. Once more -- it is necessary to remember that the masses of the people will evaluate the revolution, in the last analysis, by its practical results. And they will be quite right in so doing. Yet there can be no doubt that a section of Soviet officials have adopted the attitude that the task of the working class had been fundamentally fulfilled by the mere calling to power of workers' and peasants' deputies who cope 'somehow' with their work. The Soviet regime is the best regime for the workers' revolution just because it most truly reflects the development of the proletariat, its struggle, its successes, but also its inadequacies, including those of its leading stratum. Along with the many thousands of first-class people whom the proletariat has advanced from its ranks, people who learn and make progress, and who undoubtedly have a great future before them, there are also in the leading Soviet organs not a few half-equipped people who imagine themselves to be know-it-alls. Complacency, resting content with small successes -- this is the worst feature of philistinism, which is radically inimical to the historical tasks of the proletariat. Nevertheless, this feature is also to be encountered among those workers who, with more or less justification, can be called advanced: the heritage of the past, petty-bourgeois traditions and influences and finally, just the demand of strained nerves for rest, all do their work. In addition, there are fairly numerous representatives of the intelligentsia and semi-intelligentsia who have sincerely rallied to the cause of the working class but have not yet had a thorough internal burn-out and so have retained many qualities and ways of thought which are characteristic of the petty-bourgeois milieu. These, the worst elements of the new regime, are striving to become crystallized as a Soviet bureaucracy.

I said 'the worst' without forgetting the many thousands of technicians merely lacking in political ideas who are employed by all Soviet institutions. Technicians, 'non-party' specialists, carry out their tasks, well or badly, without accepting responsibility for the Soviet regime and without charging our party with responsibility for themselves. It is necessary to make use of them in every possible way, without demanding from them what they cannot give... Our own bureaucrat, however, is real historical ballast --

already conservative, sluggish, complacent, unwilling to learn and even expressing enmity to anybody who reminds him of the need to learn.

This is the genuine menace to the cause of communist revolution. These are the genuine accomplices of counter-revolution, even though they are not guilty of any conspiracy. Our factories work not better than those belonging to the bourgeoisie, but worse. The fact, therefore, that a number of workers stand at their head, as managers, does not in itself solve any problems. If these workers are filled with resolve to achieve great results (and in the majority of cases this is so or will become so), then all difficulties will be overcome. It is necessary to move, from all directions, towards a more rational, more improved organization of the economy and command of the army. It is necessary to arouse initiative, criticism, creative power. It is necessary to give more scope to the great mainspring of emulation. At the same time, it is necessary to draw in specialists, to find experienced organizers, first-class technicians, to give opportunities to all talents, both those that emerge from the depths and those that remain as a legacy from the bourgeois regime. Only a wretched Soviet bureaucrat, jealous for his new job, and cherishing this job because of the personal privileges it confers and not because of the interests of the workers' revolution, can have an attitude of baseless distrust towards any great expert, outstanding organizer, technician, specialist or scientist -- having already decided on his own account that 'me and my mates will get by somehow'.

In our General Staff Academy there are some party comrades now studying who have in practice, in bloody experience, conscientiously understood how hard is the stern art of war and who are now working with the greatest attention under the guidance of professors of the old military school. People who are close to the Academy tell me that the attitude of the pupils to their teachers is not at all determined by political factors, and apparently it is the most conservative of the teachers who is honored with the most notable marks of attention. These people want to learn. They see beside them others who possess knowledge, and they do not sniff, do not swagger, do not shout, 'tossing their Soviet caps in the air' -- they learn diligently and conscientiously from the 'Tsarist generals', because these generals know what the Communists do not know and what the Communists need to know. And I have no doubt that, when they have learnt, our Red military academicians will make substantial corrections to what they are now learning, and perhaps will even make some fresh contributions of their own.

Insufficient knowledge is, of course, not a fault but a misfortune, and moreover a misfortune which can be put right. But this misfortune becomes a fault and even a crime when it is supplemented by complacency, reliance on 'maybe' and 'most likely', and an attitude of envy and hatred towards anybody who knows more than oneself.

You asked why this question of the military specialists has aroused such passion. The essence of the matter is that behind this question, if we dig far enough, two trends are hidden: one, which proceeds from an appreciation of the magnitude of the tasks confronting us, endeavors to utilize all the forces and resources which the proletariat has inherited from capitalism -- to rationalize, i.e., to comprehend in practice, all social work, including military work, introducing in every sphere the principle of economy of forces, achieving the greatest possible results with the minimum of sacrifices -- really to create conditions under which it will be easier to live. The other trend, which fortunately is much less strong, is nourished by the moods of limited, envious, complacent (and yet at the same time unsure of itself) philistine-bureaucratic conservatism

'We're managing somehow, aren't we, so we'll keep on managing all right.' It isn't true! We shall not



manage 'somehow', in any case: either we shall manage completely, as we ought, in accordance with science, applying and developing all the powers and resources of technique, or we shall not manage at all, but collapse in ruin. Who has not understood this has not understood anything.

Returning to the question you raise, old friend, about the military specialists, let me tell you this, from my own direct observation. There are certain corners in our armed forces where 'distrust' of the military specialists is particularly flourishing. What corners are these? The most cultured, the richest in political knowledge of the masses? Not a bit! On the contrary, these are the most deprived corners of our Soviet republic. In one of our armies it was considered not long ago a mark of the highest revolutionariness to jeer rather pettily and stupidly at 'military specialists', i.e. at all who had studied in military schools. Yet in this very same army practically no political work was carried on. The attitude there was no less hostile, perhaps even more so, towards Communist commissars, those political 'specialists', than it was towards the military specialists. Who was sowing this hostility? The worst sort among the new commanders -- military half-experts, half-guerrillas, half-party people who did not want to have anyone around them, be they party workers or serious military workers. These are the worst sort of commanders. They are ignorant but they do not want to learn. Their failures -- how could they have successes? -- they always seek to explain by somebody else's treachery. They quail miserably before any change in the morale of their units, for they lack any serious moral and military authority. When a unit, not feeling the hand of a firm leader, refuses to attack, they hide behind its back. Hanging on for dear life to their jobs, they hate the mere mention of military studies. For them these are identified with treachery and perfidy. Many of them, after getting finally into a hopeless mess, have ended up by simply rebelling against the Soviet power. In those units where the level of the Red Army men's morale is higher, where political work is carried on, where there are responsible commissars and party cells, they have no fear of the military specialists; on the contrary, they ask for them, use them and learn from them. Moreover, in those units they catch the real traitors much more successfully, and shoot them in good time. And, what is most important of all, those units win victories.

That is how it is, dear friend. Now, perhaps, you can better grasp the root of the differences that exist on the question of military and other specialists.

***En route. Tambov-Balashov \* January 10, 1919***  
***Voyennoye Dyelo, No.5-6 (34-35), February 23, 1919***

\* Balashov is a railway junction about 175 kilometers south east of Tamb on the line linking Moscow with Kamyshin, on the Volga.

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# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE MILITARY SPECIALISTS

ORDER BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR  
MILITARY AFFAIRS

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\* \* \*

August 3, 1918

Non-commissioned officer! The country is calling you. The Soviet power is creating an army which will have the duty of defending the freedom and independence of the working classes of Russia from attacks by aggressors both external and internal. The workers' and peasants' army needs a serious, strong and honest commanding apparatus. A section of the old officer corps is working conscientiously at the task of creating the military might of the Soviet Republic. But they are an insignificant minority. The majority, accustomed to fawning and groveling before Tsardom, are unwilling to serve the working class and the poor peasantry. We are compelling the opponents of the Soviet power to act as military instructors. But we cannot entrust them with powers of command.

The Soviet power summons you, the former NCOs, to *posts of command*. You are yourselves sons of the working people. The Workers' and Peasants' Army is your army. You will stand at the head of its platoons, its companies, and later also of its regiments and divisions, in order firmly and valiantly to serve the Russia of the working people. You will create indestructible cadres for the socialist officer corps of the Soviet Republic. As from now, every NCO serving in the Red Army, whether as a volunteer or through compulsory enlistment, is promoted to the post of platoon commander.

The Soviet power will give you every opportunity to complete your military education. While remaining true sons of the revolutionary people, you must ascend to the highest levels of the military art.

Non-commissioned officers, your hour has struck! Soviet Russia calls you. Forward, on the road of stubborn work, on the road of valiant struggle for the freedom and happiness of Soviet Russia! Forward on the road of glory and honor!

**Izv. V Ts. I.K.,  
August 6, 1918**

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# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE MILITARY SPECIALISTS

## DECREE OF THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS

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\* \* \*

**On the call-up for compulsory military service of persons who have served in the forces as non-commissioned officers. Moscow, August 2, 1918.**

The creation of an army able and ready to defend the interests of the working population against external and internal aggressors is encountering great difficulty owing to the almost complete lack of a commanding apparatus which is inseparably linked with the working class and the poor peasantry.

In the old army, posts of command were held almost exclusively by members of the propertied classes, so that the majority of the old officer corps were hostile to the power of the workers and peasants. The new army needs a new officer corps. This can be created in a short time by bringing into posts of command honest and valiant sons of the people from among the former NCOs.

Proceeding from these considerations, the Council of People's Commissars has decided, in addition to issuing the decree calling up, in the *uyezds* of the Moscow, Petrograd, Vladimir, Nizhny-Novgorod, Perm and Vyatka provinces, all workers born in 1896 and 1897, to call up at the same time and on the same bases as are set out in the decree mentioned, in all the *uyezds* of the six provinces mentioned, also those workers born in 1893, 1894 and 1895 who have served in the forces as non commissioned officers, so as to form from them as quickly as possible a commanding apparatus for the workers' and peasants' Red Army.<sup>[67]</sup>



## NOTES

**67.** *The decree issued for the calling up of NCOs* was supplementary to a number of orders and decisions regarding the transition from volunteering for the Red Army to compulsory enlistment.

The first decision of the All-Russia CEC for conscription to the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army was taken on May 29. In view of the complex problems involved in applying this decree over the whole territory of Russia, the All-Russia CEC decided to begin applying it in the most directly threatened regions and in the principal centers of the labor movement - that is, in the Don and Kuban regions and in Moscow and Petrograd. The People's Commissar for Military Affairs was required to draw up within one week a plan for implementing the decree within such limits and forms as would cause the least disruption to the economic and social life of the regions and cities mentioned.

What must be seen as the first decree on mobilization was the decree of the Council of People's Commissars dated June 12, when workers and peasants born in 1893-1897 were ordered to report for military service in certain *uyezds* of the Volga, Ural and West-Siberia military districts. On June 14 'Instructions for procedure in reception of workers' and peasants' for military service were issued. On June 17 a decree of the Council of People's Commissars called up workers in the city of Moscow and its suburbs who were born in 1896 and 1897. On June 29 workers born in 18% and 1897 were called up in Petrograd and its suburbs. The growth in the size of the army and the shortage of commanding personnel compelled the Council of People's Commissars and the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs to call up for service a section of the former NCOs as well.

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Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE MILITARY SPECIALISTS

THE NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS

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\* \* \*

## Speech made to the Petrograd Manoeuvring Battalion of Non-Commissioned Officers, at Kozlov, in Autumn 1918

Comrades! When I arrived here I asked the commander of the Southern Front how the Petrograd Maneuvering Battalion of NCOs was looking. He replied: 'Splendid'. I had no doubt, comrades, that this would be so. The majority of you are, I know, from that very battalion of NCOs. From the technical standpoint you do not possess the advantages that the officers had. You are military men who know the soldier's trade precisely because the old army brought you forward, and from private soldiers turned you into NCOs. But you have at the same time enormous advantages from the class standpoint. You belong, flesh and blood, to the working class and the peasantry. That is why, comrades, what happens to your maneuvering battalion, and what happens to each one of you individually, is of very great importance for the Soviet Republic, for the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.

You know why and how the old Tsarist army perished. When it advanced on the front against Germany and Austria-Hungary it seemed all-powerful: in it there was much heroism, there were many self-sacrificing soldiers, there were honorable officers. True, in the highest posts of command these were only a tiny minority. This army went to pieces, collapsed and perished. Why?

The representatives of the old order said that the army had been ruined by agitators. We can answer that like this. The Tsar surrounded the army with all possible safeguards -- police and gendarmes, prisons and gallows - and yet this army was not safeguarded. The army went to pieces, it collapsed. Why did the agitators prove all-powerful? We can say, for example: let Tsarist agitators, agitators on behalf of the landlords and the bourgeoisie, try to get into our army in order to destroy it. They will burn their fingers, and their tongues. The Red Army does not give access to Tsarist counter-revolutionary agitators. Why did the old army refuse a hearing to revolutionary agitators and why does the army of today not refuse it? We have come to the heart of the matter. The old army mostly consisted, like the present one, of workers and peasants. How could it be other wise? Workers and peasants make up the overwhelming majority of our country's population. In all countries the army is nowadays recruited from the working masses. But

an army's character, its purpose, its aim is determined by the commanding apparatus, by those who form, educate and organize it, and to what end? For a long time Tsardom made of the army an automaton in which consciousness was not awakened and which obeyed orders even when these were mortally harmful to the interests of the masses. The old army consisted mainly of men from the peasant and worker masses. But above these peasants always stood a closely-welded officer corps drawn from the rich and educated classes. Every soldier was held in the grip of the discipline imposed by the commanding apparatus of officers. And the latter belonged, by virtue of their interests, habits and education, not with the soldiers whom they commanded, but with the powerful class which was headed by the Tsar.

This old army was strong down to a certain time. What ruined it, what disintegrated it? The same force which is now disintegrating the German army: the awakening of the soldier's mind and conscience. Only so long as the soldier obeyed his commander's orders automatically without thinking about their purpose, only so long did the army hold together. But an army cannot be kept in hand by *police discipline* alone. For every army, discipline must be created by the army itself. An army must understand what it serves, what its purpose is, *what* it is that obliges every honorable soldier to devote his strength and labor, and even his life and his blood, on behalf of these interests. And once an army has woken up, once the soldier's consciousness has spoken, then the old discipline and the old stories and catch phrases of the monarchy, the nobles and the bourgeoisie cease to be able to sustain this army. That is why our old Tsarist army broke up, splitting at every seam, and that is why today the strongest army in the world is breaking up -- I mean the German army, which is headed by the most skillful, cunning and experienced officer corps and the most solid landlord-bourgeois government in the world. The end has come for the German army, and it is collapsing.

After the break-up of the old army, the Soviet power set about creating a new one, on new foundations. Wherein, comrades, did our difficulty lie? It lay, on the one hand, in the weariness of the mass of the soldiers. They were sick and tired of their four years of war. It was hard to bring it home to the mind, the consciousness, the conscience of each individual worker and peasant that, despite the fact that our country was in a state of collapse, we had to fight. Despite the weariness of our army we had to make the army fight in defense of new interests, not those of the nobles and landlords, but those of the worker and peasant masses. And this difficulty was quickly overcome.

When the peasants had taken over the land, when the worker masses had made themselves masters of the factories, and the working people looked round, they saw that the greedy capitalists of Germany, Britain and France had fallen upon Russia, upon the Soviet land of honest labor.

In these circumstances we needed to create an army, and realization of this fact penetrated deeply into the consciousness of the masses. But here a new difficulty arose. *This was the question of the commanding apparatus.* The soldiers of the workers and peasants' country were, in the main, honest working men, but they did not have the technical preparation needed to defend the workers' interests. Where were we to find a commanding apparatus? Nine-tenths of the old officer corps, as I said, had sold its soul to the bourgeoisie and the landlords, and now, when the privileges and power of the monarchy and of the bourgeoisie had fallen, the old officer corps fled from the Soviet land. In the Ukraine nine-tenths of these officers sold their swords to German militarism. Over there, in the Archangel

region, they are hiring themselves out to the British bandits. In Siberia, in the Far East, they are selling themselves to America, or to the Japanese, just as everywhere they are taking service against the Russian

workers and peasants. Until recently, before Skoropadsky's position was shaken, officers of the General Staff were emigrating to the Ukraine. However, a section of the officers did remain, to serve the Soviet power -- only a minority of them, though. Among the officers there are, of course -- and you, as NCOs, know this from your own experience -- some honorable men. These honorable men from the officer corps understood that it was necessary to defend Russia, to safeguard the independence of the Russian people, and that this could only be done by a new army, constructed on new principles, with a new, solid, comradely discipline. And they are serving the Soviet army: but, I repeat, they are the minority, and they are not enough. We have set up training schools, in which soldiers -- workers and peasants - are taught the art of commanding small units, at least. But these schools cannot provide us in a short time with the commanding apparatus we need. Although the courses are short, it will take four or five months before we can create out of rank-and-file soldiers our new workers' and peasants' corps of officers. But we possess ready-made material for a commanding apparatus, in the shape of the many thousands of NCOs -- of you! You have now been called up, and some of you have been embodied in the Maneuvering Battalion. In you the Soviet power sees the future commanders of the workers' and peasants' Red Army. After the temporary interruption, you must refresh your military knowledge and revive the fighting spirit which lived in you and thanks to which you were, in your time, promoted and made NCOs. You need to get into close contact with the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army we are forming. I do not doubt that many of you, ninety-nine out of a hundred, will become in a very short time real leaders in our Workers' and Peasants' Army. You lack a completely finished education. We shall strive to ensure that in our new, workers' and peasants' country of labor, the children of the workers and peasants, your children -- shall receive education in all subjects. But what you do possess is living military experience and devotion to the cause of the workers and peasants. You have a sound popular consciousness, not clouded by lies, which you can and you want to put at the service of the workers and peasants. From such men, who do not fear danger, a real commanding apparatus will emerge, for the defense of the interests of the revolution.

Over a hundred years ago there took place the great French Revolution, which broke up the old army of the monarchy. Then, as now, the mass of the officers went over to the enemies of the French people, to the side of Britain against the French Revolution, just as now they are waging dishonorable war against us alongside the British capitalists. A section of the French officer corps went over to the side of Germany, and we know that they fought against the revolutionary people of France. They called the French working people *sansculottes* which means men without breeches. And those *sansculottes*; those men without breeches, created a real Red Army. Where did they get their commanders from? From the corporals, the NCOs? And Napoleon, who later became Emperor, when he was still a revolutionary general, [There is no hard evidence that Napoleon ever uttered this famous saying. He could hardly have used the expression when he was still a revolutionary general, since the rank of field marshal (*marechal de France*) was in fact abolished by the Convention in 1793. It was restored only by Napoleon himself, after he became Emperor, in 1804.] that every soldier carried in his knapsack the baton of a field-marshal -- meaning that in a revolutionary country every energetic and steadfast soldier may and must, in a moment of danger, take over the post of command, however high. Those marshals, forever NCOs, some of whom could not write their own names, became great revolutionary commanders. They not only threw the Germans and the British out of their country, but marches all across Europe at the head of the victorious French army, and everywhere dealt blows at the rule of serfdom and the clergy. This means that there they created a real people's army; forward from its own midst a real commanding apparatus.

And so, comrades, the Soviet power looks to you with confidence and hope. The work you are doing at



the moment is the phase of transition to posts of command. Each of you must see himself as an honorable worker for the Soviet Russia of the workers and peasants. The workers must know that you are masters of the soldier's trade, that you know well how to use arms, and that you use them in the interests of the worker and peasant masses: that you swear before the whole country never to direct your weapons against the working people, the workers and peasants, on behalf of the landlords and bourgeois.

I do not doubt that you will acquire authority and influence throughout our young Workers' and Peasants' Red Army now being formed. Then we shall have a workers' and peasants' commanding apparatus that is really our own. We need it urgently, for we have many enemies. The whole world is awakening, thanks to our workers' and peasants' revolution: in Germany militarism is collapsing, in Austria-Hungary it has already collapsed. Any day now it will collapse in France, Britain, America and Japan, and this collapse will be a severe blow to the bourgeoisie. But the bourgeoisie is not asleep: it may itself strike a hard blow at the revolution. As you know, the stable fly stings more painfully just before it dies. So it is with the bourgeoisie of imperialist Germany and Britain, who, feeling their death-agony coming on, are trying to strike a blow at Soviet Russia. But, meanwhile, we stand firm as an independent revolutionary country, our voice rings out like a tocsin for all countries. That is why the imperialist bourgeoisie has risen up against us, and why we must rise up in defense of the interests of the workers and peasant masses of the Soviet country.

Our enemies say that Soviet Russia will not create a new army. The German military press has said this. Not so long ago, three or four months back, a German general came to see me at the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs, as Germany's representative in the Soviet Republic. After the official statements had been made, he asked to stay and talk to me privately, and he put this question: 'Here you are, denouncing our discipline in your papers, but allow me to inquire how you are going to be able to create a new army for yourselves? With your ways of doing things, without a firm monarchical power based on authority, you won't be able to establish discipline.' To this I replied, also in a private capacity: 'Do you have discipline in Germany? You do. If, in the bourgeois countries, soldiers can put up with discipline against their inclinations, then our soldiers, who are beginning to understand better, as day follows day, that our discipline aims to promote the welfare of the soldiers and workers, will establish a discipline ten times firmer than yours.' That is true. I think that you will help the Red Army to establish such a discipline in itself and in all Red Armies as a whole. The workers of all countries are watching anxiously: are we going to fall beneath the onslaught of the counter-revolutionary forces? This question is discussed with concern in the revolutionary press of the West.

How will the Soviet power create a commanding apparatus in the Red Army? So long as the army was small, no more than a few tens of thousands of men, it was possible to obtain commanders from that section of the old officers, that minority, which went over to the side of the Soviet power. But where are we to find thousands of officers for the new revolutionary army? We can now tell our enemies that we have created a new officer corps. We have issued a call, appealing to the non commissioned officers and to all advanced, conscious fighters in whose breast beats an ardent desire to defend the Soviet Republic on all fronts. The doors of all the schools and military academies are open to all of them. We have purged these schools of everything out-of-date and taken from the bourgeoisie only what we need. We have left in our academies only that which is necessary for a real military and political leader, who has to influence the soldier masses. He must not only speak the truth but also know well his trade as a soldier.

I address myself to you, comrades, with this appeal: look on yourselves as real leaders of the workers' and peasants' army! Tomorrow you will be at the head of platoons, companies, battalions, regiments, and



you will really be called upon to command the new army which is being formed. Look on yourselves in such a way that the soldiers will look up to you. Train the young and create firm discipline! This discipline is not the discipline of the rod, it is the discipline of comrades. Formerly discipline was imposed by the rod. What we must have is a real Communist work-team. Let us take each other by the hand and establish among ourselves a firm, iron, co-operative discipline and proclaim to our workers and peasants that we will not let our country be desecrated.

I call on you to purge the bourgeoisie from our homeland!



# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE MILITARY SPECIALISTS

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE RED ARMY

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## ON THE MILITARY COMMISSARS

The post of military commissar, especially the commissar of a regiment, is one of the most difficult and responsible known to the Soviet Republic. Far from every comrade, however well-developed politically, can cope with the duties of a military commissar. Here what is needed above all is a firm, staunch character, with calm, vigilant courage, free from impetuosity. The commissar who acts without preparation, who turns up in a regiment with a ready-made intention to 'tighten the screws', set things right, correct and alter everything, before even knowing how, who or what, will inevitably come up against resistance, obstacles and rebuffs, and will risk becoming transformed into a grumbler-commissar. This is a fairly widespread type, though, fortunately, it accounts for only a small minority in our corps of commissars.

The grumbler-commissar is dissatisfied all the time and with everything: with the senior commissars, with the commanders, with the Revolutionary War Council of the army, with the regulations -- in short, with everybody and everything. Actually, this clamorous dissatisfaction has its root in the commissar himself: he is simply incapable of performing his duties, and is soon transformed into *a former* commissar.

The center of gravity of the problem does not lie at *all* where bad commissars look for it. The heart of the matter is not the conferring on the commissar of some unrestricted, all-embracing powers. The powers of

the commissar are quite adequate. The task is to learn, in practice and through experience, to make use of these powers without disrupting other people's work, but instead supplementing it and giving it direction.

There have not and do not exist any orders telling the commissar: 'thou hast no right to interfere in any dispositions whatsoever that are made by the commanders'.

The sphere in which the commissar has fewest 'rights' is that of operations, of command. Every sensible person appreciates that there cannot be two commanders at once, and especially not in a battle situation. But nobody has ever forbidden the commissar to express his opinion regarding operational problems, to give advice, to supervise the execution of an operational order, and so on. On the contrary, all this falls within the commissar's sphere of work, and if he understands what he is doing, he will always exercise a significant degree of influence, even in the sphere of command.

In the organizational, administrative and supply spheres, where the principal problems are solved not in battle situations but in the preparatory period, in the rear, commissars and commanders must work together and, generally speaking, the rights they possess are identical. If, day after day, they disagree on essential questions, this must mean that one or other of them fails to understand the fundamental tasks of constructive work in the military field. In that case, it will be necessary to remove either the commander or the commissar, taking into account which of them, in his work, has departed from the right road. If the disagreement between them relates to some secondary, practical matter, this must be referred up through the usual channels for arbitration. This procedure has, in fact, long since been established in our units, and has been confirmed by appropriate orders and interpretations.

In the sphere of political education it is the commissar who wields the conductor's baton, just as in the sphere of operational command this will always be wielded by the commander. But that does not mean in the least that the commander has no right to 'interfere' in the political work, if this interests him, and a good commander cannot fail to take an interest, since the state of political work has a tremendous influence on the fighting capacity of a unit.

The more the commissar tries to understand the work involved in operations, and the more the commander tries to understand the political work, the closer they will come to that system of one-man authority in which the person placed at the head of a unit combines in himself both commander and commissar, that is, leader in battle and political teacher.

Autumn 1918

## **THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNISTS IN THE RED ARMY**

Order by the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the Red Army and the Red Navy, December 11, 1918. No. 69, *Voronezh*

It is known to all soldiers, to all sailors, and indeed, to all citizens, what serious and responsible work has been and is being done by Communist comrades in the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army. Recently there have been cases, however, in which individual Communists have behaved unworthily, failing to act against pillage, not showing proper courage, and so on. Such Communists are unworthy of the name they bear and are merely persons who have wormed their way into a great calling. The Communist soldier has the same rights as any other soldier, and not a hair's breadth more: he only has incomparably more duties. The Communist soldier must be an exemplary warrior, he must always be in the forefront of the battle,

he must try to lead others to the places of greatest danger, he must be a model of discipline, conscientiousness and courage. At the front and in the rear he must offer others an example of careful treatment of public property in general and army property in particular. Only such a model soldier has the right to the name of Communist: otherwise he is a wretched pretender who must be called to account with twofold severity. I require the political departments of all the armies of the Soviet Republic to pay close attention to the conduct of Communists and thoroughly and in good time to clear the field of weeds.

## OUR POLICY IN CREATING THE ARMY

Theses adopted by the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party [69] in March 1919 [Included in Volume I, which covers 1918, because they generalize the experience of that year. I did not deliver a report at the Congress because I was at the front. -- *LT*]

### A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

I

The old Social-Democratic program called for the establishment of a militia of the whole people, made UP of all citizens capable of bearing arms, whose military training would be carried on, so far as possible, outside barracks. This programmatic demand, which in the epoch of the Second International was directed against the imperialist standing armies with their barracks training, long terms of service and officer castes, possessed the same historical significance as other democratic demands -- universal and equal suffrage, a single-chamber system, and so on. Under conditions of 'peaceful' capitalist development and the necessity, for the time being, to adapt the class struggle of the proletariat to the context of bourgeois legality, one of the tasks of the Social-Democrats was, naturally, to demand the most democratic forms of organization for the capitalist state and the capitalist army. The struggle waged on this basis undoubtedly had its educational value, but, as was shown by the great experience of the last war, the struggle to democratize bourgeois militarism yielded even smaller results than the struggle to democratize the bourgeois parliamentary system. For, in the sphere of militarism, the bourgeoisie can, if it is not to abdicate, allow only such 'democratism' as does not affect its class rule: that is, illusory, pretended democratism. When what is at issue is the fundamental interests of the bourgeoisie, in the international sphere as in internal relations, bourgeois militarism in Germany, France, Switzerland, Britain and America, regardless of all the differences in forms of the state and structures of the army, has displayed identical features of ruthless class brutality.

II

When the class struggle has been transformed into open civil war, tearing away the veil of bourgeois law and bourgeois-democratic institutions, the slogan of a 'people's militia' loses all its meaning, in exactly the same way as the slogan of democratic parliamentarism, and so becomes a weapon for reaction. Just as the 'Constituent Assembly' slogan became a cover for activity aimed at restoring the power of the landlords and capitalists, so the slogan of a 'people's' army, or an army 'of all the people', became a means of building the armies of Krasnov and Kolchak.

After the experience of the Russian revolution it takes the truly despicable petty-bourgeois blindness of a

Kautsky to go on preaching formal democracy in the sphere of the organization of state power and the army,[70] at a time when the German Constituent Assembly has fled from Berlin to Weimar, giving itself into the protection of White-Guard regiments, when General Hoffmann is recruiting his iron battalions from the sons of Junkers, bourgeois and kulaks, and the Spartacists[71] are arming the revolutionary workers. The epoch of proletarian revolution which has begun is an epoch of open civil war of the proletariat against every bourgeois state and every bourgeois army, regardless of whether or not it is concealed beneath democratic forms. The victory of the proletariat in this civil war will inevitably lead to the establishment of a proletarian class state and class army.

### III

In setting aside for the present historical period the so called 'nation-wide' character of the militia, as it was defined in our old program, we do not break with the program of a militia as such. We put political democracy on a class basis and transform it into Soviet democracy. We shift the militia on to a class basis and transform it into a Soviet militia. Our immediate program of work thus consists in creating an army of the workers and poor peasants on the basis of compulsory military training, carries on, so far as possible, outside of barracks, that is, under conditions close to the work-situation of the working class.

### IV

The actual course of development of our Red Army runs, so to speak, counter to the requirements which have just been stated. At first we created the army on the basis of *volunteering*. When, later, we introduced compulsory military training, for workers and peasants who do not exploit the labor of others, we at the same time resorted to the compulsory call-up of a series of age-groups of the working classes. These contradictions were not accidental deviations, but resulted from the actual circumstances and constituted quite unavoidable transitional forms in the work of creating the army in the concrete conditions which had been bequeathed to us by the imperialist war and the bourgeois (February) revolution.

*Volunteering* is the only possible means of forming units with any degree of combat-readiness under conditions in which the old army has broken down catastrophically, along with all the organs for its formation and administration. The best proof of this is furnished by the fact that, in Germany today, the counter-revolutionary generals find themselves obliged, equally with the Spartacists, to resort to the forming of volunteer battalions. Going over from volunteering to conscription became possible when the main masses of the old army had been dispersed among the towns and villages, and when we had succeeded in establishing in the localities local organs of military administration: for registration, formation and supply (the *volost*, *uyezd*, province and district commissariats).

### V

Counterpoising the idea of guerrilla units to that of an army organized and centralized in a planned way (as preached by the 'Left' SRs and their like) is a caricatural product of the political thought, or thoughtlessness of the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia. Guerrilla methods of struggle were forced on the proletariat, in the first period, by its oppressed position in the state, just as it was forced to use primitive underground printing presses and to hold secret meetings of small groups. The conquest of political power made it possible for the proletariat to use the state apparatus to build, in a planned way, a



centralized army, unity in the organization and direction of which could alone ensure that the maximum results were obtained with the minimum sacrifice. Preaching guerrillaism as a military program is equivalent to advocating a reversion from large scale industry to the handicraft system. Such advocacy is fully in accordance with the nature of intellectual groups which are incapable of wielding state power, incapable even of seriously conceiving the task of wielding this power, and which excel in guerrilla (polemical or terroristic) forays against the workers' power.

## VI

We can consider it theoretically irrefutable that we should obtain the best of armies if we were to create our army on the basis of compulsory training of the workers and the working peasants under *conditions close to their everyday work*. An all-round improvement in industry and an increase in the collective character and the productivity of agricultural work would establish the soundest of bases for the army -- companies, battalions, regiments, brigades and divisions would then coincide with factory workshops, factories, villages, *volost*, *uyezd*, provinces and so on. Such an army, which would be formed, step by step, parallel with the economic revival of the country and with the education of the commanding personnel, would be the most invincible army in the world. We are moving towards precisely that kind of army, and sooner or later we shall arrive at it. [\[72\]](#)

## VII

The need to repulse our class enemies, internal and external, immediately and without delay did not permit us, however, to proceed by this 'organic' route towards a workers' and peasants' militia, for which several years would be required, or, at least, many months. Just as on the morrow of the October revolution we were obliged to have recourse to volunteer formations, so, in the next phase, the summer of last year, when the imperialist ring tightened especially closely around Soviet Russia, we were obliged to speed up our military work and without waiting for militia formations (that is, out-of-barracks formations of the territorial type), to resort to compulsory general mobilization of certain age groups and to hastily training them and concentrating them in barracks. At the same time, the War Department made every effort to ensure that every barracks was as much as possible like a military school, and to make it a center not only of purely military instruction but also of general and political education.

## VIII

The active army that we have at present that is, the army which is in action or is directly preparing for action -- is of the transitional type which has been indicated: although a class army in its social composition, it is not a militia but a 'standing' or 'regular' army in respect of the methods whereby it is formed and trained. While this latter circumstance is the source of many internal difficulties, especially under the conditions of the country's extreme exhaustion, at the same time we can state with satisfaction that even this transitional type of army, created under the most unfavorable conditions, has shown itself able to beat its adversaries.

## IX

Concurrently with the barracked or the purely field formations -- that is, those formed in the course of active operations -- extensive work is going ahead for universal training of the workers and working peasants in the localities. In relation to our regular formations, the work of universal training was viewed, in its first stages, as elementary preparation, as the inculcation of certain habits in the individual fighter, so as to accelerate his apprenticeship later on in the combat unit which he will join. There can be no doubt that, even from this limited standpoint, universal training is already now performing an important service towards the creation of the army.

## X

But the task of universal training is not limited to the above-mentioned. The universal training of the workers and working peasants is a task of the first importance for the army.

individual fighter and a type of unit as a whole, which is better-qualified than a; present. The militia army must be an army which is trained, armed and organized in accordance with the last word in military science.

## XIV

The commissars in the army are not only the direct and immediate representatives of the Soviet power but also, and above all, the bearers of the spirit of our Party, its discipline, its firmness and courage in the struggle to achieve the aims laid down. The Party may look with complete satisfaction upon the heroic work done by its commissars, who, shoulder to shoulder with the best elements of the commanding apparatus, have in a short time created an army capable of waging war. At the same time it is necessary that the Political Departments of the army, under the direct guidance of the central committee, shall continue to carry out their work of selection among the commissars, eliminating all elements that are in any degree fortuitous, unreliable or careerist.

The commissars' work can produce full results only if it is based, in every unit, upon the direct support given by a cell of Communist soldiers. The rapid increase in the number of Communist cells is the most important guarantee that the army will be permeated to an ever greater extent with the ideas and the discipline of communism. But just because of the tremendous role played by the Communist cells, the commissars and, in general, all the most mature Party workers in the army, must take measures to ensure that unreliable elements do not get into the cells, in search of imaginary rights and privileges. Respect for the Communist cells will be the higher and more unshakable the more clearly that every soldier understands, and is convinced by experience, that membership of a Communist cell gives a soldier no special rights, but only imposes upon him the duty to be the most self-sacrificing and courageous of fighters.

Approving in its entirety the statute composed by the Central Committee regarding the rights and duties of Communist cells, commissars and political departments, the Congress declares it to be the duty of all comrades working in the army to conform undeviatingly to this statute.

## XV

The demand for the election of commanders, which possessed enormous importance from the standpoint of principle in relation to the bourgeois army, in which the commanding apparatus was selected and educated as an apparatus for class subordination of the soldiers, and, through the soldiers, of the working masses, loses its principled significance completely where the workers' and peasants' class-based Red Army is concerned. A possible combination of election and appointment is imposed upon the revolutionary class army exclusively by practical considerations, and depends on the level of formation attained, the degree of solidity of an army unit, the availability of command cadres. In general it can be said that the less mature a unit is, the more fortuitous and transient its composition and the less its young commanders have been tested by experience, then the less expedient it may prove to be to apply the principle of election of commanders, and, contrariwise, growth in the internal cohesion of units, development by the soldier of a critical attitude to himself and to his leaders, the creation of considerable cadres of combatant commanders, of both lower and higher rank, who have shown their qualities in the conditions of the new war, create favorable conditions for the principle of election of commanders to be given ever wider application.

## XVI

The question of the commanding apparatus, which presents great practical difficulties, does not, in essence, provide any basis for differences *of principle*.

Even if it had been possible for our army, within a few years, to take shape in a planned way, and at the same time to prepare a new commanding apparatus for itself, we still should have had no grounds of principle for refusing to enlist in the work those elements of the old commanding apparatus which have either inwardly adopted the standpoint of the Soviet power or, by the force of circumstances, have seen themselves as obliged conscientiously to serve it. The revolutionary character of the army is determined, above all, by the character of the Soviet regime which creates this army, which sets it its aims and makes it, so to speak, its instrument. On the other hand, the conformity of this instrument to the Soviet regime is achieved by the class composition of the main mass of the soldiers, by the organization of the commissars and the Communist cells, and, finally, by the overall Party and Soviet guidance of the life and activity of the army.

Work on the training and education of the new officer corps, drawn predominantly from among the workers and advanced peasants, is one of the most important tasks involved in the creation of the army. The steady increase in the number of instructional courses and of pupils attending them bears witness to the fact that the War Department is devoting to this task all the attention it deserves. Together with the Higher Military Academy (of the General Staff), five schools of an intermediate type are being organized -- half-way between instructional courses and the Higher Military Academy. Nevertheless, there are in the Red Army of today a very large number of commanders from the old army, who are doing their responsible work with great benefit to the cause. The need for selection and control, in order to keep out traitors and provocateurs, is obvious and, so far as experience goes, it is in practice performed more or less satisfactorily by our military organization. From this standpoint, the Party can have no grounds for revising our army policy.

## XVII

The regulations published hitherto (for the internal services, for the field armies, for the garrisons) which bring solidity and shape into the army's internal relations, into the rights and duties of its component elements, and therefore constitute a big step forward; nevertheless reflect the transitional period in the formation of our army and will be subject to further modification, as the old 'barracks' features of the formation of the army are overcome and it is increasingly transformed into a class-militia army.

## XVIII

The agitation carried on from the camp of the bourgeois democrats (the SRs and Mensheviks) against the Red Army, as a manifestation of 'militarism' and the basis for creeping Bonapartism, is only an expression of political ignorance or charlatanism, or a mixture of both. Bonapartism is not a product of military organization as such, but a product of particular social relations. The political rule of the petty-bourgeoisie, standing between the reactionary big-bourgeois elements and the revolutionary proletarian lower orders, not yet capable of playing an independent political role or of exercising political rule, provided the necessary prerequisite for the rise of Bonapartism, which found its bulwark in the well to do peasant and rose above the class contradictions which had not been solved by the revolutionary

program of petty-bourgeois (Jacobin) democracy. In so far as the foundation of Bonapartism is the kulak peasant, to that extent the very social composition of our army, from which kulaks are excluded and driven out, furnishes a quite serious guarantee against Bonapartism tendencies. The Russian parodies of Bonapartism, in the form of the Krasnov movement, the Kolchak movement, and so on, grew not out of the Red Army but in direct and open struggle against it. Skoropadsky, the Ukrainian Bonaparte in Hohenzollern's leading-strings, formed an army based on a property-qualification directly opposite to the class basis of the Red Army, recruiting well-to-do kulaks for his regiments. Given these conditions, it is possible to see the army of the proletarians and the rural poor as a bulwark of Bonapartism only if one is one of those who yesterday, either directly or indirectly, supported the candidates for the role of Bonaparte in the Ukraine, on the Don, at Archangel and in Siberia!

Since the Red Army is only the instrument of a particular regime, the basic guarantee against Bonapartism, just as against any other form of counter-revolution, has to be sought in the regime itself. Counter-revolution cannot in any way develop out of the regime of proletarian dictatorship it can establish itself only as a result of a direct and open bloody victory over this regime. The development and consolidation of the Red Army is needed precisely in order to render such a victory impossible. Thus, the historical meaning of the Red Army's existence is that it is the instrument of socialist self-defense by the proletariat and the village poor, defending them against the danger of kulak-bourgeois Bonapartism, backed by foreign imperialism.

## XIX

The class militia is not the last word in the building of communism, because the aim of the latter is to abolish class struggle by abolishing classes themselves, and therefore class armies as well. As the socialist economy becomes organized, the Soviet class state will be more and more completely dissolved in the guiding apparatus of production and distribution and in the cultural-administrative organs. Freed of its class character, the state will cease to be a state and will become an organ of economic and cultural self-government. Along with this, the army will lose its class character. It will become an army *of the whole people* in the true sense of the word, because in the socialist commune there will *be* no more parasitic, exploiting, kulak elements. The formation of this army will rely directly upon the mighty labor groupings of the citizens of the socialist republic, while its supplies will be furnished directly by powerfully growing socialist production. This army, that is, the well-trained and well-armed, socialistically-organized people, will be the strongest army the world has ever known. It will not only serve as the instrument of defense of the socialist community against possible attacks by still existing imperialist states, it will also enable decisive support to be given to the proletariat of those states in their struggle against imperialism.

## B. PRATICAL MEASURES

In the light of these fundamental provisions, the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party considers it necessary to implement the following immediate practical measures:

1. Undeviating application of the principle of class mobilization of working elements only, with careful separation off into special labor battalions (companies) of the kulak and parasitic elements -- a principle which has not yet been applied, despite the official decision to this effect.



2. Continued enlistment of military specialists for duties of command and administration, and selection of reliable elements, while keeping them under unremitting centralized party-political supervision, exercised through the commissariat, and removing those who prove to be politically and technically unfit.

Organization of a system of checking the credentials of the commanding personnel -- the commissars to be responsible for periodically compiling these certifications.

4. Intensifying the formation of commanding personnel from among proletarians and semi-proletarians and improving this work from the standpoint of both military and political preparation, with establishment, both in the rear and at the front, for this purpose, of competent credentials commissions made up predominantly of Party representatives, with the task of systematically ending to the Red officers' schools those Red Army men who are best prepared, by their battle -- experience, to become Red officers.

Review of the course programs in accordance with the spirit of the Red Army in the circumstances of civil war. Special attention to be given by local Party organizations to the proper presentation of political education in the courses. [Points 3 and 4: The bodies set up to check the credentials of commanding personnel and certify, their fitness for appointment to various types and levels of appointment are sometimes called 'Attestation Commissions'. On the technicalities of Soviet military organization in this period, see Erickson, J., *The Soviet High Command* 1962.]

5. Local organizations to be made responsible for carrying on systematic and intense work of Communist education among the Red Army men in rear units by assigning special workers to this task.

6. The Central Committee of the Party to be charged with organizing planned distribution of Communists among the units of the army and navy.

7. The center of gravity of Communist work at the front to be shifted from the Political Departments of the fronts to the Political Departments of the armies and divisions, so as to stimulate it and bring it closer to the units active at the front. An agreed and precise resolution to be published regarding the rights and duties of Political Committees, Political Departments and Communist cells.

8. The All-Russia Bureau of Military Commissars to be abolished. A Political Department of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to be formed; all the functions of the All-Russia Bureau of Military Commissars to be transferred to this department, which is to be headed by a member of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party with the powers of a member of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic.

9. Military regulations to be revised with a view to making them more concise wherever possible, eliminating all archaisms and provisions establishing unnecessary privileges for the commanding personnel, and allotting the proper place in the schedule of activities to questions of political education.

10. The resolution on commissars and revolutionary war councils to be speedily revised so as to define precisely the rights and duties of commissars and commanders, assigning the

decision of questions of supply and administration to commanders jointly with commissars and assigning to commissars the right to impose disciplinary penalties (including the right of arrest) and the right to bring persons to trial.

11. Recognition of the need to subordinate the 'special sections'[The 'special sections' carried out in the armed forces functions similar to those of the Cheka among the civilian population.] of the armies and fronts to the respective commissars of the armies and fronts, leaving to the 'special section' of the Republic the functions of general guidance and supervision of their activity.

12. Recognition of the need, in future, when general-guidance regulations, decisions and instructions are formulated, to submit them, when possible, for previous consideration by the political workers in the army.

## NOTES

**69.** *The Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks)* was held in Moscow between March 18 and 23, 1919. The principal points on the agenda were: drawing up the Party programme, problems of military policy, and organising work in the rural areas. The Congress drew up and approved a new Party programme. Comrade Lenin's report on our attitude towards the middle peasant provided the basis for a long-term alliance between the urban proletariat and the middle peasantry. The fundamental report on the military question was given by Comrade Sokolnikov, who expounded Comrade Trotsky's theses. A supplementary report, for the opposition, was given by Comrade Smirnov. Its main demands amounted to extending the powers of commissars and strengthening their influence not only in the administrative and organisational sphere but also in that of operations. After detailed discussion of these questions in the military commission, the Congress adopted Comrade Trotsky's theses. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**70.** Attempts to apply *the principles of formal democracy on German soil* ended very sadly. The November 1918 revolution in that country grew out of the Kiel mutiny in 1917 and the general strike in January 1918. This movement, as it grew stronger, led to the abdication of Wilhelm. At the head of the rebel workers and soldiers, Karl Liebknecht proclaimed a socialist republic. 'True democrats' (according to Kautsky) came to power: three Scheidemannites and three Independents. Already in January 1919 the petty-bourgeoisie, frightened by the spectre of social revolution, began to carry out bloody measures of repression. These were followed by suppression of workers' revolts in Berlin and Bavaria, the Kapp putsch and the unleashing of Fascism. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**71.** *The Spartacists* were an illegal organisation formed in Germany, at the beginning of the World war, by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, to combat the bourgeoisie and the official Social-Democratic Party. Spartacus was the name of the leader of a Roman slave revolt. After the November revolution in Germany the League of Spartacists ceased to exist and was merged in the newly-formed Communist Party of Germany. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**72.** An important step forward in the direction of forming military units in conditions close to the everyday labors of the worker and peasant was the *partial transition to the militia mode of formation in the Red Army*. In 1923 a number of divisions were put on a militia basis. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)



# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE CIVIL WAR IN RSFSF IN 1918

THE FIRST ACTS OF ALLIED INTERVENTION

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[TOWARD INTERVENTION](#) [In the bourgeois press and among those who echo what it says it was widely alleged that I had said at a meeting that occupation by the Germans was preferable to occupation by the Japanese. *Novaya Zhizn* picking up this dirty gossip, raised the question of what plans and diplomatic combinations were hidden behind this statement. -- *L.T.*]

[ORDER BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR MILITARY AND NAVAL AFFAIRS -- July 1, 1918](#)

[THE LANDING AT MURMANSK](#)

[ORDER BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR MILITARY AND NAVAL AFFAIRS -- July 17, 1918](#)

[ORDER BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR MILITARY AND NAVAL AFFAIRS TO THE RED ARMY AND THE RED NAVY -- July 22, 1918](#)

[A WARNING](#)

[ORDER BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR MILITARY AND NAVAL AFFAIRS -- August 6, 1918](#)

[AN AMERICAN LIE](#)

## TOWARD INTERVENTION

I have actually spoken on this subject already, and, alas, more than once.

Ever since the Anglo-French (especially the French) press began to insist upon the need for military intervention in Russian affairs by the Allies, so as to push our country into war with Germany, I have declared, in complete conformity with general Soviet policy, that we cannot regard interference by the Allied imperialists in any other light than as a hostile attempt on the freedom and independence of Soviet Russia.

This means that if they try to effect a landing, we shall resist with all the means at our disposal.

So far as that matter is concerned, we see no difference between encroachment by the Germans and 'friendly' encroachment by the Allied armies.

Furthermore, in order to illustrate this idea of mine, I have said more than once that the 'Allies' would be able to make a serious military attack only with the help of the Japanese army. Fools alone can imagine that the Japanese army will invade Russian soil for no other purpose than to help the Allies and free Russia from the Germans.

If Japan interfered in Russian affairs it would be solely in order to enslave Russia and, on encountering the German forces, to extend to them the hand of friendship.

If, I added, Russia were to find herself, even if only temporarily, faced with the necessity of choosing between a Japanese and a German occupation, then, certainly, we should have to recognize that a Japanese occupation would be not less but more dangerous for the fate of the Russian people, for we have incomparably fewer grounds to hope for the possibility of profound internal changes in Japan, in the near future, than in the case of Germany.

That was the gist of what I said at the meeting.

I expressed myself in exactly the same sense not only at the meeting but in my talks with French officers, British representatives and the Serbian minister Spalaikovich, a few months back.

Those who interpret this argument, which is logically quite irrefutable, as pointing towards an alliance with Germany against the 'Allies' must be persons who either understand nothing or are being paid not to understand.

As regards the statement published in one newspaper that I spoke about possible co-operation by Germany in the fight against the Czechoslovaks, this, too, belongs to the category of those provocative rumors, spread by the Right SRs and Mensheviks, which played a substantial role in stimulating the Czechoslovak mutiny. At the joint meeting in the Bolshoi Theater<sup>[73]</sup> I have already declared for all to hear that only scoundrels can spread such rumors. I have no reason to change anything in that declaration.

Izv. V. Ts.I.K., June 22, 1918



## **ORDER BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR MILITARY AND NAVAL AFFAIRS -- July 1, 1918**

Notwithstanding the direct protest made by the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, foreign troops have landed at Murmansk. I have been instructed by the Council of People's Commissars to take the necessary measures to protect the White Sea coast from the aggression by foreign imperialists. In fulfillment of this task entrusted to me, I declare:

1. Any aid whatsoever, direct or indirect, given to the foreign force which is intruding into the Soviet Republic will be regarded as treason to the state, punishable by martial law.
2. The movement of prisoners-of-war towards Murmansk or Archangel, either as groups, whether armed or unarmed, or as individuals, is unconditionally forbidden. Any breach of this prohibition will be punished by martial law.
3. No-one, whether Russian or foreigner, can go to the White Sea coast without the permission of the military commissar of the nearest district. Travelers approaching the coast without this permission will be liable to instant arrest.

Izv.V.Ts.LK., no 135 July 2,1918

### **THE LANDING AT MURMANSK**

The measures taken by the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs to deal with the landing by our former allies at Murmansk are completely in accordance with the instructions I received from the Council of People's Commissars and, in particular, from the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs.

Any attempt made by our former allies to transform the White Sea coast into a base for their operations will meet with an uncompromising rebuff from us.

As is known, I have dispatched the armed forces needed to safeguard the Northern coast against any encroachments whatsoever.

The force landed by our ex-allies is numerically insignificant, and more symbolic than effective. The Anglo-French imperialists apparently count on establishing in the North a pole of attraction for all sorts of adventurers, mercenaries, counter-revolutionaries and traitors. To this end, our ex-allies have long since been bribing certain groups of the White-Sea coast inhabitants, and, in particular, the Murmansk Soviet<sup>[74]</sup> and some of the military and naval representatives in the area.

At the same time, an attempt was made by French and other officers to move to the North substantial units of Czechoslovak, Serbian, French and Russian White Guards, especially airmen, so as to form a powerful occupying force at Murmansk, and later at Archangel.

Two groups of prisoners-of-war, consisting of 100 Serbs and 200 Italians, did actually succeed in getting through to Archangel, with a certain quantity of weapons. A most searching inquiry is now under way to

establish the routes by which these groups traveled and who it was that helped them.

In accordance with my orders, these two groups have, of course, already been disarmed and placed under arrest.

The central food-supply administration received an application from the French military mission for an issue of foodstuffs for a thousand men who were allegedly being sent through Murmansk to France. This is, as we know, the formula by means of which adventurers, mercenaries and crooks are being mobilized for the occupying forces. Officially, they are being sent 'to France', but in reality they are destined to raise a revolt on Russia soil and to seize our Northern coast.

A few days ago a group such as this, consisting of a few dozen Czechoslovak and Polish White Guards and French officers, was detained in Moscow and put in prison. The measures taken provide some guarantee that no further sudden movement and concentration towards the North by similar groups can occur. Those Russian traitors who treat as normal the barefaced arbitrariness committed by foreigners in our North, and provide help to it, will be dealt with in short order.

The picture before us is now extremely instructive for any honest observer. Exactly the same groups and classes of the population show themselves Anglophil or Germanophil in orientation, depending on whose help is nearest to hand. The Cadets and Right SRs go along with the Japanese in the Far East, in the North with the British and French, in the Ukraine and on the Don, and at Pskov and Dvinsk, with the Germans, and the Cadet who makes an agreement with Skoropadsky in no way blames as unpatriotic the Cadet who is ready to sell Russia to the Anglo-French stock-exchange speculators, while the latter fully 'understands' his colleague in the Ukraine.

Krasnov operates according to a German orientation. His brother Dutov leans towards the Czechoslovaks and the British. The third man, Semyonov, has hired himself out to Japan. All three of them are fulfilling the instructions of the Russian bourgeoisie. This is their patriotism, their national dignity, their national honor.

In conclusion, I should just like to draw attention to the specific activity of the French military mission in Russia during the revolution. It is hard to conceive anything more limited, short-sighted and helpless than a French petty-bourgeois clad in a General's uniform or a diplomat's frock-coat. Above all, this petty-bourgeois is ignorant of geography and incapable of finding his feet in an unfamiliar setting. As a result, the activity of France's agents in Russia was entirely directed against the elementary interests of France. I shall not deal in detail with the actions of the French diplomatic and military representatives, but will mention only the most important of these.

France raised up the Romanians against us<sup>[75]</sup> -- and the Romanians ended by transporting the German troops into New Russia.

The French raised up the Rada against us, helping it with money and military leadership -- and the Rada ended by allying itself with Germany and Austria-Hungary.

The French supported Kornilov, Kaledin and Krasnov -- and Krasnov is working with Skoropadsky.

It was the French who pressed hardest for Japanese intervention. But one would need to be really as innocent as Tartarin [Tartarin is a character in stories by Alphonse Daudet who is not so much innocent' as disposed, Walter-Mitty-like, to believe his own tall stories about his adventures.] to suppose that Japan

wants to get involved in an armed conflict with Germany, and not merely to grab the Russian provinces of the Far East.

This was, and still is, the policy of all the agents of France on Russian territory. Mr. Clemenceau is nothing but an hysterical petty-bourgeois, a journalist who has not recovered from a state of chauvinist intoxication. He is in charge of the policy of unfortunate France, which has been drained of blood. Through his agents he is everywhere creating enemies for himself.

Let us actually try, in a calm way, to answer the question: what is it that the British and the French want? They want to involve Russia in the war, to create a new Eastern Front. The Soviet power does not want this. Hence the idea of overthrowing the Soviet power.

Let us assume for a moment that they succeed in their aim. Does any sensible person imagine that the working class and the revolutionary poor peasants, who undividedly follow us, would quietly and for a long time put up with the establishment of bourgeois government that made an alliance with Anglo French imperialism?

The moment that the Soviet power was overthrown would see the beginning of a civil war throughout the country on a scale twice and three times as great as before. There could be no question of Russia making any contribution to the war under these conditions.

A Russian bourgeois government would find itself under such pressure from the working people that any independent policy would be quite beyond its capacity. A government headed by Milyukov and Kerensky in Russia would be incomparable weaker even than Skoropadsky's government in the Ukraine. And Skoropadsky's government depends entirely on the support from foreign bayonets.

the immediate future we shall extend this mobilization of certain age-groups to all parts of Russia.

I do not doubt that the All-Russia Congress of Soviets [\[76\]](#) will sanction the transition to compulsory military service for the sake of protecting the security of the Soviet Republic from imperialist onslaughts. And then the last word on all this will be spoken by the working class of Europe and of the world.

Izv.V. Ts.I.K., July 4, 1918

## **ORDER BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR MILITARY AND NAVAL AFFAIRS --July 17, 1918**

In connection with the Anglo-French landing on the Mermansk coast and the overt Participation by French officers in the counter-revolutionary mutiny of the Czechoslovak mercenaries, I hereby give the strictest instructions to all institutions of the War Department, and to all service personnel generally, to provide no assistance of any kind to French or British military or navy officers, not to permit them to move from one town to another, and vigilantly to observe all their actions, since these are the actions of persons who, as facts show, are capable of Plotting on the territory of the Russian Republic against the sovereign rights of the Russian people.

This order is to be sent out by telegraph, and to remain in force until the reasons for it have been eliminated, which will be announced in due course.

Izv.V.Ts.I.K., no 149 July 17, 1918

## **ORDER BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR MILITARY AND NAVAL AFFAIRS TO THE RED ARMY AND THE RED NAVY -- July 22, 1918**

Yaroslavl has been for the last week the scene of a carefully organized revolt. Agents of Anglo-French imperialism, White Guards of the monarchist and SR persuasions, bourgeois adventurers, monks, grammar-school boys and criminal thugs came together in a fierce revolt against the workers and peasants. Treachery put into the rebels' hands an abundance of artillery stores. Participation by numerous officers gave the rebels all the advantages of military technique. Nevertheless, the Soviet forces succeeded in surrounding the town, suppressing the revolt, and disarming and taking prisoner many of the rebels. The stern fist of the revolution has descended upon the heads of the criminal enemies of the people.

The flag of the Soviet Republic waves once more over Yaroslavl.

Published in *Izv. V. Ts. I. K.*, No. 154, July 23, 1918 and in *Izv. Narhomvoyen*, July 24, 1918

### **A WARNING**

In various parts of the country the Soviet authorities have detained Russian, Polish, Serbian, Czechoslovak and other officers and soldiers who have revealed that they had been sent either to Murmansk or to the Czechoslovaks by French recruiting agents. The foreign imperialists are thus daring to recruit, on Russian soil, mercenaries for their struggle against Russia.

I issue this warning:

1. No-one has the right to go to Murmansk, to Archangel or to the zone of the Czechoslovak revolt without permission in writing from the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs.
2. Anyone who sells himself to the foreign imperialists in order to take part in revolts or in the occupation of Russian territory will be punished with death.

This warning is to be hung in railway stations and railway carriages, printed in the Russian, Polish, Serbian and Czechoslovak languages, so that no-one may plead ignorance of it.

July 23, 1918

*Izv. N. K. po V. D.*,

July 25, 1918

## **ORDER BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR MILITARY AND NAVAL AFFAIRS -- August 6, 1918**

To the member of the Board of the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs Comrade Kedrov, to the Kasan Revolutionary War Council and to the Vologda Province Militia Commissariat, August 6, 1918

The circumstances under which Archangel was temporarily lost<sup>[78]</sup> show that certain representatives of the local Soviet power far from always display those qualities which are obligatory for every revolutionary occupying a post of responsibility: endurance, energy and courage.

It has again been confirmed that there are Soviet representatives who, at the first sign of danger, hasten to take to their heels, considering that their most important task is to save their own lives.

Creatures of this sort have nothing in common with the revolution. They are not fighters or Communists, but wretched Soviet careerists who have temporarily attached themselves to our great cause.

Any representative of the Soviet power who leaves his post at a moment of military danger without having done all he could to defend every inch of Soviet territory is a traitor. Treachery in wartime is punished with death.

I instruct you immediately to detain and arrest all those Soviet workers in Archangel who, according to evidence strictly verified by you, must be regarded as deserters, so that they may be brought to trial before the Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal.

Published in Izv.V.Ts.I.K., no.166, August 6, 1918

## AN AMERICAN LIE

To all, to all, to all. Announcement by the People's Commissariat for Military and Naval Affairs, August 22, 1918 .

When, in April, the Japanese landing at Vladivostok was being prepared, the General Staff in Tokyo circulated by the Allies' cables the story that the Trans-Siberian Railway was under threat from German and Austro-Hungarian prisoners.

I then sent out from Moscow, along the Trans-Siberian line, American and British officers who were obliged to confirm officially that all the reports about a threat to the line from prisoners were foolish inventions. [For the Webster-Hicks report on prisoners-of-war in Siberia, mentioned here, see Bunyan, J., *Intervention, Civil War and Communism in Russia*, April-December 1918 (1936) and sources given there. About 50,000 former German and Austro-Hungarian prisoners-of-war eventually served in the Red Army. They fought in Transcaspia against the British-Indian forces which had entered from Persia and on the Manchurian frontier against Ataman Semyonov. They also played, along with the Lettish and Chinese units, an important role in internal security, as in the suppression of the Left SR revolt in Moscow by Bela Kun's Hungarians. K. Paustovsky describes (*In That Dawn*, p.159) the suppression by an 'Internationalist' unit of a mutiny in the Red Army. Trotsky makes another reference to the Webster-Hicks report in his speech of April 14, 1918, published as *A Paradise In This World*, by the British Socialist Party in 1920 (pp.5-6).]

This fact is well-known to ex-Ambassador Francis and to the former head of the American Red Cross in Russia, Colonel Robins.

Now, when intervention by the Allies has become an accomplished fact, the American Government has picked up the Japanese lie and is trying to present it to the world in warmed up form.

According to the American statement, the aim of the Allied intervention is to bring help to the Czechoslovaks against armed German and Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war who have attacked them. Participation by these prisoners in the struggle against the Czechoslovaks is no less a monstrous invention than the Japanese statement about danger to the Trans-Siberian railway from the Germans.



It is true that there are in the Soviet forces a certain number of former prisoners of war, revolutionary socialists who have become Russian citizens and are ready to fight against any imperialism, from whatever direction it may come. It must, however, be said that the internationalists who are soldiers in the Soviet army make up no more than one- twenty-fifth of the Soviet forces as a whole.

Izv. V. Ts.I.K., No, 181, August 22, 1918

## NOTES

73. The reference is to the joint session of the Fourth All-Russia CEC and the Moscow Soviet of Workers', Peasants' and Red Army Men's Deputies on June 4, 1918. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

74. Insignificant detachments of Allied troops (mostly British) occupied Murmansk already during the World War, to provide protection *for* the deliveries of artillery and ammunition from the Entente. After the October Revolution these detachments remained at Murman, and after the German landing in Finland in April 1918 they were reinforced, and the Allied command began negotiations with the Merman Territory Soviet for joint operations against the Germans. At the end of June, representatives of Britain, the USA and France, on the one hand, and the presidium of the Murman Territory Soviet, on the other, made a pact whereby the representatives of the Entente undertook to supply the territory and the military units there with all their requirements. They also undertook to supply the Murman Territory Soviet with financial aid, food and manufactured goods. On its part, the Territory Soviet, betraying the Soviet power, was to refrain from hindering the organization of armed forces and the de facto occupation of the Territory by Allied troops. The military leader of the Territory Soviet, ex-General Zvegintsov, took part personally in these dealings with the Allies. As a result of this adventure, the *Munnan Territory was occupied by the troops of the Entente*. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

75. At the end of February 1918, after our units had left the Romanian Front, *the Romanians*, at the insistence of the French mission, crossed the Dniester, *occupied Rybnitsa* [Rybnitsa is on the eastern bank of the Dniester. It is now included in the Moldavian SSR]and attempted to advance further so as to occupy the whole of Bessarabia and the area round Odessa. Our young Red Army units, led by Comrade Yegorov,[The 'Yegorov' mentioned here is not Marshal A.I. Yegorov (1883-1939) but, probably, V.N. Yegorov (1869-1948) who subsequently (July 1919) took over command of the Southern Front from V.M. Gittis (with A.I. Yegorov as his second-in command)]inflicted a heavy defeat on the Romanians, and forced them to withdraw behind the Dniester. Five days later, the Romanians allowed the Germans through. On March 13 the Germans occupied Odessa and continued to advance rapidly. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

76. The reference is to the Fifth All-Russia Congress of Soviets which was held between July 4 and 10 in Moscow. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

77. Archangel was occupied during the night of August 2-3, 1918. The following is a summary of preceding events on *the Northern front*. On July 4 a British cruiser landed a party on Solovetsky Island and put the Russian wireless station out of action. On July 11 the British occupied Soroki (30 versts to the south of Kem) and began preparing to occupy Archangel.

Nor were the White organizations dozing. With the help of the British counter-espionage center in Petrograd and also on their own initiative, White Guards of various political nuances had begun to

assemble in Archangel already from May onward. The naval authorities entered into relations with the Allies, and a Volunteer partisan unit was formed from White officers. Colonel Potapov facilitated the freedom of action of this unit by his distribution of the forces of the Archangel garrison. Fleet Commander Veselago failed to take any measures to block the channel. On July 31 Onega was taken, on August 1 the island of Mudyug, and during the night of August 2-3 a White-Guard revolt broke out in Archangel, accompanied by a landing from the sea. With the direct assistance of the French ambassador, Noules, the American ambassador, Francis, and the Italian ambassador, Della Toretta, a Supreme Government of the Northern Region was formed, consisting of Chaikovsky (Popular-Socialist)[The Popular-Socialists were a right-wing breakaway from the SRs], Liathach (SR), Maslov (SR), Ivanov (SR) and Gukovsky (SR). [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)



# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE CIVIL WAR IN RSFSR IN 1918

THE CZECHOSLOVAK MUTINY [\[79\]](#)

[The role of the Czechoslovak Corps in the civil war and intervention has given rise to an extensive literature. Bunyan's hook (see note to p.271) contains relevant documents. Recent accounts include: Bradley, J.F.N., *Civil War in Russia* (1975); Fic, V.M., *The Bolsheviks and the Czechoslovak Legion: The Origin of the Conflict, March-May 1918*(1978); Fleming, P., *The Fate of Admiral Kolchak* (1963); and Parrott, C., *The Bad Bohemian: The Life of Jaroslav Hasek* (1978).]

Transcribed and HTML markup for the [Trotsky Internet Archive](#) by [David Walters](#)

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[ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS PUT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK CORPS, VAGLAV NEUBERT \(May 31, 1918\)](#)

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## **COMMUNIQUE OF THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR MILITARY AFFAIRS May 29, 1918**

For months the Czechoslovak Corps has been trying to leave Russia. The Commissariat for Military Affairs has, for its part, taken the measures needed in order to enable them to do so. A condition was imposed in this connection: the Czechoslovaks were to surrender all weapons except a small quantity of rifles for each echelon, required for guard purposes. The movement of the echelons proceeded without hindrance, with full co-operation from the local Soviets. The Japanese landing at Vladivostok and the offensive by Semyonov's bands made it impossible for the echelons to continue their eastward progress. The People's Commissariat halted the movement so as to investigate the possibilities for routing the Czechoslovaks through Archangel.

Meanwhile, counter-revolutionaries, among whom the Right SRs played the leading role, carried on a disgraceful demagogic agitation among the Czechoslovaks, persuading them that the Soviet power was hatching some sort of dark conspiracy against them. Some of the commanding personnel of the Czech echelons, including Russian officers, were directly linked with the counter-revolutionaries in an organized way. It was revealed that the echelons were not honoring conscientiously the requirement to surrender their arms, but were keeping back a considerable portion. The demagoguery and provocation of the counter-revolutionaries led to a number of conflicts, which in some places developed into veritable military operations.

The People's Commissariat for Military Affairs informed all the interested parties, and the Czechoslovaks first and foremost, quite precisely and clearly, that the Soviet power entertains the most friendly feelings toward the mass of the Czechoslovak workers and peasants, who are the brothers of the Russian workers and peasants. However, the Soviet power cannot tolerate a situation in which the Czechoslovaks, confused by reactionary scoundrels, White Guards and foreign agents, have seized railway stations by armed force and used violence against the Soviets, as happened at Novo Nikolayevsk. The Military Commissariat has issued an order for immediate and unconditional disarmament of all Czechoslovaks, and shooting of those who resist by force the measures taken by the Soviet power. At the same time, the Military Commissariat again declares and confirms, in the name of the Government as a whole, that the Soviet power entertains the most friendly feelings towards the Czechoslovaks and, for its part, will do everything necessary to enable them to leave Russia in the shortest possible time. But this depends on their complete and unconditional surrender of all arms and strictest submission to the instructions of the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs. Until this has been done, the People's Commissariat's order

for ruthless action against the mutineers remains fully in force. A sufficient number of troops have been moved in from the Urals, from Central Russia and from Siberia to crush the mutineers and deprive the counter-revolutionary plotters once and for all of any desire to draw persons they have fooled into mutiny against the Soviet power.

The fate of the Czechoslovak workers and peasants rests in their own hands.

## **ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS PUT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK CORPS, VAGLAV NEUBERT**

At the end of March I gave permission for the Czechoslovak echelons to travel towards Vladivostok, where they were to have embarked for France. The condition laid down for this movement was that the Czechoslovaks must surrender all their weapons except for a certain amount needed for internal guard purposes.

At the beginning of April the Japanese landed at Vladivostok. Their further intentions were not known. Consequently, it was not possible to ascertain whether the Czechoslovaks would be able to take ship at Vladivostok. In accordance with the Government's instructions, I halted the movement of the Czechoslovak echelons, and explained to the representatives of the French military mission, and also to the representatives of the Czechoslovak National Council who came to see me, that the halting of the movement of the Czechoslovak echelons was not at all a measure inspired by hostility to the Czechoslovaks, but was due exclusively to the new political and strategic situation in the Far East. At the same time, I proposed to the representatives of the National Council, Messrs. Maxa and Cermak, that they induce the British and French Governments to state formally that they were prepared to receive the Czechoslovaks aboard their ships at Archangel and Murmansk. For my part, I undertook to dispatch the Czechoslovaks to those places, within a definite period to be decided by negotiation. Although Messrs. Maxa and Cermak promised me to provide within a few days such an official declaration by the interested governments of Britain and France, I received no communication of this kind. In a private exchange of views with Mr. Lockhart, the British plenipotentiary, I showed him the need for the British and French Governments to take a definite decision regarding the Czechoslovaks, since it was quite impossible to hold these men for months in their echelons, especially during the summer. Mr. Lockhart was unable to give me an answer, merely pointing out that the question of available shipping was very critical, and he did not know whether the British Government would be able to send the number of vessels needed. Thus, the matter remained quite unsettled for no *fault* of the Soviet Government's, but solely for the following reasons: on the one hand, the Japanese landing at Vladivostok, and, on the other, the lack of any definite statement by the Governments of Britain and France.

This indefinite and protracted state of affairs was exploited by counter-revolutionary elements in the Czechoslovak Corps itself and by their allies among the Russian bourgeoisie and reactionary Russian officers, who did all they could to foster a false interpretation of the situation and encourage among the mass of the Czechoslovaks the suspicion that the Soviet power was going to betray them into the hands of the Germans. I have already, in writing, described these rumors as absurd, and such as only scoundrels could spread and fools could believe.

In view of our failure to receive any reply from Britain and France, I put the following proposal to the Czechoslovaks, through Comrade Aralov: in case the continuation of their journey should be rendered impossible - that is, should Britain and France fail to take them off in their ships - they would be given



full opportunity to remain in Russia and to choose the occupations most suited to their training and inclinations: that is, either to join the Red Army, or to form themselves into workers' co-operatives, or to serve in guard companies, etc., etc. This proposal had, of course, nothing compulsory about it:

its purpose was to offer the Czechoslovaks a solution to their problem in the event that, through no fault of the Soviet power, their journey out of Russia should prove impossible of accomplishment.

All these proposals and declarations, which were inspired solely by concern for the interests of the Czechoslovaks, were interpreted by the counter-revolutionary plotters, demagogues and intriguers as evidence of hostility towards the Czechoslovaks and served for sowing among them distrust and enmity towards the Soviet power.

This resulted in an unprecedented incident, when the Czechoslovak echelons took up arms against the Soviet power, seized railway stations and even assumed governmental authority in certain towns. Naturally, the Soviet power cannot tolerate such a situation. In full agreement with the central government, I, as Commissar for Military Affairs, ordered the immediate and unconditional disarmament of all the Czechoslovak echelons and the shooting of any Czechoslovak who refused to surrender his weapon voluntarily. In the same announcement I promised, in the name of the Government, to give every assistance to loyal Czechoslovaks, both as regards their leaving Russia and as regards ensuring the livelihood in Russia of those of them who should willingly choose to stay. All these declarations and orders continue to remain fully effective at the present time.

This means: first, the Czechoslovaks are to pledge themselves to surrender, completely and unconditionally, all the weapons in their possession: secondly, I pledge myself, on behalf of the central Soviet Government, to do everything in our power to enable the Czechoslovaks to leave Russia in the shortest possible time, through some port or other, regarding which a practical agreement must be reached with the representatives of the Czechoslovaks and the representatives of Britain and France: thirdly, the echelons must be accompanied by commissars representing the Czechoslovaks themselves, the French and the Soviet power.

The Soviet power assumes responsibility for the complete security of the Czechoslovaks and for supplying them with the means of life.

This statement is being handed by me to the representative of the Czechoslovak Corps Vaclav Neubert, who is guaranteed free and unimpeded movement for the purpose of informing all the Czechoslovak units of this answer.

At the same time I declare and confirm that, until reports are received from Soviet institutions that the Czechoslovaks are surrendering their arms, military operations and concentration of forces against the mutineers will not be called off. The order for shooting Czechoslovaks found armed and refusing to hand over their arms is to remain in full force: also to remain in full force is the order that any unit in which a weapon is found is to be confined in a concentration camp.

In view of the repeated question by the representative of the Czechoslovak Corps, Vaclav Neubert, regarding the possibility that the Czechoslovaks may be handed over to some enemies of theirs, I declare that the very putting of such a question shows utter misunderstanding by the leaders of the Czechoslovak Corps of the principles and policy of the Soviet power, and is utterly misplaced and unworthy. The offer of Russian citizenship was made precisely so that, in case Britain and France should decline to take the Czechoslovaks, all those of them who so desired might live, quite freely and without any sort of

restriction or restraint, upon the territory of the Soviet Republic. I repeat once more that to suspect the Soviet power of wanting to do some harm to, or, still worse, to commit some act of treachery against Czechoslovak workers and peasants who are prepared to sacrifice themselves for their ideas, is something of which only utterly confused people are capable, when they have been corrupted by the demagoguery, lies and slanders of Russian counter-revolutionaries.

In answer to Vaclav Neubert's supplementary question, I make clear that, after their arms have been voluntarily and conscientiously surrendered, no Czechoslovak unit will be disbanded. Of course, anyone who wishes may remain in Russia. We cannot and will not compel anyone to leave by force of arms. But all units that wish to leave will do so in the state in which they exist at present, that is, as formed military units.

In answer to Vaclav Neubert's question as to whether Czechoslovak soldiers who voluntarily surrender their arms may expect any punishment, I say: only those elements, that is, those individuals, will be called to account who are proved to have previously entered into definite agreement with Russian or other counter-revolutionaries, or who deliberately deceived the Czechoslovak masses, provoking their outbreak. As for the entire mass of the soldiers of the Czechoslovak Corps, who were led into mutinous acts by the ill-will of particular demagogues and counter-revolutionaries, none of them who voluntarily surrender their arms will suffer any sort of punishment what so ever.

This statement does not, of course, apply to the units which will now be forcibly disarmed by Soviet troops. The order for the shooting of those found armed remains fully in force where they are concerned.

May 31, 1918

## **ORDER BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR MILITARY AFFAIRS**

To all units fighting against the counter-revolutionary Czechoslovak mutineers, June 4, 1918

The concentration of our forces has been completed and unity of command on the Volga, Ural and Siberia-Omsk fronts established.<sup>[80]</sup> Fully aware that the Czechoslovak mutineers are direct allies of the counter-revolution and agents of imperialism, the Soviet troops are fighting heroically against them. Hard-pressed from behind and hemmed in on either flank, the Czechoslovaks are rushing along the line of the railway. An obvious ferment has begun in their ranks. The more conscious elements realize the disastrous character of their outbreak and show desire to enter into negotiations with the Soviet forces. I have decided to authorize the front commanders to receive envoys under a flag of truce from the Czechoslovak echelons. An obligatory condition for negotiations is surrender of all arms by the Czechoslovaks. Those who do not voluntarily hand over their arms are to be shot on the spot, in accordance with the order previously given. Echelons which have been forcibly disarmed are to be confirmed in concentration camps. In view of the fact that military operations in the railway zone are hindering the movement of goods trains carrying foodstuffs, I order the commanders-in-chief of the three fronts to act with all vigour as to liquidate this shameful and dangerous situation as quickly as possible,

## **ORDER BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL AND THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR MILITARY AND NAVAL AFFAIRS**

To all units of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army fighting against the counter-revolutionary mutineers and their Czechoslovak allies, June 13, 1918

Soldiers of the Red Army! The enemies of the workers and peasants have raised a revolt. Ex- General Krasnov is restoring the Tsarist regime in the Don area and opening the gates for foreign invasion. The criminal rebel Dutov is advancing his black bands against the workers and peasants in the Ural region. The agents of foreign capitalists have, by means of bribery, lies and slander, raised our Czechoslovak prisoners-of-war in rebellion against the Russian workers and peasants. On the Don, on the Volga, in the Urals, in Siberia the landlords, capitalists and reactionary generals are lifting their heads. The Right SRs and Mensheviks are acting in concert with them.

Soldiers of the Red Army, the Council of People's Commissars orders you to crush the counter-revolutionary bands and wipe the enemies of the people off the face of the earth!

Order and discipline must reign in all units. All orders by commanding personnel must be carried out unquestioningly. I order commanders to report to me all feats of revolutionary heroism and military valor. I shall publish these cases, giving names, for the information of the whole country. Let every town and village of workers' and peasants' Russia learn who is a renegade and who is a true and honest son of the people.

Cowards and traitors must be cast out and crushed.

All the honest workers and peasants of all Russia will come to the aid of the brave.

Long live the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army!

Published in Izv.V.Ts.I.K., No 121 June 15, 1918

## **ORDER BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL AND THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR MILITARY AND NAVAL AFFAIRS**

To the Army and Navy Departments and to the Red Army and the Red Navy, June 13, 1918

The revolt by the Czechoslovaks, which has disorganized transport and food-supplies and aroused false hopes in the hearts of the enemies of the Soviet Republic, at home and abroad, must be put down as soon as possible.

However, among the military specialists, the former officers who have entered the service of the Soviet Republic, together with examples of honest performance of military duty, there have been observed some instances of evasion of the fulfillment of orders arising from the tasks of combating the Czechoslovak mutiny. Those concerned try to claim they were not called up to wage 'civil war'.

The majority of the Czechoslovaks are prisoners-of-war taken by us. While on the territory of the Soviet

Republic they received pay from one of the foreign governments. Through deception they retained, and then through mutiny they seized, weapons which should not be in their possession. They are trying to get control of the Trans-Siberian railway, the country's most important artery of food-supplies. They are trying to link up with Vladivostok, whence we are under threat from a landing by foreign imperialists. The Czechoslovak mutineers are thus an instrument of foreign occupation and of the enslavement of the Russian Republic. Under these conditions, only traitors and accomplices of foreign aggressors can hide behind the expression 'civil war'.

I declare that the Soviet power will tolerate no evasion or argument on the part of military personnel in face of the enemy. All scoundrelly and rotten elements who look without concern or indignation upon the mutiny by prisoners-of-war acting as mercenaries in foreign service, against the freedom and independence of Workers' and Peasants' Russia, will be struck down, and those guilty of resistance will be crushed.

This warning is the first and the last.

Published in Izv.V.TsJ.K., No.121 June 15, 1918

## **THE SOCIALIST FATHERLAND IN DANGER**

Report to the extraordinary joint session of the 5th All-Russia Central Executive Committee, the Moscow Soviet of Workers', Peasants' and Red Army Men's Deputies, the trade unions and the factory committees, July 29, 1918

Comrades, the Soviet power has no right, and neither has the Party which is the leading party in the Soviets, to conceal or embellish the actual state of affairs in the revolution. The old slogan given us by one of the most militant socialists of the past epoch, Ferdinand Lassalle -- say what is; declare and tell the masses that which is the case -- is also the basic rule for every really revolutionary politician, and is therefore also our rule.

And, with strict observation of this rule, it has been shown to you here that what is now happening on the Volga, in the shape of the Czechoslovak mutiny, puts Soviet Russia in danger [81] and therefore also endangers the international revolution. At first sight it seems incomprehensible that some Czechoslovak Corps, which has found itself here in Russia through the tortuous ways of the world war, should at the given moment prove to be almost the chief factor in deciding the questions of the Russian revolution. Nevertheless, that is the case.

In order to provide a full exposition of events I will briefly recall the circumstances and causes of the appearance of this corps on the Volga and in the Urals. This is also necessary because around this matter lies and slanders, on the one hand, and ignorance, on the other, are weaving rumors which are being exploited by our enemies.

The Czechoslovak Corps consists in the main of former prisoners-of-war from the Austrian army. And for characters like the patriotism and national dignity of our bourgeoisie, how symbolic in this respect are the facts I mention, that when former prisoners-of-war, released by us, are now sitting on the necks and on the backs of the Russian peasants and workers, the entire bourgeoisie gloats and gives them money, with the intention of finding support from the brilliant Czech officers.

Such is the national dignity and self-respect of the despicable bourgeoisie.



The Czechoslovak prisoners-of-war, who in their time, under Tsardom, were interned in Siberia, were released, and already at that time strove to get to France, where they had been promised the earth but where in actual fact it was intended they should die in the interests of the French stock-exchange. The Russian Tsarist government, for reasons that do not concern us, refused to let them go. In Kerensky's time they again applied to leave for France, but again without success. During the Germans' summer offensive in the Ukraine, the Czechoslovak Corps was there (it was formed in the South), armed from head to foot. Though they had been organized to fight against German imperialism, the Czechoslovaks were ready to retreat without fighting, merely because, in the Ukraine, fighting against the Germans would have meant fighting for the Soviet power. While this Corps did, in certain circumstances, and in a formal way, help in organizing the fight against German imperialism, it proved, in any case, to be incapable of fighting for the workers and peasants of the Ukraine and Byelorussia.

So, withdrawing without a struggle from the Ukraine, the whole Corps entered the territory of the Soviet Republic. Here the representatives of the Corps approached the Council of People's Commissars and the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs with a request that we let the Czechoslovaks go to France. We replied that if this request did not proceed from the French military mission and the commanding personnel, if this was the desire of the soldiers themselves, then we would not hold them back, provided they gave up their arms, which, having been taken from the Tsar's arsenals, belonged to us. The Czechoslovak corps sent delegates to conclude an agreement, and permission was given. The soldiers were disarmed, but, through insufficient attention on the part of our authorities, not all the arms were handed in: a considerable number of machine guns and rifles were left, hidden in straw and mattresses.

Movement of the echelons was effected, along the Trans-Siberian line in the direction of Vladivostok, without any hindrance, until April 4, [The text has 'July 4' for the date of the Japanese landing, but this is evidently a mistake for 'April 4'.] when there appeared in our port on the Pacific Ocean a Japanese landing party which consisted, to start with, of four companies. We did not know how rapid would be the build-up of Japanese forces, which, in principle, could occupy our territory right up to the Urals and beyond. And, to amplify the inner significance of the event, we must say that of all the Allied countries which most insistently demanded Japanese intervention in the war, striving to hurl against the Germans a fresh army half a million strong, it was none other than bourgeois France that demanded and wanted this more than any other. It was none other than bourgeois France, which supported the Czechoslovak Corps with the milliards of its stock exchange, that was sending this corps eastward. And now a precise conjuncture of events occurred: in alliance with the French bourgeoisie and in pursuit of its own robber interests in the Russian Far East, the Japanese landed their expeditionary force and established a link between the Czechoslovak Corps and their units.

The Soviet power was ready to put up the most vigorous and sharp resistance to the invasion by the Japanese hordes (here our chief defense lies in our great spaces), which were advancing from Vladivostok towards Chelyabinsk.

Meanwhile, the Czechoslovak Corps, which was stretched out along the Trans-Siberian line as far as Vladivostok, was in a position, at a signal from the French stock-exchange and the Japanese General Staff, to seize this railway and prevent us from barring the way to the Japanese, who would then advance rapidly, by express train, to the Urals, and through them. Under these conditions until the question of the Japanese landing at Vladivostok had been clarified, we were obliged to halt further movement eastward by the Czechoslovak echelons and this we did. And as soon as we had done this, I summoned, acting on the instructions of the Council of People's Commissars, the representatives of the French mission and the



British diplomatic mission, on the one hand, and, on the other, the representatives of the Czechoslovak National Council, Professors Maxa and Cermak, whose roles in this conspiracy against the Russian people were not the least important. I told them that we now lacked the right to send the Czechoslovaks through our own country to the Far East, but we considered it possible to send them to Archangel or Murmansk (at that time, of course, the Anglo-French landing had not yet taken place):

however, we needed to have confirmation from the official representatives of Britain and France that they were really willing to receive the Czechoslovaks and prepared to provide the means of transport needed for their conveyance. We were not in a position ourselves to convey the entire Corps to its destination, and, owing to the shortage of foodstuffs in the North, we could not maintain it on the coast for an indefinite period. In short, we had to have a firm guarantee that Allied transport would be provided in good time. I was given my answer by General Lavergne, [The text has 'General Sveri', which must be a muddle for 'General Lavcrgne.'] who is present here, and the British plenipotentiary Lockhart who, if I am not mistaken, is on his way. They both said that they could not give the guarantees I had requested, because the question of sea transport is now very complicated and difficult, and they could assume no responsibility for it. I pointed out to them that, through their agents and through the Czechoslovak National Council, they were calling on the Czechoslovaks to go to France, promising them the earth if they went there, and blaming us for not letting the Czechoslovaks go: yet, when we raised in a practical way the question of how the Czechoslovaks were to be transported, they answered evasively. Lavergne and Lockhart replied that they would consult their governments and then give me their answer. Week after week passed, month after month, yet no answer came. And now it is as clear to us as can be, both from the papers which were seized at the office of the Czech National Council and from the statements and depositions given by many White Guards under arrest, that what we had here was a malicious, carefully worked-out plan. The essence of this plan was that the imperialists of France did not want a superfluous Czechoslovak Corps, but that for them it was ten times more important to have the Czechoslovak Corps on Russian territory, directed against the Russian workers and peasants, thus creating the nucleus around which the White Guards, the Monarchists, all the bourgeois elements scattered about the country, and so on, could group themselves. This plan, devised long before, was put into effect at a signal given from Chelyabinsk, where a conference of representatives of all the units of the Czechoslovak Corps was held. Our telegraph operators have provided me with the text of a telegram sent by this congress to the French military mission at Vologda, in which, despite the evasive language used, the fact that a rising against the Soviet power was being prepared emerges quite clearly. In the telegram they say that everything is ready, they are pulling their echelons back from East to West, and concentrating their forces. This refers (if my memory does not deceive me) to May 25 or May 22, that is, to a date preceding that on which the Czechoslovaks rose in open revolt at Chelyabinsk, and subsequently in other places as well.

Thus, the actions of the Czechoslovaks took place in the setting and according to the arrangements of a definite Anglo-French counter-revolutionary plan. It was about then that we received from abroad a warning that the British were planning to make their first landing at this same time, with the aim of establishing their forces along the Murman coast. It may be said, of course, that we, the Soviet power, are to blame for having passively watched this mutiny being prepared passively, because we did not have a sufficiency strong and disciplined army that was ready, on receipt of a formal order, to concentrate in a particular area at a particular moment and go over to the offensive. In order to organize and arm the workers and peasants, to make them capable of launching an offensive given their lack of training, their slight, inadequate experience' and that fatigue of which Comrade Lenin so rightly spoke' here, [See

Lenin, *Collected Works* Vol. 28, p.29: 'The Russian people's state of extreme war fatigue] it was necessary that they be inwardly filled, saturated, with awareness that there is no other way, that they should understand that the Czechoslovak mutiny, with everything that surrounds it and has grown up around it, does actually signify in the true sense of the word, a mortal danger for Soviet Russia:

In order that such a feeling should be created in the country it was necessary that events should develop in a certain way, and from the beginning of these events we did everything we could to ward off the danger. And here it must be said that in the initial period we did not receive even from those local Soviets that were closest to the events that had occurred over there along the Trans-Siberian Railway and up to Chelyabinsk, the response that we had the right to expect. The local Soviets did not appreciate the full scope of the diabolical conspiracy. Among them were Soviets that were so faint-hearted that they tried to pass the Czechoslovaks on into the responsibility of neighboring Soviets which were, perhaps, stronger. All this was due to the fact that there was no full and clear awareness that it was not a question of misunderstandings at Syzran, Penza and Chelyabinsk, but a question, in the direct and immediate sense of the word, of life and death for the working class in Russia. And the Czechoslovaks had to seize a whole series of towns and provide a point of support for the White Guards and monarchists, and the latter had to carry out compulsory mobilization of the adult inhabitants, on the one hand, and, on the other, requisitions and confiscations in favor of the landlords and capitalists, before the Soviet elements in the localities concerned, at Omsk, Chelyabinsk and the entire zone near the front, realized clearly what was happening and before the people at large started to realize that the die has been cast for Russia: either we vanquish the Czechoslovaks and all those around them, or they will destroy us.

And this poor appreciation of the importance of the moment, on the part of the conscious sections of the population was, in the last analysis, reflected also in the consciousness of our Red Army units. We have sufficient armed forces to employ against the Czechs, and we are now, of course, transferring to the front such substantial forces as will, together with those which are there already, outnumber the Czechoslovaks by at least two or three to one.

But, comrades, by itself this is not enough. Thanks to the diabolical scale of the conspiracy and the conduct of the Czechoslovak officers -- and their commanders are extremely chauvinistic -- the Czechoslovaks have put themselves in a position where they must either fight to a finish or else go under. Among them there are elements that know the Soviet power will not punish the blind, ignorant, deceived workers, and still less the peasants, but only those guilty of this conspiracy and actively participating in it: the professors, officers and NCOs and the more hardened and corrupt among the soldiers. These elements now reckon that there is no escape, that they must fight to a finish. This gives them the energy of despair, the energy of helplessness, and, besides that, they are surrounded by a crowd of Russian bourgeois and kulaks who create about them a milieu which, though not very extensive, is nevertheless sympathetic. As regards our Red units, they consider that they are at home, and that though the Czechoslovaks are capturing one town after another, the possibility still exists that the Czechoslovak question may be solved by propaganda and agitation. This is the reason for the extremely protracted character, in one way and another, of the operation, which has this disadvantageous aspect for us, that we are cut off from Siberia, our principal and fundamental source of foodstuffs, so that the working class throughout the country is in a state of severe hunger. And thus, weighing the relation of forces, our morale and that of the enemy, the general food situation in the country, the need, as quickly as possible, to purge Siberia and restore it to the bosom of Soviet Russia, the inadmissibility and dangerousness of a long-drawn-out operation -- we must decisively alter in our favor the situation which has been created. How are we to do this?

Our Red Army units lack the needful moral and military cohesion, because they have not yet been tempered in battle, and even though there are among them many soldiers who have been in battle as individuals, as military collectives they are, as a whole, in need of organizational, disciplinary and moral influence. If the units lack the old-style military bearing, this may be replaced by clear and distinct consciousness of the iron necessity of fighting. In the given case, the absence of military, mechanical discipline is compensated by the discipline of revolutionary consciousness. Here, in this hall, we number some two thousand persons, or more, and the overwhelming majority, if not all of us, share the same revolutionary view point. We are not going to make a regiment out of you, but if we were to be transformed this very day into a regiment, armed and sent off to the front, I think that it would not be the worst regiment in the world. Why? Because we were trained soldiers? No, because we are united by a definite idea, inspired by firm consciousness that, at the front to which we were being sent, history is putting the question point-blank, and there we must either conquer or die. This is the consciousness we have to create in our Red Army units. Naturally, they cannot by one wave of somebody's hand be lifted all at once to the political level of the Central Executive Committee, the Moscow Soviet and the factory committees of Moscow, but within each regiment and each company we must and can create a firm nucleus of Soviet people, of Communist revolutionaries. This nucleus, though small in numbers, will be the heart of the regiment and the company: in the first place, it will be able to mistake, and to pass on to the masses, a correct estimate of each situation, and in dangerous situations it will not let the unit run away, it will support the commissar or the commander, it will say:

'Stop! This is a matter of life and death for the working class'...

Comrades capable of going into each unit and forming a close nucleus of five to ten members can be found only among the most conscious workers. And we have them both in Moscow and in Petrograd. Moscow has already furnished some two or three hundred agitators, commissars and organizers, a considerable number of whom have gone into Red Army units. But Moscow will, I am convinced, furnish twice as many as that. You, the organs of Soviet power, and you, the factory committees, look around you: everywhere, in the districts, in the trade unions, in the factory committees, you will find comrades who are now performing work of first-class importance but who are more urgently needed at the front, for, if we do not overcome the Czechoslovaks, that work they are doing, and all the forces of the factory committees, the trade unions and so on, will go for nothing. We must overcome the Czechoslovaks and White Guards, strangle the serpent on the Volga, so that all the rest of our work may possess meaning and historical significance. You are required to furnish some hundreds of agitators -- first-class, militant Moscow workers who will go to the front, join the units and say: 'We shall stay with this unit till the war is over: we shall go into it and carry on agitation both among the masses and with every individual, for the fate of the whole country and of the revolution is at stake, and, whether there be an offensive, a victory or a retreat, we shall be with the unit and shall temper its revolutionary spirit.' You must and you will give us such people, comrades! I was talking yesterday on this very subject with the chairman of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies, Comrade Zinoviev, and he told me that the Petrograd Soviet has already supplied a quarter of its membership, that is, about two hundred, sending them to the Czechoslovak front as agitators, instructors, organizers, commanders and fighters. In this lies the fundamental condition for the turn that we have to bring about. What the old armies provided through months of prolonged schooling, correction and drill, which mechanically forged a unit, we have to provide, as I have already said, spiritually and by ideological means, introducing into our army the best elements of the working class, and this will fully ensure our victory, despite our weakness where commanding personnel are concerned. We have irreproachable, devoted commanders at the lowest level,



but only at the lowest level, of the military hierarchy. Where higher commanding personnel are concerned, we have too few officers who are devoted to the Soviet power and who honestly carry out their obligations: worse still, as you know, some of them have actually gone over to the enemy's camp. There have been several such cases lately. Makhno went over on the Ufa front, and Bogolovsky, a professor at the General Staff Academy, went over almost at once when he was appointed to the Yekaterinsburg front. He has disappeared, which obviously means that he has fled to the Czechoslovaks. In the North the former naval officer Veselago has sold himself to the British, and a former member of our White Sea commissariat has also gone over to the Anglo-French imperialists, and has been appointed by them to the command of armed forces. The officers seemingly do not take full account of the acuteness of the situation which is created for us not only by their past but also by their present. You all remember how harshly the soldiers and sailors of the old army dealt with their officers at the critical moments of the revolution.

Since power passed into the hands of the workers and peasants, we have opened the doors to experts and specialists in military matters, so that they may serve the working class as in the past they served the bourgeoisie and the Tsar, but a considerable section of the officers evidently think the situation is changing in their favor, and they are mounting adventuristic conspiracies and openly going over to the camp of our enemies.

The counter-revolutionary officers, who make up a substantial section of the old officer corps, are creating the conditions for embittered and justified hostility and hatred on the part of the worker masses towards their conspiratorial elements, and suspicious distrust towards officers generally. I think that the hour is near, and perhaps has already arrived, when we shall have to curb these intriguing, prancing officers with an iron curb. We shall make a list of all those ex-officers who are not ready to work voluntarily at the creation of the workers' and peasants' army, and, for a start, we shall shut them up in concentration camps. Comrades, when British imperialism set about crushing the Boers of South Africa under its iron heel, it set up such camps for these Boers -- for the farmers themselves and for their wives and children. Now, when our officers are fraternizing with British imperialism, we shall remind these allies of the imperialists precisely of the British concentration camps. At the same time, we shall call on the comrades in the Soviets, the Party organizations and the trade unions to mobilize from among themselves, as quickly as they can, all those comrades who have had some experience of command. All who know how to command even the smallest units must be placed immediately at the disposal of the Commissariat for Military Affairs, so as to be posted to the Czechoslovak front. You, Soviet and trade union organizers, must take all the combatants among you, all who have been NCOs or ensigns, and send them all, without exception, to the Czechoslovak front. Their place is now not here, in civilian jobs: we need to have our own commanders in the small units, for practice has shown that if there are genuine Soviet commanders in charge of the small military units, we need fear no higher commanders -- though, I ought to note, in passing, that if we observe suspicious conduct on the part of any officer who has been entrusted with powers of command, then, needless to say, the matter is plain and simple, the guilty man must be shot. But it is not a matter of how matters stand in the rear, whether close to the front or far from it. There is no-one in a high commanding position who has not a commissar on his right and another on his left, and if the specialist is not known to us as a man who is devoted to the Soviet power, these commissars are under orders to be vigilant, not taking their eyes off this officer for one moment. But we do not have, as we ought to have, military commissars actually at the front itself, in order to assume responsibility and superintendence, so that there may be at the front, to the right and to the left of each specialist, a commissar with a revolver in his hand, and so that, if these commissars perceive that the

specialist is wavering and betraying, he may be shot in good time.

The French revolution also started with very little, and it also had to enlist officers from the old army, but it laid down a condition binding upon them: either victory or death. We put the choice in the same way before those whom we sent to the Czechoslovak front. And so that this may not remain without foundation, we need to have in every unit, in every headquarters and organization, our own Soviet people, for whom this war is their war, the war of the working class, and who will not be held back by any dangers. We need to bring about a turn in another profound sense.

During these eight or nine months of Soviet power it has been our habit to deal too lightly with our opponents in the civil war. Until recently this policy always worked for us. We smashed the bands of Alekseyev and Komilov in two ticks, with small detachments of Baltic sailors or Red Guards from Petrograd and Moscow. As a result, we now have comrades who served in those Red detachments but who are now occupied with Soviet work: they sit in their sacred offices which, to be sure, are Soviet offices -- and read reports about actions at the front. Such 'base' feelings are manifested, we observe, also among many commissars: not all of them, alas, have that revolutionary tempering which is invincible in struggle, when it is necessary to be able to sacrifice one's life or to make others sacrifice theirs, for what is at stake is what is highest for us, the fate of the socialist revolution. To our shame, there have been cases when certain commissars were not the last to abandon a town. At times when the commissar, like an honorable captain, ought to be the last to leave the ship, or else go down with it, there have been comrades who, at the first sign of danger, took to their heels and fled to a safe place.

The military commissar, appointed by the Soviet power, holds a post which has very great powers and responsibilities, and it is no empty saying that the military commissar must be of a high standard, for the commissar's position is one of the highest that the Soviet Republic can confer. The commissar is the representative of the armed forces in the country, and this is a great power, because it decides on whose side power lies. And whoever among the commissars does not feel that he possesses strength, tempering and selflessness should get out: he who assumes the title of commissar must lay his life on the line!

I have to say, comrades, that in some provincial cities the local Soviet authorities and institutions are also not always up to the mark. There have frequently been cases when the Soviet has been among the first to be evacuated, withdrawing to some other, safe town a great many versts away, and waiting there peacefully for the Red Army to recapture for it the residence it has abandoned. I declare -- and this view is common to the whole Soviet power -- that this cannot be allowed: that, if the Soviet army has lost a town, then it is, to a considerable degree, the fault of the local Soviet and of the military commissar, and it is incumbent upon them to do their utmost to recover that town. Whether as agitators or as front-rank fighters, the members of the Soviet of a town which has been captured by the Czechoslovaks must be at the front, in the foremost firing-line, and not vegetating peacefully in some backyard. I am here emphasizing the negative aspects just because we must; above all, say what is, and these negative aspects do exist. And besides, we are assembled here not for the purpose of lauding the many particular instances of heroic conduct in the struggle -- there have been such instances at the front, and they are increasing - but for the purpose of finding resources and, in a consistent, practical way, improving the situation on the Czechoslovak front. But I cannot refrain from mentioning what Comrade Raskolnikov has reported to us about the heroic fight put up by one of our armed vessels on the Volga, which perished heroically.

You see, our Baltic sailors now on the Volga -- and their numbers are increasing all the time, we are arming an ever larger number of steamships, and we hope that more powerful guns than three-inch ones



will make their appearance on the Volga -- are conducting themselves as becomes the revolutionary calling of the Red Baltic Fleet.

There have also been examples of magnificent valor on the part of Red Army units. But the state of the units is chaotic, many things about them are not as they should be, and their heroic breakthroughs do not result from a single, common, fundamental effort, because for such an organized effort there is not yet everywhere the awareness that what is at stake at the front is life or death for the working class, and therefore for the whole country. True, our situation has, by and large, improved in every respect. I mentioned that we have created on the Volga a big and strong naval flotilla, which will soon make the White Guards and Czechoslovaks aware of its presence. We have also sent army units there which, along with those already on the spot, will give us a tremendous superiority in armed force. We must ensure that we have this superiority in armed force. We must ensure that we maintain that superiority in moral force which is ours by right, for we are defending the cause of the working class and not that of the French and British bourgeoisie. This moral superiority can be ensured only by living people, by representatives of the working class from our best urban industrial centers. And we are now, in addition to all the measures of which I have spoken, proceeding to a further mobilization of workers, to supplement the cadres of our workers' and peasants' Red Army. This evening a draft decree is being tabled in the Council of People's Commissars, for mobilizing in the immediate future, in the coming week, the workers who were born in 1896 and 1897 in the provinces of Vladimir, Nizhny-Novgorod, Moscow and Petrograd. You know, comrades, that we mobilized the workers in the cities of Moscow and Petrograd who were born in 1896 and 1897. They have already furnished examples of the sort of units that will be created. They will be our best units. Now Moscow is going to furnish another example, another model. We want to mobilize in Moscow the workers who were born in 1893, 1894 and 1895, and it is your duty, the duty of the district soviets, trade unions, factory committees and all labor organizations, to help us, in the factories, to carry through this mobilization. You must show the workers that it is their duty to submit to mobilization.

Such help is needed also in Petrograd, in our northern capital. Without your help and co-operation -- but we are sure we shall have this -- we cannot carry out this mobilization. Thanks to you we carried out the first mobilization splendidly, without a hitch, and you will now make it possible for us to carry out this second, somewhat wider mobilization. You will spread our influence throughout the province of Moscow and conduct the mobilization of the two age-groups, and we shall form several new divisions to help the divisions that are now on the Czechoslovak front.

We want you to understand clearly that the situation is serious. We have lost Simbirsk and Yekaterinburg. These are facts which bear witness to the extreme seriousness of the situation and to the circumstance that what we are fighting against is not small, scattered bands but a trained army, reinforced by Russian officers, who, while not distinguished by great talents, do, at least, possess great advantages. The danger is serious, and we must respond to this serious danger with a serious rebuff.

We can and we must understand this. It must enter into the consciousness of every worker, wherever he may be. It must be called to mind in connection with everything and, above all, in connection with the famine, for the Czechoslovaks and White Guards are blocking the gates of Siberia, through which we could be receiving grain. In the course of the next few days you must give us tens and hundreds of workers, you must take from their civilian jobs those who have had previous military experience, and even though they are, perhaps, insufficiently experienced, you must place them all at the disposal of the War Department. You must facilitate the mobilizing of the three age-groups in Moscow city and the two age-groups in Moscow province. These are the practical tasks that confront us. I do not doubt that the

workers of Moscow will give an example to their country and cope successfully not only with all the tasks that face them but also with the wavering, unstable Soviets on the Volga and in the Urals, and with the weak units which now will be able to find support from the will of the proletariat -- and this will lead us to victory, it is already half-way to victory. I have referred to the French revolution. Yes, comrades, we need to revive the traditions of that revolution, to the full. Remember how the Jacobins in France spoke, even while the war was still going on, about complete victory, and how the Girondins screamed at them: 'You talk about what you are going to do after victory: have you then made a pact with victory?' One of the Jacobins replied: 'We have made a pact with death.' The working class cannot be defeated. We are sons of the working class: we have made our pact with death and, therefore, with victory!

Resolution adapted On the above report:

The joint session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee of the Soviets, the Moscow Soviet, the trade unions and factory committees, having heard the report of the representatives of the central Soviet power, has decided:

1. To recognize that the socialist fatherland is in danger.
2. To subordinate the work of all the soviets and other workers' organizations to the basic tasks of the present moment: repelling the onslaught of the Czechoslovaks, and working effectively to collect grain and dispatch it to the places where it is needed.
3. To carry out agitation on the most extensive scale among the worker masses of Moscow and other localities in order to explain the critical character of the time that the Soviet Republic is now living through and to explain the necessity, from the military standpoint and also from that of grain procurement, of cleansing the Volga and Ural regions and Siberia of all counter-revolutionaries.
4. Strengthening vigilance in relation to the bourgeoisie, who everywhere side with the counter-revolutionaries. The Soviet power must safeguard its rear, placing the bourgeoisie under surveillance and practicing mass terror against it.
5. With these aims in view, the joint session considers it necessary to transfer a number of responsible soviet and trade-union workers to work in the military sphere and in the sphere of grain-procurement .
6. Every meeting of every soviet institution of any kind, every trade-union organ of the labor movement, and every other workers' organization, will henceforth put on its agenda the question of practically implementing the most resolute measures for explaining to proletarian masses the situation which has come about and for effecting military mobilization of the proletariat.
7. A mass campaign for grain, mass military training, mass armament of the workers, and concentration of all forces, for the military campaign against the counter revolutionary bourgeoisie, under the slogan: 'Victory or death.' This to be our general slogan.

## **THE MASTERS OF CZECHOSLOVAK RUSSIA**

Our Intelligence service recently intercepted some correspondence of French diplomatic agents, sent from Samara to Petrograd. This correspondence characterizes very strikingly indeed the masters of the situation there and their relationships among themselves. The French agents speak with unconcealed contempt of the Russian White Guards and the Czechoslovaks, as tools of their schemes. Without them,

without these choice representatives of the Paris stock-exchange, the Samara regime could not, of course, endure. They, the French, are everything, and from Samara their domination is to be extended over the whole country. Their influence is guaranteed, in every branch of public life. Everything and everyone will be subject to them.

This is the tone of these letters. As usual, in the camp of the bourgeois victors, in Samara many intrigues, internecine machinations, slanders, and so on, are developing. The French consul is at daggers drawn with the French military plenipotentiary, Jeannot. [The name index to the original Russian edition wrongly identifies this Jeannot with General Janin, head of the French military mission in Siberia, 1918-1920. In fact, he was a warrant officer who 'assumed' the rank of colonel and engaged in activities which led to his being sent back to France in disgrace. In order to deny supplies to Germany, the French representatives in Russia carried out an extensive purchasing program which provided opportunities for dishonest elements in their own ranks and for local speculators linked with them. See J.F.N. Bradley, *La Legion Tchechoslovaque n Russie, 1914-1920* (Paris, 1965) and Pierre Pascal, *Mon Journal ale Rusie Paris, 1975*.] We consider it will be very instructive to quote an exact translation of the letter from the French consul in Samara which figures in our files as document No. 4.

'Monsieur Jean,' the consul writes to his Petrograd correspondent (Ambassador Noulens), 'Monsieur Jean denies the report that he has been appointed envoy, and says that his function is solely that of plenipotentiary representative of the French government for military affairs. In so far as I remain without official papers, I have to play the role of observer of all these fantasies. I cannot suppose that there is any foundation for them. The consequence is that my excellent relations with the General Staff [i.e., the Dutovite-SR General Staff] have suffered since Monsieur Jeannot's return: thus, in the name of his military requirements he has deprived me of the motor-car which had been placed at my disposal, and announced that the consul must concern himself only with consular matters. On the other hand, I know, from indubitably reliable sources, that Monsieur Jeannot's military activities have consisted in acquiring 200,000 poods of tin at Omsk, and in other pieces of business -- for example, with caviar -- in various regions of this country. His official powers serve merely to facilitate profiteering by the speculators who surround Monsieur Jean. He receives donations amounting to hundreds of thousands of rubles from financiers and merchants, and spends this money freely on remunerating his general staff and on payments to recruiters of prisoners, who have already exploited him extensively. Can this go on? Naturally, if you allow it to! I only want to be informed, and you will appreciate that in this isolated situation the question of authority dominates everything. I ought, actually, either to be the head of the mission, or else to be arrested. I do not think that Monsieur Jean is going to have me arrested, but he may announce that he knows nothing about my plenary powers, and then I shall suddenly find myself just an ordinary French citizen.'

So writes the consul. His chief secretary, in a long letter to a certain Jeanne, relates that Samara is the principal center from which all operations are henceforth to begin. 'The richest merchant has placed at the consul's disposal his country residence, which is a real palace (it cost about a million). I shall be mobilized at the consulate. Here in Samara they are expecting the Allies to arrive.'

It subsequently turns out, to our surprise, that this Monsieur the chief secretary, who is getting ready to manage the affairs of Russia, is a dancing-master at a girls' school. He laments that war and revolution have killed the taste for dancing, and his lessons have become less numerous. But he is not downhearted. 'As military operations develop, so my work will increase in the French military mission which will undoubtedly be established in Samara.' 'In Petrograd,' the dancing-master diplomat goes on, 'life must

now be absolutely unbearable. Here we have everything.'

Later, the author of the letter invites Jeanne, who is also a teacher of dancing, to come to Samara, promising her profitable work. 'A high school is to be set up here, and if you were here you would, of course, enjoy advantages over the Russians. Our country and our representatives will progress daily in the extent of their influence.'... 'My position gives me, of course, many advantages' . . . 'I attend, of necessity, all banquets and festivals, and have dined with Dutov himself.' -- and so on and so forth.

Such are the new masters of the situation, those very persons who are going to 'liberate' Russia. A French dancing-master, placing both feet on the table, tells his Jeanne that, from now on, the French will enjoy in Russia all advantages over the Russians. Monsieur Jean, in the name of his military tasks, buys up metal and caviar and makes hundreds of thousands from murky speculations. This mob of parasites are preparing to rule over and govern our revolutionary country. We must hope that very soon the broom of the revolution will sweep away the Franco-Czecho-White-Guard rogues, with all their dancing-masters and Jeannots, from every corner of workers' and peasants' Russia!

August 14, 1918 Izv.V.Ts.I.K., No.178, August 20, 1918

## NOTES

**79.** In order that the articles and speeches devoted to the Czechoslovak revolt may be better understood it is necessary to provide a brief historical *account of the origins of the Czechoslovak Corps*. Czechoslovaks living in Russia, who had emigrated there from Austria and were Austrian subjects, organised at the beginning of the War, so as to prevent their property from being confiscated, a first combat-group to fight against the Germans alongside the Russians. This group, consisting of four companies, was reinforced from among Czechoslovak prisoners-of-war, and by April 1916 had increased in size to two regiments, plus a four-company reserve battalion in Kiev. This activity was connected with that of the Czechoslovak National Committee in Paris, under Masaryk. France gave support to this committee, promising to establish an independent Czechoslovak Republic. Although the Provisional Government did not particularly trust the Czechoslovaks, under pressure from the diplomatic corps it allowed them to expand their formations further. The Czechoslovak Corps played an active part in the June offensive of 17, after which it was stationed in the Berdichev-Kiev-Poltava area. The Czechoslovak Corps, and especially its commanders, reacted negatively to the October Revolution. One of their regiments even took part in the suppression of a workers' revolt in Kiev. Subsequently, the Czechoslovak Corps began to act in obedience to direct instructions from the representatives of the Entente. The entry of the United States into the war put an end to France's acute need for the Czechoslovak Corps to be transferred to the Western Front. On the other hand, the situation in Soviet Russia was so unfavourable to the Allies that they did everything they could to draw the Czechoslovaks into conflict with the Bolsheviks, so as to restore the Eastern Front against the Germans. The Czechoslovaks did not recognise the Brest treaty, and declared themselves a unit of the French Army on Russian territory. At first the Allies ordered the Corps to proceed to Murmansk, where means of transport were supposed to be waiting for them: this of course, not the case -- the Czechoslovaks were to take part in the formation of a Northern Front. The Czechoslovaks continued to move eastward toward the occupation of Vladivostok by the Japanese, and their attempts to advance further, threatened serious complications in Siberia, and this circumstance compelled the People's Commissar for Military Affairs to take a series of precautionary measures, which included a demand for complete disarmament of the Czechoslovaks. The latter, acting on orders from the Entente, regrouped themselves accordingly and began active operations against the Bolsheviks. The first



armed uprising by the Czechoslovaks took place at Chelyabinsk. After this, the People's Commissar for Military Affairs ordered that the movement of the Czechoslovak echelons be halted. On May 29, after a one day battle, Penza was taken by a large force of Czechs. On May 31 they advanced further towards the East, seizing towns and annihilating our forces. All the counter revolutionary forces of the Urals and Siberia soon rallied round the Czechoslovaks. A Siberian Government was formed in Omsk, and in Samara the Mensheviks and SRs revived the authority of the Constituent Assembly: in Orenburg Dutov reappeared, while in the Far East the lead was taken by Semyonov and Horvath. A stubborn civil war began. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**80.** Unification of the forces operating on the Northern-Ural and Siberia Omsk Fronts was achieved by the formation of the Northern-Ural-and Siberia Front under the command of R. Berzin, with Nadezhny as military commander and Anuchin as military commissar. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**81.** *The situation at the front* at this moment can be seen from Map no.2. After our surrender of Syzran on July 10 and Simbirsk on July 22, the Czechoslovaks moved quickly towards Kazan. The First Army withdrew to Kuznetsk-on-the-Inza, [Kuznetsk-on-the-Inza (not to be confused with the Kuznetsk, now Leninsk Kuzaetslcy, in Siberia) lies between Pema and Syzran. Buinsk is between Kazann and Simbrisk (now Ulyanovsk).] and up the Volga, at Buinsk, to its right, the Fourth Army was operating, covering Saratov. The Second Army, organised out of fighting squads from the town and province of Ufa, launched an offensive at the end of July from the Kama towards Bugulma,[Bugulma lies between Simbirsk (U'yanovsk) and Ufa, south of the Kama.] aiming to cut the railway between Simbirsk and Ufa. To the Second Army's left, the Third Army, after giving up Yekaterinburg, retreated to Perm. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)





# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE CIVIL WAR IN RSFSR IN 1918

THE FIGHT FOR KAZAN [\[82\]](#)

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**ORDER BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL  
AND THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR MILITARY AND NAVAL  
AFFAIRS August 8, 1918**

The fight with the Czecho-White-Guards is dragging out too long. Slovenliness, negligence and faint-heartedness *in* our own ranks are our foes' best allies. Anglo-French agents are roaming around everywhere scattering gold to right and left. They are bribing all the officers who are for sale. They are inciting the railway workers and the officials of the postal and telegraph services to commit sabotage.

Their hired agitators are everywhere penetrating into Red Army units, bringing confusion and trouble.

An end must be put to this. The country needs calm and it needs grain. The Czecho-White-Guards are depriving it of both. They must be destroyed.

Allies, direct and indirect, of the Czechoslovaks -- counter-revolutionaries, agitators and saboteurs -- must be ground to dust. Leaving for the Czechoslovak front, I send my greetings to all those who, in the army, on the railways, in grain- procurement or in the postal and telegraph services are honestly and valiantly defending the freedom and independence of the working class and the working peasantry.

Honor and glory to the valiant fighters.

At the same time, I issue this warning: no quarter will be given to the enemies of the people, the agents of foreign imperialism, the hirelings of the bourgeoisie. In the train of the People's Commissar for Military Affairs, where this order is being written, a Military Revolutionary Tribunal is in session, consisting of Comrade Smidovich, chairman of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies, Comrade Gusev, representing the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs, and Comrade Zhigmund, representing the People's Commissariat of Communications.

The Military Revolutionary Tribunal has been given unlimited powers within the zone of the railway line, which is placed under martial law.

Comrade Kamenshchikov, whom I have charged with the defense of the Moscow-Kazan line, has arranged for the setting up, at Murom, Arzamas and Sviyazhsk, of concentration camps for the imprisonment of suspicious agitators, counter- revolutionary officers, saboteurs, parasites and speculators, other than those who are to be shot at the scene of their crimes or else sentenced by the Military Revolutionary Tribunal to other punishments. I warn responsible Soviet officials in all areas where military operations are in progress, and in the zone of military movements, that we shall be doubly exacting towards them. The Soviet Republic will punish its negligent and criminal servants no less severely than its enemies. The country's terrible situation obliges us to take terrible measures.

The Soviet Republic is in peril! Woe to those who, directly or indirectly, aggravate its peril!

Published in *Izv.V.Ts.I.K.*, no.171 August 11, 1918

## **THE LETTISH SEMIGALLIAN REGIMENT**

**[Semigallia (in Lettish, Zemgale) is a part of Latvia, around Mitau (in Lettish, Jelgava).]**

*From the People's Commissar for Military' and Naval Affairs to the Chairman of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers', Peasants', Soldiers'' and Cossacks' Deputies*

During the enemy attack on Kazan some units behaved unworthy, like cowardly mercenaries and not like revolutionary soldiers of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.

If we now find ourselves obliged to take Kazan, at the price of effort and sacrifice, it is because there were units which surrendered that city without a fight.

An investigation is being carried out, and all the guilty will be punished in proportion to their crime against the Soviet Republic.

However, besides the incapable units there were others which showed a high degree of warlike valor during the defense of Kazan. First place in this category is held by the Fifth Lettish Semigallian Soviet Regiment, for its conduct in the course of the two-day defense of Kazan.

According to reports I have received, all the most important attacks made by the enemy were beaten off by units of this regiment.

In the field and then in the city, during the street fighting, the riflemen and commanding personnel of the Fifth Lettish Semigallian Regiment fought with the same self-sacrifice and heroic courage, regardless of heavy losses in dead and wounded. Thanks to this it was possible to hold Kazan for two days, which was very important, for if Kazan had fallen to the enemy on August 5, he would on August 6 also have taken the bridge over the Volga, and Sviyazhsk station. Loss of the Volga bridge and of Sviyazhsk station would have entailed grave consequences for the subsequent course of operations.

Of the commanding personnel, the following behaved with valor: the commander of the Kazan division, Comrade *Slavin*: [The name-index says of Slavin that he 'deserted to the Whites.' However, Trotsky refers to him without hostility in *My Life*, and Larissa Reissner likewise in *Sviyahsk*. In *The Trotsky Papers* there is a message from Trotsky to Lenin, dated January 22, 1919, stating that Slaven (as the name, which is Lettish, should be written) has been, at his own request, released from his command of the Southern Front. A note in a Soviet publication of 1959 (*Sotsialisncheskaya Sovetskaya Respublika Lazvii v.1919 g. i inosatrannaya interventstya*, ed. J. Krastins) says that 'in 1921 he returned to bourgeois Latvia, was arrested, and died in prison.'] General Staff officer *Pelrov*: the commander-in-chiefs aide-de-camp, *Dylan*; the commandant of the front staff, *Remer*; and the military leader *Avrov*, who personally led the street fighting. *Avrov* died the death of a hero.

On the basis of reports by participants in the battle, and, in the first place, by commander-in-chief *Vatsetis*, [English books about the Civil War give the Lettish surnames *Vacietis* and *Lacis* as 'Vatsetis' and 'Latsis', a transliteration from Russian.] I consider it necessary to mention here also the courage and devotion shown by the following Communist revolutionaries: the former commissar of the Fourth Army, Comrade *Levin*, who fought in the street battle to the last moment, and the brothers *Mezhlauk*.

Without prejudice to the question of how the feats of arms of the individuals mentioned, and of others whose roles are yet to be established, are to be honored, I nevertheless consider it a matter of justice to request the Central Executive Committee forthwith to award the Fifth Semigallian Regiment a special banner of honor, [Provisions for awarding 'banners of honor' to particular regiments were instituted by order of the People's Commissar for Military Affairs on August 3, 1918. The decoration called the Order of the Red Banner was created by the All-Russia CEC on September 16, 1918.] in the name of the highest institution of the Soviet Republic.

August 13, 1918

**ORDER BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL  
AND THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR MILITARY AND NAVAL  
AFFAIRS No 18-1918**

It has been reported to me that the Petrograd guerrilla detachment has abandoned its position.

I order Commissar Rozengolts [\[83\]](#) to verify this.

The soldiers of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army are neither cowards nor scoundrels. They want to fight for the freedom and happiness of the working people. If they retreat or fight poorly, their commanders and commissars are to blame.

I issue this warning: if any unit retreats without orders, the first to be shot will be the commissar, and the next the commander.

Soldiers who show courage will be rewarded for their services and promoted to posts of command.

Cowards, self-seekers and traitors will not escape the bullet.

For this I vouch before the whole Red Army.

Published in *Izv.V.Ts.LK.*, no.173 August 14, 1918

## **ON COLLABORATORS WITH THE CZECHO-WHITE GUARDS ANNOUNCEMENT**

Citizens of towns temporarily captured by the Czechs and White Guards are still subject to the laws of the Soviet Republic.

None is to dare to offer coercion by the conqueror justification for acts of treason against the power of the workers and peasants.

Anyone who, during the rule of the Czechs and White Guards has collaborated with them will be shot.

The property, movable and immovable, of participants in the bourgeois revolt, and of their accomplices, will be confiscated.

Out of this property compensation will be paid to the families of workers and peasants who fell under the blows of the counter-revolutionaries, and also to all working people generally who suffered by the bourgeois revolt.

August 15, 1918

## **COMRADE SAILORS OF THE VOLGA FLOTILLA!**

When I visited yesterday the headquarters of the flotilla, on the steamship *Ilya Muromets*, I was astonished at what I saw. There were numerous outsiders walking about on the ship, as though it were a thoroughfare, the sentries were not checking passes, and indeed there were no passes to check. Anyone who wanted could come aboard, talk about whatever he liked, and leave when he saw fit. Everything else presented the same spectacle. Nobody knew who was in command of the vessel. It was impossible to discover who was in charge of the boats that served for communication. Somebody was being sent some where as a result of an order that nobody knew anything about. The messengers left their launch somewhere or other, hoping that somebody else would bring it back. There was no organization, no sense of responsibility. On this ship which serves as the workplace of the naval staff there were numerous



women and children present.

No serious, businesslike work at all can be done under these conditions. Still less is it possible to safeguard any naval secrets. While I was visiting the ship, Commissar Markin summoned the mechanic, who could not get the engine to work. 'It's always the same with us,' said Commissar Markin: 'when it's a question of retiring, the ship's engines work splendidly, but when we have to move up to battle stations the machinery at once goes on strike.'

Comrade sailors! This state of affairs is intolerable. Like this, the fleet has no combat-efficiency, it is not viable. And it is with good reason that everyone remarks that our new Volga flotilla works very, very slackly, lazily, without vigor and without success. When there is no proper order at the center there can be no solid, vigorous work done on the vessels, either. And yet we are waging a serious struggle, a great struggle, truly a fight to the death. If we do not take Kazan now, the enemy will take Nizhny-Novgorod from us and link up with the Anglo-French bandits on the Archangel littoral. They would then have formed a common front. Our task would then be made very much more difficult. And then, we can say without a shadow of doubt, the Germans would start to advance from the West and from the South, so as not to let the Czechoslovaks and the British and French establish a lasting front on Russian soil. We workers and peasants, soldiers and sailors of the Soviet Republic find ourselves between two fires: the British and French, with the Czechoslovak and White Guards, in the North-East, and the Germans in the West and South. Our young republic will perish between these two fires. The most savage bourgeois tyranny will reign in our towns and villages, and all the conquests won by such great sacrifices, including the lives of many sailors of the navy will be lost for decades.

Comrade sailors! I call on you all to think about the situation which now prevails in our country. If we take Kazan, we thereby break the enemy front. Simbirsk and Samara will fall by themselves. The insignificant Anglo-French expeditionary force will give us no cause for alarm. The Germans will have no reason to advance, since no new front will have been formed in Russia. All our country's interests demand that we strain every nerve to take Kazan.

Comrade sailors! Pull yourselves together! Throw out what ever self-seekers there may be among you, sweep away slovenliness, imprecision and negligence. Everything must be put on a war footing. Do not waste a single minute. Do not retreat one inch. Seize everything possible from the enemy. Wage the struggle boldly, courageously, with the spirit of attack. Nothing venture, nothing win.

I grasp your hands fraternally, comrade sailors!

August 19, 1918

## **ORDER BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR MILITARY AND NAVAL AFFAIRS -- August 24, 1918**

Soldiers of the Fifth Army, sailors of the Volga Flotilla! We have received joyful news. The soldiers of the Soviet Second Army have drawn close to Kazan from the north-east. [84] The Czecho-White-Guards of Kazan tried to give battle, but the Soviet forces beat them back, went over to the attack, captured two armoured cars and a machine-gun, knocked out two guns, forced the enemy to flee, and occupied the villages of Kindery and Koshchakovo. Thus, the heroic forces of the Second Army are now within twelve versts of Kazan.

It is now your turn, soldiers of the Fifth Army. You must move up to meet the Second Army, and, between you, crush the Kazan counter-revolution in a vice of steel.

*Soldiers of the Fifth Army! Sailors of the Volga Flotilla!*

*The taking of Kazan* means the liberation of the workers and peasants of Kazan.

*The taking of Kazan* means the beginning of the death-agony for the bourgeois swine on the Volga, in the Urals and in Siberia.

*The taking of Kazan* means a merciless reckoning for the enemies of the revolution.

*The taking of Kazan* means, for you, well-deserved rest and reward for all the brave and firm warriors of the revolution.

The enemy already senses that his doom has come. *Get ready!* The moment for the decisive onslaught is here. At the first order from your commander, Comrade Slavin,[\[85\]](#) you will go forward as one man and deal the death blow to the weakened enemy.

Commanders! Commissars! Soldiers! Sailors! Everyone to his post!

## **TO THE MUTINOUS FORCES IN KAZAN**

To the mutinous forces in Kazan fighting against the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, we the deceived Czechoslovaks, to the deceived peasants, to the deceived Workers.

What are you fighting for?

The landlords, the capitalists, the old officers want to recover their power and their wealth. The French and Japanese stock-exchange speculators want to recover their profits. But what about you Czechoslovaks, you workers and peasants?

You have been deceived. You are cannon-fodder. You are shedding workers' blood for the interests of the rich.

There is no hope of salvation for the rebel White Guards. Kazan is surrounded on all sides. Our forces, on land, sea and air, are incomparably greater than yours.

Your leaders, having seized the people's gold, are hastening to quit Kazan. They feel that they are doomed.

Czechoslovak soldiers! Peasants and workers!

Do you want to die with them?

I declare to all:

The Soviet power is making war only on the rich, the aggressors, the imperialists.

To the working people we extend a fraternal hand. Everyone of you that comes over voluntarily to our side will receive from us full pardon and fraternal welcome.

Dozens of men from your ranks have already come over to us. None of them have suffered. They are all

unharmd and at liberty.

In the name of the Council of People's Commissars I give you a last warning.

Come over, all of you, to the side of the Soviet forces! *Sviyazhsk, August 26, 1918* [The date is given at the end of the order as 'August 26', but appears in the list of contents as 'August 27'.]

## ON THE MOBILIZATION

*To the peasants and workers of Kazan province*

The enemies of the working people the landlords, capitalists, officers and their hirelings, the Czechoslovaks, are attempting to mobilise the working population of Kazan province to fight against the workers and peasants.

I hereby give notice, so that no one may later plead ignorance of the revolutionary laws and decrees of the Soviet power, that:

1. Anyone who submits to mobilisation by the Czechoslovak White Guards and joins the army of the enemies of the people commits a very grave crime against the state.
2. All workers and peasants who have joined the enemy's army under duress must immediately come over to the side of the Soviet troops: by so doing they will be guaranteed a full pardon.
3. Those peasants and workers who have sold themselves to the White Guards and who do not voluntarily lay down their arms will be shot, along with the officers and the sons of the bourgeoisie and landlords. All their property will be turned over to the wounded and maimed Red Army men and the families of fallen soldiers of the Workers' and Peasants' Army.

## WHAT IS THE STRUGGLE ABOUT?

Workers of Kazan! Honest citizens! Your city is now in the hands of the Czechoslovaks and White Guards.

The Czechoslovaks are mercenaries in the service of the French bourgeoisie. The bankers, stock-exchange speculators and usurers of Paris want to get from the Russian people the tens of milliards of roubles that the Tsar borrowed from them. The British beasts of prey want to seize Russia's northern coast. The Japanese are trying to cut Siberia off from us. Finally, the French, British and American capitalists want to force exhausted Russia to involve herself again in the war with Germany.

This is why they have begun to fight against workers' and peasants' Russia.

The foreign capitalists have put the Czechoslovaks and Tsarist officers on their payroll. French capital reigns in Kazan, Simbirsk and Samara. The Fortunatovs and Lebedevs [\[86\]](#) are merely wretched and criminal imbeciles who play the role of a false signboard.

*Workers of Kazan!* The hirelings of foreign capital have temporarily cut you off from workers' and peasants' Russia. They lie to you and deceive you with their newspapers and leaflets. They tell you that

the Soviet troops have been broken and scattered. In reality, workers' and peasants' regiments are hastening from all parts of Russia to free the Volga region and the Urals from the domination of the Czecho-White Guards. Kazan is now surrounded by a ring of revolutionary troops.

*Workers and peasants!* The Soviet troops will not let the Russian White Guards sell you to foreign capital. We will not let the landlords take the land from the peasants. We will not let the degenerates of the Romanov dynasty take power into their hands. We will not let the Czechoslovak mercenaries rule the roost on Russian soil. Kazan will soon be torn from the hands of the counter-revolution and the Czechoslovak bands.

Be prepared, workers and honest citizens of Kazan! The moment is near when our foes will be crushed and working people's Kazan will be restored to the family of Soviet Russia.

Down with the Czechoslovak, Anglo-French, Japanese and other bandits!

Death to the White Guards!

Destruction to the traitorous bourgeois of Kazan!

Long live Workers' and Peasants' Soviet Russia!

*Grazhdanskaya Voina* (organ of the 5th Army), no 2 August 28, 1918

## **ORDER No.31 -- BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR MILITARY AND NAVAL AFFAIRS TO THE RED ARMY AND THE RED NAVY August 30, 1918**

Traitors are penetrating into the ranks of the workers' and peasants' army and trying to bring about victory for the enemies of the people. They are followed by self-seeking deserters. Dishonest cowards are frequently quitting the battlefield at the moment when the final blow has to be dealt to annihilate the enemy. The Soviet power has warned all self-seekers that it will not joke with them. The fate of the working class is at stake. The brave and honorable soldier cannot give his life twice -- for himself and for a deserter. The overwhelming majority of the revolutionary soldiers have long been demanding that traitors be dealt with ruthlessly. The Soviet power has now passed from warning to action. Yesterday twenty deserters were shot, having been sentenced by the field court-martial of the Fifth Army.

The first to go were commanders and commissars who had abandoned the positions entrusted to them. Next, cowardly liars who played sick. Finally, some deserters from among the Red Army men who refused to expiate their crime by taking part in the subsequent struggle.

Every honorable soldier and sailor will read the sentence of the court with complete satisfaction. No quarter must be given to traitors to the workers' cause.

In publishing for general information the sentence of the Revolutionary Field Court-Martial, I at the same time express my firm hope that the Central Soviet power will soon introduce a special revolutionary decoration for honorable and courageous warriors. It is necessary that everyone should distinguish between brave sons of the revolution and miserable cowards.

Long live the valiant soldiers of the Workers' and Peasants' Army!

Down with self-seekers! Death to deserter-traitors!

## AT THE GATES OF KAZAN

The Fifth Army has been assigned the task of taking Kazan.

Our enemy is trying to break through from Kazan to Nizhny Noygorod, Perm, Vyatka and Vologda, to link up with the Anglo-French troops, and to crush the heart of the workers' revolution -- Moscow.

But before Kazan stand the workers' and peasants' regiments of the Red Army. They know what their task is: to prevent the enemy from taking a single step forward: to wrest Kazan from his grasp: to throw back the Czech mercenaries and the officer-thugs, drown them in the Volga, and crush their criminal mutiny against the workers' revolution.

In this conflict we are using not only rifles, cannon and machine guns, but also newspapers. For the newspaper is also a weapon. The newspaper binds together all units of the Fifth Army in one thought, one aspiration, one will.

*Foward to Kazan!*

August 1918

## REMEMBER YAROSLAVL!

The revolt of the bourgeoisie and officers at Yaroskvl was crushed by the Soviet forces without mercy. Hundreds of the rebels were slaughtered or drowned in the Volga. More than 350 captured White Guards were shot after the revolt had been putdown. The attempts by the bourgeoisie to force the workers and peasants back into slavery brought down stern punishment upon the conspirators.

*Remember Yaroslavl, you counter-revolutionaiy bandits of Kazan, Simbirsk and Samara!*

The ignorant, deceived, bewildered soldiers and Czechoslovaks may yet hope for pardon if they repent in time and lay down their arms. *But you, bourgeois conspirators, foreign agents provocateurs and White-Guard officers will be exterminated, every one of you.* The Soviet power will, with a red-hot iron, teach bourgeois adventurers not to raise rebellions against the workers and peasants.

*Remember Yaroslavl, you hirelings of the bourgeoisie!*

August 1918

## A WARNING TO THE WORKING POPULATION OF KAZAN

You must get out of the city for the time being. After the seizure of Kazan by the Czech-White-Guard bands, the city has become a nest of counter-revolution.

This nest has to be destroyed. In the event of further resistance, *the counter-revolutionary parts of the city will be razed to the ground.*

Our gunners operating on land and on the river, and also our airmen, will do their utmost to avoid damaging the dwellings and districts of the poor. But in a savage battle all sorts of accidents may occur.



*We warn the working population of Kazan of the imminent danger.*

Everyone who can had better get out of Kazan during these days of imminent ruthless settlement of accounts with the bandits.

*It is necessary to remove your children from the town as soon as you can.*

We advise the working population of Kazan to seek refuge on Soviet territory. We offer fraternal hospitality to all working and needy people. Within a few days the working population of Kazan will be able to return to a city cleansed of vermin, along with the Soviet troops.

*Woe to the black nest of counter-revolution in Kazan!*

Long live Red workers' Kazan!

August 1918

## **THE KAZAN PEASANT IS WISE AFTER THE EVENT**

Our soldiers say that in some villages of Kazan province the peasants are receiving them in an unfriendly way, and in certain places with absolute hostility. Why is this? It is understandable where the kulaks are concerned. They know that now the revolution is bringing their doom. But, likewise, the middle peasantry, sometimes under the influence of these same kulaks, is showing enmity to the workers' army. This is because the Kazan peasant lives in the backwoods, in ignorance, cut off, not knowing what is going to happen to him tomorrow. It was the same in the Ukraine. When the bourgeois troops of the Rada, together with the German bands, moved against the Ukrainian towns and villages, the Soviet forces fought against this invasion. But in many places the peasants held aloof, saying: 'This is not our business. It's no concern of ours.' There were not a few cases when the peasants acted against the Ukrainian Soviet troops and supported the Ukrainian bourgeois troops. The German troops occupied the Ukraine. The land was given back to the landlords. The old police authorities had their powers restored. The old taxes were reintroduced. The peasants set up a howl. All over the Ukraine, the peasantry now rose in rebellion. With rifles and machine-guns, and sometimes with knives and pitchforks, the Ukrainian peasant rose against the German violators of the Ukraine. Rivers of blood flow. The Ukrainian peasant scratches his head and says to himself: 'There now, I'm wise after the event, I ought to have supported the Soviet troops at the right time. If I had, fewer sacrifices would have been needed now.'

The Kazan peasant ought now to look at the Ukrainian peasant and learn his lesson: tomorrow they will set the land lords and policemen on your back once more and you will have to take up your pitchfork, your scythe, your knife... Would it not be better to unite now with the Soviet forces and support them in their struggle? That is the only way to safeguard land and liberty for the peasants.

September 1918

## **WHAT IS PANIC?**

Panic is herd-like, blind, senseless fear. One or two shots, an obscure rumour -- and panic breaks out. 'They are outflanking us... -- and the unit retreats in senseless terror. Why did we lose Kazan at the beginning of August? Because certain units were seized with ignorant, shameful panic, and fled before

insignificant enemy forces. [87] Kazan could have been held on August 5 with very few casualties. But now we are having to take Kazan with a much greater expenditure of forces and lives.

The ignorant, unconscious, cowardly, bad soldier is subject to panic. And he is more likely to perish than anyone else, for senseless fear is a bad counsellor. A man in the grip of panic rushes headlong, without thinking, and often runs into real danger and perishes. The conscious, courageous soldiers does not give way to panic. He weighs all the circumstances, pre serves the necessary calm, and therefore often saves his life even under the most difficult conditions. More cowards die than brave men.

There are soldiers who spread panic. They are the ones who always pass on alarming gossip and who are the first to raise the cry: 'They have outflanked us... We must retreat.' Because of such worthless creatures thousands of men sometimes retreat before a few dozen.

The Czechoslovaks number 22,000 in all. The White-Guard officers are also not very numerous. We could have settled with them in a couple of days if our young units had not been seized by that vile disease, panic. We must put an end to it once and for all. Commissars, commanders, advanced soldiers, Communist agitators, all must declare relentless war on panic. Away with panic! Stern punishment for those who sow panic!

September 1918

## **ORDER NO. 32**

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and the Peoples' Commissariat for Military and Naval Affairs to the Red Army and the Red Navy, September 10, 1918: No.32

The tenth of September will be a red-letter day in the history of the socialist revolution. Kazan has been wrested by units of the Fifth Army from the clutches of the White Guards and Czechoslovaks. [88] This is a turning-point. The advance of the bourgeois army has at last met with a proper rebuff. The enemy's morale has been broken. After Kazan will come Yelaterinburg, Simbirsk, Samara and all the other towns of the Volga region, the Urals and Siberia which have temporarily been captured by the enemies of the worker masses.

Soldiers and sailors! The month of fighting before Kazan passed under my eyes. The enemy, 'with his officer battalions, had the clear advantage in organisation and skill. Our young units, which had never before been under fire, failed sometimes in the first days to show the necessary staunchness. Cases were seen of causeless panic and senseless retreats. But the first failures did not break our morale. The most conscious soldiers and sailors united more closely and helped to establish firm discipline in the ranks of the Fifth Army. Amid universal contempt, self-seekers were subjected to stern punishment. Commanders, commissars, soldiers, sailors, all acted as one. And, inmiediatly, there was a turn. After experiencing the blows we dealt them, the Czecho-White Guards began to say:

'These are not Red Army men, they are Germans.' The Tsarist officers, who are used to being beaten by the Germans, now think that anyone who beats them must be a German.

Soldiers and Sailors of the Fifth Army! You have taken Kazan. It will be counted to your credit. Those units or those individuals who have especially distinguished themselves will be rewarded accordingly by the workers' and peasants' power.

Here I wish to proclaim, before the country and before the international proletariat: the entire Fifth Army has honorably done its duty. In the name of the Council of People's Commissars I say 'Thank you, comrades.'

Published in *Izv.V.Ts.LK.*, no.199 September 14, 1918

## **TELEGRAM SEPT. 11, 1918**

To the Chairmen of the Soviets of Petrograd and Moscow, Gomrades Zinoviez and Kamenev, September 11, 1918

The capture of Kazan is your victory, not only because it is a victory for the working-class over bourgeois *gangs*, but also because the decisive role in this victory was played by the heroic workers of Petrograd and Moscow, who march in the front ranks and showed, in the most difficult circumstances an example of courage and indestructible loyalty.

Long live the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets of Workers' Deputies;

Published in *Izv.V. Ts.I.K.*, no.197 September 12, 1918

## **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TAKING OF KAZAN IN THE COURSE OF THE CIVIL WAR**

Speech in Kazan Theatre on the day after the taking of Kazan, September 11, 1918 [The beginning of this speech was not taken down. The partial shorthand report which has survived is reproduced here. -- *L.T.*]

We value science, culture, art, and want to make them accessible to the people, along with all their institutions -- schools, universities, theatres and the rest. But if our class enemies should again try to show that all these are for them only, and not for the people, we should say: 'Perish science and art, perish the theatre!' Comrades, we love the sun that gives us light, but if the rich and the aggressors were to try to monopolize it we should say: 'Let the sun be extinguished, let darkness reign, eternal night

Precisely for that it was that we fought under the walls of Kazan, for that it is that we are fighting on the Volga and in the Urals -- to settle the question whether homes, palaces, cities, the sun and the heavens are to belong to the working people, to the workers, the peasants, the poor, or to the bourgeois and the landlords who, having got astride the Volga and the Urals, are trying once more to get astride the working people.

The SR papers are right when they say that a working class which has taken power, which has tested and understood what that means, will not surrender power without a bitter fight.

'Workers,' say our enemies, gloatingly, 'you have taken power, but where is your land flowing with milk and honey?' The workers, however, fully aware of their historical rightness, answer them: 'Yes, we have taken over the dreadful heritage left to us by the autocracy and by the four years of world slaughter that have exhausted the country. It is true that the working class is experiencing difficulties, but it is also true that work for the transformation of the country is very difficult work. The propertied classes ruled for thousands of years and inflicted many wounds, and the working class has had to heal these wounds in the course of a few months. Give us time: we shall cope with everything -- and without having recourse to

the means recommended by the Russian bourgeoisie, landlords and ex-officials, namely, the Constituent Assembly.'

'The Constituent Assembly!' It was under this slogan that yesterday the bourgeoisie was trying, before the walls of Kazan, to oppose the workers and peasants who were giving their lives in the fight against this slogan.

A Constituent Assembly is an aggregate of classes and parties, that is, it is made up of representatives of all the parties, from the landlords to the proletariat. And so we ask this question: 'Who will rule in the Constituent Assembly? Are they not proposing to us to form a coalition -- and this is the only thing they can now propose -- a joint government, extending from Lebedev on one wing to Comrade Lenin on the other?' I think, comrades, that this item will not appear on our historical program. Besides, our enemies themselves do not, in practice, want a coalition with the proletariat, for when Lebedev was preparing the Constituent Assembly, along with his mate Kerensky, Comrade Lenin was in a hut in the forest, where he had to hide himself, like a hermit, for several weeks, and we others lay in the Kresty prison in Petrograd.<sup>[89]</sup> No, there was no question of a coalition then, even when those who preach the idea of a constituent assembly were in power. Let us allow that there could at that time be no coalition with the Communists, but only with the other, respectable parties, parties of government, patriotic parties: the Cadets, the Right SRs, the Mensheviks, and, perhaps, even the Left SRs. Were all these moral, respectable parties able to form a coalition? That is the point, namely, that coalition is contrary to the laws of the class struggle.

A Constituent Assembly does not rule, it is a ministry that would rule. A ministry made up of whom? Of all the parties except the Bolsheviks. A coalition of all the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties against the working class and the village poor-- that is what the Constituent Assembly means. But only forces that have weight count in the scales of history: on the one hand, the working class, which is strong in its labor, its skill, its numbers and its role in the economy; on the other, the landlords, so long as they hold the land, the capitalists and bankers, so long as they possess capital -- these classes also have great importance: and between them, like cockroaches in cracks, huddle the Right SRs and the Mensheviks, who say:

'Why, workers, do you fight the capitalists, and why, peasants, do you fight the landlords? We, the Right SRs and Mensheviks, will stand in the middle and, by means of a coalition, will reconcile you with your class enemies: there is no need for civil war.' But the working class has rejected this lying and play-acting. The bourgeoisie itself compelled it to! The compromisers blame the Bolsheviks for kindling civil war, but when this civil war develops into a war of the propertied against the propertyless, the Right SRs and the Mensheviks always prove to be on the side of the propertied. Did they rise in protest against civil war when workers were being shot in Kazan, when the bourgeois groups were consolidating their power in this way? No, they did not.

There are two civil wars, or, more properly, two poles of civil war. That civil war which the landlords, the old officials, the old generals, bankers and capitalists are waging against the working masses is a dishonorable civil war: and there is the other civil war, which we, the workers, having stood up and straightened our backs, are beginning to wage against the oppressors, against the aggressors, and which is a sacred civil war. This war we waged yesterday and we will wage it tomorrow and today -- we have shown this by the capture of Kazan!

The capture of Kazan! How are we to evaluate this gratifying fact?



The internal class struggle in the Soviet Republic has been complicated and has assumed the form of a protracted, authentic war because the resistance of the Russian bourgeoisie has been joined by foreign intervention, by the attack and invasion of foreign imperialism, in the form of the European and American landing and of a network of conspiracies. At the start, having landed a small expeditionary force of two or three thousand British and French at Murmansk and Archangel, the imperialist burglars calculated that the broad masses of the people would begin to flow over to their side. They did not reckon with resistance from the revolution, given the difficult situation the Russian workers were in. But the bearer of the revolution, the hungry proletariat of Moscow and Petrograd, said to them: 'I am today eating an eighth of a pound of bread, and tomorrow I shall not have even that, but I shall just tighten my belt, and I tell you plainly -- I have taken power, and this power I shall never surrender!' And when the imperialists met with their first rebuff after their unexpected attack on Archangel, the whole bourgeois press of Britain and France spoke up, saying that the entire enterprise in the North was an adventure.

Meanwhile, the British plenipotentiary Lockhart and the French General Lavergne, who were in Moscow, raised a revolt in Yaroslavl and Vologda, and organized a plot in Moscow. Everything was ready, with only one 'trifle' to be settled: what was to be done with Comrade Lenin -- was he to be sent under escort to Archangel, or to be shot on the spot?

The Yaroslavl and Moscow revolt not only took place at the bidding of the Allied imperialists and with their money, they also laid down the time-table for these revolts. And when General Lavergne summoned Savinkov and told him: 'We need a revolt on the Volga on such-and-such a date,' and Savinkov replied: 'That would be a risky undertaking -- at present it would be premature,' Lavergne answered him more or less like this: 'Have we not created all your organisations for you?' -- that is, haven't I paid you? It was as though Lavergne had said:

'A donkey should know his master's crib -- Savinkov should know what his master's orders are.' And, at the direct command of the French General Lavergne, Savinkov organized the revolt in Yaroslavl which destroyed part of the town and cost the lives of many workers. He shot them down there no less savagely than happened here in Kazan. Hardly had these events occurred than the revolt of the Czechoslovaks followed them up in Siberia, at Chelyabinsk -- and Samara and Simbirsk were seized. It hadn't worked at Vologda and Yaroslavl, so now from Kazan the wave rolled towards Nizhny-Novgorod, in an attempt to link up with the Anglo-French front. The entire bourgeois press was already trumpeting the triumph of this maneuver. That is why our capture of Kazan means more than merely the liberation of one workers' city -- the capture of Kazan means the collapse of a diabolical plan in which representatives of the American, French and Japanese stock exchanges are taking part, and in which the Russian bourgeoisie is involved, tens and hundreds of blue-blooded conspirators: a plan the aim of which was to put all the key points in our country at the disposal of Anglo-Franco Americano-Japanese imperialism, that is, to act in Russia as they acted in any colony. And this plan has been ruined by the capture of Kazan! There will still be fighting, and hard fighting, but we may hope that there will now be no link-up between the Czechoslovaks and the Anglo-French forces! Besides, nature herself leaves only a month, or six weeks, no more than that, for the enemy schemes to be realised: our northern seas are beginning to freeze up, Mother Volga too will start to freeze, and they will be left as tiny handfuls, scattered among different towns without a proper link between them, isolated and doomed!

For them, the capture of Kazan is like a sharp knife. The capture of Kazan will be followed by the capture of Samara, Simbirsk, Chelyabinsk and Ufa, and Yekaterinburg and Orenburg will be freed, which means that the Volga, the Urals and Siberia will be restored to the family of Soviet Russia. This



does not, of course, mean that all danger is past. There is no greater danger for the revolutionary class than resting on its laurels and supposing that the successes achieved will ensure complete victory. There would have been no Czechoslovak mutiny if, after October, we had kept up the muscular tension with which we fought the bourgeoisie during the October revolution. But it is the working class's misfortune that it underestimates the strength of its enemies. How many of our worst enemies were set free by the workers of Petrograd and Moscow after the first revolt! That very same General Krasnov who now rules on the Don, who has there shot, hanged and cut to pieces thousands, many thousands of workers, was taken prisoner in Petrograd in October of last year and good-naturedly released by the Petrograd workers. And all the Right SRs who are now ministers in the Ukraine or ministers of the Siberian government in Samara, all these Lebedevs, Fortunatovs and the rest, were also in the hands of the working class. Those hands held them -- and let them go: without respect, with contempt, but they let them go. Now these men have organized a conspiracy against the workers, and are shooting and hanging them. And now, when the workers are accused of harshness and of waging civil war, we say, on the basis of experience: the only sin that would now be unforgivable in the Russian working class would be to show mercy and soft-heartedness towards its class enemies. We are fighting for the greatest good of mankind, for the rebirth of the entire human race, for its emancipation from oppression, from ignorance, from slavery. And everything that stands in our way must be swept aside. We do not want civil strife, blood, wounds! We are ready to join fraternally in a common life with all our worst enemies. If the bourgeoisie of Kazan were to come back today to the rich mansions that they abandoned in cowardly fashion, and were to say: 'Well, comrade workers' -- or if the landlords were to say: 'Well, comrade peasants, in past centuries and decades our fathers and grandfathers and we ourselves oppressed, robbed and coerced your grandfathers and your fathers and yourselves, but now we extend a brotherly hand to you: let us instead work together as a team, sharing the fruits of our labor like brothers' -- then I think that, in that case, I could say, on your behalf: 'Messrs landlords, Messrs bourgeois, feel free to come back, a table will be laid for you, as for all our friends! If you don't want civil war, if you want to live with us like brothers, then please do... But if you want to rule once more over the working class, to take back the factories -- then we will show you an iron fist, and we will give the mansions you deserted to the poor, the workers and oppressed people of Kazan.'

In the struggle which has begun, it is the task of the conscious workers to bend down to their brothers who are in the darkness of ignorance (there are still not a few of them) to bend down and explain to them the meaning of what has happened, to raise them up, to show them that this is not a fight between parties, not a fight over trifles, but a fight to decide whether the worker is to live as absolute master of the Russian land or to lie prostrate like a corpse on which the vultures of world imperialism will gather to tear him to pieces. You must show that we want a Workers' and Peasants' Soviet Republic to be established in the land of Russia, so that the working people may rule here and so that it may be made impossible for the rule of the capitalists and landlords to be re-established here. This is the simple idea which, expounded in a working-class way, must be grasped by every backward workers and every peasant.

Like everything done by the Russian revolution, our first successes against the Czechoslovaks played an enormous revolutionary role in France and Britain: an offensive by the workers against the imperialists has begun in those countries, and a split has begun to appear among the imperialists: a section of them has started to declare that this senseless offensive, this wretched, risky adventure, must cease. This was happening before the capture of Kazan.

It is therefore beyond doubt that the news of the capture of Kazan will bring about a very big split among

the bourgeois imperialists of Britain, and they will start to beat retreat, having seen that the land of Russia does not lie helpless in temptation's path, that it is not for any highway robber from among the imperialist brigands to pocket the land of Russia. It is now a workers' and peasants' country, and is defended by its workers' and peasants' army. Soviet Russia will give a decisive rebuff to the imperialists. Into Soviet Russia, as into a hornets' nest, you will no longer thrust your thieving hands. The heroic capture of Kazan is a warning to all imperialists! But it is necessary that this warning shall not remain isolated, that it shall be given a firm and vigorous continuation. Mobilisation is under way here in Kazan province. The workers of the city of Kazan have the duty of being the first to join the workers' and peasants' Red Army. We must create a public opinion such that whoever now dodges or hides from military service is seen as a traitor to the cause of the working class, and just as in the old days we dealt harshly and sternly with strikebreakers who curried favour with the capitalists, so now we must deal with those workers who fail to support the workers' and peasants' army and help the counter-revolution. All honest Soviet citizens have the duty of defending the country.

We are accused of being bad patriots. Yes, comrades, so long as the bourgeois stood at the head of our country and landlord- bureaucrats drove the grey-clad cattle, the Russian soldiers, to shed their blood for their interests, so long were we bad patriots for their profits, for we were always patriots for the working class. But now it is the working class and the poor peasantry who rule in our country. This is now a different country, on whose soil, steeped in the violence, slavery and sweat of many generations, the working class has, for the first time in world history, risen to its full height and said: 'I am the master here and there is no other master but me.' And for this Russia we have the most ardent feelings, and for it we are prepared to lay down our lives and to shed our blood to the very last drop.

The terrible danger is helping us to create a strong army not in days but in hours. The mobilisation is, judging by the latest reports, everywhere proceeding splendidly: a mass of telegrams is coming in, requesting permission to carry out mobilisation of two, three, four and more age-groups. We cannot remain in our Kazan bivouac, we must push on! Other places call to us, places where the White Guards still rule. And we proclaim from here, in the name of the revolution at large: 'Comrades of Simbirsk, Samara and other towns! We remember you, we are not holding back for one moment, we are all ready to go forward with combined efforts to help you, so as to free our Soviet Russia from the black tyranny of the bourgeois counter-revolution, we are all ready to give our lives for the life of the working class.'

And, in the name of the revolution, I call on you, comrades, to join with me in one cry: Long live Workers' and Peasants' Soviet Russia!

Long live the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army!

Hurrah!

## **ORDER OF SEPT 12, 1918**

*By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and the People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Red Army and the Red Navy, September 12, 1918*

In my order No.331 expressed my appreciation of the valiant contribution made by the Fifth Army to the capture of Kazan. But also taking part in the heroic struggle before Kazan was a detachment of the Second Army, which attacked from the North-East, under the command of Comrade Azin. Until late ly, this detachment was without regular communication with the Fifth Army. I now perceive, from reports and from all the circumstances of the action, that the Second Army detachment, overcoming all

difficulties and hardships, fought with truly revolutionary heroism. I consider it my duty to bring this to the notice of the Council of People's Commissars and the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers', Peasants', Red Army Men's and Cossacks' Deputies.

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## **AN APPEAL TO THE CZECHOSLOVAKS**

Czechoslovak soldiers, workers and peasants! You were promised help from Britain, France, America and Japan, but they deceived you. The British and Japanese bourgeois need your blood in order to subjugate the working people of Russia and squeeze gold out of them. The Russian White-Guard officers hide behind your backs and force you to die for the cause of the bourgeoisie.

You have now seen how strong the Red Army is. We have taken Kazan and Simbirsk, and tomorrow we shall take Yekaterinburg, Samara and all the other towns that the bourgeoisie has temporarily seized with the aid of your blood.

You are all giving your lives for the interests of the rich, the bankers and the kings. They are cheating you. Rub your eyes:

Live Russian workers and peasants are fighting for their freedom and power against the Russian and foreign bourgeois. Do not stand in our way!

Solemnly I declare to you, before the working class of all countries: 'Every Czechoslovak soldier who voluntarily lays down his arms will be pardoned and given the opportunity to Live in Russia on an equal footing with all the working citizens of the Soviet Republic.'

Czechoslovak soldiers! Remember that you yourselves are mostly workers and peasants. Arrest your counter revolutionary officers, unite with the workers and peasants of Soviet Russia -- in this lies your salvation!

September 13, 1918

## **ABOUT THE BURGLARS WHO SEIZED IN KAZAN PART OF THE GOLD RESERVE OF THE RUSSIAN SOVIET REPUBLIC**

In Kazan the White Guards and Czechoslovaks seized part of the gold which is the public property of the Russian Soviet Republic. The seizure of this gold was carried out on the orders of the French, British, Japanese and American capitalists. After the October Revolution the Russian people refused to make payments to foreign usurers for the loans contracted by the Tsars. In order to extract their profits from the Russian workers and peasants, the foreign beasts of prey, acting through the Czechoslovak mercenaries and White Guards, seized part of the gold which belongs to the Russian people. The robbers are now trying to carry off the gold they have seized, through Siberia to Japan and America and through Archangel to France and Britain.

This must at all costs be prevented.

The gold which has been stolen from the Russian people must be restored to them intact.

Protection of this gold in the area where the Czechoslovak and White-Guard revolt is going on is the responsibility of all honest workers and peasants.

They must save it from being carried off and plundered.

The conspirators, who have long since run out of bank notes, may try to pay their bills with this gold.

*Anyone who accepts gold in payment for work or for produce will be considered an accomplice in the robbery.*

The conscious workers, the peasants and, in general, all the honest citizens in the localities temporarily held by the rebels bear the responsibility of maintaining secret surveillance of all the criminals now engaged in transport, concealment or plundering of the gold.

After the Volga, the Urals and Siberia have been cleansed of the White Guards and Czechoslovaks, all who have been guilty of plundering the gold reserve will be identified. Their property will be confiscated and they themselves will be subjected to the severest punishment, up to and including death by shooting.

*Izv. V. Ts. I. K.*, No. 199 September 14, 1918

## **ABOUT THE VICTORY**

What is there to be said about the victory? Victories do not require commentaries they speak for themselves. Many people think that the victory came unexpectedly. That is not so. Soon after my departure for the Eastern Front I telegraphed to Comrade Lenin that our units would fight magnificently and be victorious, provided only they were ensured a minimum of organisation and competent leadership. From the example of the Fifth Army I was able to follow, day by day, how the young, freshly-knocked-together units were becoming more united and growing in strength. The Communists constituted the soul, in the true sense of that word, of every company and every regiment. Certain detachments of Communists gave examples of incomparable devotion. In my first days at the Fifth Army front I heard complaints about the Bryansk regiment, which had retreated without justification. Throughout the subsequent operations the Bryansk regiment was among the most heroic, and the commander spoke of it with sincere enthusiasm. As soon as our units felt that they were linked together, and each one acquired confidence that there would be no withdrawals either on its right or on its left, that the command was pursuing a definite, thought-out plan, then all the true qualities of a revolutionary army -- enthusiasm, *elan*, heroism showed themselves to the full. We are now forging on the anvil of war an army of first-class quality. It can be said that if the Czechoslovaks had not existed, they would have had to be invented, for under peacetime conditions we should never have succeeded in forming, within a short time, a close-knit, disciplined, heroic army. But now this army is being formed before our eyes. We need reinforcements. These reinforcements must be sent to us from the same localities from which the basic units have come, so that the worker or peasant from Tula may reinforce his own Tula regiments, the men from Vladimir may go to the Vladimir regiment, and so on. Reinforcement, like formation, will with us take place directly under the enemy's fire. In this way it will prove sounder. Through this feverish activity of formation, carried out amid the actual fires of struggle, more and more capable and vigorous soldiers are emerging and will continue to emerge, and to them we shall be able to entrust positions of command. The *elan* shown by the revolutionary worker-soldiers and their warlike vigour are making a big impression on many of the old officers, and we are obtaining, in them,



commanders who are completely reliable and vitally bound up with the Red Army. After incredible efforts, privations and losses, the Red Army units entered Kazan in perfect order. The White Guards had scared the inhabitants with a prospect of butchery, mass extermination, and so forth. In fact, the arrival of the Red Army men signified the establishment in the city of a regime of strict discipline and suppression of drunkenness and gangsterism. At huge meetings in the city theatre and in the square in front of the theatre the proletarian masses of the population of Kazan greeted with stormy revolutionary enthusiasm the restoration of Soviet power in their city, and promised to support the Red Army by reinforcing it with new regiments from Kazan. Neither was the capture of Simbirsk a matter for surprise. The commander of the First Army, Comrade Tukhachevsky, had undertaken to capture Simbirsk not later than September 12. He honorably fulfilled his obligation. He informed me of the taking of the town in a telegram which read: 'Order carried out. Simbirsk taken.'

The surest way to develop and complete this victory is not to slacken pressure on the enemy. For this purpose we need reinforcements from within the country, and for that, in turn, we need widespread and intense agitation among the masses of the workers and the village poor. The working people in the most out-of-the-way corners of Soviet Russia must understand that this war is their war, and upon its outcome depends the fate of the working masses of Russia, and, to a significant degree, of the whole world.

September 1918

## **ORDER No 36**

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and the People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Red Army and the Red Navy, November 3, 1918, No 36, Tsaritsyn

Among the counter-revolutionary troops fighting against us there are Czechoslovak units. They consist mostly of deceived Czech workers and peasants who hope that the Anglo-French imperialists will secure the independence of their homeland, Bohemia. The independence of Bohemia has now been proclaimed in Austria itself, thanks to the revolution which is developing there.

Through the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs I have raised the question of enabling all those Czechs who so desire to return to their homeland, which is now passing through a period of revolutionary upsurge. The People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs has in his turn informed the Czech Government that the Soviet Government, despite all the successes won by our arms on the Volga and in the Urals, wishes for nothing so warmly as for the cessation of bloodshed, and is therefore ready to offer unarmed Czechoslovaks a full guarantee of security in proceeding through Russia to their liberated homeland. The Soviet Government has proposed to the Government of Bohemia that negotiations be begun with a view to determining all the conditions for the return of the Czechoslovaks to their homeland.

I order the Revolutionary War Councils of all the armies on the Eastern Front to take measures to bring to the notice of the Czechoslovaks these steps we have taken, as well as the great changes that are now occurring in Austria-Hungary. I most strictly order that all Czechoslovaks taken prisoner be spared. Anyone responsible for shooting captured Czechoslovaks will be liable to the severest punishment.

The moment has come when the Czechoslovaks, deceived and sold to the British, French and Russian imperialists, must understand that their salvation lies in alliance with the Russian Soviet power, which can alone facilitate their return home.



## ORDER No. 60, November 15, 1918

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and the People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Red Army and the Red Navy, November 15, 1918, No 60. Moscow

In connection with my order concerning the deceived Czechoslovaks who are now fighting against the Soviet forces, I have received a statement from the Serbs who are in Russia and a considerable section of whom have been drawn by the imperialists into struggle against the workers' and peasants' power. In answer to the questions put to me, I declare that the order concerning the Czechoslovaks applies in full likewise to the Serbs, the Poles and the soldiers of other nationalities recruited by Anglo-French and Japanese imperialist agents.

I issue a strict order to the Revolutionary War Council of the fronts to see to it that rank-and-file soldiers who are taken prisoner by us, or who voluntarily give themselves up, are not subjected to shooting or any other penalties, and to take steps to make widely known among the Serbian soldiers the revolutions which are developing in the Balkans the establishment in Serbia of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, and also the fact that the Soviet power in the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic is prepared, for its part, to facilitate the unhindered return of soldiers of Serbian nationality to their homeland, on condition that they immediately lay down their arms.

## NOTES

**82.** After taking Syzran and Simbirsk, the Czechoslovaks began a vigorous advance aimed at *capturing Kazan*. Apart from the importance of this city as the administrative centre of the territory, its loss meant that the operations of the First and Second Red Armies were separated from each other, the last crossing-point over the Volga (the former Romanov Bridge) was lost, and, finally, it became possible for the enemy to develop operations in a northerly direction so as to link up with the Allied expeditionary force. Consequently, the attention of the front and of the centre became concentrated on the struggle waged by our troops around Kazan between August 1 and 7. Despite the considerable energy shown by the Commander-in-Chief, Comrade Vatsetis, who had been appointed after Muravyov's adventure, the fight for Kazan ended unsuccessfully for the Red forces. The Czechoslovaks occupied the city on August 6. The very feeble fighting-capacity of our guerrilla detachments, the inadequacy of reinforcements, and, at the last moment, a partial betrayal by the headquarters staff, which it had not been possible to replace after the killing of Muravyov -- such were the general causes of the rapid fall of Kazan.. The situation at the front became so serious that on August 7 Comrade Trotsky went in person to Sviyazhsk [Sviyazhsk is the last-but-one railway station immediately before Kazan, coming from the Moscow direction.] Feverish activity began, with a view to establishing order among the detachments and units. The liquidation of what remained of guerrilla-ism, the punitive work of the tribunal, the intense political activity, all found very successful reflection in the state of the troops. An intense mobilisation of Communists was carried out in the rear, and this provided the front with a number of responsible Party comrades. All the subsequent orders, down to the taking of Kazan by the Red forces (September 10) describe this period of rapid growth, both in quantity and quality, of the forces of our armies on the Eastern Front. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**83.** On August 11 Comrade Rosengoltz was appointed a member of the *Revolutionary War Council of the Kazan Sector of the Eastern Front*. The War Council for that sector, which was formed on the same

day,~constituted at the same time the command of the Fifth Army. The army Commander was Comrade Maygur, the commissar Kobozev, the chief of staff Comrade Blagoveshchensky, the commissar at headquarters Comrade Gusev. Immediately after it was organized, the headquarters of the Fifth Army began preparing the operation for the recovery of Kazan. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**84.** On August 24 the right-flank group of the Second Army, under Comrade Arm's command, advanced from the North-East upon Kazan. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**85.** On August 18 Comrade Slavin was appointed to command the Fifth Army, with Gusev as commissar and Andersen as chief of staff. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**86.** *Fortunatov and Lebedev* were both prominent members of the Samara Government. After the capture of Samara by the Czechoslovaks, the SR party and some members of the dissolved Constituent Assembly took power there. The first order issued by this Committee for the Constituent Assembly (*Komach*) read: 'In the name of the Constituent Assembly, Bolshevik authority in Samara and Samara province is declared overthrown. The organs of local self-government -- the municipal Dumas and Zemstvo boards -- which were dissolved by the Bolsheviks are restored, and are invited to resume work immediately.' The military headquarters of *Komach* consisted of Colonel Galkin; the military commissar of the Romanian front, Bogolyubov; and Fortunatov, a member of the Constituent Assembly. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**87.** At the *fall of Kasan* the panic was so great that Commander-in-Chief Vatsetis, accompanied by six Red Army men of the Fifth Lettish Regiment, had to fight their way out of the city, and survived only by good luck. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**88.** On September 10, by combined and co-ordinated operations of the right- and left-bank groups of the Fifth Army, part of the Second Army under Comrade Azan's command, and the Volga Flotilla, and after heavy fighting, *Kazan was taken by our forces*. The rout of the Czechs before Kazan was of decisive importance for subsequent operations, not only on the middle Volga but also on the Kama, for the Second Army, which rapidly cleared the River Vyatka and began to threaten the enemy group operating in the Simbirsk Samara area. On September 12 Comrade Gayes Iron Division, part of Tukhachevsky's First Army took Simbirsk, after which the whole Volga was quickly cleared of the Whites, who withdrew eastward. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**89.** *After the July days* (July 3-5, 1917) the Provisional Government proceeded to arrest the most prominent Bolsheviks. Comrades Lenin and Zinoviev went into clandestinity, and lived for several weeks in the forest near Sestroretsk (a country-cottage locality not far from Petersburg), with only a haystack to shelter them at night. A little later, Comrade Lenin hid himself in Finland disguised as a stoker, and then, at the end of September, he returned to Petersburg. Comrade Trotsky was arrested immediately after the July days, and put in the Kresty prison. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)



# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE CIVIL WAR IN RSFSR IN 1918

## Revolt of the Left SRs

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\* \* \*

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**BEFORE THE REVOLT**[\[90\]](#)

[Speech by me introducing an emergency motion at the 5th Congress of Soviets of Workers', Peasants', Cossacks' and Red Army Men's Deputies July 4, 1918. This is the text of the stenographic report of the speech. -L.T.]

Extracts from the official report of the Proceedings of the Fifth Congress of Soviets are given in Bunyan,

op. cit. Eye witness accounts will be found in M.P. Price, *My Reminiscences of the Russian Revolution* (1921), R.H. Bruce Lockhart, *Memoirs of a British Agent* (1932), and K Paustovsky *In That Dawn* (Vol.3 of *Story of a Life*) (1967). Lenin's speeches at the Congress are in Vol. 27 of the *Collected Works*.]

I have taken the liberty of requesting the Presidium, and now I request you, to allow me a few minutes of your valuable time for the purpose of introducing a motion Which was not included on the agenda but which life itself it now calls for.

In certain sectors of our front zone come disturbing events have been observed, the significance of which I do not want to exaggerate but which nevertheless are significant on the plane of principle. And if we remain indifferent to these occurrences, they could grow into facts that would constitute a menace to the policy which you have wished, and, I think, still wish, to pursue.

In the Kursk sector of the Ukrainian front, in the zone of the demarcation line between us and the Germans, there were alarming signs a few weeks ago that certain elements are carrying on an agitation among some units of our army, aimed at inciting them, regardless of their commanders and of the directives of the central Soviet power, to go over to the offensive.

I do not intend at this moment, comrades, and I have no right, to take up the question of which policy -- war or peace -- is right or wrong: this question has been allotted a special item on the agenda. But, in any case, I have no doubt that there is no-one in this hall, neither any delegate nor even any of our visitors and guests (unless our enemies have managed secretly to get in among us), who would suppose that the question of war or peace, of launching an attack or concluding an armistice, is a question that can be left to the decision of individual units and detachments of the Red Army.

I have received a telegram from our military commissar at Kursk, Krivoshein -- and I mention here, in parentheses, although this question is for me, as Commissar for Military Affairs, a matter of complete indifference, that Comrade Krivoshein, one of our best and most energetic commissars, belongs to the Left SR Party -- which informs me that, as a result of 'provocations ' which I have reported, certain units have now demanded that an attack be launched. The N. regiment has passed a resolution not to attack without orders from the central authorities.' He reported on the 15th, in the telegram which I have just quoted, that the fifth company of the Third Regiment had launched an attack. This happened, he says, for reasons of various kinds.

Later, a day or two ago, on the 3rd, in the same area, at Lgov, [Lgov is about 75 miles west of Kursk, on the railway line from Moscow to Kiev] Commissar Bych was murdered and Brigade Commander Sluvis wounded -- again I mention, in parentheses, that Sluvis belongs to the Left SR group -- and Krivoshein, whom I have already named, reported that it appeared to him, from the information at his disposal, that certain sinister elements were egging units on to proceed at once to attack, ignoring the orders of the central and even of the local Soviet authorities. He says that this murder was the work of the same leading group which is carrying on the demagogic agitation.

Similar reports are being received from other localities as well. I have only to add that I sent a commission to Kursk and Lgov to investigate the affair, and that this commission has been fired on by the same gang, two comrades being wounded.

From Nevel [Nevel is near the Byelorussian border, on the railway from Petrograd to Odessa, and is the junction for the line to Warsaw]one of our commissars reports that a dishonest demagogic agitation is being carried on there, the gist of which is that the Soviet power is betraying our Ukrainian brothers.



They retail filthy legends about how we are buying up all the cloth and handing it over to the Germans, sending grain to Germany and so on -- in short, those legends of corrupt and dishonest bourgeois demagogues with which we are very familiar.

I fully understand that some ignorant peasants may be confused by such legends, and, when I am speaking, I have in mind not them but those persons who are trying to involve particular units in conflict, contrary to the will of the All-Russia Congress of Soviets. In addition, I have been informed from Zhalobovka that there, at the checkpoint, some persons dared to threaten with a bomb the chairman of our peace delegation, Comrade Rakovsky. Unfortunately, they were not detained and shot.

You will appreciate, comrades, that one cannot trifle with matters of this sort; that I, as the person responsible at present for the conduct of Red Army units [*Kamkov*: 'Kerensky!' *Shouts*: 'Down with whoever it was who shouted!'] ... Kerensky! Kerensky stood on guard for the will of the bourgeois classes, but I am here answerable to you, the representatives of the Russian workers and peasants, and if you censure me and take a different decision, one with which I may or may not agree, then I, as a soldier of the revolution, will submit to it and carry it out.

The last, the Fourth, All-Russia Congress of Soviets<sup>[91]</sup> (which adopted the policy of peace with Germany), and the Central Executive Committee and Council of People's Commissars which it elected, pursued a definite policy which expressed the point of view -- whether that point of view is correct or incorrect is another question -- of the party which represents the will of the overwhelming majority of the classes that do not exploit the labor of others. I am obliged to carry out that part of this policy which has to be implemented through the War Department, and when I am told that certain units of the Red Army are killing, for example, Commissar Bych, or wounding a Brigade Commander, the Left SR Sluis, and when Commissar Krivoshein reports that gangs are corrupting the troops, and, when we send five or six persons to investigate, they fire on them -- then I know that we shall have either to advocate a policy of indulgence or else to hurry up and relentlessly call to account whoever is responsible for all this.

I think, comrades, that, if you were to ask me who these sinister agitators are, I could not tell you exactly, but if you were to ask me: 'Are there among them Right SRs who are trying by this method to push us into war?' -- I should say: 'That is likely.' If you were to ask me: 'Are there among these delegates representatives of that party which is not satisfied even with the Brest Peace, and wants to provoke us into war, so that Moscow and Petrograd may be occupied?' -- I should say: 'That is likely.' If you were to ask me: 'Are there among them agents of the Anglo-French stock-exchange, who have made a landing on the White Sea coast?' -- I should say: 'That is likely.' And they are all working harmoniously together, by means of provocation, lies and bribery, and trying to impose upon you a decision which you alone, by your free will, by your votes, can adopt or not adopt.

So as to set limits to the developments which I have reported to you, I yesterday telegraphed the following order, for which I ask your approval:

'Two groups want to involve Russia immediately in war with Germany. The first consists of the extremists among the German conquerors and aggressors who are not satisfied even with the Brest-Litovsk peace and are trying to provoke us, so as to be able to occupy Moscow and Petrograd. The other consists of the Anglo-French imperialists who want to involve Russia again in the imperialist slaughter. Agitators hired by our enemies are working among the Red Army men, trying to draw us into the war.'

*Thereby order:* all agitators who, after the publication of this order, call for insubordination in relation to the Soviet power, are to be arrested and sent to Moscow for trial by the Extraordinary Tribunal. All agents of foreign imperialism who call for offensive action and offer armed resistance to the Soviet authorities are to be shot on the spot.

'The All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies is opening today in Moscow. I shall inform it of the activity of scoundrels and hired agents of the German and Anglo-French bourgeoisies. I shall propose to the Congress that provocateurs, hooligans and self-seekers be dealt with ruthlessly. Woe to whoever disobeys the will of the All-Russia Congress of Soviets!

'Long live revolutionary discipline! Long live the honorable army of the workers and peasants!'

In asking your approval for this order I request you with all seriousness to devote a few minutes to that great question which, in this order, is presented for your attention. War is a grave matter, a great matter, like revolution, and we have taken on ourselves the serious obligation of carrying through to the end what has been begun.

If we have decided to fight, we should say openly that we are going to fight, and state precisely on which front and at what hour we are going to fight.

If we continue to maintain the policy which was approved at the last Congress, then we must make our plenipotentiaries carry out this policy quite resolutely and categorically. You may change this policy at any moment, from considerations of one order or another, depending on the particular international situation, but, so long as it has not been changed, you will not allow agitators whose pockets jingle with imperialist coins to set you one against another, saying: 'The Soviet power is betraying the Ukraine and Lithuania.' You will not let them hurl thousands or hundreds of our soldiers into attacks on certain sectors of the front. Let the assembly of the representatives of all the Soviets of Russia say to us: 'We have placed you in a position of responsibility, entrusted you with a definite policy to pursue, and you have the right to employ, against provocation and treasonable acts which violate this policy, not merely the weapon of agitation but also the sternest measures of revolutionary repression.'<sup>[92]</sup>

Some obvious misunderstandings have crept in here, owing to the insufficiently critical attitude of a certain section of the Congress towards what is being said and read.

It was said that you are being asked to rubber-stamp a resolution put forward by Trotsky. I did not read out any resolution: what I read to you was an order which, as it turned out, shocked certain persons somewhat because of its style. I myself, comrades, am by no means a lover of military style, as such. I have been accustomed, in my life and writing, to use the publicist's style, which I prefer to any other. But every sort of activity has its consequences, including stylistic ones, and as the People's Commissar for Military Affairs, who has to stop hooligans shooting our representatives, I am not a publicist, and I cannot express myself in that lyrical tone in which Comrade Spiridonova spoke.

First of all, I will allow myself to reject some belated fraternal remarks by the Left SRs, those which were directed at us in their speeches describing how we have fraternized with them at various times. For our part, we recall that in that period when, under Kerensky's government, we were in prison, fraternizing with criminals, the party for which Spiridonova spoke here was a shareholder in Kerensky's firm. That

was in June of last year, a time when, on every occasion that we met the Left SRs, we asked them (it was not then a question of international politics, in which everything depends on circumstances imposed from without): 'When are you going to display revolutionary honor -- and conscience and break with Kerensky's government?' And in October when we rose against Kerensky -- I have to mention this, so that there may be no further retrospective fraternization -- all the Left SRs declared that they would not support this rising. Kamkov has all the more reason to smile at this because he himself said it, along with Natanson and Shreider.

I can speak quite calmly about this matter, but not in that language, a mixture of lyricism with low-grade literature, in which all the representatives of that wing speak: neither toward the diplomatic box, nor toward our own people, nor toward you, do I intend to indulge in that. But those who carried out the October revolution (not in August or in July of this year but in October of last year, as it happened), they know that the Left SRs withdrew from the revolutionary committee and removed all their workers from it except those who remained there independently of their party. In the same way, when once we fell in with their proposal to form a joint government, they replied: 'We shall enter the government only if the Mensheviks and the Right SRs are in it.' Yes, that is what they replied. True, we were, for a time, disposed to forgive and forget a lot of things where this party was concerned. We said: 'It's young, not to say green: one can't expect it to show consistency in its action or much logic in its thinking.' But if now we are told that this party is the vanguard of the proletariat and the peasantry, and even of the whole International, where as we Communists have moved into Kerensky's position, I am bound to say that the advanced proletariat is grouped around Petrograd and Moscow, but certainly not in Tambov, where the *uyezd* congress of the Left SRs resolved, in opposition to our group, to distribute vodka to the population. I am not blaming the whole Left SR party for this, comrades, for I am quite sure that no party can be held responsible if, in some corner of its periphery, such measures are taken, but I wanted to point out that the majority of the Left SRs are to be found not in Petrograd or in Moscow but in the *uyezds* of Tambov province, or in Lgov, where the gangs are active, and the Left SRs have just expressed solidarity with the Lgov gangs, describing their criminal activity as revolutionary indignation against German imperialism.

Then, you will remember what Comrade Zinoviev said here. How many Left SRs are there in Petrograd who are capable of supporting with their authority the gangs of which I spoke? And when the Left SRs try to interpret banditry, among other things, as expressing the revolutionary mood of Red Army units, we do not believe it. Our Red Army units, which, well or ill, we formed (and if they are weak, that means we too are weak make them stronger!...), want to defend the Soviet Republic honorably. They are disciplined regiments and they will never resort to such action as crossing the demarcation line in groups of twenty to cut down two or three German soldiers who happen to come their way. Only ignorant and undisciplined elements act like that -- and it is they who are involved. I mentioned earlier that a representative of Latvia spoke here -- and let anyone name any military units that are as disciplined, as firm and as self-sacrificing as our Lettish units: I say that if, on the fronts where we border on Livonia, Estonia and Courland, a conflict were to come about which later would cost us the blood of our own soldiers or peasants, while producing no political result, that would mean that the persons involved might be whoever you like, but no Lettish Bolsheviks would be involved, for they are organized units which stand beneath the banner of firm revolutionary discipline.

The Left SRs say that the Kursk and Lgov episodes are not examples of banditry but expressions of a healthy tendency.

What does true health consist in? In a revolutionary saying: 'I am angry, I am indignant, but for today I

submit to the overall situation and to the orders of the government which I created. And I subordinate myself like a disciplined soldier.' Can it really be that revolutionary health is manifested when twenty men, having listened to some sinister agitators -- or, perhaps neurasthenics or hysterics -- fling themselves across the demarcation line, after ascertaining that the German soldiers present at that point are fewer in numbers than themselves? No. This is, so far as the Left SRs are concerned, the most shameful impressionism in politics, and, so far as these gangs are concerned, it is criminality, adventurism.

We find ourselves today in more difficult conditions than ten or fifteen years ago, when, in the course of the struggle against Tsardom, we examined the problem of the tactics of individual terror and mass revolutionary organization, and when, even then, we were for mass work and the SRs were for impressionistic terror, and we saw how these advocates of noisy guerrilla outbursts mostly found their way into the camp of the bourgeoisie.

Fifteen years ago, we stood for the principle of organized action, counterpoising mass organization to individual terror, and for this principle of organization we stand now, as well -- in the shape of a regular army of the proletarian and peasant masses, as against guerrilla-ism, which has a lot in common with terror. And we say, as in its day we said about terror, that guerrilla movements disorganize our army and, in the end, destroy its discipline.

Some participants in the Congress have Presumed to state that the threat from the Soviet power to these units, which are a miserable minority, means nothing and frightens none of them. If that is so, then why, in that case, have we seen an entire party, which defends these units, consider it necessary, without having adequate grounds, to bring their fear into this hall and say: 'We know that you want to shoot us: allow us a last word, listen to us'?

No, things have not reached so tragic a state as that: those Left SRs who work seriously and honestly at the task of building the army -- and there are such -- are the first to inform me, over the direct wire, of any excesses, of any sort of hooliganism. I repeat: Krivoshein in Kursk, a Left SR, the commissar for the province, is an excellent commissar. There are other comrades like him in Kursk, they themselves treat these guerrilla elements as sinister and corrupt, like those who cross the demarcation line and, at the sight of a German helmet, if it be multiplied by ten or twenty, run away -- while solid, conscious units like, for example, the Lettish units, which possess Party spirit and strong discipline, don't launch senseless attacks, but also don't take to their heels at the sight of the first German or other helmet. And we want to build just such an army-- that is, to eradicate from the army the disorganized and demoralized elements, the neurasthenics and hysterics, and introduce firm discipline, which consists in behaving in a self-possessed and conscious way under the worst, most difficult conditions, when there is nothing easier than to engage in cheap demagogy about how, out there in the Ukraine, they are killing our brothers, and soon. In general, what is the point of talking about this, how, in this All-Russia Congress of Soviets, in which 99 out of a hundred Party people are activists with an old Party tempering, can any need be felt for crude demagogy? We are gathered here not to listen to that, but to decide how we can become strong, firm and powerful. And when we are told that we must bow our heads before activity which finds expression in a group of hooligans threatening to throw a bomb at Comrade Rakovsky, an action performed, moreover, by the same demoralized elements that steal the luggage of all the Germans who pass through, and that of our own people as well, we answer: 'There is no place for this conduct here!' Only a group that has lost his bearings can talk in such a way, and we must disband the demoralized units.



There, at the frontiers, only firm units can hold their ground. And you will say that it is their duty to hold on firmly to those positions where we have put them, that they are not to dare to decide for themselves, on the burning soil of the frontier, that question of war and peace. I do not ask you, and I have no right to ask you, to prefer peace rather than war: I have not talked about that, comrades, and it is in vain that the Left SRs have shifted the whole problem on to a different plane. I said that we must proclaim to all the units of the army, to the working class and to the peasantry, to all the parties, all the groups, whether or not they are connected with the Soviets, that the question of war and peace can be decided by you and by you alone.

And the Left SRs approve of violations of this unshakable condition of Soviet power, they applaud from the rostrum of the All-Russia Congress those units in which scoundrelly elements, handfuls of bandits, set themselves against the sovereign organ of the entire country, they dare to say that this behavior is symptomatic of healthy activity. You must express your view on this matter, and express it decisively, without vagueness or reticence. Here, essentially, we have to decide a question which is not just a matter of the units stationed before Kursk and Lgov.

In the CEC, at former congresses of Soviets, we said to the Mensheviks and SRs: take power, and you will create an authority that will pass painlessly from one hand to the other. But in those days the Soviets were not an instrument, an organ of power, but an apparatus used by the servants of the forces which held power and which stood above the Soviets. We said that we could not resign ourselves to the lot of being a servile apparatus. Today the Soviets are the organ of power. In the Congress of Soviets you will work out and adopt a constitution which will be based on the workers and the poorest peasantry, giving expression in legal relationships to the relation of forces between them in the revolution. And if the Left SRs tell us, in connection with the military episode which has taken place, that they are unwilling to keep Soviet activity within the framework of the All-Russia Congress of Soviets, that within this framework no legal channel is available for struggle, this must not be so! Regardless of how the question of war and peace is decided, every party, every Red Guard, every one of you who disagrees with the Brest-Litovsk peace, can prepare for the next All-Russia Congress of Soviets. But if other parties claim that your decision is to be violated through 'direct action', if they want to demonstrate this at the front -- we shall not allow them to do it! Not for this did we take power, not in order that some groups of neurasthenics and intellectuals should be able to violate the will of the worker and peasant masses of our country.

At the present moment the balance of votes to be cast for one side or the other is not being decided. What is put to us is the question: for Soviet power or against it, for 'direct action' or for subordination? And let no-one refer in this connection to the number of votes cast. What has the work of the credentials commission to do with this question?

It is our duty to decide the question which has been raised today not casually but seriously, fully aware of our responsibility before the whole country. We have to give a clear answer to this question: are you going to allow any Red Army unit to decide for itself what Soviet policy is to be, when this unit, having read the articles by Spiridonova and others, tries to engage in battle?

You know that the Anglo-French forces are advancing, together with the Right SRs and Mensheviks, in order to fight the Germans regardless of the Soviets. And if some isolated units -- alas, some intoxicated units -- commit outrages on the frontier: if other forces are landing on our coast -- landing because we have no battleships; if the Czechoslovaks revolt, and the Right SRs give them leadership: if emotional speeches are made about the Ukraine, with calls for offensive action -- then all this, regardless of the



differences in forms and slogans, will tend, in its overall, ultimate aims and tasks, towards one point: the disrupting of peace.

I have spoken about how I see the question of war and peace. But if the Congress of Soviets says that we must fight, then we Bolsheviks can die no worse than the SRs can.

To this question, which we are obliged to answer, you will give your answer tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow, after we have discussed the whole situation in its entirety. Today you will be answering another question, which is a great deal more important than the procedure for dealing with doubtful and imperfect credentials [The Left SRs alleged that the Bolshevik majority at the Fifth Congress of Soviets was achieved, in part, by giving the Committees of the Poor a disproportionately large share of the seats reserved for peasant delegates.]-- party 'kitchen' intrigues, that's a complicated business, some slovenly concoctions come out of that. The question you will be answering is: have I the right to tell Army units that the All-Russia Congress is the sovereign organ of the Republic?

And if the comrades say that that is the case, then they will also be saying: 'It is here that the question of our international policy will be decided, and any attempt to violate the will of the All-Russia Congress by individual outbreaks at the front is a miserable, shameful and dishonorable provocation.'

At the same time you will be saying that the People's Commissar for Military Affairs has the duty, until he is replaced, to carry out your will, and is therefore obliged to suppress any military provocation that runs counter to our resolutions.

They talk to me about the executions by firing squads. They remembered Kerensky! Yes, of course, comrades, a class which is demonstrating that it is in power does shoot people. But Kerensky shot at the masses in order to support British imperialism. We shall defend the independence of the Russian Soviet Republic against all imperialisms: we shall not go with Germany against France and Britain, just as we shall not go with Britain and France against Germany. We want to become stronger, more disciplined, better organized, as a Soviet Republic. And towards this end you, as the sovereign organ, must say to all groups, large and small, that engage in petty incitements to war: 'Hands off! Here speaks the sovereign organ of the Soviet Republic: it, and nobody else, will decide whether there is to be war or peace.'[\[93\]](#)

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## **RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE FIFTH CONGRESS OF SOVIETS ON THE QUESTION OF WAR AND PEACE**

*presented by Comrade Trotsky*

The Fifth All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers', Peasants', Red Army men's and Cossacks' Deputies, having heard an emergency statement by the People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, has resolved:

Power to decide questions of peace and war lies exclusively with the All-Russia Congress of Soviets and the organs of central Soviet power established by it -- the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars.

No group of the population will presume, independently of the All-Russia Soviet power, to take it upon itself to decide the question of armistice or offensive. All units of the Red Army are obliged, where these matters are concerned, most strictly to subordinate themselves to the decisions of the central Soviet

power and the commissars and commanders appointed by it.

The All-Russia Congress of Soviets warns all workers and peasants, all soldiers of the Red Army, against the activity of hired provocateurs -- agents of foreign imperialism who are trying, in a variety of ways, by violence, lies, provocation and deceit to draw the Soviet Republic into the imperialist slaughter.

The All-Russia Congress of Soviets entrusts the People's Commissar for Military Affairs with the responsibility, acting through the organs subordinate to him, for purging all Red Army units of provocateurs and hirelings of imperialism, with out shrinking from the most decisive measures.

The All-Russia Congress of Soviets charges all Soviets in the front zone with the responsibility of thoroughly investigating all the sinister individuals who, sometimes hidden behind various Party names, have gone to the Ukrainian front in order to agitate for an immediate offensive. Such agitators must be arrested and punished in accordance with martial law.

The All-Russia Congress of Soviets charges its Presidium with the duty of immediately sending to Kursk-Lgov an extraordinary commission armed with unlimited powers to put down provocation and establish firm revolutionary order.

The well-being of the Soviet Republic is the highest law. Whoever sets himself against this law must be wiped off the face of the earth.

## **ORDER BY THE COMMISSAR FOR MILITARY AFFAIRS, JULY 7, 1918 ON THE MURDER OF COUNT MIRBACH**

[For a detailed study of the circumstances of this affair, see G. Katkov, 'The Assassination of Count Mirbach, in *St. Antony's Papers* No.12 (Soviet affairs series No.3), edited by D. Footman, London, 1972.]

A bomb has been thrown at the German Embassy by persons unknown. Ambassador Mirbach is said to be gravely wounded. [94] The aim of this deed is obviously to try and involve Russia in war with Germany. This aim is being pursued, as is known, by all the counter-revolutionary elements -- the White Guards, the Right SRs and their allies.

In view of the decision taken yesterday by the All-Russia Congress, approving the foreign policy of the Council of People's Commissars, the counter-revolutionary plotters resolved to wreck this decision of the Congress.

The bomb they threw was aimed not so much at the German Embassy as at the Soviet power. I hereby order the investigatory organs of the Commissariat for Military Affairs to take measures against the counter-revolutionary conspirators and those who carried out the *auentat* on their behalf.

The progress of the investigation is to be reported directly to me.

*Izv.V.Ts.I.K.*, no.140 July 7, 1918

## THE REVOLT

Report to the Fifth All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers', Peasants', Cossacks' and Red Army Men's Deputies, on July 9, 1918, the day following the suppression of the revolt by the Left SRs which took place on July 6-8, 1918

Comrades, an unforeseen interruption occurred during the Fifth All-Russia Congress of Soviets, owing to recent events in Moscow, the echo of which has not yet finally subsided. I spoke of unforeseen events although, to a certain extent, their symptoms were present already on the eve of this Congress. If you remember -- and, of course, you do remember it -- the first political question with which the present Congress began its work concerned, precisely the provocations being committed by certain groups and individuals in the sphere of our international relations. The Fifth Congress adopted a first resolution which severely condemned those groups which consider it possible, acting behind the back of the Soviet power -- at the given moment, behind the back of the All-Russia Congress of Soviets -- to decide political questions according to their own discretion, and in particular to try and decide, in practice, the question of whom the Russian Republic is today to be at peace with, and with whom it is to be at war. Then, when this question had been voted on, the Left SR group left the meeting-hall, and this withdrawal was already, in itself, profoundly symptomatic. It meant that, after the principal and most acute question in the sphere of foreign policy had been decided, that question on the settlement of which, one way or the other, the fate of the inhabitants of the Russian Republic and the fate of the entire revolution depends, the so-called Left SR Party considered itself obliged to withdraw, as though striking its name out of the Soviet muster-roll. This first warning was not fully understood at the time.

On July 6, at three o'clock in the afternoon or thereabouts, this political enigma, this political half-riddle found most clear and distinct expression in the provocative assassination of the German ambassador, Count Mirbach. This murder was a senseless and dishonest act of violence against the policy which is being followed by the 'All-Russia Soviet power. The murder itself was carried out by using the apparatus of Soviet power. Here we had an action that was unlike the terrorist actions carried out in former times by the best fighters of the SR party. You all know that in the past we took a negative view of terror. At the same time, however, we felt moral respect for those sincere heroes who, in the epoch of Tsardom, sacrificed their own lives to destroy the hangmen of the Tsarist regime.

In the present action the facts are completely opposite, not only politically but also morally, to what I have just mentioned.

The SRs called themselves a Soviet party. I refer to the so-called 'Lefts'. As such they entered Soviet institutions and made use of Soviet power, and to accomplish their act of terrorism it was not their own Party apparatus, their own personal forces that they utilized. In order to promote Party measures they acted dishonestly from within the Soviet organization, making it their task to utilize Soviet institutions, or institutions formed to safeguard the Soviet regime, in order to fulfill their plans. In particular, for the purpose of gaining entry to the German Embassy, they stole documents, forging the signatures of persons whose subordinates they were. And so, relying on stolen and forged documents, they got into the presence of the German Ambassador and carried out their act of terrorism. For what purpose? So as, by killing the German Ambassador, to throw a weighty argument into that scale of the balance which stands for war.

Thus, in order to bring about war, this group ignored the views of the All-Russia Congress of Soviets, as

expressed in your vote of July 4. In order to wreck the policy of the Soviet power, this group utilized the institutions of that power, entering into them as a Soviet party and acquiring Soviet authority through the ruling organs of that power. This is perfidy without precedent in history, or, at least, in the history of revolutions.

It is an act of perfidy such as only the Azefs [E.F. Azef was a notorious provocateur who, having become a trusted member of the SRs' terrorist organization in the early 1900s, used his position to betray a number of leading SRs to the Tsarist police. He was exposed by Burtsev in 1908 and fled abroad.] of the revolution could commit. These Azefs first expounded before you here their point of view, the point of view of war, but when you rejected it, then, using the authority which you had not managed to strip from them and which they still wielded, they went to one of your institutions and used your own weapon in order to paralyze your will. That is why I say again that this crime is an act of perfidy without precedent in all revolutionary history.

Furthermore, obeying the logic of the situation in which they had placed themselves by their murder of Count Mirbach, this group, acting, so far as we can judge, behind the backs of nine-tenths of their own party, found themselves compelled immediately to launch an open revolt against the Soviet power.

In those hours when we in the Kremlin received the first reports about the persons who had made the attempt on Count Mirbach's life, when Comrade Dzerzhinsky, with characteristic knightliness, took upon himself, despite his friends' warnings, the mission of proceeding to the place from where, according to the first rumors, the attack had come, so as to ascertain on the spot who was responsible, we began to receive reports that patrols sent out from Popov's unit were arresting guards and individual representatives of the Soviet power. Comrade Dzerzhinsky was arrested by Popov's unit, which was subordinate to him and which, when, in Red Square, I presented them with their colors, had sworn to be loyal to the Soviet power. His arrest was made with the direct participation of prominent members of the Left SR party -- Aleksandrovich, Karelin, Kamkov, Spiridonova and Cherepanov. After a certain lapse of time, a group of armed sailors from Popov's unit appeared at the Commission for Combating Council-Revolution, and from there a former member of the Commission, Zaks, also a Left SR, telephoned me to say that this group had captured Comrade Latsis and taken him away. Zaks himself had been against -- this action, but, evidently in a state of utter confusion, he left the Commission building. [This is G.D. Zaks (1882-1937), not to be confused with S.M. Saks (1884-1937) a Bolshevik since 1906 (or with S.E. Saks. see note on page 181).] By this time the rising had already assumed an open character: the Left SRs took Popov's unit under their direct leadership and began to post sentries, send out patrols, and arrest representatives of the Soviet power: thus, for example, they arrested Comrade Smidovich, the chairman of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

There was a profound logic in all these actions. When I moved the first resolution, I asked the Left SR party whether they considered themselves bound by the discipline of the Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies and of the Congress of Soviets. I said, not just in my own name but also in that of the Communist Party, that we would bow to the vote of the All-Russia Congress, whatever it might be, on the international question, the question of war and peace, and all other questions.

I asked the Left SR party whether they too accepted the vote of the All-Russia Congress of Soviets and promised to take account of it at the given moment, where the crucial question of war and peace was concerned. I received no answer to that question. This failure to answer was, in itself, already an answer. It meant that this group of intellectuals supposes that in its policy it bases itself on a certain section of the



peasantry -- whereas, on the question of violating the peace of Brest Litovsk, the SR party does not enjoy the support of any significant stratum of the peasantry. This group of intellectuals, urged on and whipped up by the unbridled public opinion of the bourgeois classes, impelled by neurasthenia and by the daily hysterical howling of the SR and bourgeois press, worked itself into a state of frenzy in which it thought that it could decide, on its own, no more and no less than the question whether the land of Russia should go to war or not, whether Moscow and Petrograd should or should not be subjected to the direct threat of occupation. And it decided these questions in its own way, regardless of you and against you: and in doing this it had the audacity to refer to the vote of the best element of the Russian people. Against it we put the workers of Petrograd, the workers of Moscow, the overwhelming majority of members of this Congress: but, in its frenzy, urged on by bourgeois public opinion, this group ignored them all. This group was interested only in the public opinion of the kulaks, who expressed dissatisfaction with the Soviet power not because of the Brest peace but because of our grain-procurement policy. The ignorant elements in the countryside express discontent because they receive inadequate supplies of cloth. They forget that the workers have received just as little bread -- that they, in any case, are suffering from lack of bread just as the peasants are suffering from the state of textile production. It is true that the most backward strata of the peasants are dissatisfied with the Soviet power on these grounds, but it is not true that they want war. Is there a single conscious person who today, in our present circumstances, thinks it possible for us to fight Germany?

And the Left SRs, a group of intellectuals, flesh of the flesh of the bourgeois intelligentsia, have planted their flag in the discontent of the workers, of a section of the workers, in the discontent of a section of the kulak peasants. They have placed their intellectual's cap and bells upon the discontent of a section of the masses and declared: 'Along with us, the people call for immediate war with Germany.'

Ask and ask again today all the Soviets, today, when the question has become serious, when life has put it to us point-blank, after this provocative terrorist act -- not, of course, those sham Soviets that sit in dark corners and did nothing to help repulse the offensive of the Germans and the Haydamak [The Haydamaks were the Ukrainian nationalist forces loyal to Peflyura: they took their name, and features of their uniform, from Ukrainian rebels (against Poland) in the 18th century.] when the enemy advanced to Voronezh, Kursk and Bryansk, advanced to the Don, where we are now fighting with Krasnov, where our Red Army men are beating off attacks, dying, struggling, defending the Soviet Republic: do not ask those who in their dark corners are sucking their kulak's ration, but ask the conscious soldiers who have been through the school of war, the best elements of the Soviet power in the major centres, where the population is more cultured, where it evaluates the entire international situation, where it knows what can and what cannot be done. Ask in the localities -- you must, after the congress you will have to do this -- whether they want war. And they will all tell you that those who, by an act of terrorism and not through our will, not through our consciousness, but mechanically, from without, have tried to bring down war upon our heads, have acted as our worst enemies, as traitors to the Soviet power!

The Left SRs themselves clearly and distinctly knew and felt that they had in fact crossed over into the camp of counter revolution, for there is not a single bourgeois party that would not call for war with Germany -- apart, of course, from those which have become pro- German owing to the proximity of German troops. All the newspapers and organs of the Right SRs and Mensheviks have called for immediate rupture of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, while at the same time dishonestly passing over in silence the fact that Anglo-French forces are now, at this very moment, advancing in the area of the Murman coast, and that we are concentrating our forces there in order to defend the Soviet Republic, just as we shall concentrate them in North Caucasia and elsewhere against Turkish, Haydamak and, in case of



danger, German invasion, for we strive everywhere, so far as our forces allow, to defend the Soviet Republic not only against the German forces wherever they attack us, violating the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, but also against the Anglo-French forces which are now trying to strike a treacherous blow at us. The bourgeois press keeps quiet about that, and the bourgeoisie itself even quieter. Helping them, the Left SRs tried to draw us into war with Germany, in the knowledge that this attempt is already in itself a revolt against the Soviet power. In general, by the character they gave to their rising, the Left SRs placed themselves in the camp of counter-revolution. They aimed their first blow at the chairman of the Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution, Speculation and Sabotage. .By this alone they showed whose camp they belonged to!

Even to those among us who were inclined to look with benevolent, temporising tolerance, upon the behaviour of the Left SR party, as such, those who said: 'It must be individual madmen and criminals who have committed this terrorist act, but it is not possible that the Central Committee of the Party can be mixed up in it' -- even to them it was already plain one hour, half-an-hour, after the murder of Mirbach that this was a real conspiracy, a revolt, organized under the direct leadership of the Central Committee of the Left SR party. And, of course, we could not, as we had done before, issue straight away an order for the immediate capture and bringing to trial of the two provocateurs who had tried by means of a terrorist act to involve our country in war, for order was given that sufficient military forces be at once concentrated for the task of suppressing the counter- revolutionary revolt organized under the banner of the Central Committee of the Left SR party.

To acquaint you, in broad outline, with the course of the military operations which have taken place in the last few days I will read you extracts from the reports which were sent to us concerning them.

The commander of the Lettish Division, former General Staff Colonel Vatsetis, a man who belongs to no political party, a soldier, reports that he was informed, from Government sources, that at about noon on July 6 Popov's unit was concentrated in Trekhsvyatitsky Lane: that this unit, made up of troops of all branches, was in a state of full combat-readiness: and that among the members of this unit were leaders of the Left SRs. On receipt of this information it became quite clear that we were faced with a thought-out, organized plan of action and full combat-readiness on the part of the Left SRs for an immediate attack. Vatsetis goes on to list the forces which were at the disposal of the rebels, but his information regarding the main body of their forces is uncertain owing to the fact that the rebels themselves could not say exactly which units they had inveigled into the revolt were really for them, which were against them and which were neutral. He says that they had between 800 and 2,000 infantry, and, as regards artillery, also depending on the same circumstances, between four and eight guns, and sixty machine-guns: also some bomb-throwers and hand-grenades. In addition, news came in that some units had gone over to the Popovites. The impressive numbers of their force and (the main thing) its complete combat-readiness and concentrated disposition, gave our adversaries a great advantage, where imminent events were concerned, when it came to seizing the initiative. The Central Committee of the Left SR Party possessed all the advantages in that respect, for it had on its side the advantages that perfidy gives: all members of the Central Committee of the Left SRs always had free access to the Kremlin whenever they wanted it, and, in particular, access to Comrade Lenin, and therefore they could carry out arrests and murders, and steal whatever papers they wanted, as they did at the office of the Commission presided over by Comrade Dzerzliinsky. They had this opportunity because, I repeat, they enjoyed the advantage of perfidy, and this weapon they used against a revolutionary party which they considered, or which they called, their brother-party.

The task which faced the military authorities was, after the initiative had been taken by the rebels, to concentrate sufficient forces to crush them as quickly as possible. How the Soviet units coped with their task is shown, with particular reference to some of them, in the report of the Commissar of the Lettish Rifle Division, Comrade Peterson, a revolutionary worker known to many who are here.

I must first mention that a unit of internationalists led by our ex-Hungarian comrade Bela Kun placed itself at the disposal of the Soviet power. Because of this, the Left SRs and the peasant delegation of the All-Russia CEC, led by them, put about the slander that we were arming German prisoners-of-war, whereas, in fact, we were offered the services of a small but tightly-knit Communist, socialist unit of Hungarians, led by an old Hungarian socialist -- a unit made up of blood-brothers of those Hungarian workers who are now shaking Budapest and all Hungary with their revolutionary struggle. However, it was not possible to concentrate the troops during the night, precisely because the enemy had the advantage of the initiative, and so the operations assumed the character of a daylight battle. Our units were stationed by the church of Christ the Saviour, on Strastnaya Square, by the Pushkin monument, on Arbatskaya Square, and also, of course, in the Kremlin. 'At about 3 am on July 7,' the same Vatsetis reports, 'I learnt that the enemy's principal forces still remained passive in the area of Trekhsvyatitsky Lane, but that during the night they had temporarily occupied the Post Office and had tried, unsuccessfully, to take over the power station.'

I omitted to mention that during the night between July 6 and 7 a small detachment of Left SRs, Popov's unit, captured the telegraph office, taking it not by force but by treachery -- Soldiers of Popov's unit seized the People's Commissar for Posts and Telegraphs, Comrade Podbelsky, took his motor-car, and in this car went to the building and entered it unhindered, with their leaders. Everywhere we see one and the same method of operation being used: the Left SRs operate with false identity papers in their hands, the identity papers of the Soviet power and this accounts for the (too fleeting) advantage they enjoyed, which seemed to them very important at the beginning, at the time when their supporters put out an order over the telegraph to the effect that no more regard should be paid to any decrees on telegrams from the Council of People's Commissars, as they were hostile to 'the Left SR party now in power'.

Subsequently, operations developed as follows. The Left SR force was driven out of the telegraph office by the Lettish comrades and Bela Kun's unit. Each individual order was carried out by the troops, but, as they had gone to the collecting-points by night, they were unable to find their bearings.

The Left SRs opened fire on the Kremlin. It must be said that events were taking place before us which could be described as symbolic: and when, from a building in the Kremlin, we saw shells -- fortunately, only a few -- falling in the courtyard, we said to ourselves: 'The Council of People's Commissars is now the natural target for the Left SRs. They have raised the banner of revolt against the Soviet power, and so they must, by the force of logic, bombard the Kremlin, where stands the pillar of the Soviet power.'

On the 7th the Left SRs withdrew in disorderly fashion from the area of Trekhsvyatitsky Lane, scattering along the road to the Kursk Railway Station. After Popov's men gave up the station they were no longer an organized body. The appropriate forces for their pursuit were placed at the disposal of Comrade Antonov. [The Comrade mentioned here and elsewhere is V.A. Antonov Ovseyenko.] In the report by Podvoisky and Muralov it is said that Antonov found twelve versts out along the Vladimir Highway' the rebels' line of retreat, a broken-down armoured car equipped with guns, and, twenty versts along the same highway, some guns, bombs and so forth. Altogether, by 12 o'clock on the 7th we had taken about 300 prisoners.

In the same way the detachments of Left SRs, a few dozen men, who had come here from Petrograd were arrested and disarmed. Also arrested was a force of three or four hundred men which had been sent here from the Western frontier zone. A telegram was intercepted in which struggle by various dangerous methods was advocated. In Petrograd the affair was confined to the disarming of some Left SR squads, which was effected quickly, though we lost ten killed and ten wounded at the Corps of Pages building, where this took place. In other parts of Petrograd the disarming was carried out painlessly and without losses.

This is the factual aspect of what happened. It is clear to you. As regards the political aspect, I spoke to you about that at the beginning of my report. I must now merely draw a few conclusions regarding the purely military aspect. Undoubtedly, the Left SRs succeeded in concentrating considerable forces almost without the Soviet power noticing, but these forces proved to be fictitious. When our comrades who were arrested -- Dzerzhinsky, Latsis, Smidovich -- got into conversation with the Left SR detachment that was guarding them, it became clear to them that a considerable part of this detachment was, in feeling and mood, on the side of the Soviet power -- that the men were confused and did not know what it was all about, and when the arrested comrades openly and courageously explained the situation to them, they went over to our comrades' side, laid down their arms, and said: 'You can leave.' It happened that one of our scouts was captured and taken to the rebels' headquarters by two Finns: on the way he deprived both Finns of their rifles and bombs, and took them both prisoner. Clearly, those who went into battle did not show any special readiness to fight against the Soviet power. We were told from this rostrum not so long ago, and yet already long ago so far as the Left SRs are concerned: 'We don't need a Red Army, what we need is guerrilla units: we don't need war, we need rebellion.' Well, the rebellion that the Left SRs wanted so much has taken place, but it turned out to be a rebellion not against foreign imperialism but against the Soviet power. They got their guerrilla detachments ready for this rebellion, and they revealed how completely useless they were -- and, contrariwise, the superiority our Red Army over them. Our units displayed tremendous superiority, both moral and physical. I speak of moral superiority because the operations against the Left SRs could have been carried out in such a way that Popov's unit would have suffered very heavy losses, but this method was rejected. Our artillery men brought their guns up by hand to a distance of two hundred paces, aimed them directly at the Left SR headquarters, and destroyed it, as our comrades who were there now confirm to us, with amazing accuracy. The Left SR headquarters was itself pervaded with a guerrilla atmosphere of indecision, mutual suspicion and hostility. There was no staunchness: a few well-aimed blows caused the rebels to take refuge in most miserable flight, and the revolt was liquidated with only a small number of casualties.

All that now remains is to draw the political lessons of this revolt, this miserable shameful parody of a revolt. We already possess a mass of evidence that many members of the Left SR party look with indignation upon an adventure which was dreamed up behind their backs. This we have witnessed if only by reading the statement of the Left SRs of Moscow which denounced the small group of intellectuals, surrounded by a yawning void, who brought themselves to a state of real political intoxication.

The rebel opposition tried to find means from a variety of sources. Here there were peasants, from among the village poor, who feel aggrieved, which is not surprising, for it is hard for everyone now to live in post-war Russia, and the poor peasants, in their remote corners, have not yet learnt to comprehend our policy as a whole. When somebody talks to them of the Ukraine, they sincerely think about this question and sincerely sympathise with the Ukraine -- but, at the beginning of the war, under Tsardom, wasn't there exactly the same talk about Serbia, about the crucifixion of Belgium, whom we had to go and help? What did we say in reply then? We said then that by this war you won't liberate either Belgium or Serbia



or Poland!

Whoever came out victorious from this slaughter, the small, weak and backward peoples would be sacrificed to the powerful predators, and would be trampled on: and when they tell us that the Ukraine has been seized, that it is being crucified by counter-revolutionary imperialists, we who, of course, know as well as anybody else what is happening in the Ukraine, say: the Ukraine can be freed only by a force that will free all Europe and allow Soviet Russia to breathe freely: but turning our Soviet Russia into that one and only force, which would intervene in the battle between the imperialist predators and pour out its lifeblood, would mean squandering fruitlessly that moral capital, that possession which we are now called upon to preserve here, in the form of the power of the workers and peasants. So long as we stand here, watching out for all blows and revolts, stand with the banner of Soviet power, workers' and peasants' power, in our hands, hope will glimmer and kindle among the workers, among all the oppressed in all countries. They will say: 'Look, the Russian workers, in most difficult conditions, surrounded by an imperialist ring, are not surrendering but are marching with us. That means that we, too, the workers of all countries, can develop great revolutionary forces and perform a much greater historical feat than the young Russian working class has performed.' From the moment that we intervened in this accursed war through our own fault, we should be the basest traitors to world socialism, for our intervention would mean a mortal blow to the Soviet Republic. If, of course, we are attacked, and it does not matter what might cause this attack, if it were brought on by the most cruel provocation committed by the Left SRs, we should all, as one man, defend ourselves to the last drop of blood: I do not even have to talk about that. We shall all defend ourselves against all predators, from whatever direction they may fall upon us, but at the same time we do not hide the fact that we have been weakened to the utmost degree by the entire preceding course of events, and that we are against any war.

When a revolutionary class knows that its enemies are attacking it, that class always finds in itself sufficient revolutionary vigour to create a very great obstacle and hindrance to the attacking enemy and to force him to expend huge masses of imperialist forces. But if we were now to be drawn into war with Germany because the German ambassador has been murdered, if we were obliged to yield up Petrograd and Moscow, the Russian workers and peasants would know that we had been forced to do this not by historical inevitability but only by the provocation of the Left SRs. And I therefore say that a party which could be so crazy, so senseless, being a tiny clique, a mere handful, as to stand out against the will and consciousness of the overwhelming majority of the workers and peasants that party committed suicide, once and for all, on July 6 and 7. That party cannot be revived!

If they do not trust us, if they do not trust the Russian workers and peasants, then I ask, on whom did these adventurers count in the fight against Germany? After all, it was not that they were organizing a party conference, or a party split, in some congress held abroad: what they wanted was to set Russia against Germany and bring war upon us. Yet they did not trust -- whom? The workers and peasants! They wanted to bring about war against them and despite them, a war that the workers and peasants would have to wage, the very ones behind whose backs they organized their conspiracy. By what means would they wage this war? They themselves have told us. They said: it will not be a regular war with Germany but a revolt, carried out by the organizing of guerrilla units. We saw, in Trekhsvyatitelsky Lane, the military viability of such guerrilla units, from the fact that our scout whom they caught succeeded in taking two of their men prisoners, along with their rifles; or from the fact that after the first shell burst the whole troop scattered, saying that if the entire headquarters had done a bunk, why should they stay put any longer? And they ran off down the Vladimir Highway. And it is with such handfuls, with this sort of armies and this sort of ideas, that they sought to rise up against us in order to wage war

with Germany.

Even though this episode is now closed, the danger that this provocation may achieve its purpose has still not disappeared, because the extreme militarist party in Germany, which nothing satisfies, not even the peace of Brest-Litovsk, is ready to make use of any gift that is presented to it, whether from the hands of the Right SRs, the Monarchists or the Left SRs. The danger has not yet passed. We do not know what the result will be, but one thing we do know, and that is that, after the adventure of July 6-7 there is one political party fewer in the land of Russia.

We shall go along with you into every place and to every peasant, and ask him: do you want now, at the present time, today, to go to war with Germany? If you don't then be it known to you that the Left SR party wanted to make you do just that, and because we, the Soviet power, consider that it would be fatal for you to do it, they tried to make out that we are agents of German imperialism, friends of its extreme wing. They depicted us as enemies of the Russian people merely because we said that the Russian people would be mad if, of its own volition, it were to open the gate to war! We shall go from here to every peasant and tell him the names of those deputies who gave their approval here to this dishonest provocation. We shall say to every peasant in every remote corner of the countryside:

Ivanov or Petrov, do you want, now, to fight the Germans? And we shall see what, after that, the Soviet power in the localities will have to say, what the millions and tens of millions of workers and peasants will have to say. Their answer will be the same as your declaration, made here, that you maintain the same view which you affirmed at the decisive congress: [i.e., the Fourth Congress of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants Deputies. -- L.T.] we do not want to go to war. We have bought peace in return for expensive concessions. We know now, at the present moment, by what dishonest methods Anglo-French imperialism is trying to drag us into war, and how our worst enemies are trying to capture towns so as to pave the way for Anglo-French imperialism. In vain! At Yaroslavl the counter-revolutionary gangs were surrounded by our troops, and Syzran, after being captured by the Czechoslovaks, was recovered by us. I do not doubt, comrades, that the dishonest adventure of the Left SRs will bring sobriety to the minds of those who were still wavering and doubting, and did not realize what the source was, which the corner, that the hysterical howling came from, about the peace, about our decision not to go to war with Germany. We do not doubt that for our Red Army, too, the events in Moscow will serve as a lesson for the strengthening of discipline. In the Red Army they appreciate better than anyone else that we need an army constructed on scientific principles, that guerrilla units are amateurish, that is, childish units, that we need to consolidate discipline so that never again will an adventure like that one be possible. The Moscow experience enables every soldier to see that, where discipline is lacking, bloodshed and fratricide can occur. The Red Army is the armed organ of the Soviet power, it does not serve itself, or any small group -- it serves the aims of the workers and peasants. The will of the people is represented in the All-Russia Congress of Soviets, and, consequently, it is the duty of the Red Army firmly and unquestioningly to suppress those who dare to declare themselves against the sovereign organ of the Soviet power. Let us tell this Red Army, explain to it, that what we see here is a single team, a single principle, in the shape of the Czechoslovak attack on the Volga and in the Urals, and the advance of Anglo-French imperialism from the Murman coast, and the Left SRs' revolting in Moscow: and though the wretched and shameful assassination of the German ambassador had a different subjective connection, objectively everything was directed to one and the same end, and all this is guided by the hate-filled bourgeoisie, whose press incites the Mensheviks and Left SRs, sets them on us, saying: 'Force them to do the impossible, make them clash with German imperialism: let the Russian working class break its heart against the rock of German imperialism while that is still strong.'



This is the purpose common to the Czechoslovaks, the Anglo-French expedition, and the rest. We say to the Red Army that we want to guard against war, and if we manage to make peace on the Anglo-French front, we shall write that down as a game -- that we have achieved peace, that we want to be neutral, and that the imperialists have left us in peace, gone away from us. We shall thereby win a great victory for the Russian people. If the White Guards or the British, with their expeditionary force, and the Mensheviks and the Right SRs, and the Left SRs attack us, we shall defend ourselves as fiercely as we can. Where that is concerned we are not joking! We would have been prepared to say: 'Haven't all these children got into a muddle? What a wretched game this is, played by children who have got excited and gone too far!' I and other members of the Council of People's Commissars said: 'These children -- wretched, irresponsible creatures that they are -- don't realize what they are saying.' Could we take it seriously, could we see in this a conspiracy? But, at the same time, you see, these were children who, trying to provoke a situation, organized a revolt, and killed persons who were objectively under the protection of the Soviet power. No, there is no room here for such children. What is at stake here is not the fate of a particular group of intellectuals, but the fate of Soviet Russia, and we are not going to let that be put at risk by anybody's tricks. The Soviet power can have only one method, applying in politics this principle which you will consider correct and which you will approve: if anyone attacks the Soviet power not with criticism but with deeds, then we shall answer his iron with steel. We must defend the workers' and peasants' power with those forces and in those ways that we know, and with the same measures that are used in attacks on the Soviet power. The Soviet power exists and will continue to exist, strengthening the Russian revolution for the establishment of the republic of labor in Europe and the world. [\[95\]](#)

II

## **[Concluding speech at the same meeting. L.T.]**

Comrades, the analogy has been drawn here which, on a first, superficial view, suggests itself -- between the Left SR revolt or, rather, parody of a revolt, and the July days of last year in Petrograd. Twelve months have passed since those days, but the very name of the present month, July, gives rise to a natural association of resemblance and analogy. The representative of one of the groups spoke to us here about the July days. I remember those days very well: there are here present not a few comrades who experienced them along with us, and the memory of those days is lodged firmly in their minds. What happened in July of last year? The working class, in the persons of their vanguard, were striving for power. They realized clearly that the rule of the bourgeoisie and the compromisers could not fail to bring Russia to ruin. The Petrograd workers were the vanguard of the working class, and this vanguard rushed ahead. This was, on the one hand, the fulfillment of its mission, but, on the other, an absolute tragedy, due to the fact that the vanguard had not yet secured for itself substantial reserves in the provinces -- even in the working-class provinces, let alone the peasant ones -- and that they came up against the enemy's resistance and exposed themselves to his blows.

Naturally, when this vanguard, impelled forward by its political sense, but not backed by the provinces, fell under those blows, our party said to itself: where blows are raining down upon the working class, there must we be alongside them, taking these blows upon ourselves.

That was the significance of the July days of last year: [\[96\]](#) and I ask you, what new class is fighting for power now? Let them tell us what new class is fighting for power in Moscow in July 1918 against the power of the Petrograd and Moscow workers, because, with all our respect, with all our ardent fraternal

sympathy with the working peasantry, none of you peasants will assert that the peasantry is today the most conscious element in the revolution. Any one of you who thinks honestly about the conditions of the current moment must recognise that in 1905 and in 1917-1918 the workers of Petrograd and Moscow were the vanguard, that they were saying: 'The land to the peasants' before you peasants said it yourselves. They came out on January 9, 1905<sup>[97]</sup> under the slogan: 'The land to the peasants', and the Tsar shot them down, and the peasantry did not support them. In that fact, of course, was shown the influence of age-old slavery, ignorance, rural isolation, rural illiteracy: it was not the peasants' fault, it was their misfortune -- but such is the fact. And now, I ask, when Soviet power has been established in the country, when it lives and breathes in unison with the advanced proletariat of Petrograd and Moscow, I ask those who presume to evoke the ghost of July last year -- what new class is fighting for power now? The Left SRs are not a class, they are fellow-travellers who merely attached themselves to the working class and who at first showed no confidence in it: when the working class, together with us, smashed in October the foundations of the compromisers', the bourgeois power, they moved away, they stood aside. When the working class took power, they joined us for the time being: the task seemed to them to have become easier. First they underestimated the strength of the working class, then they underestimated the strength of our adversaries, and each time, whenever a particularly dangerous conjuncture was created, they withdrew to the wings and started singing their critical tune against us, taking up the position of spectators, observers. The SRs are petty-bourgeois intellectuals. They have always based themselves on those sections of the petty bourgeoisie for whom it is hard to march with the working class along its thorny path.

This is the sort of 'class' that we can speak of in this connection. We can speak only of the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia, which is trying, in the persons of a small section of itself, to cast off the yoke of the proletariat and Soviet discipline: they find it too hard to share the struggle of the working class, with all its sufferings and difficulties, to share this struggle in those circumstances when it is necessary temporarily to reconcile one self to foreign coercion. The intellectuals say: would it not be better for us to step aside and adopt the standpoint of an observer, criticising and grumbling? If the working class comes out on top, we're with it: if it is defeated, we'll say that we always foretold that that would happen.

This, comrades, is the psychology on the basis of which a small group of fanatics and madmen. . . from whom broad circles of the intelligentsia are now recoiling, a group of responsible people, could conceive the idea of such a monstrous experiment as the events of July 6 and 7.

We are told: yes, but you say that the whole Left SR party is guilty, you bring down on the entire party the thunder of your anger and your repression. And one of the speakers here, Lozovsky, allowed himself, in a public statement, to commit an absolute and, I say, a malicious distortion of the facts, when he presented them in this way: first, the murder of Ambassador Mirbach, and then the arrest of the whole Left SR fraction. [A. Lozovsky had been expelled from the Bolshevik Party early in 1918 as a result of differences on trade union questions. He headed the right wing of the Internationalist Social-Democrat' group until he was readmitted to the Bolshevik Party in late 1919.] This speaker declared that the second event was the consequence of the first: as though what actually happened was that some Blyumkin and some Andreyev or other killed Mirbach, and we, in response to this, arrested the Left SR party. But this arrangement of the facts is a malicious lie. What happened was something different.

When the terrorist act was committed, the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars telephoned me at the Commissariat for Military Affairs, told me what had occurred, and read me his order in which

he said that some White Guards or Anarchists, as we then believed, had, in order to draw Russia into war, committed the act of terrorism, and that they must be hunted down everywhere. I, on my part, ordered the appropriate measures to be taken. We were sure that we had to do with an open and direct adversary, an honest enemy of the Soviet power. But some time later we received information that, judging by the number of the motor-car that was used, or for some other reason, it was to be presumed that the Left SRs had done the deed. We did not know that it was an action ordered by the Central Committee, or of the Left SR party itself, even though warnings had been given from this rostrum. Even though Spiridonova, when she spoke here, played with a revolver and threatened with a bomb, we stayed calm, seeing this as just her personal behaviour, and not suspecting that there was any real threat directed against the peaceful existence of the Soviet Republic. When we learnt from the first, unconfirmed reports, that what had happened was the work of Left SRs, we still felt sure that not only the party but also the Central Committee could certainly not want this deed, and could not associate itself with it, that they had nothing to do with it. It was that idea which determined the step which Comrade Dzerzhinsky took when he learnt that the killer was Blyumkin, that he it was who had committed the act of terrorism. What did Dzerzhinsky do? He went not to the Left SR fraction but to Popov's unit. Dzerzhinsky had information that the killer, who was a servant of the Soviet power, had hidden himself there. Dzerzhinsky thought that he would be able to clarify the question without any conflict. That was what happened. And it was not because of the terrorist act that we arrested the Left SR fraction. Later, when we learnt that Dzerzhinsky could not be reached on the telephone, that he had not reported, and that, consequently, he must have been arrested, and when we began to be informed that Popov's patrols were seizing Soviet motor-cars and Soviet representatives, we took measures to have the whole theatre surrounded, because we thought the rebel unit was going to lay siege to the place where the All-Russia Congress was in progress. As a guarantee, we locked up the Left SR fraction and surrounded them with a wall of secure defence. That is what happened.

We thought that, since what was going on was a revolt, the rebels' first intention would be to capture the citadel of the Soviet power. Usually, this citadel is the Kremlin, but at the moment it is the Bolshoi Theatre, where the All-Russia Congress is in session. And we said: 'The conspirators may get into this place, or they may want to get their accomplices out of here, so let us keep the latter under lock and key for a few hours and surround the place with secure defences, until the situation has been clarified.' Later, when we learnt that the Central Committee of the Left SR party not only associated itself with this dishonorable murder, but even accepted responsibility for it, we were unwilling to believe this. I am no Left SR, and you know and heard how we spoke here before the event in question, but nevertheless it was a cruel blow to me that such crazy and criminal perfidy could be resorted to by the Central Committee of a party calling itself a Soviet party. Even then we hoped that, in the end, the Left SR fraction would dissociate itself from its Central Committee. That was how the matter stood where the actions of the Left SRs were concerned.

But we are asked: why did you not simply release the Left SRS? Do that, when, armed from head to foot with bombs, they were arresting and holding Latsis in Trekhsvyatitelsky Lane, shooting at our patrols and training their guns on the Kremlin, when the Central Committee of their party was sitting there and directing operations against the Soviet power? Well, and what if among the members of that fraction were some tens or hundreds who were involved in the rising, and we released them to go and help fire on the Kremlin, or the Bolshoi Theatre, or our Red Army men?

No, comrades, as responsible Soviet politicians, we could not act like that, and we said: this is an open revolt against the Soviet power, and in these circumstances there are only two answers -- yes and no.

The Central Committee of the Left SR party said 'yes', it was for the revolt. We wanted the Left SR fraction to say, openly, whether they were for the revolt against the Soviet power, with those who want to bring war upon us, or for the Soviet power which was defending itself against the rebels. There was fighting here in the streets of Moscow, the sound of it reached you here. Peaceful bystanders, peaceful citizens ran the risk of getting shot, events had drawn them into civil war, put them in danger. We had to ensure that this party's fraction, headed by the Central Committee, which had approved and organized everything, was not going to stand aloof and say neither yes nor no. We demanded an answer: are you going to defend the Soviet power or are you going to fire on it? We acted rightly, for we were defending the power of the working class against a handful of dishonest and treacherous rebels.

We are told that the whole party is not guilty, and the Soviet power also says that the whole party is not guilty. In my speech I said, indeed, that it was behind the backs of probably 90, possibly 98, per cent of their own party that the Central Committee of the Left SRs carried out this crazy adventure, and many representatives of the party have indignantly dissociated themselves from this disgraceful act. We have heard the representative of the Left SR organization at Yelets speaking here to that effect. It is clear that the party as a whole, its entire membership and all its organizations, cannot be held responsible for what the Central Committee did. These madmen are sinister individuals. But a party is a party: it is differentiated from a crowd by the fact that it is, in fact, a spiritual organization and not a physical one. A party is an organization of minds. And we wish to know from the Left SRs: are they going to continue to be organized under the banner of the Central Committee which has played such a provocational role. Or are they going to be organized on the Soviet platform? That has to be decided by every group that marches with us, every organization, every individual member of the party. Where attempts have been made to take unfortunate German soldiers prisoner under the banner of the Left SR party -- and there have been such attempts -- we shall ruthlessly punish them and put a stop to them. The action launched by the Central Committee provided abundant grounds for such attempts. Where declarations have been issued stating that a group associates itself with the Central Committee and maintains the right at any moment to violate the decisions of the Soviet power, we saw: there is no place within the framework of the existing state for this group, and there cannot be. The Soviet power is a ruling power. What is involved here is not a struggle between parties or small groups (as was said here by the representative of the worst of these groups, the Maximalists) [The Maximalists were a semi-anarchist group which broke away from the Socialist-Revolutionary Party in 1904.] but the right of the working class and of the many-millioned peasantry to hold power. Power is not a club or a meeting, it is state organization. If people obey it, it is a ruling power, if they don't it ceases to be that. At a given moment the ruling power finds itself faced with the most crucial of questions -- the question of peace and war. If this question cannot be decided by the ruling power, but it can be decided by a group, a handful of rogues, then we have no ruling power here: therefore the ruling power also says that it will seize in an iron grip all those rogues who want to decide matters instead of the Soviet power -- and the will to power is one of the most important conditions for holding power.

Comrades, many people have uttered in this place lying phrases about civil strife, about all-embracing unity, and so on and so forth, with those who considered it possible to raise the banner of revolt during the Congress of Soviets. Did I not warn the Left SRs, did I not come to this rostrum and say that there are 'dangerous elements' about? I did not want the Left SRs to play again the role they played on the Kursk front. I said that so as to give them the chance to come to their senses. I warned them generally, as comrades, not to engage in such actions against the Soviet power. Comrade Lenin said here that Spiridonova is a most honorable person, a sincere person. [Speaking of Spiridonova Lenin said: 'It must



be a bad party indeed whose sincerest people stoop to spreading fairy-tales for propaganda purposes.' (Collected Works, Vol.27, p.527.)] But woe to a party whose most honorable persons are obliged to resort, in their struggle, to slander and demagogy! We warned them, on the eve of an action which we did not and could not foresee. Remember, didn't the Left SRs come up here to hurl accusations at the workers of Petrograd and Moscow and attribute all sort of vile actions to the Soviet power? The most dishonest baiting of the Soviet power took place here, so as to make you more receptive to the adventure they were preparing behind your backs. And now they talk to us about reconciliation -- with whom? They mentioned the name of Aleksandrovich, who has been shot, and said: 'This is cruel terror.' But remember this: Aleksandrovich was Deputy-Chairman of the Extraordinary Investigative Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution, Speculation and Sabotage. I knew him and when I met him I never asked whether he was a Left SR or a Bolshevik: he was a trusted member of the Commission, and that was enough for me. This Commission was one of the most important organs, an organ of struggle directed against counter-revolution. And since the counter-revolution had long since wanted to kill Count Mirbach, the Commission had as one of its tasks the investigation of that matter. We engaged in this activity because we are obliged to protect the persons of the representatives of foreign powers generally the German ambassador equally with the American or the British, for a blow at him is a threat to peace and violation of the authority of the Soviet power. Aleksandrovich was engaged in investigating the threads of the plot against Mirbach. He worked hand in hand with Dzerzhinsky. And Aleksandrovich turned this Commission into the organ for murdering Count Mirbach. He embezzled 500,000 roubles and handed it over to the Central Committee of the Left SRs, for the purpose of organizing the revolt. He was a revolutionary, and I have been told that he died bravely: he was a revolutionary, but what we are concerned with here is not the evaluation of individuals, but the conduct of a ruling power which wants to survive. You must realize that the deputy-chairman of the Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution cannot transform the apparatus of power into an instrument for revolt against the Soviet power, and cannot steal money for the organizing of such a revolt. He cannot organize a revolt and he cannot arrest representatives of the Soviet power. But he did arrest Dzerzhinsky, his immediate superior, who trusted him. One cannot conceive of greater perfidy, dictated by party discipline, or greater dishonesty! We are forced to say: in such a case there is one remedy only, a white-hot iron, cauterising with a white-hot iron, so that there should be no more such cases, and the white-hot iron was set to work. Was that cruel? Life is a cruel business generally, and revolutions, as the old revolutionary Mirabeau put it, are not made with butter. If, yesterday, the Left SRs had been victorious, aided by our soft heartedness, they would nevertheless not have been in power. And every one of you ought to understand that. The Left SRs have no backing, especially not in Moscow. Here there are only two parties: the leading Soviet party, the Bolsheviks, on the one hand, and on the other, the counter-revolution. And if the Left SRs had proved to be that cherry-stone of which the Anarchist Karelin spoke, and we had slipped up on it, then power would have passed to the counter-revolution.[The Anarchist Karelin is A.A. Karelin, leader of the Anarchist-Communist group, not to be confused with the Left SR: A. Karelin.] You would all have fallen victims to the counter-revolution: there would have been real brutality here, an iron roller would have passed over you.

Comrades, I reject the statement that after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk the Soviet power found itself in a shameful situation, as one of the speakers here declared. Only bourgeois philistines can see something shameful in the fact that an oppressed class is too weak to overthrow all its oppressors. What does the shame of the Russian working class consist in? In the circumstance that it is not at present strong enough to cast off all its oppressors. Is this a matter for shame? Those who see shame in the peace treaty we signed are miserable windbags. It is a misfortune, a calamity, and it can be seen as shameful only by



those who are either direct agents of the bourgeoisie or miserable windbags. Another argument which was brought up here was that by making peace with the Germans we are giving encouragement to patriotic feelings among the proletariat of the Allied countries. These are well-known arguments which are repeated day after day by people, miserable people, who do not read the papers, who do not know what is going on in Europe, who do not read documents, and who keep repeating the same phrase over and over again. During the last few days there took place the congress of the British Labor Party, which by a majority of votes, for the first time during the war, declared that it was terminating its union sacree with its own bourgeoisie. The voting was 1,100,000 to 700,000. [The Labor Party Conference held in June 1918 did indeed vote to end the political truce (by 1,704,000 to 951,000, but this merely meant that the party would now stand candidates at by-elections. Representatives of the Labor Party continued to serve in the Government.)] In this way the union sacree which chained the working class of Britain to its own bourgeoisie, to bourgeois patriotism, was ended. And in France the organization to which I belonged, together with Lozovsky, the organization for re-establishing international relations, the organization in which our friends Merrheim, Saumoneau and others worked, this organization issued only a few days ago its ardent protest against Allied intervention in Russian affairs and voiced its fraternal greetings to the Russian revolutionary party, the Bolsheviks. And in Germany? Whereas earlier, owing to the censorship, they knew and understood nothing about us, during the past week we have received dozens of resolutions, numerous documents, in which the best representatives of German socialism declare their solidarity with us and say that it would, of course, be better if we were strong enough to throw off the yoke of imperialism both within and without, but they understand very well that the policy that we are pursuing has been imposed on us by the fact that the working class of all countries has not yet smashed the chains of militarism. We ask too much of the Russian working class. But we cannot demand that it do the work of the proletariat of all countries. Yet that is what is demanded by those who talk of our shame. They say: the German working class is held fast in the clutches of imperialism: so, then, Russian working class, take up arms and go forth to liberate all Europe. But we say: no, this is a task too great for our strength. We shall try to defend ourselves, to hold on in expectation of the moment when, inevitably, over there, too, will begin the cleansing of the Augean stables of imperialism. Our brothers hail us and call on us for aid and support.

I will say only a few words in conclusion. In the first days of the Congress a comrade was present who came to us from captivity: he is a foreigner and at the same time a Russian, and, above all, he is our brother, because he is an international revolutionary socialist. He heard our debates with the Left SRs and said: 'Is there any sense in concerning yourselves with this, is there any sense in all this at such a time, in such tragic conditions?' This was the first impression that he obtained here. And, following him, one might perhaps ask if it would not really be simpler to throw all this aside and move on? But that's just it that the revolution is a big and serious machine. What today is a difference of opinion, a perplexity, will tomorrow be transformed into a civil war. Spiridonova wrote to Comrade Lenin a day or two before the Congress in a spirit of closest comradely solidarity: she came to see me at the Commissariat for Military Affairs, and we talked together like close comrades, like brothers-in-arms, even though I knew very well how unstable the Left SR party was in its politics. This party had departed further and further from us, especially after its representatives left the Council of People's Commissars and fell there after more and more under the influence of the bourgeois democrats. We had to say at a meeting of the Central Executive Committee: 'Comrade Left SRs, cast off this miserable and shameful influence of bourgeois psychology! We have to drag you with a lasso at every sharp turn, because you have not yet risen above bourgeois public opinion, and its screams signify for you no less than the moral law. Get rid of it I said this more than once, and not just to individual members of the Left SR party. There is only one way of

keeping check on the consciousness of intellectual groups, and that is firm control by the organized working class. It is organized in the Soviets. So long as the Left SRs followed, hobbling, the majority in the Soviets, their true visage was hidden. But when they took to themselves the right to break away and act as they chose, they thereby broke away from the working class and fell under the influence of the bourgeoisie, which hurled them in armed revolt against the Soviet power.

On the contrary, comrades, do not at this time treat lightly any question of politics which the Soviet power is deciding or considering, for through internal struggle, open conflict, it will discover the best and most assured solution for the working class. And particular dissident groups, especially those composed of intellectuals, must examine their luggage before they raise their flag to call openly for struggle. Today it is criticism, tomorrow -- civil war. We do not want that. We want to issue one slogan everywhere. Explain to the peasants the dangerousness of a split, safeguard the Soviet power through firm discipline, and tell our friends and co-thinkers in the provinces everything. At the same time we say this: when you, our comrades, members of the All-Russia Congress of Soviets, and you, our opponents, come to this rostrum, be careful in your choice of expressions. Why did Lozovsky, in explaining the repression of the Left SRs as a response to the killing of Count Mirbach, say: 'We insist on being told the demands that were put to the Soviet power by Germany regarding the work of the Left SRs'? I do not know with what dishonest aim in view he uttered this new slander and falsehood.

There is not a single dishonest invention that the Lozovskys come upon somewhere or other that they would not repeat from this rostrum, before the workers and peasants. Be careful where such dishonest provocation is concerned. Do not become, even unconsciously, transmitters of this sort of dishonest slander. However, from this dishonest slander, from this grave lesson we have received, we can derive some benefit for ourselves. A certain boil ripened at the periphery of the Soviet power. It burst comparatively painlessly because it burst in Moscow, the centre wherein the most conscious part of the population is concentrated and where the best military units are stationed. (In the future we must pay special attention to the question of whether there is an organization inside them.) And when, somewhere or other, they incite the ignorant peasants against the Soviet power, when they say that we are bullies who rob the working peasants, pay money to the German imperialists, send them all our manufactures, while our peasants fare going about naked -- if that sort of agitation is being carried on, they know that this is nothing other than a presage of the outbreak, very soon afterward, of a new civil war. For this reason you, the representatives of the ruling class, bear a great responsibility, when you, on the instructions of that ruling class, create the Soviet power, our responsible political organ. And when you hear malicious, slanderous attacks, when a prejudiced person disseminates lying rumours, take him by the arm and say: 'The Soviet power came out of the October Revolution, and it wants only the best for us. If it makes mistakes, we shall calmly put them right at the All-Russia Congress of Soviets.'

The Soviet power, which you created, has to be protected, and we shall firmly see that that is done, under the banner which you have entrusted to us.

NOTE. The attack by the Left SRs on the Soviet power on July 6, 1918 put an end to the political bloc which, after October (and to some extent before it) was formed by the Communists, the Left SRs and the Anarchists, on the platform of Soviet power and struggle against the bourgeoisie and the compromisers.

This conditional and temporary coalition was bound to break up in the course of the revolution, owing to the complete social difference between the programs of the parties which it brought together.

It suffered its first failure already in April 1918, when the Soviet power, forced to take this action by



shifting from one foot to the other, but haven't a clue how to turn the key. This is their misfortune but not their guilt, it is not a crime and they cannot be punished for it.

However, comrades, during our revolution, as everyone knows, and the honest ideological Anarchists know it better than anyone else, very many hooligan-type carrion-crows, robbers and night-prowlers of all sorts have gathered under the flag of Anarchism. Yesterday this man was serving a sentence of hard labor for raping a woman, or was in prison for theft, or in exile for robbery, but today he says: 'I'm an Anarchist from the "Black Crow" club' -- or from the 'Storm' club, or the 'Attack', or the 'Charge', or whatever: they have many different names.

I have talked about this, comrades, with ideological Anarchists, and they themselves say: 'A great many of these black crows, these hooligans, all sorts of crooks, have attached themselves to us. You know very well what has been happening in Moscow. The Anarchists have laid whole streets under tribute, or seized buildings, regardless of the Soviet of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies, regardless of the workers' organizations, and it has happened that Soviet organizations were in occupation of a building, and hooligans, calling themselves Anarchists, have broken into this building, mounted machine-guns and seized armoured cars and even artillery. When we arrested them we found on them a mass of things they had stolen, heaps of gold. The Moscow Anarchists are nothing but burglars and thugs who bring discredit on the ideological Anarchists. Anarchism is an ideology, even though a wrong one. But hooliganism is hooliganism. And we said to the ideological Anarchists: you must strictly dissociate yourselves from these thugs, for nothing worse can happen to a revolution than to start rotting from one or other of its extremities. The whole fabric of the revolution then comes unravelled at a touch. Soviet order must be a sound fabric. We took power not so as to rob, behave like hooligans and brigands, or get drunk, but in order to introduce general labor discipline and honest working life.

I consider that the Soviet power acted quite correctly when it said to the pseudo-Anarchist gentry: 'Don't imagine that your kingdom has come, don't imagine that the Russian people and the Soviet state are now carrion that crows can settle on and tear to pieces. If you want to live together with us, in accordance with the principles of labor, then submit yourselves, along with us, to the common Soviet discipline of the working class but if you get in our way, then, by your leave, we'll show you the iron fist of the workers' government, the Soviet power!'

If the sham Anarchists, who are really thugs, try to go on acting along the same lines as before, then the second show down will be three times, ten times, harsher than the first. It is said that some honest Anarchists were present among the hooligans: if that is true -- and, obviously, it can be true only of a relatively few persons -- it is very regrettable, and they must be released at once. We must express to them our great regret, but at the same time we must say: comrade Anarchists, in order that such unpleasantness may not happen in the future, you must erect a watershed between yourselves and the hooligans, you must draw a firm line, so that you cannot be mixed up, so that it may be known once and for all that this man is a thug but that one is an honest man with an ideology. -- L. T.

## **ORDERBY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR MILITARY AFFAIRS**

Besides units which did their duty irreproachably during the counter-revolutionary revolt of the Left SRs, some unworthy groups were found among the Moscow garrison, which either joined the rebels or were weakened by internal discord. In order to investigate the conduct of all units of the Moscow garrison and identify the defective elements in it, so as to subject them to exemplary punishment, a commission is set



up, consisting of M.S. Kedrov (chairman), Danishevsky and Arosev.

This commission is empowered to create sub-commissions in particular districts or units. The result of the investigation is to be reported not later than July 15.

July 1918

## LIQUIDATION OF THE REVOLT

### *Official communique*

The crazy revolt of the so-called Left SRs has been liquidated. The judicial investigation authorities will in the next few days clarify the precise factual picture of this unprecedented adventure and establish the degree of responsibility borne by individual participants. But the political significance of the Moscow events of July 6-7 is already quite clear.

Bending to the pressure of the bourgeois classes of society, the Left SRs made in recent weeks increasingly persistent efforts to draw Russia into war with Germany. These efforts of theirs found expression not only in pointing to the exceptionally burdensome conditions of the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, but also in fabricating and spreading monstrous rumours and suspicions, calculated to have a disturbing effect on the people's imagination. Conscious workers and peasants are, of course, well enough aware of the heaviness of the conditions of the treaty of Brest-Litovsk. But they are no less clearly aware what the consequences would be if Russia, exhausted and bled white, were to be drawn into the imperialist slaughter. Therefore, the overwhelming majority of the workers and peasants consciously rejected that tearing up of the Brest treaty which is frenziedly called for by the Cadets, the Right SRs, the Mensheviks and the Left SRs.

The failure of their demagogic agitation in favour of war impelled the Left SRs to take the road of senseless and dishonest adventure: they decided to draw Russia into the war by means of an act of terrorism, against the will of the workers and peasants. After the Fifth All-Russia Congress of Soviets had categorically approved the foreign policy of the Council of People's Commissars, a certain Blyumkin, acting on the instructions of the Central Committee of the Left SR party, assassinated the German ambassador, Count Mirbach.

In carrying out this provocative act the Left SRs relied not so much on their Party apparatus as on the official position they occupied as a Soviet party. With this Party's backing, Blyumkin became a member of the staff of the Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution. Utilizing his official status, he took possession of some documents and forged others, gained entry, under cover of his official status, into the German Embassy, and there carried out the assassination he had been ordered to perform by the Central Committee of his party.

At the same time the Left SRs openly proceeded to acts of rebellion, which had the aim of forcibly transferring state power from the hands of the All-Russia Congress of Soviets into those of a party which had proved to be in the minority in the Congress. Members of the Left SRs' Central Committee tried to develop the revolt, relying on part of a unit of the Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution. This unit was commanded by the Left SR Popov. The part of Popov's unit which became involved in the conspiracy, reinforced by demoralized elements from the personnel of the Black Sea Fleet, sent out street patrols and posted sentries, arrested representatives of the Soviet power, and disarmed and fired on



certain groups of Red Army men. The rebels had machine-guns, cannon and armoured cars.

In this way there developed, on July 7, the revolt of a Soviet party which had proved to be in the minority, against the power of the Soviets.

Had this revolt succeeded (assuming that such an adventure could have succeeded) it would have meant immediate war with Germany and the downfall of the Soviet power, since nobody with any common sense could, of course, suppose that the Left SRs would be able to keep hold of the power torn from the hands of the workers', peasants' and Red Army men's soviets. By the essential nature of the whole situation, the Left SRs revolted on July 6-7 exclusively as a fighting squad in the service of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie, for which it was clearing the road.

Under these conditions there was only one decision that the Council of People's Commissars could take: to put down as quickly as possible a revolt in which frivolity, perfidy and provocation were combined in one disgusting whole.

Vigorous action brought results within a few hours. The Left SRs abandoned the post and telegraph office where they had been in command for two hours. Disintegration began in Popov's unit after the first shots they received from the Soviet forces. A considerable part of the unit reacted indignantly to the adventure and came over entirely to the side of the representatives of the Soviet power whom the rebels had taken prisoner-- Comrades Dzerzhinsky, Latsis and Smidovich. It was only thanks to this that these comrades were preserved from the danger of losing their lives.

The liquidation of the revolt was fully worthy of its original conception and of the entire course of this shameful adventure. Utter confusion at the rebels' headquarters and demoralization in the rebel unit developed together. In setting themselves such an aim as the seizure of state power, the leaders of the Left SRs apparently quite failed to appreciate the scope and significance of this task which was utterly beyond their strength. After insignificant attempts to resist, the rebels began to send out flags of truce in various directions, and then retreated in disorder.

Pursuit of the fugitives is now proceeding with complete success. The number of prisoners taken is already numbered in hundreds. Details will be given by the Government at the next session of the All-Russia Congress of Soviets, which will speak its decisive word regarding both the revolt of July 6-7 and the entire fate of the so-called Left SR party.

*Izv.V.Ts.I.K.*, no.14! July 8, 1918

## **SOLDIERS OF THE WORKERS' AND PEASANTS'RED ARMY!**

Order by the People's Commissar of Military and Naval Affairs, July 15, 1918, No.561

After the crazy and dishonest revolt of the Left SRs, the German Government demanded that a battalion of German soldiers be admitted to Moscow, to guard the German Embassy. [\[98\]](#)

The Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies replied to this demand with a resolute refusal. The Soviet power wants to remain at peace with all peoples. But precisely for that reason it cannot allow foreign imperialist troops to appear on the territory of the Soviet republic. German soldiers in Moscow would be just as much a threat to the freedom and independence of the Russian people as are the Czechoslovak mercenaries at Samara, the Anglo-French bands on the

Murman coast, or the Japanese at Vladivostok.

Soldiers of the Soviet Republic! Russia wants to live at peace with all peoples, But precisely for that reason you must be ready to repulse aggression, from whatever direction it may come. Revolutionary order in Moscow can be safeguarded by Soviet troops and by no others. The Volga, the Urals and Siberia must be freed from enemies. More than ever before, the Urals are the backbone of Soviet Russia. We cannot tolerate for one more day the presence there of bands which bar our access to Siberian grain. In order that Soviet Russia may live, develop, and give a firm rebuff to aggression from without, we must ruthlessly smash the Czechoslovak and White-Guard revolt on our territory.

Soldiers of the revolution! Soviet Russian, thirsting for free dom, peace and bread, points to the Urals and says to you:

Strangle the serpent!

## NOTES

90. The Fifth Congress of Soviets met in Moscow between July 4 and 10, 1918. Of the delegates present, 66 per cent were Communists, the rest being mostly Left SRs. From the very beginning of the Congress the latter tried to set the Left SR peasants against the Bolsheviks. Comrade Trotsky's emergency motion requesting the Congress to approve the order for introducing strict discipline in the frontier guerrilla units which by their policy were violating the peace treaty with Germany, met with an extremely hostile reception from the Left SRs. In his speech Kamkov called on the guerrilla units to attack the Germans actively. Next day, Spiridonova tried, with false allegations, to show that the Council of People's Commissars was secretly sending gold, grain and manufactured goods to Germany. On July 7-8, after the murder of the German ambassador, Count Mirbach, by the Left SRs Blyumkin and Andreyev, the Left SRs' revolt took place. The Fifth Congress suspended its work, resuming this only on the 9th when the Congress examined the question of the organization of the Red Army, and also ratified the Soviet Constitution.

91. The Fourth Congress of Sovtets was an extraordinary congress and was held in Moscow between March 14 and 16, 1918. There were only two points on the agenda: (1) ratifying the Brest peace, (2) transferring the capital to Moscow. Reports on the first point were given by Comrades Chicherin and Lenin, and a speech on behalf of the Left SRs, who protested, together with a section of the Communists, against the peace, was made by Kamkov. When voting by nominal roll was carried out, 784 delegates voted for ratification and 261 against, with 115 abstentions. (For more details on the Brest peace, see Note 20.) On the second point of the Congress agenda, it was resolved to shift the capital, for the time being, to Moscow.

92. After Comrade Trotsky, Kamkov rose to speak. He endorsed the 'broad and healthy revolutionary movement' which found expression in an endeavour to help the Ukrainian workers. Kamkov asked the Congress to reject Comrade Trotsky's motion. Then Comrade Zinoviev spoke for the Communist fraction in the Congress, in defence of the motion. The Left SRs asked for a recess so that they could hold a conference of their fraction. After the recess, Spiridonova made a long speech denouncing the Bolsheviks, and then Comrade Trotsky made the concluding speech.

93. After the concluding speech, Karelin said the Left SR fraction did not wish to take part in the voting until the credentials commission had reported. Furthermore, he said that he perceived in the adopting of

this motion an attempt to predetermine a number of general political factors. The Left SR fraction temporarily left the hall, and *the resolution was passed unanimously in their absence*.

94. From the documents of the investigation that was carried out, the circumstances connected with the *murder of Mirbach* emerge as follows. Count Mirbach, the German Ambassador to Soviet Russia, was killed in Denezhny Lane, in one of the drawing-rooms of the Embassy building, at about 3pm on July 6, 1918. The political origin of this terrorist act was as follows. The All-Russia Congress of the Left SRs, which met in Moscow at the same time as the Fifth Congress of Soviets, resolved, on the question of foreign policy, 'to tear up, by revolutionary means, the Brest treaty which is fatal to the Russian and world revolution.' The Congress entrusted the execution of this decision to the Party's Central Committee. The latter decided to carry out the will of the Congress by killing Mirbach and placing the Soviet Government in a situation where the Brest treaty had been broken. The Central Committee of the Left SRS intended by this deed to appeal to the solidarity between the German proletariat and the working masses of Russia. At the session of the Left SR Central Committee during the night of July 4 the assassination was entrusted to Yakov Blyurnkin and Nikolai Andreyev, who had personally volunteered for the task. Both were members of the Left SR party: the former held at that time the responsible post of head of the Cheka's counter espionage department, while the latter was a photographer in the same department. In order to carry out the deed assigned to him, Blyurakin made use of the papers of the case of a German spy, Count Robert Mirbach, the ambassador's nephew, which he already had in his possession through his duties. Blyumkin filled in on a Cheka form the following authorisation: 'The All-Russia Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution empowers its member Yakov Blyumkin and the representative of the Revolutionary Tribunal Nikolai Andreyev to enter into direct negotiations with the German Ambassador to Russia, Count M. Mirbach, regarding a matter of direct concern to the Ambassador.' The signature of the Chairman of the Cheka, Comrade Dzerzhinsky, and its secretary Ksenofontov, were forged. The seal was supplied by the Vice-Chairman of the Cheka, Aleksari drovich, a member of the Left SRs' Central Committee, who knew that the assassination was being prepared. On arriving at the embassy, Blyumkin insisted to the Counsellor of the Embassy Riezier that he must see Mirbach personally. After some discussion, this was agreed to, and the Ambassador came out to meet them. After a length conversation regarding the above- mentioned case, Blyumkin fired point-blank at Mirbach, Riezier and the interpreter. Mirbach had evidently only been wounded, so Andreyev threw a bomb at him. As it did not go off, Blyumkin picked it up and threw it again, this time killing Mirbach. It was with difficulty that they succeeded in getting away in a car, as the Embassy guard opened fire on them, and Blylmikin was wounded. The assassination was the signal for open revolt by the Left SRs in Moscow and in the provinces. The details of the revolt are given in Comrade Trotsky's subsequent speeches and orders.

95. After Comrade Trotsky had given his report, the spokesmen of the frac tions addressed the assemb!y: Garin, for the Federation of Anarchist Communists; Roslavets, for the Yelets organisation of the Left SRs, who were opposed to the policy of that party's Central Committee; Lozovsky, for the Internationalist Social-Democrats; Lindov for the Left Internationalist Social-Democrats; and Svedov for the Maximalist SRs.

96. July 3-5, 1917. The discontent of the masses with the reactionary policy of the Provisional Government became especially acute after the unsuccessful offensive organised by Kerensky in June 1917. The regiments stationed in Petersburg were concerned because of the Government's intention to send them to the front, so as to clear the capital of troops that were a danger to the Government. At the centre of the July revolt was the Machine Gun Regiment, whose delegates came to the Petersburg City

Conference of the Bolsheviks and asked for their support. Considering the movement to be premature, the Conference refused. During the evening of July 3 the movement grew in strength, and a mass demonstration began. On July 4, with a view to avoiding an armed clash, the Central Committee issued the slogan for organising a peaceful demonstration. In this more than half a million workers and soldiers took part. On July 5 troops summoned from the front by Kerensky started to arrive. Disarmament of the workers, soldiers and sailors was begun, and there were widespread arrests. The July days showed that the Communist Party was followed by huge masses of workers and soldiers. On the consequences of the July days, see note 89.

97. January 9, 1905 see note 33.

98. The German Government's demand for a battalion of German soldiers to be allowed to enter Moscow to protect their Embassy was a direct consequence of the murder of Mirbach. The People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs backed by the All-Russia CEC, replied to this demand with a categorical refusal and for a time Soviet Russia lay under the threat of a new war. On the ground's of the danger to which it was allegedly subject in Moscow the German Embassy transferred its residence to Pskov, in the zone occupied by the Germans



# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE CIVIL WAR IN RSFSR IN 1918

## The Red Army and the Civil War

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[NOTES](#)

## THE CREATION OF THE WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' RED ARMY

**Report to the Fifth Congress of Soviets at its session of July 10, 1918**

Our opponents and, to an even greater extent, our enemies -- though it must be said that in the course of the revolution our opponents are being transformed into enemies -- reproach us for having realized only gradually, only belatedly, the need to create an army, and an army built according to solid, planned, scientific principles.

The program of our party, like that of any workers' socialist party, does not say anything about the destruction and suppression of the army in the present period of struggle, but only about reconstructing it on new, democratic principles, the principles of militia service and armament of the entire people.



I shall speak later about the modification that the principle of universal armament undergoes in the revolutionary conditions of an epoch of civil war. But now, before dealing with that question, I have to ask you this: what caused the disappearance of the old army, which was a regular army constructed, so far as the material and ideological means and resources of the old regime permitted, on the basis of scientific principles?

The main cause of the collapse of the Tsarist army was not the anti-militarism of the revolution, not the fact that the revolution rejected military defense as such, but solely the class structure of the old army itself, the fact that, while consisting mostly, of course, of peasants and workers, it had a ruling apparatus which was constructed, organized and educated so as to ensure that this army automatically served the ruling class of those days, with the monarchy as its summit.

This is something which, naturally, we never forget. And that is why the claim made by some of the military specialists that the army was ruined by politics, and that an army can survive, as a sound organism capable of fighting, only if it be placed outside politics, seems to us to be baseless and childish.

Not long ago, for instance, one of the most outstanding of the old generals, Brusilov, [General A.A. Brusilov was commander-in-chief of Russia's South-Western Front in 1916 and made a famous 'breakthrough' which crippled the Austro-Hungarian army and had important effects on the course of World War I. It brought Romania in on the Allied side, saved the Italian army from annihilation, and obliged the Germans to lighten their pressure on the French. Owing to the corruption and incompetence of the Tsarist regime, Brusilov's success was not followed up. Brusilov remained inactive after the October Revolution until 1920, when he rallied to the Soviet Government in connection with the war against Poland, and became Inspector of Cavalry in the Red Army.] informed the bourgeois press, in connection with Kerensky's reminiscences, which had been published in pamphlet form, that the disintegration of the old army was a process brought about by the revolution, as such, and that the armed forces could be re-created only provided that the army was isolated from politics. By 'politics' is meant in this statement, of course, the interests of the worker and peasant masses, for there has never in history been, and there is not anywhere now, an army that stands 'outside politics'.

'War,' said the famous German theoretician of war, Clausewitz, 'is the continuation of politics, only by other means' -- that is, the army of a particular country is subordinate to the politics of that country.

From this it is clear that the army of Tsardom was nothing but an armed force adapted to the service of the interests of Tsardom and carrying out precisely the politics of Tsardom. As crowning proof of this I will not recall its external status and the oath of allegiance to the Tsar, the so-called national anthem, which was the anthem of Tsardom, or the commemoration days and parades -- all that which created around the army an atmosphere thick with Tsarist politics. I will refer only to the commanding personnel, who were made to serve as an apparatus for subjecting the peasant and worker masses to the requirements of the ruling upper circles of the country.

And if the old army disintegrated, that happened not because of any pernicious slogans but because of what the revolution itself gave rise to, namely, anger on the part of the worker and peasant masses against the propertied classes that had previously held command. The old army merely shared the fate of the old Russia in general. If the revolt of the peasants against the landlords, of the workers against the capitalists, of the whole people against the old reign of the bureaucracy and against the Tsar himself signified the break-up of the old Russia, then the break-up of the army was predetermined precisely by this. It was inherent in the internal mechanics of the revolution, in the dynamics of its class forces.

And when they now hurl at us the charge that the October revolution inflicted an incurable injury upon the army and disintegrated it, I remember very well, comrades, since I was living in Petrograd at the time, I remember, as many of you will, too, how, during September and October, down to the moment of the October revolution, delegates came to see us at the Petrograd Soviet, from regiments, divisions, corps and whole armies, saying: 'Something terrible is coming to a head in the trenches. The army will not stay in the trenches any longer unless decisive steps are taken towards peace.'

In that period proclamations were being circulated in the trenches which the soldiers themselves had composed, proclamations in which they wrote that we, that is, the soldiers, will stay here until the coming of the first snow, but after that we shall quit the trenches and get away from here.

And if this worn-out and internally defeated army -- defeated above all, under Tsardom already, by the terrible blows suffered from without, struck at it by the German army, and then by the baseness and dishonesty of the Tsarist regime, and, finally, by the deception committed by the Compromisers and the bourgeoisie after the February period, when they hurled the army into the offensive of June 18 -- if this thrice-defeated army nevertheless, all through November, December and January, despite the terrible ebb-tide from the trenches, continued to hold its positions, it was supported solely by the ideological pressure of the October revolution.

But there was no power capable of keeping this army, as such, in existence, for it had been destroyed internally: it had to be atomised, dispersed -- every soldier, be he worker or peasant, had to be demobilized, to go back to his own work-hive, his own economic cell, so that he might then, reborn, proceed thence into a new army, built according to the interests and tasks of the new classes that had come to power, the workers and the peasants who do not exploit the labor of others.

'But you tried to build the army on the voluntary principle'; so runs the next objection.

I do not know of anyone among us who has ever affirmed that the voluntary principle is a sound principle for organizing a truly popular, democratic army. The principle of voluntary service was adopted by Britain, a predatory power whose chief concern in the matter of armed forces was the organizing of a navy -- and a navy does not require a large number of men. The principle of voluntary service was also adopted by the United States, which, until recently, did not wage an imperialist policy of conquest outside America, because American territory itself offered wide scope for the bourgeoisie of the New World.

Apart from America and Britain, in absolutely every bourgeois-democratic country the principle of universal military service was invariably applied, being dictated, there too, by the general conditions prevailing, the regime of political life, and so on.

Neither the Party of the workers and peasants nor the Soviet power, based on these classes, could, in any case, make the question of the country's defence depend upon the influx of volunteers. They resorted to a temporary application of the voluntary principle only because they were passing' through an acute, crucial moment of the revolution, when the old army had broken up and dispersed, and, along with it, the old apparatus of military administration, both at the center and in the localities.

In order to build the new army according to the laws dictated by the interests of the working classes it was necessary, first, that the old army should have finally dispersed, with the soldiers returning to their cells of work and class and becoming transformed into the raw material from which it would later be

possible to build a new, socialist army; and, secondly, that an apparatus of military administration should have been previously formed, at the center and in the localities, an apparatus that would be competent to register all the human material available and draw it, in a planned way, into fulfillment of the most important of all civic duties the duty of defending the workers' and peasants' Soviet regime and fatherland.

That, comrades, was why, at a time when we had not yet managed to create organs for registering, calling up and training the new cadres, but, at the same time, when it was not possible to suppose that our enemies, internal and external, had gone to sleep, we could only appeal to the people, saying: 'You, workers, and you, peasants, who see the difficult situation that the Soviet power, our power, is in, will respond, and those of you, from the ranks of the old army, from the factories and from the villages, who want to save the socialist fatherland, will at once take your places under the banner of the Red Army, as volunteers.'

This was not a principle that we fought for and promoted. It was a necessary compromise measure for a particular moment, because there was no other solution available. But if you take all our statements of principle since the October revolution, all our programmatic speeches, you will then be able to establish that we considered the voluntary principle precisely as a temporary measure, a palliative, as a measure which was contrary in principle to the task of building a real workers' and peasants' army.

That was why we set ourselves the task, first and foremost, of creating an organ of military administration in the localities, an organ for registration, call-up, formation and training. The local military commissariats are no longer departments of the local Soviets, but are subordinated hierarchically one to another, right up to the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs.

This, comrades, is a most important military-administrative reform: without conscientious and precise implementation of this measure in the localities we cannot carry through any serious mobilization, even when the conditions for this improve -- and they will improve when the time comes for gathering in the new harvest.

The creation of the new army is affected by the general situation in the country, its economic position, the presence of food stocks, transport, and so on. All these difficulties, about which particular People's Commissars and individual delegates from the localities have spoken here, the disorganized state of affairs and other phenomena, all this finds reflection in the activity of the War Department and hinders the work of creating the army. I do not say this in order to strengthen anyone's scepticism: on the contrary, I am filled with the same faith which undoubtedly lives in each one of you, faith that we shall cope with all difficulties and dangers, shall overcome them, every one, and create favourable circumstances for consolidating the Soviet Republic.

What we need to do now, above all and before anything else, is to create an apparatus of military administration in the *uyezds*, *volosts*, provinces and districts. I have nothing to say about the *volost* commissariats. They have been set up in only an insignificant minority of *volsts*. But *uyezd* commissariats do not exist everywhere, either, and those that do are not fully organized, they do not have all their departments, and do not always have the establishment that we laid down for them, that is, they are without specialists. Even the province commissariats are lame in one leg, and sometimes in both, and lack an adequate number of competent workers, authoritative and strong commissars. And without all that, comrades, we cannot, of course, create any army at all.

Furthermore, it is necessary that each commissariat keep well in mind its hierarchical dependence on the commissariat that ranks above it: the dependence of the *volost* commissariat on that of the *uyezd*, of the *uyezd* commissariat on the province commissariat, of the province commissariat on that of the district, of the latter on the center -- on Moscow. This is a simple mechanism, but it has to be mastered, and this is not always done. Soviet centralism is, in general, still in a rudimentary state, but without it we shall achieve nothing, either in the sphere of food-supply or in any other sphere, and especially not in the military sphere.

By its very essence, an army is a strictly centralized apparatus, closely linked by threads with its center. No centralism, no army.

In this connection you have heard a statement made here that we have no need at all for an army built on scientific principles, but that we do need guerrilla squads. But this is as though they were to tell us: 'The workers' and peasants' government do not need railways -- we'll use animal-drawn transport. Let's chuck out the steam ploughs, where they exist, and go back to the wooden Andreyevna plough. [The allusion here is to a riddle from Russian folklore. 'Old Andreyevna bending down, with her nose to the ground and her arms stretched out behind her. What is it? Answer: The plough.' The choice of the name 'Andreyevna' was probably intended to suggest the plough-like appearance of a capital 'A' upside down.] In general, let's return to the regime of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.' For going back to guerrilla units means a leap backward of whole centuries.

Yes, indeed, when we were working in the underground we formed guerrilla units, but we tried to bring into them the maximum degree of centralization and unity of action. However, we did not take power in order to continue hobbling along towards our goal with amateurish methods. Having taken over the whole centralized state apparatus, we want to reconstruct it on new principles, to transform it into an apparatus of the masses who yesterday were oppressed and humiliated. What is involved is a very great historical experiment which you have to carry out, an experiment in building a workers' and peasants' state and economy and creating a centralised workers' and peasants' army.

For this purpose we need, first and foremost, to introduce the strictest Soviet centralism. Unfortunately, we encounter opposition here and there in the localities, and, I'm afraid, we encounter this even from some of the comrades who are present here. Psychologically, this opposition can be understood: it was engendered by the domination of the old bureaucratic centralism, which stifled all free initiative, all individuality. And now, when we have overthrown this old bureaucratic apparatus, it seems to us that each one of us can act quite independently, that he can and will do everything himself. We have got used to looking on the center as a hindrance and a threat. We apply to the center, comrades, when we need money or armoured cars, and all the *volosts* now have a great liking for armoured cars, and there is no *volost* that would not ask for at least a dozen of them.

But the centre can give you only what is needed, and when it is needed, and, moreover, only if you are capable of handling it. We must put an end to the procedure whereby they send delegates from the *uyezd* to Moscow almost for every foot cloth [Russian soldiers wore, instead of socks, strips of cloth wound round their feet.] they want, supposing that this will be the quickest way to get it. But this procedure gives rise to the greatest dislocation and difficulty. We need, for example, to ensure that, in the sphere of military administration, the Soviets at province level teach their commissars to keep an eye on the *uyezd* Soviets, to see that all estimates and lists are sent up through the district office. Only in this way shall we form a military apparatus that will help us to create an army.



This military apparatus is, of course, merely an administrative skeleton. To create an army we need, by means of this apparatus, to draw in the living, creative, human element, the conscious element, for it is this that distinguishes our army from the old one. And we know that the Tsarist army was, in the main, a peasant army, but the peasants were unconscious and ignorant: without reasoning why, they went where they were sent. Discipline did not pass through the individual consciousness of each separate soldier.

People often complain now, in our country, and we too complain, that there is no discipline. We do not want the old discipline, that discipline by which every ignorant peasant and worker was slotted into his regiment, his company and his platoon, and marched off without asking why they were leading him away, why they were making him shed blood. The revolution awakened the human personality in the ignorant peasants and the oppressed worker, and this is the principal and greatest achievement of the revolution.

The revolution gave land to the peasants, the revolution gave power to the workers and the peasants: these were great achievements, but no achievement of the revolution is more important than the awakening of the human personality in every oppressed and humiliated individual.

This process of awakening of the individual personality assumes chaotic form, in the early stages. Whereas yesterday still the peasant did not think of himself as a person, and was ready, at the first order from the Government, to go forth blindly to shed his blood, now he is unwilling to subordinate himself blindly. He asks: where are they telling me to go, and why? And he declares: I'm not going, I don't want to submit! He says that because awareness of his human dignity, his personality, has been awakened in him for the first time, and this awareness, which is as yet too crude, which is not sufficiently digested, takes anarchical forms when expressed in deeds.

We have to reach the situation when every peasant and every worker is aware of himself as a human personality with a right to respect, but also feels that he is part of the working class of republican Russia and will be prepared unquestioningly to lay down his life for this Soviet Republican Russia.

Whereas formerly the working man did not value himself, now, contrariwise, he does not value the whole. It is necessary to remember the whole, to remember the interests of the whole class of working people, of our workers' socialist fatherland of labor.

This is the psychological cement by means of which we can create a new army, a real, conscious Soviet army, bound together by a discipline that has passed through the soldiers' brains, and not just the discipline of the rod. This is the discipline we advocate, and we do not want to know any other.

But for this purpose, I repeat, we need to have a centralized apparatus.

I mentioned when I began that the principle of democracy is the principle of general mobilization, and because we have not introduced it we are in receipt of many attacks from bourgeois newspapers and bourgeois politicians. They demand that we introduce universal military service.

Universal military service is the regime needed for a period of peaceful democratic construction. But we are living in conditions of open civil war of class against class. That is the basic fact from which we start. We are not going to say whether this fact is good or bad. The civil war is not a principle but a fact, prepared by centuries of historical development, centuries of oppression of the working people, who have revolted against this oppression. We cannot but reckon with this fact. Civil war ruthlessly tears apart the fabric, the envelope of the nation. At any moment the propertied classes are ready to stretch out their



hands to any foreign aggressor, in order to crush the workers and peasants of their own country. This is also a fact, which has found confirmation in the events in the Ukraine, on the Don, on the Murman coast, and on the banks of the Volga. Every where, the bourgeois classes look with much greater hatred upon the power of the workers and peasants than upon the power of the German or the Anglo-French imperialists, or upon the Czechoslovak hirelings of the French stock-exchange.

Since civil war exists amongst us, we are naturally not interested in arming our class enemies, who are at the same time the allies of all our external enemies. We do not want to arm a bourgeoisie which is ready to place any weapon that may be given it at the service of foreign imperialism.

We rejected the Constituent Assembly because this democratic envelope is merely an empty form when class is confronting class, and the question of power calls for a weapon. And universal military service is at that moment, in those conditions, just such an empty envelope.

The obligation of universal military service would actually find expression for the bourgeoisie in the obligation to run away to Krasnov, to the Urals, to the Czechoslovaks, to join with all our enemies and attack us, while the obligation falling upon us is expressed in smashing the bourgeoisie and our enemies external and internal.

It is that that determines the principle on which we build our army. We include workers and peasants in our army: it is a reflection of the system of Soviets as a whole, a reflection of the All-Russia Congress of Soviets. We can understand why the bourgeois agents -- the SRs and Mensheviks -- fiercely attack our method of creating an army. Of course our army is hateful to them, since it is a weapon of the Soviet system. Repeating the phrase of the German theoretician I have already quoted, about war and the army being a reflection of general politics, we can say that with Soviet, workers' and peasants' politics it is necessary to have a Soviet Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.

But an agitation is being carried on among the peasants and workers, saying that the Soviet power is putting the burden of military service on their shoulders, while relieving the bourgeoisie and landlords of this burden. To this argument you, comrades, should reply: 'In the epoch in which we live, a rifle is not a burden but a privilege, a monopoly of the ruling class.'

For lack of time and also for lack of a fully-formed military apparatus, we have not as yet managed to draw the bourgeoisie to the work of bearing those burdens which the bourgeois in classes ought not, of course, to be spared. A series of decrees are being got ready in the Council of People's Commissars, and will, I hope, be issued in the next few days, which will draw the bourgeoisie into the work of bearing these burdens. Levies for work in the rear, teams for laboring and auxiliary tasks, will be formed from among the bourgeoisie. [\[99\]](#)

We are told that this is cruel. To this we reply: if the bourgeois youth show in practice that they are devoted to the peasant and worker class and are ready to live with us, to eat from one fraternal cauldron, ready to fight against our external and internal foes, then, of course, we shall open the gates of the Red Army wide and clear for such youngsters. But those from whom the revolution has not yet shaken out the idea of restoring the power of the landlords and bourgeoisie are in need of thoroughgoing correction. We shall say: 'Our ancestors, our grandfathers and fathers, served yours, cleaning up dirt and *filth*, and we will make you do the same.' Until you recognize that Soviet Russia is a country of equality in labor, of duty to labor, for civil and military purposes -- until then we shall subject you to a severe schooling.

But, once again, for the practical solving of this question we need to create military commissariats in the localities -- universal registration and control both of the working class for enlistment in the army and of the bourgeoisie for enlistment in teams for work in the rear. The question of universal military training is being solved by us, as I have already said, on the basis of the general principle of the Soviet regime. We are undertaking (and have already undertaken) the military training of all workers and all peasants who do not exploit the labor of others. But these enormous numbers of cadres who have to pass through the training school are still not an army, but only substantial reserves, which can be called up at a moment of crisis. However, we need to have, here and now, the fundamental nucleus of an army that would be capable of giving battle at any moment. This cadre, fit to fight, we have so far formed through volunteering, but we have now had to reject this principle and, in practice, to go over to the method of compulsory military mobilization .

For the time being we have carried out one complete practical experiment only. Here in Moscow we have mobilized two age-groups -- those of 1896 and 1897. As always, there was whispering in all the bourgeois holes and corners that our experiment would come to nothing, that not a single worker would turn up. You know, comrades, that we have not had recourse to any measure of coercion, for there was no need for it: the workers all reported themselves, as one man, and we selected from the numbers reporting the thousands whom we needed, and from them we shall form very fine fighting regiments.

The Council of People's Commissars has instructed the Petrograd Commune to carry out a similar mobilization of those two age-groups, 1896 and 1897. In addition, we are going to mobilize three age-groups of workers belonging to the artillery and engineer branches.

Those who know the proletariat of Petrograd will have no doubt that the mobilization will be carried out there impeccably. By a general decree, which lays down no times for its implementation, mobilization has been proclaimed in fifty *uyezds* of the Volga region, the Urals, Siberia, the Don and the Kuban, but in those parts of the country the military- administrative prerequisites for the practical carrying-out of mobilization do not yet exist.

All these partial experiments of ours are merely preparatory steps towards the promulgation of a law that every citizen of the Soviet Republic between 18 and 40 years of age must report to the colors at any moment when called upon by the Soviet power to defend it.

We shall ask the Congress to give us, in the interests of the Soviet Republic, the right to mobilize two, three or more age groups, depending on the conditions that confront us. When you have granted us this right, you, comrade delegates to the Congress, after dispersing to the localities, will explain at every meeting of workers and peasants that, in order to defend our selves against our enemies, in order not to fall under the oppression of the imperialists, we need to have an armed force.

And here we take the occasion to say to those comrades from the Left SRS who have not left us and who,

strength of the army.

The most difficult problem in creating the Red Army is the problem of commanding personnel. The crisis of the old army caused a split between the working masses and the ruling class, and this led to a breach between the mass of the soldiers and the officers. That was inevitable.

Neither the working class nor the peasant masses possess as yet the habit of governing, they lack sufficient of the knowledge that is needed in all spheres of economic, state and military administration. This is an indubitable fact, to which we cannot close our eyes. We have extraordinarily few engineers, doctors, generals and officers who are flesh and blood of the workers and peasants. All the bourgeois specialists were brought up in such educational institutions and in such an atmosphere that there was formed in them the conviction that the working masses are incapable of taking over the apparatus of state power, that only the educated, bourgeois classes can rule. When power passed to us they were mostly in the camp of our enemies, with only a few remaining cautiously neutral, waiting in the wings to see who would win, so as to offer their services to the victor.

But from this, comrades, one cannot draw the conclusion which is drawn by naive and superficial people, namely, that we should reject the services of the old commanding personnel and try to manage with our own resources. If we did we should have to resort to guerrilla methods, to military amateurism.

The power of the working class and the peasants does not begin with our driving out the bourgeoisie and the landlords, with cudgel-blows, from the apparatus of state power: it begins with our taking that apparatus into our own hands and making it fulfill the tasks of our own class.

The Tsarist cannon, the Tsarist machine-guns, armoured cars, engineers, generals, specialists of all ranks and branches -- we register them all and say: 'Now, gentlemen, hitherto all this has belonged to the propertied classes and served them, but now be so kind as to serve the working class!'

At that moment we are asked: 'But what if they betray us?' There will, of course, be cases of betrayal. Haven't the railway bigwigs, all sorts of directors, engaged in sabotage and called for strikes? Haven't there been very shameful cases when they held up the movement of our Red Army men? There have been any number of such cases! What conclusion follows from that? Certainly not that we must do without railways, but rather that we must catch the saboteurs and crush them ruthlessly, while supporting the honest engineers and railway executives. It is just the same where the commanding personnel are concerned.

Among us one hears it said, in the localities: 'They are inviting the old generals to come back.' And many add: 'They are restoring the old regime.' But when the situation gets serious they send us a telegram: 'Send us experienced specialists, military leaders!' And among the military leaders, the military specialists, there are, I affirm, a whole category of men who are now giving conscientious service to the Soviet regime, because they see that this regime is firm and strong and able to make itself obeyed. Not to take them into our service would be pitiful childishness. On the contrary, all the military specialists who conscientiously carry out our instruction must receive the most vigorous support in the localities. The local soviets and Soviet people must eliminate the prejudice and distrust felt towards these men by the masses, and put it to them like this: 'You, worker and peasant, now hold in your hands the power of government, you form part of it: that means that the officers and generals are now serving you.'

'But then,' they say, 'what if we don't manage to keep a close eye on them?'

'Comrades! If we don't keep a close eye on them, when we have all power in our grasp, then we are not worth a brass farthing!'

It is possible that, along with honest military specialists, a dozen or two may get in among us who will want to use their position for counter-revolutionary plots. There has been such a case: it happened in the Baltic fleet, and you know what the end of it was. [\[100\]](#)

We do not want an amateur army, constructed on some do-it-yourself principle or other, but a real, centralized army, constructed in accordance with the principles of military science and technique. For that to be the case, the army needs to have adequate cadres of military specialists.

As yet there are no new military specialists drawn from the working class, and so we are enlisting the old ones.

Among the regular officers whose consciousness and experience were formed only during the war and the revolution there are many for whom their experience of events has not gone for nothing. They have understood what a profound organic process the revolution has stimulated, they have understood that the people and the army will emerge from the revolution different from what they were, that the army must be built by other ways and means than before. Among these young officers there are not a few who understand us and march with us.

At the same time we have done everything possible to create a new officer corps of our own, from among workers and peasants who have passed through the school of war and who have the military vocation. We are putting them through instructors' courses. We shall increase the number of such courses month by month and cover the whole country with them. As I have already reported, there took part in the suppression of the revolt in Moscow our Soviet officers of tomorrow, the students attending the instructors' courses. They are the most devoted, the finest soldiers of the Soviet power. Appointed to command small military units, platoons and companies, they will be a bulwark of the Soviet regime, a bulwark against which any intrigues in the ranks of the Red Army will break in pieces.

At the same time we have opened the doors of the General Staff Academy, now called the Military Academy, to persons without qualifications. Previously, access to the academy was restricted to military specialists possessing certain educational qualifications. We have said: any soldier who has had a certain experience of command, who has a quick brain and a certain amount of imagination, the ability to combine the tasks of a military commander, may be admitted to the Military Academy. Within two or three months we shall determine whether he is up to the work. If not, he will be transferred to the preparatory courses, and later will again be sent to the Military Academy. We have sent about 150 new pupils there, soldiers devoted to the Soviet power, and our Academy will turn out the first graduation of these General Staff officers during the next ten or twelve months.

While creating a new commanding apparatus drawn from the classes which are now in power, we shall in the meantime make use of all the sound elements of the old commanding apparatus, giving their members extensive opportunities for work.

Speaking of the difficulties we encounter in creating the new army, I must mention that the biggest of these is constituted by this dreadful localism, local patriotism. Interception, seizure and concealment of military property and institutions of any and every kind is being carried on by the local organs of Soviet power.



Every *uyezd*, almost every *volost*, believes that Soviet power can best be defended by concentrating on the territory of the given *volost* as much as possible of aircraft *materiel*, radio equipment, rifles and armoured cars, and they all try to conceal this *materiel* -- and not only in the provinces, but even in the centers, even in the district organizations of Petrograd we can still observe this childish conduct.

It is self-evident that, from the point of view of the state as a whole we need to keep account of all our military property. It was dumped during the process of demobilizing the old army, without any plan, in all sorts of places, and wherever it was dumped it was absorbed, unpacked, pillaged and sold off. It must be recovered, listed, handed over to the army authorities and concentrated in depots, so as to be at the disposal of the country as a whole.

Is it really not appreciated that any Tsarevo-Kokshaisk *uyezd*, [Trotsky uses Tsarevo-Kokshaisk as an example of an out-of-the-way, backwoods place. Known today as Yoshkar-Ola, and capital of the Mari ASSR, it lies between Kazan and Vyatka.] or any *volost*, will be better protected from external enemies and counter-revolution if the central Soviet power has on record and under its control all the arms and ammunition in the country, instead of letting these military stores remain in the *volosts*, where they can neither be used nor disposed of? We send telegrams to the Soviets of the provinces complaining about these abuses, but in nine cases out of ten, comrades, we do not meet with sufficiently active support from you in the localities.

We must put an end to this situation. We must wage a most severe struggle against the intercepting, appropriating and concealing of Army property by local Soviets.

There are a whole number of difficulties of a more general kind. Testifying to these are a large number of dispatches which we have received only this day. I am not going to quote them all here: I will select just a few, to serve as examples.

Here is a telegram from Usmansk *uyezd*, in Tambov province: 'Organization of the Red Army is proceeding with great difficulty. Very few men have registered for service. The kulaks are carrying on a persistent agitation against the Soviet power: in some *volosts* they have driven out the Soviets. In general, counter-revolutionary agitation is proceeding intensely.'

The same kulaks who disrupt our procurement organization and conceal grain are also waging a struggle against the Red Army. This means that the Red Army is nothing but a reflection of the Soviet regime as a whole, and it is coming up against the same difficulties and the same foes.

The poorest peasantry have a good attitude to the creation of a new Red Army. A resolution greeting the workers' and peasants' Red Army was adopted at a general meeting. The morale of the Red Army men is excellent, but this cannot be said of the railway workers. Counter-revolutionary agitation is being carried on among them. The military commissariat has only just been established.'

Where the railway workers are old cadres of the Black Hundreds, where they are under the thumb of the managers, they revolt against the Soviet power and against the workers' and peasants' Soviet army.

From Kaleyev *volost*, in Volokolamsk *uyezd*, Moscow province, I have received a report that the peasants of one village announced that everyone serving in the Red Army must immediately leave it and return to his village by June 30. Whoever failed to obey this decision would be deprived of his peasant status (that is how it is put in the resolution) and would not be allowed back into the village. One of the commissars sends us this report, and says that it has affected the Red Army very badly. Comrades, I



make use of this lofty tribune of the All-Russia Congress of Soviets to give a first warning to the kulaks and Black Hundreds of Kaleyev *volost*, Volokolamsk *uyezd*. They have no right to deprive a Red Army man of his peasant status. They themselves will be deprived of any status at all if they dare revolt against the creation of the workers' and peasants' army.

In the localities the idea of compulsory military service is meeting in most cases, so say the reports we get from our commissars, with a completely favourable response on the part of the workers and the poor peasants. Thus, I have had a telegram from our district commissar regarding the Yaroslavl province congress. He writes that this congress hails the last decree on universal military service and considers that one of the principal tasks, perhaps *the* principal task, of the current moment is the formation, technical equipment, and armament in accordance with the last word of military science, of a workers' and peasants' Red Army. The congress is firmly convinced that Soviet Russia will succeed in realising its cherished aims and will in future be in a position to resist the entire imperialist world not only ideologically but also with military armed force. This is signed by Nakhimson, representing the Congress.

Nakhimson was our district commissar. He was killed at Yaroslavl during the White-Guard revolt. He was one of the most dedicated workers for the Soviet regime, one of the best of our commissars. We shall accomplish the idea which he set forth in that statement, we shall create a workers' and peasants' army excellently trained and technically equipped according to the most up-to-date military science.

In conclusion I must say that all those who previously were doubtful about this are coming round to it. In the Party Committee of the North-Western region there were comrades who reacted with some distrust and criticism to our endeavour to build an army on the basis of rational military science, with enlistment of the necessary number of specialists. I have received from that quarter, from those very comrades, a telegram which calls for establishment of the strictest discipline, recruitment of the necessary number of old military specialists, compulsory enlistment for military service on special conditions, of all those officers who are scattered among various other commissariats and engaged in various other kinds of work, and formation of new cadres of military leaders from the ranks of our own Soviet people.

I may mention here the name of one of the finest workers for the Soviet power, Comrade Myasnikov, [A.F. Myasnikov (Myasnikian), a Bolshevik since 1906, served on the Volga front in 1918, and became Commissar for Military Affairs in Soviet Lithuania and Byelorussia in 1919] whose previous attitude towards our methods of creating a workers' and peasants' army was one, if not of mistrust then of hesitation. I don't know if he is present: he wanted to speak on this question. As a result of experience he has now come to the same conclusions as we have, and he wanted to make a public statement to this effect at the Congress.

We hear more and more often that those Soviet executives who, sometimes openly and sometimes on the sly, grumbled at us for creating a real army and not a toy or amateur one, not some sort of militia detachments, are now in favour of our view on this matter. Those who protest against this have not yet understood that the worker and peasant class is in power, and for that very reason everything we do is not home-made and amateurish but built on solid, scientific principles.

We must stop this grumbling! Some people try to frighten us by saying: 'We are inviting back the old generals, and the Red Army men hear this and think that we are inviting them back so as to restore the old regime.' But we say: 'Haven't you taken power, worker and peasant? Don't you want to consolidate this power? That we can do, but we need to create conditions in which we can work successfully. For this

purpose we need to bring in specialists. In order to create an army of the workers and peasants we need generals, and if mistakes and failures occur in this sphere of work, if we see that some general engages in counter-revolutionary activity, we shall arrest him.'

We must examine each case individually, and not throw out all the specialists without adequate reason. Fortunately, the workers and peasants understand that we cannot succeed in creating something on new principles without employing specialists. If a bourgeois engineer, invited to serve in a factory, were to think of being guided in his work by the idea that industry is going to revert to capitalism, then the workers' administration would, of course, show him that this is not so. And we have shown and shall show this likewise to every military specialist. Our task is to create the mechanism of a new order. This task is not so simple.

If the Tsarist regime succeeded in creating an army, and succeeded in creating discipline in that army which served not the people but the enemies of the people, we, in creating an army to defend the people's interests, do not doubt that we shall succeed in creating discipline that is ten times as firm. We have only to overcome the infantile disease, the malady of growth, the slackness and weakness which are a heritage from the accursed war and the Tsarist regime.

But the question of whether or not we shall manage to do this is the question of the survival of our power. If we do not, it means that the working class must put its neck under the old yoke. But we reject that notion. We know that the working class will overcome all difficulties and will be able to hold out through these most difficult few weeks when our enemies are straining every effort, resorting to rebellion and mutiny, holding up the movement of food supplies, delaying trains, striving to bring about disorder everywhere: when, essentially speaking, all parties have disappeared, merging into one, which sets itself the task of overthrowing the workers' and peasants' power: when every means is being brought into play -- calumny, sabotage, and the summoning of foreign bayonets.

We are sure that you here, having acquired fresh energy, fresh will to power, will take with you from this Congress back to the localities confidence that no force can crush us, because we are closely bound together. A new, still closer bond will be our workers' and peasants' army, which will grow and become stronger and firmer. Within six weeks we shall be over the pass, we shall be getting in the new harvest, and that will enable us to create the basis for organizing our army. We shall become able to give our Red Army men not three-quarters of a pound but one-and-a-half, perhaps two pounds of bread, which a healthy young fellow needs if he is going to undergo military training for six hours a day and then spend three hours on his political development.

We shall form more and more cadres from the workers and peasants, and you will support us in the localities, stamping out all localism, understanding that Soviet Russia is one entire organism, that the army is one of the parts of this organism, that we need firm discipline and a firm, consistent policy for strengthening the workers' and peasants' socialist order.

## **Resolution on the report on creating the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army**

1. The Russian Soviet Republic is like a fortress which is besieged on every side by imperialist forces. Inside the Soviet fortress counter-revolution is raising its head, having found temporary support from the Czechoslovak hirelings of the Anglo-French bourgeoisie.

The Soviet Republic needs a strong revolutionary army, capable of crushing the bourgeois-landlord counter-revolution and giving a rebuff to the onslaught of the imperialist predators.

2. The old Tsarist army, which was created by coercion and in order to maintain the rule of the propertied upper circles over the working lower orders, suffered a terrible debacle in the imperialist slaughtering of the peoples. It was dealt the final blow by the lying policy of the Cadets and the compromisers, the criminal offensive of June 18, the Kerensky episode and the Korniloviad.

The old apparatus of military administration, at the center and in the localities, crashed and was dispersed along with the old order and the old army.

3. Under these conditions there was, at the beginning, no way open to the workers' and peasants' power, for creating an army, other than the enlistment of volunteers prepared to take their places under the flag of the Red Army.

4. At the same time the Soviet power always recognised (and the Fifth All-Russia Congress of Soviets again solemnly confirms this) that every honest and healthy citizen aged between 18 and 40 has the duty to answer the first call of the Soviet Republic to come forward to defend it against internal and external enemies.

5. With a view to introducing compulsory military training and compulsory military service, the Council of People's Commissars has set up Soviet organs of local military administration, in the form of district, province, *uyezd* and *volost* military commissariats. Approving this reform, the All-Russia Congress of Soviets imposes on all local soviets the duty of implementing it with all strictness in the localities. It is a condition for the success of all measures for creating an army that there shall be consistent centralism in the sphere of military administration -- that is, strict and unconditional subordination of *volost* commissariats to *uyezd* commissariats, of *uyezd* commissariats to province commissariats, of province commissariats to district commissariats, and of district commissariats to the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs.

6. The Fifth Congress of Soviets requires of all local institutions a strict accounting of military property, and its conscientious distribution and expenditure in conformity with the establishments and regulations laid down by the central organs of Soviet power. Arbitrary seizure of military property, its concealment, unlawful appropriation or careless expenditure must henceforth be treated as equivalent to the worst of crimes against the state.

7. The period of casual formations, arbitrary detachments and amateurish structures must be put behind us. All formations must be effected in strict conformity with the institutional establishments and according to the assessments of the All-Russia General Staff. The Workers' and Peasants' Red Army must be built in such a way that the minimum expenditure of forces and resources gives the maximum result, and this will be possible only provided there is planned application of all the conclusions of military science emerging from the experience of the present war.

8. In order to create a centralized, well-trained and well-equipped army we need to make extensive use of the experience and knowledge of many military specialists from among the officers of the former army. These must all be registered and obliged to take up the posts assigned to them by the Soviet power. Every military specialist who works honestly and conscientiously to develop and strengthen the military might of the Soviet Republic has the right to respect from the workers' and peasants' army and to support from

the Soviet power. The military specialist who tries perfidiously to utilise his responsible post for counter-revolutionary conspiracy or treason on behalf of foreign imperialists must be punished with death.

9. The military commissars are the guardians of the close and inviolable internal bond between the Red Army and the workers' and peasants' regime as a whole. Only irreproachable revolutionaries, staunch champions of the cause of the proletariat and the village poor, must be appointed to the posts of military commissars, to whom is entrusted the fate of the army.

10. A most important task in connection with the creation of the army is the education of new commanding personnel thoroughly filled with the ideas of the workers' and peasants' revolution. The Congress imposes upon the People's Commissar for Military Affairs the duty to redouble his efforts in this direction, by creating an extensive network of schools for instructors and bringing into them able, energetic and courageous soldiers of the Red Army.

11. The Workers' and Peasants' Red Army must be built on a basis of iron revolutionary discipline. A citizen who has been given by the Soviet power a weapon with which to defend the interests of the working masses is obliged to submit unquestioningly to the demands and orders of the commanders appointed by the Soviet power. Hooligan elements who plunder and coerce the local population or raise revolts, together with self-seekers, cowards and deserters who quit their battle-positions, must be punished without mercy. The All-Russia Congress imposes on the Commissariat for Military Affairs the duty of calling to account, first and foremost, those commissars and commanders who connive at excesses or shut their eyes to violations of military duty.

12. Until the bourgeoisie has been finally expropriated and subjected to universal labor service, so long as the bourgeoisie is still striving to restore its former domination, arming the bourgeoisie would mean arming an enemy who is ready at any moment to betray the Soviet republic to foreign imperialism. The Congress confirms the decree of the Council of People's Commissars on forming, from the age-groups of the bourgeoisie which have been called up, rear levies to make up the strength of non-combatant units serving as fatigue squads. Only such bourgeois elements can be allowed to transfer to combatant units who have shown in practice their loyalty to the working classes.

13. The Congress imposes on all Soviet institutions and on all trade-union and factory-committee organizations the duty of assisting the War Department in every way in the matter of implementing compulsory military training of workers and peasants who do not exploit the labor of others. Shooting clubs and rifle ranges must be established everywhere, manoeuvres and revolutionary-military festivals organized and agitation extensively carried on with the aim of heightening interest in military matters among the working class and the peasantry.

14. Hailing the call-up of two age-groups of workers in Moscow and Petrograd, and also the approach to mobilization on the Volga and in the Urals, and taking account of the endeavour by the world-predators to involve Russia once more in the imperialist slaughter, the Congress considers it necessary to proceed as soon as possible with the mobilizing of several age-groups of workers and working peasants throughout the country. The Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars are made responsible for issuing a decree defining the number of age-groups subject to immediate call-up, together with the times and conditions for reception of these age-groups.

15. Surrounded on all sides by enemies, face to face with counter-revolution, which relies on support



from foreign mercenaries, Soviet Russia is creating a strong army to defend the workers' and peasants' power until such time as the working class of Europe and the world, rising in revolt, shall strike a mortal blow at militarism and create the conditions for peaceful and fraternal collaboration between all peoples.

## BEFORE THE CAPTURE OF KAZAN

**Speech at the meeting of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee on September 2, 1918**

Comrades, I did not expect that I should have the opportunity to address you at this time, to address the highest organ of the Soviet Republic, and I came here not on the business of the department in which I work but recalled by the news of the attempt on the life of Comrade Lenin. [\[101\]](#) In conversation with comrades about this I could describe the situation that has been created only as one in which, besides the fronts we had already, yet another front has been created -- in the chest of Vladimir Ilyich, where life is now struggling with death, and where, as we hope, that struggle will end with the victory of life. On our war fronts victory alternates with defeats: there are many dangers, but all comrades undoubtedly realise that *this* front, the front in the Kremlin, is now the most worrying of all. At the front, the front where the armies are, the news of the attempt on the life of the leader of the working class produced not depression and dismay, so far as I could judge from first impressions, but, on the contrary, an upsurge of bitterness and of will to revolutionary struggle. There is no need to say how the conscious fighters at the front felt about Comrade Lenin when they learnt that he was lying with two bullets in his body. We knew that no-one could say of Comrade Lenin that his character lacked metal: now there is metal in his body as well as in his soul, and for this he will be still dearer to the working class of Russia.

Turning to the front from which I have come, I must say that I cannot, alas, report decisive victories, but, on the other hand, I am able with complete confidence, to affirm that these victories are on the way: that our position is firm and sound: that a decisive turn has taken place: that we are now guaranteed, so far as this is possible, against any big surprises, and that each week that passes will strengthen us at the expense of our enemies. As regards the masses in the army, they have undergone a certain schooling, both military and political, and an enormous contribution was made to this by those advanced workers from Petrograd, Moscow and other cities who were sent to the front. It is hard to evaluate the importance at the front of every conscious, advanced worker. At the most critical moment, when Kazan had fallen and the battle was renewed, the Communist comrades took all the difficulties of the situation on their own shoulders. They organized vanguard units. These set out numbering fifty and came back twelve. They are agitators but, when necessary, they take up rifles, like the commissars, get in among unreliable units and provide them with a strong armature. They establish everywhere a hard, sometimes severe, regime, because war is, in general, a severe business. At the same time, thanks to these forces and to the close contact between our units and the population, a tremendous change has been brought about in the mood of the Volga peasantry.

Our country is huge and requires immense forces and political efforts. In the Volga and Ural regions we have not worked on the mass of the peasantry in the way that virgin soil is ploughed up, consciousness has not yet been aroused among the poor but they have already come into contact with Red Army units which do not plunder or steal, and although some excesses have occurred here and there, we have, on the whole, firmly disciplined units. Here again an immense role is played by those same workers from Petrograd and Moscow. Political circumstances are turning out entirely to our advantage: our units are getting stronger and are growing, spiritually and numerically, whereas among the enemy, according to



the reports obtained by our intelligence, utter disorder and breakdown prevails in his units, and those workers and peasants whose attitude to him was one of indifference or only slight hostility are now his enemies and our friends. This is evident from the fact that when our artillery falls silent, the bourgeoisie of Kazan at once rallies to the White Guards, but when our artillery roars, when our aircraft fly over and shower dynamite on the bourgeois quarters, meetings start to be held in the working-class quarters, the bourgeois hide themselves in corners, and the White Guards find themselves isolated. In so far as our units undertake attacks, our command adheres to tactics of caution. We have no right to suggest any change, if our command considers that these tactics correspond to the character of the units involved in this war, and, at the same time, these tactics guarantee us against dangers and major surprises, while we can also expect that they will bring us sure and solid success. On the other fronts there is also wavering this way and that, but on every front the chances of success are now very much greater than they were. The situation is best of all in the Povonno-Tsaritsyn [Povorino is about 330km north-west of Tsaritsyn, and is the junction of the Moscow-Tsaritsyn railway line with the Kazan-Kharkov line.]direction, where we are on the offensive against Krasnov's bands. The latest dispatches, which are probably known to you, speak of the capture of Kachalinskaya *stanitsa*. Here a certain 6th Cossack Regiment was disarmed, and another, similar regiment joined us and, together with our units, pursued the fleeing enemy. This, comrades, was no accidental occurrence, there are profound inner reasons for it. The working class and the working masses have understood that it is a matter of life and death, that they are engaged in a mortal conflict, and that every day helps to bring a change in the situation in our favour. And so what is required of us is work, tireless work, resolute and intense work.

In the sphere of command, things are better than they were, though still far from satisfactory. Our new front was formed when the old apparatus of command was, in general, withering away, and the apparatus of military organisation was designed for the old front. Hence the duality in organization. We formed divisions on the basis of volunteering, and, in accordance with this, we formed extensive staffs for these divisions. We have already done away with the voluntary principle. We have gone over to the conscription of workers and peasants who do not exploit the labor of others, and the staffs of the old divisions must be transformed to where the process of formation is going ahead with great success. Close to the new front, in those places where the peasant finds himself under direct threat from the blows of the Czechoslovaks and White-Guards, the peasantry are increasingly eager to co-operate in creating new formations.

At the top of our military apparatus we lack at present the necessary unity. We have the former Supreme Military Council, which was set up in relation to the old front, and the Revolutionary War Council at Arzamas, [Arzamas is about 100km south of Nizhny-Novgorod, on the railway line between Moscow and Kazan.]which was organized for the needs of the Eastern front, though we have now brought the North-Eastern front under its authority as well.

What are the urgent tasks before us?

It has been said here that Britain intends to wage war against us for three years. It is hard, comrades, to make any forecast where time is concerned. When the world war began, they thought it would last three months, yet it is now entering its fifth year. At present, important British diplomats are saying that war with Soviet Russia will last three years, and those successes which we have had do not in the least mean that we shall finish the war in the next three weeks or three months. These successes merely prove that the working class is learning to fight and to create a military organization, and that the Soviet Republic is able, if it so desires, to defend itself. How long the imperialist onslaught will go on, what forms it will

take, and what further measures we shall have to adopt for our defence, it is impossible to say. One can state only that the danger is still extremely great, and that it will be especially great during the next two months -- until the coming of winter, which will paralyse, at least for the duration of that season, any increase in British aid to the Czechoslovaks. These two months that lie ahead will be a time of most intense, energetic and, I will say, heroic work on our part for the military consolidation of all the borders of the Soviet Republic. We are exhausted, we are poor in all respects including the military respect, and we need to place all the country's resources at the service of the defence of the Soviet Republic.

You must proclaim that in these conditions, in which we are now faced with the concentrated fury of world imperialism,- which has turned its Anglo-French and Japano-American face towards us, we are obliged to transform the Soviet Republic into one single armed camp, and all our resources, all our forces, everything the country possesses, and the personal p05 sessions of each individual citizen and citizeness, must be devoted directly to the defence of the Soviet Republic. We have to mobilize people, soldiers, to mobilize the spirit and the ideological forces of the country, and this mobilization must assume an intense, heroic character, so that everywhere, and, in particular, on the British stock-exchange, where they quote the blood of the Russian people, they may know that, while we live, we will surrender to no-one, that we shall fight to the last drop of blood.

The measures of which I speak follow from the objective situation, from the dangers which surround us and which are not to be measured by the Czechoslovak forces and the pitiful Anglo-French expedition, dangers which may grow and assume a different physiognomy and different dimensions.

We need to become strong and powerful. To this end we must, first and foremost, ensure supplies for our army. And in our economic circumstances this will be possible only if we mobilize the entire resources of the country. Work in the supply sphere must be centralized. In charge of this work we have already placed such an energetic and expert worker as Comrade Krasin. He must be given the widest powers and all the material resources needed if our military supply service is to be raised to the proper level. Everything must be put at the disposal of the organizers of supply!

We also need, as I have already mentioned, to centralize the military apparatus. The lack of co-ordination which resulted from the duality of the fronts -- one ceasing to exist and the other coming into existence -- must be ended. At the head of the armed forces and resources of the Soviet Republic must be placed a single leading organ, in the shape of the Revolutionary War Council, and a single Commander-in-Chief. All the other institutions of the All-Russia General Staff, as an organ of supply, must be subordinated to this Revolutionary War Council, and they must receive from it the fundamental directives that will ensure that we have unity in the disposition of all the country's armed forces and resources, in their transfer from one part of the country to another, from one front to another, in the provision of supplies and equipment that have to be got ready and assembled in the shortest possible time. Along with this, we need to continue the work of agitation and organization which has been and is being carried on here in the rear. Every train that brought to us at the front ten, fifteen or twenty Communists, together with a stock of literature, was as precious to us as a train that brought a good regiment or a plentiful quantity of guns. Every detachment, every group of Communists regenerated one or other sector of the front, ensured its staunchness, established communications, and, what is not the least important factor in this matter, ensured for us a certain behaviour on the part of the officers who are now at the front. In that connection I must mention that many, especially among the young officers who were brought up under the former regime, have become closely linked with the new army, with our party, with the Soviet power, and are filled with profound respect for the Soviet activists. Among the General Staff officers with this

outlook there are many who are acting not from fear but from conscience. This was shown by the following example. When Kazan fell it was easy for the officers to sell themselves to the enemy. Yet many fell in battle, while others hid themselves for weeks and then secretly made their way over to us. But there are also elements prepared to betray us at the first opportunity, and there are wavering elements that need an iron corset -- and such an iron corset is provided by one or two good Communists. Without Communists our army will be incapable of fighting, and if many here complain that we have depopulated a whole number of important institutions, I do not quite understand this attitude of theirs.

These complaints, coming from certain organs, are not altogether comprehensible or normal. If we fail to smash the forces opposing us, then, of course, all the Soviet institutions will go smash, and basic Soviet politics is now being put into effect before Kazan, Simbirsk and Samara and the other sectors of our front. So, give us all the elements that you can give. You will proclaim that the task of the front is now the central task, and that the entire country is a reservoir for supplying that front. You will transform the country into an armed camp: you will centralize the work of supply and make available for that work all the necessary resources that the country can provide: you will centralise the military administration, placing all military authority in the hands of the Revolutionary War Council. Thereby, you will show your will to win and to live, and let us hope that, within the few weeks in which the leader of the working class will recover, we shall conquer on the other fronts too, and that news of the downfall of our foe at Samara, Simbirsk, Ufa, Orenburg and in Siberia will be brought to a session of our CEC at which Comrade Lenin will be our dear guest.

## THE RED OFFICERS

### Speech at the Militaiy Administration Courses, September 1918

Comrades, I should like first to convey to you a fraternal greeting, and then my impressions, from those armies of ours with whom I have spent the last six weeks, watching from day to day how they grew in strength, solidarity and heroism. Two months ago, comrades, we were a great deal weaker than we are today: our Workers and Peasants' Red Army has taken an immense step forward. To say nothing of our enemies, there were not a few among our friends who, two months ago, were doubting if we would succeed -- in a country exhausted by four years of slaughter, a country around whose neck the noose of the Brest peace had been drawn tight, a country that had not yet eliminated the dreadful heritage of Tsardom and bourgeois rule -- in creating a powerful revolutionary army. Well, it turned out that the new trials with which history confronted us engendered new forces. Under the lash of historical necessity and of a new war, a civil war, the Russian working class and peasantry strained every nerve, and we now see how, as a result of this effort, a workers' and peasants' Red Army is being built.

The army that fought before Kazan had been created in no more than a few weeks. Before Kazan it showed elements of instability, weakness, criminal deviations. There was the case when the Revolutionary Tribunal, with the approval of the whole army, sentenced to death a regimental commander who, though considering himself a Communist, shamefully deserted his regiment and set off on a steamboat, aiming to get away to Nizhny-Novgorod. In connection with this case the Revolutionary Tribunal said: 'Cowards and self-seekers in general deserve stern punishment, but those who, while holding posts of command and bearing the lofty title of Communist, behave as runaways and traitors must be punished doubly and trebly.' And despite its youth, the whole army understood, grasped with its sense of morality the complete justice of this stern, ruthless punishment. The regiment concerned became one of our best, and fought splendidly after that, with genuine courage.

Thus, comrades, in our Red Army, despite the very brief period it has existed, there is already at work in full force that revolutionary consciousness which rallies everything honorable and valiant and throws out everything impure and corrupt. Yet, not long ago, we were being told, on all sides, that we would not succeed in building a disciplined, solid army. Truly, those who talked like that failed in two ways to understand our army. In the first place, with the working class now in power, there is a profound moral basis for the army, and in the second place, there is realisation of this profound moral basis, the fact that we are fighting for the highest aim of mankind: this justifies the sternest, most ruthless measures in relation to those who undermine the foundations of the workers' and peasants' Red Army. If the Tsarist generals could establish discipline in the name of interests alien to the working class, we can and must -- and this is already taking effect -- establish a discipline ten times harder and firmer than theirs, for this is discipline in the name of the interests of the working class.

In military literature -- in particular, I read something about this only today in our rather poor and weak journal *Voyennoye Dyelo* (Military Affairs), which is published by specialists who have evidently not quite understood the spirit and sense of this epoch of war -- in military literature the question: 'drill or education?' has often been raised. By 'drill' was meant the physical education of the soldier, and by 'education' the exercising of spiritual influence upon him. Have we rejected drill? Never. We have merely brought more purposefulness into it, driving out, through living necessity, the survivals of barrack tyranny, square-bashing and so on. Drill, as we understand it, means inculcating in the soldier the capacity for operating in a purposeful way his arms, his legs, his sabre and his rifle, and doing all that automatically. A musician cannot become a good musician if he cannot rove his fingers automatically over the keyboard, if he has to seek with his eyes for every separate note. Just as the musician must lay his finger automatically on each key as he needs it, so must the soldier automatically operate his body and his weapon with the maximum productivity, in the interests of the military task assigned to him, just as this is achieved in industrial production, through the mechanisation of movements. The greater the automatism of his technique, the more freely will his mind work, the easier will it be for him to find his bearings, the better will he be able to estimate danger and find cover -- the greater will be his freedom for military creativity. Drill, that is, the inculcation of automatism in the soldier, does not stand in contradiction to education.

But education is a different sphere, and here the military specialists do not understand -- I am not talking, of course, about all the specialists: there are some among them whose eyes the revolution has opened -- that the education we have in mind is profoundly different from, and diametrically opposite to, the education of the past epoch. What was meant by the education of the soldier in the epoch of Tsardom, and what is meant by this in Germany and France today? Educating the soldier on behalf of the propertied class: inculcating in him spiritual slavery and subordination, causing him not to understand his own interests, the interests of his class and of humanity in general. Achieving this under the conditions of capitalist society is a little difficult, and that is why, in all those countries, the education of the soldiers is such a complicated, serious, delicate task. Where religion lends its aid the task is easier, but in proportion as criticism takes hold of the soldier's consciousness, and he no longer submits blindly to whatever his priest tells him, it becomes ever harder for the propertied class to instil in the soldier masses the idea of the necessity of submission, that is, to educate them to serve purposes that are against their own interests. Only our army, the one in which you, comrades, are serving, is, for the first time in the history of the world, nothing but the armed hand of the working class and the poor peasants. Consequently, for us, educating the soldier means showing him that he is serving himself, in the shape of his class and his posterity. Our education is therefore incomparably easier, more honest, simpler, and, in



that sense, Comrade Red officers, your task includes, besides a military mission, a great moral and cultural mission as well. You will be able to fulfil your task provided that every soldier feels, recognises, sees and senses that you are flesh of his flesh and blood of his blood. The fact that you belong to the working classes, your spiritual bond with the worker and peasant masses, does not, of course, solve everything, and much room is left free for individual evaluations. Ivanov may be brave, whereas Petrov is not brave enough. Woe to that officer regarding whose courage a spark of doubt is struck in the soldier's mind: woe to him, he is ruined in the consciousness of the masses, ruined for military work. Your first military quality is the same as your first revolutionary quality -- selfless courage in face of any and every danger. Hold your head proudly high: that is the behest for every warrior. Nor is that all, comrades. You must be, and you will be -- for this is your calling which you have entered freely -- not courageous only: you must struggle steadily to enlarge your knowledge, experience and skill as leaders of the Red Army. I have seen in battle, in action, excellent units which did not feel that they were being directed by a steady, technically competent hand. When, at a critical moment, they notice that their leader hesitates, woe to that officer, and woe to that unit! A unit must know at every moment, and especially at the moment of battle, that it is being guided by steadfast thought, a clear eye and a firm hand, and if that hand is sometimes severe, the conscious mass of the soldiers will not complain. They will understand the need for this, in the common interest: they will know that they are fighting for the cause of their class and that for this the fighting capacity of a military unit is an essential condition.

The second behest for every Red Officer is to ensure the unity and growth of the army. You are called proletarian officers. In bourgeois society the word 'proletarian' had a certain nuance which cannot and will not apply to you. You know that when people say: 'he lives like a proletarian', it means: 'he lives badly'; that when they say: 'he lives in a proletarian flat', it means, 'in a poor sort of *flat*'; that when they say: 'he eats a proletarian meal', it means a scanty meal. But the words 'proletarian officer' must not be translated as signifying 'bad officer'. A 'proletarian officer' must signify a first-class Officer, who is a model of courage, firmness, knowledge, and selfless devotion to the cause of the Soviet land. That is what being a proletarian officer means. Thanks to Tsardom and the old army, the word 'officer' became discredited with us and was relegated to the archives, but I think that you will renew and revive it, fining it with a new content.. I do not doubt that the soldier masses themselves will renew and revive this word, and when you come among them -- you, new men filled with a new spirit -- they will hail you as 'our Red worker-and-peasant officers'.

Against the background of the military tasks of the revolution, your task, comrades, like that of the Red Army, is truly immense and rewarding in the highest degree. When the Germans crushed us at Brest-Litovsk it seemed as though there was no way out. They cut us into pieces, separated our sister the Ukraine from her sister Great Russia, and trampled on Poland, Lithuania and the Baltic lands, while in Finland they drowned the proletariat in blood -- and then, after that, when we, bled white, were healing our wounds, the Anglo-French and Japano-American predators struck their claws into the North and East. It seemed as though there was no way out. But there is! The Nemesis of history, that is, the goddess of justice, who in the present historical period is embodied in the revolutionary consciousness of the worker masses of the whole world, was and is with us. It seemed that we had been destroyed, crushed by the violence of Germany, but after only a few months Bulgaria broke away from Germany, now Turkey is following Bulgaria, and there is a ferment in Austria-Hungary: within a few weeks or days the Austrian monarch will be brought to his knees Germany itself is isolated, there is discontent and ferment in that country, and the German Kaiser, who always used to speak of '*Unser alter Gott*', that is, 'our old (German) God', and maintained the closest friendship with him, has now begun to speak of the need to



bring the German people into closer participation in affairs of government. Wilhelm talks as Nicholas talked in the first days of the February revolution, but he will have to talk a different language yet, or else will find himself being talked to differently. History is accomplishing, before our eyes, a rapid turn. Revolution is raising its flag in Bulgaria, where, we learn from the newspapers, a Soviet of workers' and soldiers' deputies has been formed. The German press writes that the blame for the surrender of Bulgaria lies not with the military situation but with the idea of Bolshevism, which has taken hold not only of the masses but also of the Bulgarian army. 'The idea of Bolshevism' -- that means that everywhere the hatred and indignation of the working people is rising against the dishonorable bourgeois slaughter into which they were dragged by their propertied classes. We foretold this and based our policy upon it, and at that time we were accused of having made a mistake, since we were obliged to sign the thrice burdensome and shameful peace of Brest. We said: 'We shall have to suffer only for a time: give us time, and we will kindle the flame of our revolution in the hearts of the peoples of Germany and Austria-Hungary -- and the Ukraine, Poland, Finland and the Baltic lands will be free.' Naturally, the fools and flay-flints of the French and British Governments rub their hands with glee, thinking that because the masses have been weakened, it will be possible to finish Russia off. They are mistaken. To each one his turn: after Russia, Bulgaria, after Bulgaria, Turkey and then Austria-Hungary, after Austria-Hungary, Germany -- and after Germany, and simultaneously with Germany, will come France, Britain and other countries. To each his turn, and from this we forecast with complete confidence that the weakening of German militarism will mean not only revolution in Germany but also revolution in France, Britain, the United States and Japan. We now have more allies than enemies in the world, and, just because of that, we need in this transitional period to prevent our enemies from dealing us a mortal blow. Here lies the fundamental task of the Soviet Republic, of the Red Army, and of you, its commanders. You know that a dying insect can sometimes sting fatally, and so, in order that dying imperialism, to East or West, shall not deal us a cruel blow, we need to be on the alert, we need to be strong and firm -- and this applies especially to you, for you, comrades, form part of the skeleton of the workers and peasants' Red Army, part of its backbone, and the whole organism is held up by the backbone. If the backbone is weak, the organism will not function: you must be that firm backbone on which the musculature of the workers' and peasants' Red Army depends, you must strengthen the cause of the international revolution by strengthening your spirit with military exercises, with your bond with the Red Army, with its affairs, with awareness that there is not and has never been a cause higher than the one that you serve. That is your first duty!

Today, when you look towards the Volga and the Urals, you can say with complete satisfaction: we have an army, it is taking shape and growing stronger, and before Kazan it smashed the officers' battalions, which consisted entirely of officers of the old army. On the enemy's side, disintegration and collapse, but on our side, in the Red Army -- enhanced morale, self-knowledge and self-confidence.

But we are sometimes short of commanding personnel, and it is you who are called upon to fill that gap, to lead our Red Army units. I bring you a fraternal greeting and to each one I mentally stretch out my hand and say: 'Welcome, Red proletarian officers, to the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army! To you, Red officers, and to our Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, and to our Soviet Russia, which we love and for which we are all ready to lay down our lives and to shed our blood to the last drop, to our Soviet Workers' and Peasants' Russia -- Hurrah!'

# THE DON COSSACK HOST

**Decree of the Council of People's Commissars, September 3, 1918**

The protracted civil war between the workers and the working peasantry, on the one hand, and, on the other, the landlords and the bourgeoisie, joined with the British, French, Czechoslovak and other mercenaries, has demanded from the Soviet power a great tension of the people's forces. Inflexibly determined to nip in the bud the malicious schemes of the imperialist brigands, both foreign and Russian, the Soviet Government has been obliged to direct great armed forces against them and to give all its attention to crushing quickly and ruthlessly, with the iron fist of the revolution, the last remnants of these plundering bands.

For this reason the Southern borderlands of the Russian Republic -- the Don, Kuban, Terek and Caucasian regions have lacked timely support from the central Soviet power. A multitude of generals, landlords and officials, all the black carrion-crows of Tsardom, have congregated in the Cossack lands, gathered round them the landlord and kulak elements of Cossackdom, by force and cunning seized the Don territory, confused the minds of the Cossacks, and made the free Cossacks strangle their Cossack freedom with their own hands.

The renowned working Cossacks proved unable to defend their sovereign rights. The villages and *stanitsas* are depopulated, the corn remains unharvested, the working Cossack community is impoverished and dying.

To end the deception and machinations of the rebel Krasnov and his supporters and to put into effect the decrees of the Central Government concerning the new organization, free and based on labor, of the Don territory, the Council of People's Commissars has decided: To convene a Field Assembly of the Soviet Cossack Host of the Don -- a government of the Host, endowed with full power on the Don and composed of representatives of the working population of the Don who are, arms in hand, defending the legal authority of the Soviets against the rebel bands.

The Field Assembly of the Soviet Don Cossack Host will consist of representatives of the Soviet Don regiments and also of those villages and *stanitsas* which have been liberated from the rule of the officers and landlords.

Until the legally-elected Soviet power has been re-established throughout the territory of the Don Cossack Host, the Field Assembly of the Soviet Don Cossack Host is assigned all the rights and prerogatives of the Soviets of the Don Cossack Host, as laid down in the decree of the People's Commissars of June 1, 1918.

The most urgent task of the Field Assembly is to re-establish the Soviet socialist order in the Don territory and free the territory of the Don Cossack Host from all counter-revolutionary forces.

In order to achieve this aim, the Field Assembly is accorded the right:

- a) to conscript into the Soviet forces all the working population of the Don territory;
- b) to take charge of the organization of the armed forces of the Soviet Don territory;
- c) to co-ordinate the operations of these forces along the whole Don front.

The task of establishing of procedure for elections and norms of representation, and also the actual convocation of the Field Assembly, is entrusted to a special commission to be formed in accordance with instructions from the Presidium of the All Russia Central Executive Committee.

## THE MILITARY SITUATION

Report to the Sixth Congress of Soviets, [\[102\]](#) November 9, 1918

During the four months and more which have passed since the time of the July Congress, tremendous changes have taken place in the world situation and in the internal lives of all countries, and these changes have found direct reflection in the life and development of our Red Army.

When, in the memorable days of July, we experienced one of the most acute crises in the existence of the nine-months-old Soviet Republic, our Red Army was still weak, and, what was yet more serious, even in our own Soviet ranks its future development was often questioned. At that time many comrades doubted whether we would succeed, under those conditions of the extreme weariness of the entire adult male population of the country and of the anaemic and exhausted state of the Republic, in creating within a short period a trained, close-knit, combat-ready Red Army.

Then, in July, as you will remember, comrades, a party which occupied a certain sector of this hall made it a matter of principle to counterpose guerrilla detachments to the workers' and peasants' Red Army. We were told, from the camp of the Left SR party which then existed, that a revolutionary regime cannot create regular armies, that it must confine itself to forming guerrilla detachments. That was dangerous nonsense. Guerrilla detachments correspond to the period of struggle for power and the first, infant phase of the development of Soviet power. As the ruling class begins to make use of its power for military purposes, it goes over from guerrilla amateurism to planned state-building and has to create a regular army. I think, comrades, that the number of deputies we should find here and now who would support the Left SR cry of those days: 'Long live guerrilla detachments' -- counterposed to the cry that rang out in this place: 'Long live the workers' and peasants' army' -- would not reach even single figures.

At that time, in July, our army was in a poor way. The situation was this. On the one hand, the painful breaking-up of the old army, which, in its decomposition, corrupted our newly-formed units: on the other hand, these units, suffering from the natural maladies of youth, were as yet only precariously put together and lacked even the minimum of military traditions. Under these conditions we retreated wherever any fairly well-organized enemy units were in action against us. That happened, for example, when the Czechoslovaks attacked us on the Eastern front. However, we gradually began to form strong units, and as these grew, so the situation began to change.

Previously, the Red Army units had shown a low level of military preparation, and we surrendered town after town. We fell back from the Volga and gave up part of Siberia.

When the Anglo-French expedition landed at Murmansk, and then, almost without having to fight, insolently seized Archangel, there arose before us the concrete danger that the Anglo-French Northern front would link up with the White Guards in the East, on the Volga and in the Urals. This tremendous threat from the North-East shook the Soviet Republic.

Nevertheless, after the Fifth Congress of Soviets which concluded in early July, we still went on retreating for a whole month. In the first days of August we surrendered Kazan, the center of military

operations where the War Council of the Eastern Front was situated. Our inability to hold Kazan symbolised the extremely low level of development of the Red Army.

After that there began, at last, a turn for the better, which was accomplished in a short time. The turn took place not so much within the War Department as in Soviet Russia as a whole. For the first time everyone realised that the country was facing mortal danger, and that the War Department and the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army had to get rid of this threat, with their own forces and with the help of the entire working class of Russia.

We appealed to the Petrograd Soviet, to the Moscow Soviet, to the trade unions, to the factory committees and to the more advanced of the provincial soviets, which were still far from completely on the same levels as the revolutionary capitals. The organizations mentioned sent the flower of their workers, the best, most self-sacrificing proletarians, to the Eastern Front.

These comrades, members of trade unions and workers in various commissariats, reinforced the still diffuse, disorganized Workers' and Peasants' Army and formed, as I reported to the Central Executive Committee, its strong, firm and supple backbone. Without those thousands of Soviet executives and advanced proletarians the War Department would not have coped with its task. It was only thanks to their extraordinary self-sacrifice that we not only did not lose Nizhny-Novgorod, Vyatka and Perm, not only prevented any link-up between the Czechoslovaks and the Anglo-French force but, on the contrary, went over to the offensive on these fronts, an offensive which developed with ever greater success and led to our clearing the White Guard forces out of the whole Volga region within a few weeks. And I must say, before the most authoritative assembly of the Republic, that we owe these victories, first and foremost, to the Soviets of Petrograd and Moscow, in the shape of the proletarians they hurled into battle on the Eastern Front. In the Ural region our successes did not develop as speedily as we had wished. The chief difficulty here was that a White Guard revolt broke out in the factories of Izhevsk and Votkinsk, [Izhevsk and Votkinsk are about half-way between Kazan and Perm.] and these factories were transformed into strongpoints for the White-Guard and Czechoslovak forces. The factories in question supplied them with cartridges and with machine guns. The counter-revolution succeeded in involving in the factory revolt not only kulaks but also, undoubtedly, a section of the workers, who joined them under compulsion. A struggle *began* for possession of these highly important armament centers, and this struggle diverted forces from our offensive towards Yekaterinburg and other points in the Urals. Only yesterday we received the news that the Izhevsk factories have been taken by regiments of the Red Army and, on the first anniversary of the Republic, the flag of Soviet power is flying over them. All the other points will soon *be* liberated. Henceforth these factories will supply our Red Army with cartridges, machine-guns and everything else that it needs. This gives us grounds to expect that, in the nearest future and on the nearest front, we shall be advancing. And success will develop at a faster rate. We may suppose that in the immediate future the British and French will scrap even the idea of forming a unified North-Eastern Front. We have information that on the Northern Front the British and French and the Czechoslovaks have given up hope of success, and at the same time there are indubitable signs of disintegration of the expeditionary force. It is reported from the Kodas front [Kotlas is on the River Northern Dvina, about 500 km south-east of Archangel.] that, for the first time, a detachment of 58 British soldiers has come over to us. It's the first step that counts. Fifty-eight is not many, of course: but we need to remember that there are extremely few British in the North, and that their position will get worse with the winter weather. There can therefore be no doubt that the British must very soon remove their expeditionary force, if they do not want to expose it to the risk of complete disintegration and dispersion.



During the winter the country will not be threatened with any danger on the Northern front. And, I repeat, there can be no question but that the enemy will, for the time being, close down that front.

In the East, operations will develop further in the direction indicated, that is, in the sense of a systematic and planned offensive by our forces. One may legitimately express impatience, comrades, because the capital of the Urals, Yekaterinburg, is not yet in our hands: but at the same time you must note and take full account of the fact that on the Eastern Front our offensive is in the highest degree regular, planned and systematic, and not at all of the guerrilla variety. Here we are safeguarding ourselves against any sort of surprises. This does not prevent the operation on the flanks of our advancing front, and fairly deep in the enemy's rear, of our guerrilla detachments, acting in conformity with directives from the Center, transitted by the commanders of the regular armies, and they are operating with conscious success.

On the Southern Front, comrades, matters are, up to now, certainly worse<sup>103</sup> than on the Northern and, especially, than on the Eastern Front. On the Southern Front our army has been put together in a different way, as compared with the other two fronts. The enemy here is different, and the course of operations has developed differently. Until recently the Southern Front was, so to speak, our stepchild: our attitude towards it was almost one of letting things slide, the reason being, of course, that we had to concentrate our attention, forces and means upon the Northern Front. The British, French and Czechoslovaks were there, and the Americans and Japanese had already appeared on the Eastern horizon. But the menace proved to be too serious, and unexpectedly so, in the near South as well, where Krasnov's band was. During the first year of the revolution we had too easily got used to disposing of the internal counter-revolution and our own bourgeoisie, of the Kiasnovite and Kaledinite bands, by means of improvised workers' detachments which were poorly organized, each numbering a thousand or two of untrained Petrograd workers, who picked up rifles and dealt very well with the matter in hand. Because of this we developed a contemptuous attitude towards the Southern Front, a conviction that we should get rid of our enemies eventually, sooner or later. That was one aspect of the matter. The other aspect was the actual process of formation of the units which are now holding our Southern Front. To a considerable extent they are composed of men from the Ukraine, the Don region, the Kuban and North Caucasia. They are excellently seasoned troops who have been through a hard school of experience during the guerrilla war. Their commanders have shared with them all the adversities and hardship and all the fortunes of war through many months, in the Ukraine, on the Don, and in North Caucasia; but at the same time, these units brought with them the negative features of the guerrilla period of the war, to a greater degree than all our other units on other fronts, and have still not got rid of them. Each guerrilla commander looked on his unit, which he later named a division, as a closed world: he required of the soldiers belonging to his division unconditional submission to severe discipline, and was often capable of creating and maintaining such discipline. At the same time, he was often lacking in that discipline where his own attitude to the higher centers of command was concerned. It was hard to turn these units into regular formations, proper military units, divisions of a normally functioning centralized army. This task called for a large number of Soviet Communist activists, combat-hardened revolutionaries, and to get them, comrades, we again appealed to the Soviets of Petrograd and Moscow, pointing out how extremely important and necessary it was to discipline and unify the Southern Front, along the same lines as the Eastern Front. And again the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets gave us many hundreds of workers for service on the Southern Front. But this happened very recently, and it was only a few days ago that these several hundreds of the state's best workers appeared at the front: they are today, perhaps, scattered over various sectors of the front. Until now there have been no commissars on the Southern Front, either in the regiments or in the divisions. Those of your comrades who are at all close to the Army know what a



tremendous role is played by commissars who are *old* Party workers. As commanders we have only *young* men and former soldiers whose attention and strength are wholly absorbed by the military side of things, and the tasks of political control and revolutionary tempering of the troops are, naturally, assigned to a different leader, to the commissar, whose post is of the highest importance. Yet in our Southern armies, which include great numbers of men, there are hardly any units that have commissars, apart from those regiments and divisions which have recently been and are now being transferred thither. Only now has an apparatus of commissars been formed on that front. Our enemies have given our regime the name 'commissar-rule', and, where our workers' and worker-peasant army is concerned, we are ready to accept that name which our enemies wanted to fasten on us as a term of abuse. Yes, our army is ruled by commissars, and in so far as it depends on them we can call the revolutionary regime 'commissar-rule'. If you will give us experienced, battle-tempered commissars who know how to die, our cause will prosper.

Comrades, I am repeating what I have told the CEC many times before. I do not know of one single unit that has retreated in panic, shown faint-heartedness or produced many cases of desertion, if that unit has a firm commander and a firm commissar. In any case there is always, even if it be small, a perfectly conscious and hardened nucleus of soldier revolutionaries, Communists, knights devoted to the struggle for socialism, and if the commissar always stands at his post as an unbending soldier of the revolution, if, at the moment of most terrible danger, he is there in the front line, in front of his unit, and says '*Don't move*', he will be backed up by the best of the soldiers, and then the conduct of all the soldiers is guaranteed, for in every unit, even one that is not very conscious, there is the voice of conscience in the soul, which whispers: 'You must not betray, you must not desert.' And if even the commanding personnel are silent, and it is known that the instinct of self-preservation may triumph over consciousness, it is enough for the voice of duty to ring out: 'Comrades, don't move,' and the Red Army unit will not fall back. I have not yet known an example of panic under those conditions. That is why we have introduced a rule which some find severe, but which remains fully in force: for every panicky withdrawal, for every case of desertion, the commander and the commissar are to be answerable, first and foremost. If they have not taken all the necessary measures, have remained unharmed, or have deserted along with their unit, then, of course, they will be the first to fall beneath the sharp blade of our revolutionary punishment.

Apparently, some comrades have considered, and have voiced their opinion, that we are acting too harshly, too mercilessly. Our time is, in general, a harsh and merciless time for the working class, which is compelled to defend its power and its existence against a swarm of external foes. And if we want to celebrate more than just one anniversary of the Soviet Republic, to uphold Soviet power and win the future for the working class and the working peasantry, then, in this merciless time, we are obliged to be merciless towards anyone in our own ranks who does not display the utmost energy, courage and firmness when he has been put in a responsible position: and there is no post more responsible than that of Commissar. There can be no doubt, comrades, that if such a firm proletarian course is followed on the Southern Front in the immediate future, beneficial work will be accomplished in the disciplinary, unifying and centralizing of our armies stationed there.

I have visited the armies stationed on the Voronezh, Balashov, Tsaritsyn and Astrakhan fronts, and acquainted myself, closely and in detail, with their situation, and I can say with a clear conscience that we possess in the South a good and very numerous army, very much bigger than many of you suppose. It is now being given the proper organization of command and a real corps of commissars. I repeat -- the results of this will make themselves felt very soon.

In the Cossacks and White Guards we now have an adversary who is a great deal more serious than seemed to be the case until recently. United against us are the substantial forces which until recently were

backed by the Germans, in the shape of Krasnov's bands, and by the British and French, in the shape of Denikin and Alekseyev. There is now taking place a unification of the Alekseyev-Denikin front and the Krasnov front, which previously relied on the two hostile imperialist coalitions, the German and the Anglo-French, but which both now hope to receive supplies, on both sectors of their united front, from victorious Anglo-French militarism. Our problems on the Southern Front are now extremely acute. German militarism has collapsed. We have just heard a report which shows that the process of its downfall is going ahead at feverish speed. The Germans were needed to defend the Ukraine. Anglo-French militarism is hurrying to take their place in the Ukraine, on the Don and in North Caucasia. And we must slip in between departing German militarism and approaching Anglo-French militarism. We must occupy the Don, North Caucasia and the Caspian, support the workers and peasants of the Ukraine, crush their enemies, and enter into our Soviet house (in which we mentally include North Caucasia, the Don and the Ukraine), go into our own Soviet dwelling and say that there is no entry here either for British or for German scoundrels. This concludes the repercussion on the Red Army of those changes in the world situation that I mentioned earlier. I will now proceed to questions of organization.

It is no secret that we are experiencing difficulties in the organization of supplies and in the training of commanding personnel.

We have overcome the deepest crisis: the army exists and is being administered and supplied. There can be no room now for the doubt that was felt not long ago as to whether we could create an army. The army exists, is fighting, and is becoming a factor in international affairs with which our enemies are already having to reckon. Quoted in our own Soviet newspapers recently were extracts from the foreign press, namely, the leading British paper *The Times* and the German bourgeois paper *DerLokal-Anzeiger*. They write of our Red Army that it is growing at a menacing rate. As regards numbers, the papers mentioned a figure of 400 to 500,000 soldiers, already now. [Figures published later show that the Red Army actually comprised only 350,000 men at this time.] For reasons you will understand, I am not going to quote precise data, but I will say that at present the figures given by country's forces, and to do this, in the first place, so as to serve the Southern Front. If certain institutions feel pressure from the War Department as the cruel pressure of a new Red Soviet militarism, well, I resolutely say again that we live in a harsh time, when our country has to be transformed into an armed camp. If our soldiers fall back under the influence of panic, severe punishment awaits them. This fate will befall likewise those Soviet institutions which may remove themselves, as many have done, previously, from the territory of the front. True, such cases are happening now a great deal less frequently; on the contrary, indeed, when the front bends and comes close to *uyezd* or town soviets, the latter no longer move away, but take up arms and join the ranks of our army. For all that, though, we are still far from having formed a stable, disciplined vigorous rear. When we have such a rear, we will take the offensive on our Southern front. It is clear to everyone how important the conquest of the Don region will be. It will have repercussions in the Ukraine and all over the world, for we shall develop forces there which will help us wage a struggle for mastery of the Caspian Sea. Just three days ago I was in Astrakhan, and I returned from there with seven large steam ships which had been captured from Bicherakhov. We needed these ships, for three of them were the biggest on the Caspian Sea, such ships as we did not possess. On them we shall mount our hundred-millimetre guns, which neither Bicherakhov [General L.F. Bicherakhov held positions in Daghestan, on the Western coast of the Caspian Sea, from which he was waging a two-front war: by sea against the Bolsheviks based at Astrakhan, and by land against the Turks who had come in through Armenia and Azerbaidzhan.] nor the Turks will have. And I think that our honest Soviet river Volga will soon flow into an equally honest Soviet sea, the Caspian. It is not permissible, of course, to slip into

extreme optimism, but we cannot but acknowledge that our general military position is satisfactory.

On the Eastern Front there is complete demoralisation in the units fighting against us. We are now intensifying this by supplying information about the events in Austria-Hungary, about Bohemia having gained independence, and every Czechoslovak understands and knows that the road to liberated Bohemia lies not through Britain and France but through Soviet Russia or through Soviet Ukraine. As regards the Southern Front, the whole question there comes down to the tempo of our work. We must not allow our enemies to relieve each other. Krasnov, who until yesterday was in conflict and competition with Alekseyev, is now united with him: Bicherakhov is now at war with Turkey, but tomorrow he will be united with her. The Germans will undoubtedly clear the way for the British and French and will even help them in the common struggle against us. Tempo is of very great importance, and we must achieve tremendous speed: this together with the forces of the Red Army, will enable us to act so as to safeguard Russia from counter-revolutionary onslaughts.

I returned from the front with the conviction that there is much work to be done, and that there are also subjective obstacles: that, for instance, not all Soviet executives have realised that a centralized administration exists, and all orders that come from above have to be obeyed, that deviation from them is impermissible, and that we shall be pitiless towards those Soviet executives who have not yet understood this. We shall dismiss them, cast them out of our ranks, subject them to repression. There are still many difficulties, especially on the Southern Front, but our forces have grown larger, and we have more experience and confidence. If all of you comrades go from the Congress of Soviets refreshed from having met together, if you go back to the localities and report what you have heard here, and if you say that we have a Red Army that is strong and united, if you go to the localities with that conviction and explain that the principal task before us is to send all available and half-available forces to the Front, that all barrels have to be scraped and all superfluous bayonets and cartridges mobilized and sent back through the appropriate channels, to the front, that if there are motor-cars in the localities, it is necessary to do without them, and to send all of them to the front, as well -- if you do all this, if you carry through the work of militarising all Soviet organizations, our country will be put on such a footing that it will fear neither the German nor the Anglo-French imperialists. Our Red Army and our rear will develop daily and hourly. And the slogan which Comrade Lenin issued in his letter to the CEC, that we need an army of three million men, will become reality. [The reference is to Lenin's letter to the All-Russia CEC, October 3, 1918, in *Collected Works*, Vol.28, pp.101-104.]

While in the other countries a process of internal breakdown is taking place, with only a difference of degree between one country and another, while the war is giving rise there to a process of disruption between the mass of the soldiers and the commanders, and between the ruling classes and the masses generally, when they are going through the period we knew in February, March and April of this year -- meanwhile, the opposite process is going on here. We are taking shape, getting into formation, becoming hardened. Here we have soldiers, taken partly from the old army, who are now fulfilling historical tasks, soldiers who cannot break down and disperse, which is something that happens now only in the countries of the bankrupt bourgeoisie. There the armies have either dispersed or are dispersing, or will disperse tomorrow, as a result of revolutionary agitation alone. Our soldiers fear no agitators, and, in confirmation of that, I bring to your notice the fact that on the Southern Front, where we are now in a difficult situation, confronted with the imperialists of Germany, France and Britain, not only the Right SRs but the Left SRs as well are fruitlessly engaged in baseless conspiracies. The details of one of these conspiracies in our Red Army (*cries of 'Shame!'*) fighting against united Anglo-French imperialism will be published in the next few days.



Someone here uttered the word 'shame'. Yes, shame, thrice shame! Our Red Army is now afraid of no agitators. It knows that the country has no task other than to supply and care for the Red Army. The Army has its commanding apparatus. All the forces that are available in the country are being devoted to the Red Army. We do not conceal our tasks and aims.

Our Red Army feels that it is the Soviet workers' and peasants' regime in arms. Our Red Army will uphold this regime. Comrades! Make serving the Red Army, with moral and material means alike, your first priority. The whole country must be mobilized, materially and spiritually. All the country's strength and resources belong to the Red Army, which has to fight better than it has fought hitherto. The experience of the Red Army is being transformed into irreplaceable capital. It will accumulate this experience, it will not waste its strength. The whole country now faces a fresh process of forming units of workers and peasants, and everyone must see to it, in the localities, that these units which are being formed lack nothing they need, either materially or morally. They must feel that they are supported by the Soviet power. It is your duty to leave here conscious that there is no higher task than strengthening the Red Army and supporting the front.

And when this task has been performed, our front will be unshakable, and then we shall celebrate the anniversary of the revolution not only at home but also in Rostov, Kharkov, Kiev, Vienna and Berlin, and, perhaps, the international congress which Friedrich Adler was preparing to convene in July 1914, on the eve of the war, will be fully convened by us, in one of our Soviet capitals. Then we shall tell the Third International that it has assembled here, in Moscow or Petrograd, [A conference of the Second International was being prepared when the First World War broke out. The first Congress of the Third (Communist) International met in Moscow in March 1919.] because its congress is defended by the workers' and peasants' Red Army, the first army of communism in the whole history of the world.

## **Resolution of the All-Russia Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers', Peasants', Cossacks' and Red Army Men's Deputies**

[Signed by Ya. Sverdlov, V. Ulyanov (Lenin) and V. Avanesov. -- *L.T.*]

The Soviet Republic faces increasing danger of invasion by the united hordes of world imperialism. Having entered the arena of world-wide slaughter under the false slogans of democracy and brotherhood of the peoples, the victorious Allied predators are now trampling more and more upon the weak peoples and states. The German working class, which was itself a victim of the policy of the bourgeois-noble monarchy of the Hohenzollerns, is now being ruthlessly stifled by Wilson, Lloyd-George and their accomplices. Belgium, freed from the Germans, becomes the booty of Britain: Hungary, Bohemia, all the countries of the Balkan Peninsula, are occupied by foreign armies. All the neutral countries meekly bend their necks beneath the yoke of the victors. France herself, a member of the group of victorious states, is actually occupied by Anglo-American and colonial armies, whose task is to stifle the revolution of the French proletariat.

Under these conditions of world-wide brigandage, plundering and violence, our country alone is now the true home of the independence of the working class, the bulwark of the weak and oppressed peoples, the fortress of the social revolution, namely, Soviet Russia.

Against it is directed all the malice, all the hatred of the world's bourgeoisie. In the North and in the South, in the East and in the West, the Anglo-American and Franco-Japanese predators have advanced

and are advancing hostile fronts against Soviet Russia: they are arming the White Guards, the Cossack Generals, the sons of the landlords and bourgeois, of the kulaks of town and country, landing expeditionary forces and threatening us with more and more hordes.

The All-Russia Congresses of Soviets have shown before the face of all mankind their desire to live in peace and fraternity with all peoples, and at the same time their readiness to defend, arms in hand, the socialist republic against the attacks of imperialist forces. Nothing with great satisfaction the successes of the Red Army and the Red Navy, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee reiterates the need to increase tenfold the efforts of the workers and peasants, soldiers and sailors, in the defence of the workers' and peasants' country.

By decree of the All-Russia CEC dated September 2, the Soviet Republic was proclaimed an armed camp.

This decree must now be put into effect in all branches of economic activity and state administration.

It is necessary to ensure that the army gets its supplies, and for this purpose to increase the productivity of labor.

It is necessary to ensure that the army and navy get their food, together with Moscow, Petrograd and all other centers of organized labor.

To this end, all grain-procurement and railway organs, at the center and in the localities, must be made to work at maximum tension and with the greatest conscientiousness.

Not only in the army and the navy, but also in the grain- procurement and transport spheres, and in war industry, a military regime must be established, that is, a regime of strict labor discipline, corresponding to the situation of a country which the bandits of imperialism have forced to transform itself into an armed camp.

In order to put these measures into effect, the closest unity must be created between the War Department, the Extraordinary Commission for Producing Supplies, and the departments of communications and grain-procurement, in joint work for the fulfilment of practical tasks.

To this end, the All-Russia CEC resolves to set up a Workers' and Peasants' Defence Council under the chairmanship of Comrade Lenin, as Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, to consist of the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, Comrade Trotsky: the People's Commissar of Communications, Comrade Nevsky: the Deputy- People's Commissar of Food, Comrade Bryukhanov: the Chairman of the Extraordinary Commission for Producing

Supplies, Comrade Krasin (or their deputies): and, representing the Central Executive Committee, Comrade Stalin.[The name-index gives: Stalin, I.V. Old Bolshevik. Worked very closely with Comrade Lenin during the October Revolution. Member of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) continuously since 1912. During the Civil War was a member of the Revolutionary War Councils of various fronts. At present General Secretary of the RCP(B).]

The Defence Council is endowed with full powers for mobilizing the country's forces and resources in the interests of defence. The decrees of the Defence Council are unconditionally binding on all departments and institutions, both central and local, and on all citizens.



Direct leadership of the army and navy, and also of all institutions of the military and naval department, remains as before in the hands of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic.

In order to secure greater concentration of the activity of the latter institution, a Bureau is to be formed from it, consisting of Comrade Trotsky, as Chairman; the Commander-in-Chief, Comrade Vatsetis; and Comrade Aralov.

November 30, 1918

**Published in '*Collected Decrees and Decisions of the Workers' and Peasants' Government*', December 22, 1918, No.91-92, p.924**

## NOTES

**99.** The regulations on the rear levies were published in the decree of the Council of People's Commissars dated July 20, 1918. By this decree, all citizens not liable to be called up to the Red Army along with others of their age groups were conscripted for one year to serve in the rear levies. Special labor units in the form of independent labor battalions, were constituted from those called up in this way. They were assigned to trench digging building jobs labor on the roads, work stores and workshops in connection with the stockpiling of fuel and foodstuffs, loading and unloading, and so on. Strict measures were introduced for registering all citizens liable to call up between the ages of 18 and 45, in the following categories (1) those living on unearned income; (2) those employing hired labor with a view to making profit (3) members of the managements of joint-stock companies and industrial commercial and agricultural enterprises, (4) former barristers their assistants private attorneys, notaries, stockbrokers, middlemen, writers for the bourgeois press; (5) monks and clergy of all denominations; (6) persons belonging to the so-called liberal professions, if not performing functions of public utility; (7) former officers, civil servants, pupils at the cadet (Junker) training schools and in the Cadet Corps, [The old established and prestigious Cadet Corps catered for sons of the nobility. The 'Junker' schools had been created to provide officer training for young men from the other classes of society.] and persons without a definite occupation. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**100.** On the counur-revolutionary conspiracy in the Baltic Fleet, headed by Shchastny, see notes 50-58. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**101.** The attempt on the life of Comrade Lenin was made on August 30 by a member of the SR party named Kaplan, during a meeting in the Mikhelson factory in the Zamoskvoretsk district of Moscow. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**102.** The Sixth All-Russia Extraordinary Congress of Soviets was held in Moscow on November 6-9, 1918, coinciding with the celebration of the first anniversary of the October Revolution. This congress considered the following questions: (1) the anniversary of the Revolution; (2) the international situation; (3) the military situation; (4) the building of Soviet power at the center the Committees of the Poor, and the Soviets. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)



# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE CIVIL WAR IN RSFSF IN 1918

En Route

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**ORDER**

**by the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and the People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, to the troops on the Southern Front, October 5, 1918. No.43, Koalov**

**To be read to all companies, batteries and squadrons**

In the name of the Council of People's Commissars I greet the Red troops on the Southern Front!

You have been waging the fight against the Krasnovite bands here for a long time, comrades. This fight has seen much heroism, many losses, many sacrifices. So far, however, our struggle has not produced the desired results. While our Eastern armies have taken Kazan, Simbirsk, Volsk, [Volsk is on the Volga, about half-way between Saratov and Syzran. Khvalynsk, also on the Volga, is about half-way between Volsk and Syzran.] Khvalynsk and Syzran, and are still advancing steadily, on the Southern Front the struggle is proceeding with varying success, and the Krasnovite-German bands are still occupying Rostov and Novochoerkassk.

The reason for this is, in part, that certain units have frequently shown insufficient staunchness. It has been enough for a squadron of Krasnovites to break through into the rear, and the unstable units have yielded to panic and started to retreat. This will not happen again. The overwhelming majority of you are honest soldiers of the workers', peasants' and Cossacks' .army. You yourselves will take the faint-hearted in hand. The best regiments will be given marks of distinction. The brave will be rewarded, before the entire country. Cowards, self-seekers and traitors will be cast out and severely punished.

But the principal cause of our past failures has been the fact that certain bodies of troops (brigades, divisions) have acted in a disorderly fashion: without maintaining communication with others, without any overall command, they have advanced or retreated at their own discretion. It has even happened more than once that commanders of certain bodies of troops have not carried out military orders received from higher up. This pernicious and criminal behavior will henceforth be eradicated.

At the head of all the armies of the Southern Front is a Revolutionary War Council which at present consists of: Front Commander P.P. Sytin; People's Commissar A.G. Shlyapnikov; member of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic K.A. Mekhonoshin; and former member of the Board of the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs P. Lazimir. The commander, P.P. Sytin, is an experienced military leader who has shown by his deeds his loyalty to the workers' and peasants revolution. Comrades Shlyapnikov, Mekhonoshin and Lazimir are old and tried fighters for the cause of the working people. This Council stands at the head of all the armies of the Southern Front. All the orders and decisions of the Council are to be obeyed unconditionally and immediately.

Commanders and commissars who dare to infringe the rules of discipline shall, regardless of past merit, be immediately committed for trial before the Revolutionary Military Tribunal of the Southern Front.

## **I issue this warning:**

If a unit cracks up, easily yielding to panic, the commander and the commissar will be held guilty.

If a unit retreats instead of advancing, the commander and the commissar will be held guilty.

They will answer for their units in accordance with martial law.

Soldiers of the Southern Front! The hour of decisive action has sounded for you. The White-Guard bands must be crushed. Close your ranks more tightly. The Soviet Republic awaits your great achievements and will reward you according to your merits. Forward to victory!

## **ABOUT DESERTERS**

Order by the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, **October 7, 1918, no.44**, Bobrov [Bobrov is about 100 kilometres south-east of Voronezh, on the railway line Kharkov with Saratov]

At this time when the regiments of the Red Army are fighting honorably at the front, defending the workers and peasants from the brigand bands of Krasnov, some cowards, self-seekers and traitors are quitting their units and hiding themselves in their villages.

I declare:

1) It is the duty of rural Soviets and Committees of the Poor to arrest deserters and bring them under secure guard to the headquarters of divisions or regiments.

2) If unapprehended deserters are discovered in any village, responsibility for this will be placed upon the chairman of the Soviet and the chairman of the Committee of the Poor, who will be subject to immediate arrest.

3) Any deserter who immediately presents himself at the headquarters of a division or regiment and declares: 'I am a deserter, but I swear that in future I will fight with honor is to be pardoned and allowed to perform the high duties of a warrior of the Workers' and Peasants' Army.

4) A deserter who offers resistance to arrest is to be shot on the spot.

## ORDER

by the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, November 4, 1918, No.55, Tsaritsyn

While touring the front of the Tenth Army I was able to acquaint myself with the units stationed there. Most of them already have great services to their credit. There are units which, after breaking out of a ring of enemies, marched for hundreds of versts under conditions of immense difficulty and privation. Most of these units display internal unity and a bond with the commanding personnel the necessary condition of military success. Among the soldiers and commanders are many real heroes, whose names must be made known to the whole country. To the Steel Division, the Communist Division and the Morozovsk Division [Morozovsk is a town in the Donbas.] and the Don-Stavropol Brigade I presented banners of honor, on behalf of the All-Russia CEC of the Soviets.

It is clear to all serious workers that we cannot rest content with the successes achieved. Further steps are needed for organising and welding the Tenth Army into a single whole.

On the Tenth Army's front there are some military units which bear the title of divisions but which are not in fact divisions. All military groupings and groups can and must be reduced, within a short time, to a few divisions composed according to the establishment laid down, after these divisions have been ensured the necessary commanding apparatus and supply services.

Political work has hardly begun in the units so far. Every division, every regiment and every independently-operating brigade must be provided with commissars, in whose hands the ideological leadership of the life of their units must be concentrated.

The expenditure of military Stores is proceeding without anything like the necessary circumspection. Resolute and systematic measures must be taken against this. It is necessary that the commanding personnel themselves be filled with the idea, and that they fill their units with it, that weapons and military stores are public property which has to be very carefully preserved, and expended with all due care. The commanders of units where excessive expenditure of artillery material takes place must be punished, and, contrariwise, those units in which order prevails in this matter must be given special awards.

Certain units which emerged from the guerrilla struggle are still far from having grasped the idea that they are now no longer independent forces but units of a centralised army. The result of this is sometimes a lack of co-ordination in operations. Commanders exist who do not realise that an order is an order and must be obeyed unconditionally. There have been cases when a commander who does not want to carry out an operational order has put it to a meeting for discussion, and hidden behind that meeting. This evil must be burnt out with a red-hot iron. As citizens, soldiers may in their free time hold meetings on any subject. As soldiers, on service and at the front, they will carry out unquestioningly the military orders of the authority established by the workers' and peasants' government. If a body of troops refuses to carry out an order, the guilt for this lies with the commanders and commissars. In those cases where commanders and commissars are up to their jobs, units never refuse to fulfill their revolutionary duty. Therefore I order that, when cases occur of causeless retreat, panic or non-fulfillment of military orders, the respective commanders and commissars be immediately removed from their posts and court-martialed.



The basic military formation in our army is the division. The commanders and commissars of a division have an immense task to perform and carry immense responsibility. While establishing, together with the commissar, strict discipline in his division, the divisional commander must at the same time give a personal example of strict and unconditional obedience to the operational orders of the army commander, just as the army commander, in his turn, has to work in strict conformity with the directives of the commander of the Southern Front. Only thus will the work of the Tenth Army bring the maximum results, and the heroism of its Red regiments, their efforts and sacrifices, lead us very soon to decisive victory over the Krasnovite-Cadet bands.

As I leave the Tenth Army's area of operations I send fraternal greetings to all its honorable soldiers.

## **ORDER**

by the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and the People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, November 7, 1918, No.58

Comrade soldiers! You are fighting on the shores of the Caspian Sea. From there the foes of Workers' and Peasants' Russia want to strike a mortal blow at us. German, British, Turkish and Russian imperialist aggressors, separately and together, are trying to seize Astrakhan and Tsaritsyn, to link up with the Czechoslovaks and White Guards in the Urals, and to strangle the workers' and peasants revolution. You are defending it, you are fighting honorably and courageously for the interests of the working people. We have formed on the Caspian Sea a strong naval flotilla which is growing in strength daily. This flotilla has already captured seven of the enemy's best transports. It will soon dominate the whole of the Caspian Sea. Your task is to consolidate our position on its shores. You will carry out that task. Fresh reinforcements will come forward to help you. The whole of Soviet Russia looks to you with hope. Ruthlessly drive out cowards and self-seekers from your midst! Brave and honorable soldiers, forward! The Soviet Republic will value and reward you according to your merits.

## **ORDER**

by the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and the People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to the Red Army and the Red Navy, November 16, 1918, No.61

According to information received, which is confirmed by the course of events, the Anglo-French imperialists, frightened by the rapid development of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, have decided to direct all their efforts towards disorganising and disintegrating our Units. For this purpose they have sent in many military agents who, disguised as soldiers and commanders, are penetrating into the ranks of the Red Army, spreading false rumours there, and trying, by means of deception and bribery, to bring about confusion among the Soldiers fighting on the Soviet fronts.

I order commissars and commanders and all conscious, advanced and honorable soldiers generally, to watch out for the activity of mercenary scoundrels of this sort, who take cover behind various party names and who are, essentially, the hirelings of foreign capital. The Workers' and Peasants' Red Army on which now depends the fate of our country and the development of the world revolution, must be purged, in the shortest possible time, of criminal and traitorous elements.

## ORDER

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and the People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, to the Eighth Army, November 20, 1918, no.62. Liski station. Secret.

Most units of the Eighth Army are distinguished by extreme lack of steadiness. [104] Whole regiments frequently go to pieces when they clash with insignificant and also not very steady units of the enemy. The collapse of such units is forcing the command of the Eighth Army to stop the gaps thus made with fresh units that are barely formed. These units then suffer the same fate, that is, they often break up at their first test in battle. The only way to put an end to this state of affairs and enhance the staunchness of the army is through a system of organisational, educational and repressive measures introduced with a firm hand from above.

First and foremost, the commanding personnel must be taken in hand. Unit commanders have become accustomed to violating military orders with impunity, and referring, to justify themselves, to the willingness or unwillingness of their units. Some commanders reply like this to military orders: 'My unit won't march... My unit is tired and won't advance... My soldiers have not received, when they should, their pay or an issue of warm underwear: they won't go forward until they get what is due to them.' A commander who is capable of giving such replies is either a fool or a criminal.

In our Red Army there is no class antagonism between the mass of the soldiers, on the one hand, and the officers and the Government, on the other. Working-class public opinion unitedly demands strict discipline on the part of the soldiers. Our Red soldiers will subordinate themselves unconditionally to their commanders if the latter make it their duty to secure fulfillment of orders at all costs, at any price.

The commander who has no confidence in himself and is not prepared to secure submission to a military order is not capable of leading soldiers, and must be reduced to the ranks in his own regiment.

Commanders often show extreme negligence and slovenliness in the matter of communications, posting of sentries and security while on the march, and also in their operational and intelligence reports. The firmest discipline must be established in this sphere. The slightest departure from the requirements and rules of military procedure must be punished in accordance with martial law. A tolerant attitude by commanders where these matters are concerned, must itself render them liable to be brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal, as constituting one of the gravest of crimes.

It must be laid down once and for all, as an unshakable rule, that every Red officer is answerable for his unit, and all attempts to hide behind the backs of units must be punished severely.

In their despatches, unit commanders often speak of withdrawals which are said to have taken place after some hours of 'fierce fighting', and of 'enormous losses' suffered in battle. In the majority of cases what has to be understood by a stubborn struggle is some disorderly and senseless exchange of shots without any definite purpose, resulting in heavy expenditure of ammunition but not one step of forward movement. By huge losses is meant, in most cases, desertions and the break-up of units. It is necessary to make commanders realize, under threat of the most severe penalties, that their duty is to be precise and conscientious, and in their operational reports to give, even if only approximately, the number of killed and wounded, and not to hush up cases of desertion but to call this by its true name.

Commissars must remember that they are answerable for the morale of their units and for the

conscientiousness of the work of the commanders. A commissar who countersigns a dishonest report by a commander commits a very grave crime. During battle a commissar must, especially at critical moments, keep the lower commanding personnel under observation. In those units where the regimental commander and the company and platoon commanders remain at their posts and confidently lead their units, panic does not occur, the soldiers know that they are under firm leadership, they trust their commanders, and they do their duty. Panic, disarray, desertion, breakdown are mainly the responsibility of the commanders, and therefore of the commissars. Every commissar must, after every setback suffered by his unit, consider carefully where the chief blame lies, report unworthy commanders, and, where necessary, arrest on the spot obvious self-seekers who, while not averse to bearing the title of commander in peaceful circumstances, hide behind the units when fighting begins, and incite them to retreat to a place of safety. It is the commissar's duty to see that the Revolutionary Tribunal shoots such scoundrels. It is necessary, with an iron hand, to make commanders, and through them all soldiers, understand that an army exists not for fun and not for passing the time peacefully, but for the harsh business of war, for safeguarding by force of arms the freedom and independence of the land of labor. Danger, wounds, death, all are an inseparable aspect of the life of a warrior. Fearing them means destroying the whole meaning of the army's existence. Our Red Army has been given such a lofty aim that no sacrifices can seem too great for its attainment.

We must root out once and for all the very notion that crimes against military duty, whether committed by individuals or by groups, can be left unpunished. A tireless struggle must be waged against desertion. For obvious and notorious deserters there can be only one punishment -- shooting. All executions must be published in army orders, giving the names of those executed, the names of their units, and, where possible, the addresses of their families.

In those cases where special circumstances -- first and foremost, the guilt of commanders -- induce the Tribunal conditionally to return deserters, or men suspected of desertion, to active units, these men under conditional sentence must be made to wear distinctive black collars, so that those around them may know that, at the first fresh offence by these conditionally pardoned soldiers; there can be no mercy or repetition of leniency towards them. If, during a retreat, a soldier throws away his rifle, his boots, or any part of his uniform, equipment or armament, the cost of the articles concerned is to be recovered through deductions from the soldier's pay. Depending on the circumstances in which the loss was incurred, deductions may be effected up to the full amount of the soldier's pay over a certain number of months.

Along with punitive measures, incentives are also needed. Commissars and commanders must reward outstanding warriors of the Red Army with gifts, money payments, and the Order of the Red Banner, and the most valiant regiments must be presented with banners of honor.

At the same time the supply organs of the Eighth Army, which at present work very badly indeed, must be set to rights. The attitude towards their work of the persons in charge of the supply services is purely formal and bureaucratic -- not just no better, but even worse, than in the old Tsarist army. The task of supply does not consist in covering oneself, so far as the Government is concerned, by means of telegrams, reports and accounts that are more or less fictitious. It consists in getting to every soldier all the articles needed for clothing, feeding, arming and equipping him. Hitherto, the heads of the supply services of the Eighth Army have not managed to obtain the necessary articles from the centre or to distribute them in a planned way and in good time.

I remind all concerned that everyone serving in a military institution is on war service, and that any

slovenliness, imprecision or negligence, and (all the more so) any lack of conscientiousness, will be punished in accordance with martial law.

This order is to be conveyed in printed form to all commanders and to all persons serving at headquarters and in supply organs, through the commissars, for personal signature. All the signatures must be sent, via Eighth Army headquarters, to the Revolutionary War Council of the Southern Front.

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## ORDER

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic and the People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs to all troops on the Southern Front, **November 24, 1918, No.64**

Our forces on the North-Caucasian front have won great victories, cleansing extensive areas of the White Guard bands and penetrating into Krasnov's rear. [105] There is breakdown and collapse among the soldiers of Krasnov and Denikin. The poorly-clothed, poorly-armed, forcibly mobilised Cossacks and peasants are, in considerable numbers, ready to surrender to the Red forces, but are held back by fear that they will be shot.

I order all commanders, leaders of units and commissars to pay strict heed to ensure that any peasants and working Cossacks, mobilised by Krasnov, who come over to our side are not subjected to any penalties. Every Cossack or peasant who changes his mind and lays down his arms must be received not as an enemy but as a friend. I forbid, on pain of strictest punishment, the shooting of rank-and-file Cossacks and enemy soldiers. The time is soon coming when the working Cossacks, after settling accounts with their counter-revolutionary officers, will be united with the whole of working Russia under the banner of the Soviet power.

## ORDER

by the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the troops and Soviet institutions on the Southern Front, November 24, 1918, No.65

Krasnov and the foreign capitalists who are behind him have thrown on to the Voronezh Front hundreds of hired agents who, under various guises, have penetrated Red Army units and are there carrying on base work, corrupting our men and inciting them to desert. In a few shaky units on the Voronezh front one can actually observe the signs of demoralization, cowardice and self-seeking. While, on all other fronts and in the case of all other armies, the Red forces are chasing the enemy and advancing, on the Voronezh front senseless, criminal retreats and the break-up of whole regiments are taking place frequently.

I declare that from now on an end must be put to this, by ruthless means.

- 1) Every scoundrel who incites anyone to retreat, to desert or not to fulfill a military order, is to be shot.
- 2) Every soldier of the Red Army who voluntarily deserts his post is to be shot.
- 3) Every soldier who throws away his rifle or sells part of his uniform is to be shot.



4) Battle-police units are to be stationed along the entire front-line zone, in order to catch deserters. Any soldier who tries to offer resistance to these units is to be shot on the spot.

5) All local Soviets and Committees of the Poor, are obligated, on their part, to take all measures to catch deserters. Deserter-hunts are to be carried out twice in every 24 hours, at 8am and 8pm. Captured deserters are to be handed over to the headquarters of the nearest unit or to the nearest military commissariat.

6) Persons guilty of harbouring deserters are liable to be shot

7) Houses in which deserters are found will be burnt down. .

Death to self-seekers and traitors!

Death to deserters and agents of Krasnov!

Long live the honorable soldiers of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army!

## **A WORD ABOUT THE COSSACKS AND TO THE COSSACKS**

### **I. Who is Krasnov?**

He is a former Tsarist general, from the landlord class. Krasnov is a monarchist, that is, he wants to restore the power of the Tsar and the nobles.

In October of last year, when the Petrograd workers established their Soviet power, thereby setting an example to the working people of all Russia and of the whole world, Krasnov led Cossacks whom he had deceived against Petrograd. He hoped at that time to seize power, but, instead, he was taken prisoner by the Petrograd workers. Krasnov gave his word never again to fight against the workers' and peasants' power. The workers let him go. But he dishonorably broke his word and raised a revolt on the Don against the Soviet power. Rivers of our brothers' blood have flowed because of Krasnov.

### **2. But doesn't Krasnov swear that he is fighting for the interests of Russia?**

Don't take Krasnov at his word. You may know him by his deeds. And they are these. A year ago Krasnov was blaming the Soviet power because it was not waging war against Germany. Then Krasnov made an alliance with the German Kaiser Wilhelm, and received money, shells and cartridges from him for use against the Russian workers and peasants. But the German workers overthrew the German Kaiser. Krasnov at once went over to the other side, and is now summoning British and French troops to the Ukraine and the Don. Krasnov is ready to put the entire Russian people under a foreign yoke, just so as to re-establish with the help of foreign bayonets the power of the Russian landlords and Cossack generals. Krasnov on the Don is the same as Skoropadsky in the Ukraine. They are both dishonorable enemies of the working people.

### **3. Is it true that Krasnov stands for order?**

Krasnov stands for the order of the Tsar and the nobles -- against the order of the workers and peasants. But Krasnov's activity sows nothing but one long bloody disorder. Krasnov cut the Don country off from all the rest of Russia and deprived the inhabitants of the Don country of textiles and other goods. Who is raising bloody discord? Krasnov and his bands. Who is driving the barefoot and badly-clothed Cossacks



and peasants to fight their brothers? Krasnov. Who is destroying the loads and blowing up the bridges? Krasnov's bands.

To establish order, peace and honest labor in Russia, Krasnov's bands must be crushed.

#### **4. Why do the Cossacks follow the traitor Krasnov?**

Not all of them do. There are not a few honest, working, conscious Cossacks who are fighting against Krasnov in the ranks of the Red Army. Unfortunately, though, there are still a considerable section of the Cossacks who do follow Krasnov. These are, first and foremost, the Cossack officers and rich men -- the kulaks. They have drawn after them the old and ignorant Cossacks who think in the old way. But the young ones haven't shown much spirit up to now. So Krasnov lords it over the Cossacks: through the officers he controls the old men., and through them he controls the youngsters.

This is a final warning to you, Cossacks!

## NOTES

**104.** *The Eighth Army* was formed from units of the southern sector of the screens. Two infantry divisions had been formed in that sector the 12th and 13th -- and, under the blows of Krasnov's Cossack regiments, advancing along the Liski-Talovaya railway, organizational work was carried on aimed at forming from them this first regular army on the Southern Front. The reasons for the Eighth Army's defeat were the presence of Krasnov's great masses of cavalry, our complete lack of organization, and the absence of discipline. Comrade Trotsky's first visit coincided with a series of setbacks at the front. When he arrived at Army Headquarters Comrade Trotsky was unable to obtain from the commander any information about the location of his units. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)

**105.** The reference is to *the heroic struggle of the Eleventh Army of the North-Caucasian Front* which, cut off from the centre, drew upon itself the whole of Denikin's Volunteer Army, preventing them from giving any help to Krasnov. At the end of October the Tamam Army [Serafimovich's novel *The Iron Flood* describes the experiences of the Taman Army in this campaign.] took Stavropol and directly threatened Krasnov's rear. A severe epidemic of typhus (40,000 soldiers were sick at the same time), the extreme exhaustion of the Red Army men, the shortage of supplies, and complete isolation from the centre brought this army almost to the brink of collapse. After their withdrawal to Astrakhan, the remnants of the Eleventh Army constituted the cadres of the famous 33rd Kuban, 7th Cavalry and 34th Rifle Divisions, which fought on the fronts of the civil war until the very end. [\[BACK TO TEXT\]](#)



# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

THE CIVIL WAR IN RSFSF IN 1918

## The Civil War and the International Revolution

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[ON GUARD FOR THE WORLD REVOLUTION](#)

### THE SITUATION AT THE FRONTS

**Speech at the meeting of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, September 30, 1918**

The general situation on our fronts can be regarded as quite satisfactory. If we view it with a degree of historical perspective and look forward over the next two or three months, this situation can be considered more than satisfactory.

Undoubtedly, our army has been created. We have an army. And a good one. Though not yet so large as to correspond in numbers to the enemy, it is growing. We have formed strong, reliable cadres on every front. We shall reinforce these cadres and in a very short time develop a good, strong, united army that will show our enemies that Russia does not lie at their mercy.

If we turn now to consider the fronts taken separately, we see that, on the Northern Front, we can note a stable situation, with its disadvantageous side turned towards our enemies.

We lost Archangel, but the Allies' initial successes were not followed up. Their expeditionary force was to have constituted the axe from which the soldier cooked his soup, [In Russian folklore there is a story about a soldier who knocked at an old peasant woman's hut and asked for food. When she said she had none, he suggested that he boil an axe to make some soup. The idea intrigued the old woman, and she let him have an axe, which he put in a pot, filling this with water. As the water heated, he asked the old woman for 'a bit of turnup', 'some carrots', and so on, and in the end had all the ingredients needed for

some real soup.]but the Anglo-French soup has cooked much more slowly than the Allies had expected. The cold season is coming on. The White Sea will freeze over, and if the Anglo-French expeditionary force has not linked up with the Czechoslovaks before the beginning of winter, and it will not link up with them, then the position of that expeditionary force will become extremely difficult, and all we shall need to do is to chuck it out on to the ice of the White Sea -- or under that ice.

On the Eastern Front the situation is completely favorable. The initiative is held by our forces. On the Volga, two important places are still in the enemy's hands: Syzran and Samara. Operations on a wide scale are now being carried on against these two strong points. I can say that they will be taken in the very near future. That will mean that we have cleared the entire Volga, that the Volga has become what it ought to be, an honest Soviet river.

As you know, extensive operations are also taking place in the Urals, and after the liberation of the Volga these operations will, of course, proceed with much greater success, but it is difficult to foresee and estimate in advance the pace at which these operations will develop. It can, however, be said with

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There can be no question now, in the weeks that lie immediately ahead of any sort of catastrophe suddenly descending on us. The eyes of the White Guards are fixed on Japan and America, who do undoubtedly represent a real danger, but this is thousands of versts away from us, and we have the possibility of using the whole winter to strengthen our forces.

There is now some sort of agreement in being between Japan and the United States: what its scope is and what the relation is between the parties to it we do not know. But during this war we have seen too many examples of allies becoming trans-formed into sworn enemies, and the nearer we draw to the end of the world-wide slaughter the sharper will become the world-wide contradictions through which the friends of yesterday will become enemies.

Germany is now, in the period that lies immediately ahead, ceasing to be a force that is dangerous to us. Bulgaria is pulling out. She will be followed by Turkey, Romania and Austria- Hungary, and the rulers of present-day Germany will hardly possess either the material means or the incentive to continue with their policy in relation to the East.

Bulgaria's departure from the war weakens Germany, reduces to the minimum the political terror she can exercise against us. In answer to the weakening of Germany will come the revolt of the French proletariat.

These are the prospects before us. Two months ago our position was very difficult. But we did not give up, and if we have lasted till now, no power exists that will overthrow us. We must make use of the next few months to strengthen and develop our army.

Basing ourselves on the authority of the CEC and the sympathy of the worker and peasant masses, we shall within a short time turn Russia, not in words but in deeds, into an armed camp, and we shall overcome the conservatism of the Soviet people in the provinces who do not always appreciate this.

Comrade Krasin has now been given charge of providing supplies for the army. He will push this work ahead, and the survey which he produced recently shows that the work of supply is going by no means badly.

The new call-up of young men will give us several first-class divisions to constitute reserves for the army. You will back with your authority the work of forming the army. We must convince the British and French that their enterprise is not merely a dishonourable crime but also a very shameful folly. Our resistance on the Eastern Front will produce a powerful jolt on the other side of the ocean, and we shall show to all our enemies, and likewise to all our friends, that we are a power, that we want to live, and that we shall live.

## **THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION**

Speech at the special joint session of the All-Russia CEC, the Moscow city and city district Soviets, and representatives of the factory committees and trade unions, October 3, 1918

The South-Eastern extremity of Europe, the Balkan Peninsula, presents a picture of monstrous economic and national entanglements, antagonisms and conflicts. All the contradictions and clashes of interest that are rending capitalist Europe are to be found on a reduced scale in the small area of the Balkan Peninsula. And since this peninsula is an economically backward part of Europe, and therefore attracts the appetites of the large- scale predators of the great powers, Balkan interests and antagonisms have become



complicated, intersected and amplified under pressure from the contradictions of all Europe. The Balkan peninsula has long since become the hornets' nest of European politics, a seething cauldron out of which from time to time burst, or threaten to burst, tongues of fire of Europe's volcano and of world-wide slaughter.

In 1912 the Balkan Peninsula was the arena of the Balkan Wars between Turkey on the one hand and, on the other, Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro, which then were allies. Already at that time the revolutionary socialists forecast that this bloody brawl in the Balkans was merely the threshold, the precursor of the great world war.

In 1914 that great war began. It emerged from that region, from that same South-eastern corner of Europe, from the Balkan peninsula. A conflict between Austria-Hungary and Serbia was the starting-point for the subsequent course of events, and we are now seeing that a new turn in this European and world wide slaughter, and, along with it, the beginning of a new turn in world history, finds its starting point again in the Balkan peninsula, where, I repeat, all the accursed features of the capitalist world are concentrated.

At the very beginning of the war we saw Serbia at the centre of events. The enormous superiority of Germany and Austria-Hungary, which seemed, in their alliance, to be invincible, brought about, for a start, the crushing defeat of Serbia. It seemed that Bulgaria, the hireling of the Central Empires, would now be the dominant country in the Balkan Peninsula. But we now perceive that the defection of Bulgaria, while not, of course, the cause, is nevertheless the obvious expression of a sharp turn in the fortunes of the imperialist slaughter. In the first period of the war Germany was dominant, her domination increased steadily, accustoming the whole world to believe in the unshakability of Germany's military and imperialistic domination. Her superiority was due to the superiority of her capitalist technique: by turning out incomparable engines of mass extermination, this gave Germany's machine of militarism equality, and more than equality, with her enemies, despite their numbers and their wealth.

At the other pole, in the opposite camp, France alone possessed a centralized army with warlike traditions. Britain was obliged to resort to military improvisation, that is, to create an army from scratch. This was why the whole of the first period of the war was Germany's. Her war industry, the more caste-like organization of the German nobility, the greater degree of discipline and of education possessed by the German people, all this, in combination, constituted a war machine before which the united forces of France, Italy, Russia and the other, smaller Allies, fell back. Later, after long delay, the United States of America entered the war -- without a big army, but with powerful technique.

By that time the huge machine of German imperialism was already getting worn out, and this was especially true of the labor-force and the factories making the means of extermination. At the same time, the military might of Britain and America was living and developing, because they had formed a market into which their human material was poured, and then the United States turned upon Germany its military might, its machines for extermination, and this it did not because it was drawn into the war movement by the workers and peasants. No, during the first three years of the war America held aloof, the American Shylock supplied Europe with the instruments and means of extermination, and only when Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare threatened to cut *off* the American producers' access to the markets of the Entente countries did the American Shylock demand that a domestic market be created for guns, shells and rifles, which had piled up on the shores of America, since they could not be exported to Europe. This was where the final impulse came from, which, developed by American diplomacy, hurled

America on to the road of a new adventure, this was the basis on which America played its tremendous role in the development of the European war. To be sure, there were in Germany obtuse Junkers who thoughtlessly welcomed the entry of the United States into the war. We shall with one blow put an end to all our enemies, that is, with our competitors throughout the world, they said; but they miscalculated. The enormously powerful American machine also possessed colossal reserves, and this was understood only by those who appreciated the nature of the events which had taken place and who retained a clear and sober political outlook, and evaluated events from the standpoint of historical materialism. Now, when we Marxists review the road that has been traversed and examine the programme that was developed by the imperialists, their lackeys the democrats, and the lackeys of their lackeys, the Scheidemannites and Renaudelites, we see that these four years have been strewn not only with the corpses of workers killed in this struggle but also with the corpses of a variety of programmes, plans and theories.

Only one programme has survived the world-wide crossfire -- the programme of those who did not lose control of their five senses. We can say that we alone, the materialists, saw the nature of events and forecast their outcome. History moves, maybe, contrary to our desire, but it moves along the line traced by us. And although many victims have been sacrificed along that road, its end will be that which we foresaw: the downfall of all the gods of imperialism and capitalism. It is as though history had decided to teach mankind one last and graphic lesson. The working people were, apparently, too sluggish, immobile and irresolute. Of course we should not have had this war if the world's working class had proved in 1914 to be sufficiently resolute to come out against the imperialists of all countries. But that did not happen: the working class needed another cruel lesson from history. And now history drew into the arena the mightiest, most highly organized of countries and allowed it to rise to an unprecedented height. Germany dictated her will to the whole world through the muzzles of her 42-centimetre guns. She seemed to have enslaved all Europe for an indefinite period. She seized an immense area of France. With her innumerable submarines she undermined Britain's domination of the seas. It seemed that Germany's ascendancy would last for whole generations, if not forever. History, which had granted unparalleled power to the capitalism of Germany, was saying, as it were, to the workers of Germany: you are slaves, you do not dare to lift your heads, to free your necks from the yoke of capitalism. Behold this capital, armed with the products of your labor: this capital which rules over the whole world will tomorrow rule over all the rest of the planets, and there will be no end to its power. And then this same history, which had raised German imperialism to such a dizzying height and hypnotised the consciousness of the masses, hurled it down from that height, with catastrophic rapidity, into a gulf of humiliation and helplessness, as though saying: you see how it has been smashed -- now it is up to you to wipe out every vestige of it from all Europe, from the whole world. Thus speaks history.

We lived through the frightful period of the unrestricted domination of German imperialism. I have had occasion to mention to the CEC one little episode connected with the fact that a representative of omnipotent Germany spoke of Russia with an ironical, malicious intonation when he called her 'mighty'. With that phrase, 'mighty Russia', he mentally, and transparently, was saying this: 'Here you are, nearly 200 million Russians, who once considered yourselves a mighty power, but now you are under our heel, and we shall dictate our will to you.'

However, in spite of that, none of us is disposed in the slightest degree to gloat because Germany has suffered a colossal catastrophe. We shall be filled with joy when this catastrophe becomes the lot of militarism and capitalism as a whole, and when the sentence of history is executed not by Anglo-French and American guns but by the guns of the revolutionary proletariat risen in revolt. We know that present, for the time being, what is happening is a shift of power from one camp to the other and, as Vladimir

Ilyich says in his letter, [For Lenin's letter, see *Collected Works*, Vol.28, pp.101-104.] the catastrophic weakening of Germany can and must, in the next few days and weeks, perhaps, at worst, in the next few months, lead to a growth in the power, insolence and predatoriness of Anglo-French and Japano-American imperialism. The one is just as hostile to us as the other and today, even with the radical change in the international situation, we are as far from an alliance with victorious Anglo-French imperialism as we were yesterday from an alliance with German imperialism. We remain independent on both flanks, as an independent force, as a unit of the advancing proletarian world revolution. We say: let not the Anglo-French and Japano-American rulers of destiny try to extent the scope of their victory, as Von Ku himann put it at Brest-Litovsk. History, in the person of Hoffmann, had not yet given its final verdict in the sense that the fate of peoples is determined solely by treaties.

While we have a serious attitude to treaties and to the obligations that we undertake, we must at the same time declare that the fates of peoples such as Germany, and such also as the Ukraine, Poland, the Baltic countries and Finland, cannot depend upon a document signed at a particular moment of political development.

New forces are arising both within Germany and beyoyd her borders, and we do not doubt that the moment is near when the treaty of Brest-Litovsk will be reviewed by those forces which are striving for power. The bearer of this force in Germany is the working class. The fact that, in capitulating, absolutism in Germany is turning towards popular parliamentarism means that both those smart fellow who were at the head of affairs and also the ones who served them have suffered shipwreck. If in our country, just over a year and a half ago, in February 1917, the Cadets came to power, along with the SRs and Mensheviks, and if the latter, quite new-baked and only just arrived from the barricades, needed no more than eight months to use up and wear threadbare their strength and their reputation, and to vacate their position, the German Tseretelis will need for this purpose not eight months but only eight weeks. That is why, when people ask our Soviet power -- and they have grounds here for asking this -- how it estimates the prospects that are opening up before Germany, and what it thinks concerning the fate of the Brest treaty, the Soviet power replies that the German Government itself has declared that it is incapable, in the present situation, both international and domestic, of coping with the state of affairs.

What government will take over from it: a government of the German clerical Centre, of the Conservatives, of the National Liberals, or of the compromisers? But the Right wing has already ruled the destiny of Germany, through her monarchs and bureaucrats, and through her Junkers and the Left wing of the new, incoming government has already wiped away all the dirty marks left by the Right wing. What will this German coalition bring about that's new? It will open the eyes of the masses. Consequently, in our international policy we cannot reckon seriously with a coalition government in Germany as a force capable of determining the fate of that country for a long period of time.

What force remains? Where Germany is concerned, the idea of a united front of all democrats is even more pitiful, senseless and paltry than in the case of Russia -- let me call it a sickly utopia. What is the democratic movement in Germany? Such a movement barely exists there. There were some miserable remnants of a petty bourgeoisie, with miserable remnants of their political influence. The merciless imperialist war finally ruined and killed off the petty bourgeoisie, leaving not one stone upon another of their former importance. There are now only two camps: one, the conscious, solid camp of the imperialists, the other, the camp of the proletariat, on whom history has carried out a colossal, cruel experiment, the pro letariat who have undergone terrible trials and are now faced, point-blank, with the following task: either to take charge of the destiny of their country, taking power into their own hands, or



Germany and Austria-Hungary. News arrived today, from a well-informed comrade, about the state of feeling in the Ukraine. I will quote some of the most striking passages: 'A revolutionary situation is increasingly taking shape here. Even before the latest events in Bulgaria and Germany, as soon as it became known that Germany was to withdraw her forces from the Ukraine, confidence that Soviet power would triumph here, and very soon, became universal.'

Furthermore, there is information that prominent representatives of the late Rada are saying that, of course, no government other than the Soviet power is to be expected in the Ukraine. And then comes news of a whole series of manifestations of the revolutionary movement in the Ukraine.

But, in addition to this, a comrade who is extremely well informed and with good contacts writes about what is happening in Bulgaria. He tells us that underground Soviets have long been in existence there, and that two Socialist deputies, Lukansky and Dmitriev, who have now been sentenced to five or six years' imprisonment, were nominated at the front. They belonged to the party which corresponds to the Communists in Russia. That is the news in brief regarding the situation in the Ukraine and Bulgaria.

In our time; we were told, where the Ukraine was concerned, that we had lost it. Yes, we did lose it, temporarily, but only so as to find it again, and this time stronger than before. The Ukrainian worker and peasant have been through a harsh school, and if they now adhere to the Soviets they will adhere so strongly that no power will be able to detach them. In the panic of Brest Soviet Russia was dismembered. But in the course of events she has developed a very great revolutionary power of attraction. We do not doubt that this attraction will accomplish a great task. When the German working class stretches out its hand to take power, and when it comes to power, it too will develop a very powerful attractive force, and the criminal hand of Anglo- French imperialism will be smitten with paralysis and be unable to resist.

If the proletariat of Germany does try to take power, the fundamental duty of Soviet Russia will be to acknowledge no national frontiers in the revolutionary struggle. The revolutionary struggle of the German people will be our struggle too. It is clear to everyone that Soviet Russia feels that it is only the vanguard of the German and European proletarian revolution. However, the possibility is not excluded that for a certain period, for some months, a revolutionary Germany will have to beat off the gangs of imperialism. And, in anticipation of this, we can say with confidence that the German proletariat, armed with all its technique, on the one hand, and our Russia, disorganized but very rich in natural wealth and with 200 million inhabitants, on the other, will form a mighty bloc on which all the waves of imperialism will break in vain. We can have no allies in the imperialist camp. The revolutionary camp of the proletarians going forward into open struggle against imperialism -- there are our allies. Liebknecht does not need to make a treaty with us: even without that we shall help him in his struggle, with all our power and resources. We shall give everything for the common proletarian world struggle. In his open letter Comrade Lenin said clearly and distinctly that we have striven to create a million-strong army to defend the Soviet Republic. That is a narrow programme. History says to us: your task is not merely to protect the breathing-space, your task has been widened. A crisis is maturing already in Germany and throughout Central Europe. Perhaps tomorrow the working class of Germany will appeal to us for help and we shall create not a million-strong army but an army of two millions, since our task will have doubled or trebled. And we are ready to strain our forces doubly and trebly. These forces are increasing day by day. The German proletariat is suffering hunger worse than ours. Let it stretch out its hand for power, let it take power, and, on that basis, let it help us to put our railways in order, and we shall fetch the wealth of grain from Samara province and from the Don, where I have seen inexhaustible stocks of grain, and share it fraternally with the German working class, for the triumph of our common struggle. That is the will of



the working class of Russia and of the poor peasantry, for here are assembled their authoritative and influential representatives -- all that is best in the Russian Republic. We have here the Central Executive Committee, the Moscow Soviet, representatives of the trade unions and of the factory committees. All this constitutes the cream, and the will, of Russia. We shall be wholly with the working class of Germany in its struggle. As with the Communards, our Communist outlook extends to the working class of Germany as well. Everything that is ours is theirs. Our forces and our grain are their forces and their grain, for the common proletarian revolution.

We shall, of course, form an alliance with the workers of Germany, to revolutionize (Germans of) Tj 0 - 1  
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military force in the next few weeks. In the White-Guard papers they now write about the Anglo-French expedition as a false hope that has vanished away, and so their eyes are now all turned towards Japan and America. From that quarter a real danger does undoubtedly threaten us, or may do so. But this danger, too, is far away, very many versts or kilometres distant. We have been given the chance to utilise the whole winter for strengthening our forces, and we shall now not merely capture towns but also quickly fortify them according to all the rules of the art. And even if we presume that the Japanese or the Americans, with the support of the White Guards or of the Czechoslovaks, who are lining the Trans-Siberian Railway, will get as far as the Urals, they will encounter before spring comes a stout and mighty barrier in their path. As yet they have not traversed that path. Our floes are only at its very beginning. They will have to move across a huge country, with only enemies to left and right of them. While the Czechoslovak Corps may have cavalry as rearguard, and, thanks to its high quality (which, however, is declining day by day), may help with the central sector of the theatre of operations, the Japanese and American forces will have no rearguard: they will find that to the right and to the left of the narrow railway zone there are hostile partisans who are Prepared to do everything to defend their land and their grain, and they will be obliged to drag behind them a long, an enormous supply column. However rich in technique the Americans may be, and however powerful Japanese militarism although, it must be said, during the war they supplied Russia with extremely poor *materiel*, useless shells and guns -- they will need to spend many weeks and months overcoming the resistance and obstacles they will meet in colossal Siberia before they can reach the European borders of the Soviet Republic. And, meanwhile, the Red Army will, unperceived by them, grow stronger and develop further.

There is at present some sort of agreement in being between Japan and the United States. Whether this agreement will hold till the spring cannot be forecast by any astrologer, and how deep the opposition to this agreement will be, inside Japan and America, is also impossible to foretell with astronomical accuracy. But only a month ago we observed a tremendous movement taking place in Japan, involving millions of workers. If the Japanese bourgeoisie has shown ability to adapt and imitate, we cannot doubt that the Japanese proletariat, tempered in the crucible of the world-wide slaughter, will also show immense capacity for revolutionary imitation, and The Japanese bourgeoisie will come up against greater resistance to its chimerical hopes regarding Siberia with every month that passes. The same applies to America. There has been talk here of the growth of the movement on the other side of the ocean. The American worker has undoubtedly lost in the last two or three years his previous privileged position as the aristocrat of the world's labor. Tremendous tribute is demanded from him: upon him weighs the old federal democracy, a concentrated and centralized imperialist power which in no way falls short of any monarchical-autocratic power. Faced with this colossal upheaval, imperialism is experiencing a catastrophic turn: the revolution must develop with incredible speed, and the resistance of the American proletariat will develop all the faster the more vigorously we resist American intervention, the greater the obstacle that is encountered in their advance by American and Japanese militarism, which are our principal enemies at the present time.

As a force dangerous to us, Germany is certainly leaving the stage now. Bulgaria is pulling out, and is being followed by Turkey, Rumania and Austria-Hungary. It is difficult to suppose that the rulers of present-day Germany, quite apart from the formal treaties which should bind them, will have the material possibility or the motives to change their Eastern policy. If they do make changes in this policy, it is most likely to be in the direction of extricating some corps which is now bogged down in the Ukraine, so as to use it for other duties. We are now convinced of that by the course of events. It may be said that Bulgaria's departure will strengthen our direct opponents of the present period, the Allies, and that is true,

but only momentarily. Actually, the whole of the world's diplomacy is now determining its tasks only from moment to moment, and it cannot do otherwise. It is unable to make judgements in the light of precise historical prospects, because no prospect but doom appears before it. Russia's departure from the war undoubtedly strengthened Germany. I recall -- his intonation still rings in my ears -- how Von Kuhlmann said: 'Of course Germany wants to live at peace with her mighty Eastern neighbour.' That word 'mighty' was spoken with an intonation that had to mean: 'Yes, Russia was a mighty country, but now you are grovelling in the dust at our feet.' The sound of Von Kuhlmann's voice has remained with me, but Hertling is now no more, neither is Hintze, [Count von Hertling was Germany's Chancellor when the Brest-Litovsk negotiations began, and Rear-Admiral von Hintze negotiated the 'supplementary treaty' of August 27, 1918 between Soviet Russia and Germany.] and indeed much else has changed in Germany.

I think that, while Russia's departure from the war did temporarily strengthen Germany, in the process of history, the departure today of Bulgaria, where a Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies has been organized, and tomorrow's departure of Austria-Hungary (the revolution is passing through a fateful period in that country), are all results of those events which took Russia out of the war and temporarily strengthened Germany, and which are nothing other than most profound signs of the downfall of world capitalism.

## **ON GUARD FOR THE WORLD REVOLUTION**

Report read at the joint session of the Voronezh Soviet of Workers', Peasants' and Red Army men's Deputies, November 18, 1918

Comrades, allow me first of all to express my pleasure in the fact that we are able to talk together in Voronezh, which our enemies were not long ago disposed to think of as theirs. This gives me grounds for supposing that Voronezh will remain inseparably within Soviet Russia and that this assembly, attended by so many people and which, so far as I can judge by first impressions, is united by a single feeling, is the pledge of a spirit that will make of Voronezh an impregnable Soviet fortress.

For it has been said that Voronezh, one of the southernmost points in Soviet Russia, is still unquestionably in danger, because the principal threat to our country as a whole now comes from the South, from that front, so close to you, behind which recently were hidden Cossack-German forces, German resources, German plans, and where, behind those same deceived Cossacks, the forces and resources of the opposite camp are now grouping.

We live in an epoch which is above all an epoch of international politics. In 'peaceful', 'tranquil' times, questions of international politics seem to the ordinary man problems on an astral plane which have no practical significance for his personal destiny. But a few years ago, we entered an epoch in which, through the events of this epoch, the destiny of each and every citizen, whether he likes it or not, is bound up with the destinies not only of his class and his country but with international destinies as a whole. This is the merit, or, if you prefer, the curse, of capitalism. Capitalism has bound the peoples together in one single mighty organism, and, at the same time, has set the ruling classes of these peoples against each other. It can be said that, through international exchange, through the world market capitalism has bound the peoples together by force with a convict-labor chain, and the peoples, striving to live within the context of the slavery of the capitalist world economy, are obliged to smash this chain and in so doing tear their own bodies into pieces. This is the significance of the present imperialist war. It grew out of the contradictions between the world-wide character of production and the national character of appropriation, capitalist misappropriation. The bourgeoisie cannot cope with this contradiction. At

first there was hope, on the part of the bourgeoisie of one camp or the other, that through permanent military victory it would solve all problems. I recall the first period of the war, which I spent in Western Europe -- the first days in Austria-Hungary, then in Switzerland, then nearly two years in France, whence I was expelled, through Spain, a neutral country, to America, at the very moment of that country's entry into the war. Consequently, fate gave me the opportunity, during the first two-and-a-half years of the war, to observe how it was reflected in the consciousness and in the politics of the bourgeois classes and of the worker masses of a number of countries. In Zurich, in about the second month of the war, I happened to talk with one of the most prominent compromisers, Molkenbuhr, who, when I asked how his party saw the course that the war would take, replied, repeating the opinion of the German bourgeoisie: 'During the next two months we shall finish with France, and we shall then turn to the East, dispose of the forces of your Tsar, and within three, or at the most four, months we shall give Europe a solid peace. Such was the illusion of this social-patriot.

More than four years have passed since that time. Germany has now bitten the dust. Only the developing workers' revolution gives promise of rescuing her from the frightful, bloody dead-end into which she has been driven by the policy of her bourgeoisie, defended in its day by the party of Molkenbuhr.

It was the same in France. There, the bourgeois deputies and the social-patriots promised victory day after day, week after week, then month after month, and, eventually, year after year. To be sure, it can be claimed that this promised victory has now been achieved. France, with her allies, has now planted her jackboot upon Germany, but nevertheless, in France less than anywhere else do politicians possessed of any sense, even in the bourgeois camp, expect that military victory will solve even one of the problems which brought about the present war. None other than Jules Guesde, one of the former leaders of the former Second International, used often to say, in the days of his revolutionary prime, that war is the mother of revolution, and we have now entered an epoch when -- too slowly, indeed, for our legitimate revolutionary impatience, but none the less surely -- revolution, the daughter of war, is advancing, following in the footsteps of war, shod with iron sandals, as they used to say in olden times.

We, the Russian working class, a class in the most deprived of countries, were the first to begin the revolution. We were the first, but we shall not be the last. We took the risk of being left on our own. But was there any other way out for us? You know what mockery and scoffing arose in reply to our prophecies about the inevitability of revolutionary developments through out the world, and especially in Germany. But the facts are before us: in the last analysis it was we who were right, we who relied on the sound materialist method of investigating historical destinies, the method which is used in all sciences -- the method of strict, cold, severe examination of accumulated facts, in order thereby to establish well-defined conclusions, an accurate prognosis for the future. And only this cold scientific method, which in no way conflicts with the most ardent revolutionary temperament, only Marxism enables us not to lose our heads but to find our bearings in the world situation and forecast the inevitability of proletarian revolution as a result of the present war.

Many of us, of course, expected that this would happen sooner. We thought that the German working class would not let the compromisers lead them by the nose for so long. We are still today looking with hatred towards the France of the Bourse, and are sometimes inclined to stamp our feet impatiently because the French working class, with its rich revolutionary traditions, is submitting patiently for so long to the rule of Poincaré and Clemenceau. Nevertheless, by and large, events are proceeding as we Marxists foresaw they would. Those features of capitalism and of the working class in particular countries which were known to us before have developed and had their effect on the character and tempo



of events.

We know that the German working class, lacking a revolutionary past, needed exceptional events, exceptional shocks, if it was to be knocked out of the rut of legalism to which history had confirmed it for so long. Those shocks came, and we can see the results.

You know that the whole of this last war has been nothing but a gigantic duel between Germany and Britain. Britain is an old Imperialist, colony-owning country, an old-established robber firm which, with its navy, stands on every road and at every crossroads of the world's seaways and will not let any other world-scale brigand compete with it. For that very reason it watched with unprecedented fury and hatred when, in the shape of industrial Germany, an extremely dangerous rival, on land and sea alike, began to emerge. The characteristic feature of the British working class, due to the history of British capitalism, is a feature to which I referred just now a sense of being privileged, a certain aristocratism. In the second half of last century the British working class became bound up with the world-wide privileges of British industry, which held the dominant position on the world market. Since the time when that situation was established, that is since the 1850s and 1860s, the British working class has experienced no revolutionary shocks.

The German proletariat has remained without them for other reasons. Germany arrived later at the door of capitalist development. It developed at colossal speed. German industry, including war industry took shape very quickly, and along with this, the German working class appeared, forming its trade unions and its political party, directing all its energy to that end. While the bourgeoisie grew rich there was still in power in Germany a caste of nobles which was closely united and well -- schooled, and was made up, unlike our own nobility, not of idlers, thieves and embezzlers, but of extremely capable military leaders and ministers who knew how to rule over the masses. Education in government and its traditions was concentrated in the nobility which, by means of wars for the unification of Germany, had created the conditions for the bourgeoisie to develop. That was why the German bourgeoisie, which developed in the course of a few decades into a gigantic force, decided to leave affairs of state, and especially military affairs, in the hands of the nobility. It said to itself: 'The nobility has a strong fist, it possesses traditions of government, it will know how to bridle the proletariat.' This nobility created the huge German army. For this there existed a mighty bourgeois industry, exploiting the workers. And to this army, based on this war industry, the nobility contributed a strong caste of officers, with warlike traditions, with iron discipline and the mentality of feudal knights. Out of a powerful industry and a disciplined class without revolutionary traditions, out of this combination was produced the terrifying machine for mass killing which was called the German army. This army held its ground against Britain, against France, against Russia, then against the American army. For more than four years the German army withstood that tremendous pressure.

If we leave out of account the imperialist nature of the war and look at it merely as a military contest between economic organisms, we must above all be astonished at the colossal might of the forces which capitalism has created and released. And capitalism found its most complete and striking expression in the German army. However, we have seen that German militarism proved unable to sustain this effort -- not because against it was brought the pressure of the huge and powerful armies of Britain, France and, in the last few months, the United States, with its fresh and mighty resources, but because it could not withstand the internal ideological pressure of a new mood, the prophet of which was the Russian working class.



And it was no accident but rather the conscious will of history that, precisely on the anniversary of our October revolution, there was hoisted over Berlin the red flag of the Berlin Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. We could wish for, or ask from history, no greater satisfaction than that.

The German revolution is apparently going forward at a faster pace than our own. On the other hand, though, it would be a mistake to expect the German working class to make all at once the leap from its old legalism to the regime we look forward to, that is, to the regime of Communist dictatorship.

No people and no class have ever really learnt from books or newspapers, or from the experience of other countries.

True, we did learn something from the Germans. In our time we said that we had learnt much from them. That was so. But this 'much' was appropriate to a peaceful epoch, and it proved to be very little when set against the standard of great events. If the Russian working class has really learnt anything, it has learnt it in the school of its own direct experience of harsh struggle, face to face with its own enemies, as a result of which it overthrew party after party, wrested power from the hands of the bourgeoisie, founded its own state with its own blood, and is now showing its enemies that, having taken power, it will surrender that power to no-one. [Applause.] It is there, and only there, in continuous, protracted, harsh struggle, that the will to power is trained, with the ability to conquer and hold power. The working class has never and nowhere learnt from books, or in academies or from newspapers, what its principal tasks are, and what the methods are of accomplishing them.

That applies to the German workers as well. They have formed revolutionary councils of workers' and soldiers' deputies. But there can be no doubt that these councils will for a certain time -- let us hope, only for a short time -- waver from one side to the other, limping and hobbling. They are still headed by compromisers, those very same men who bear an immense share of guilt before the German people for the mis-fortunes and humiliations into which Germany has fallen. For there can be no doubt that if in July 1914 the German Social-Democrats had found in themselves the resolution, courage and clear consciousness to call on the working class of Germany even, at first, only to offer passive resistance, so as later to go over from this to open revolt, the war would have been greatly shortened, and perhaps would never even have got started. That is why the principal responsibility was borne, as we said at that time, by the strongest party by the German Social Democrats. And yet, nevertheless, the German working class, having broken out of the vicious circle of the war, has left in position at its head the old party structures made up of the leaders of the old Social-Democratic Party. We needed eight months in order to outlive the regime of Kerensky and Tsereteli and the rest of the compromisers. Our Kerenskys and Tseretelis were for our working class unknowns, strangers who at first imposed themselves on the mass of the workers and were trusted as being the representatives of a certain party which was marching, so it seemed, at the head of the worker masses, and it took us eight months to expose and destroy this false reputation.

In Germany David, Ebert and Scheidemann are no strangers. Throughout the war they worked hand in hand with the German government and with the German bourgeoisie, as its helpers and servants. But so great is the force of organizational inertia, organizational automatism, that it was hard for the German working class to free itself of its own party machine at the same time as it freed itself of the state machine. The old party had been formed in old conditions for old peaceful tasks. It had created a huge organizational apparatus. The further they were from the masses the more petrified, stagnant and calloused were the representatives of this mighty party and of the trade-union apparatus.

I had occasion to spend a fairly long time in Germany and got a comparatively close look at these leaders; and now, in the light of recent gigantic events I see clearly how and why these men possessed in their hearts not a single spark of revolutionary proletarian enthusiasm, not a shadow of understanding of what is meant by proletarian revolution, but instead were filled with profound, servile admiration for the wisdom of planned and peaceful constructive work by the parliamentary state. The working class, after smashing the old state machine, thrust forward its old party, and Scheidemann and Ebert became ministers of revolutionary Germany -- although they had done more than anyone to prevent the German revolution. They were made into 'revolutionaries' against their will. Even six weeks ago they were saying that there would be no revolution in Germany, that the Russian Bolsheviks were mistaken: they openly spat on our hopes, and, furthermore, the leading organ of German Social-Democracy, *Vorwärts*, wrote not long ago that, when the Bolsheviks asserted that there would be a revolution in Germany, they were consciously deceiving the Russian workers, feeding them with false promises.

So said the German 'leaders' who, one might have thought, should have been better informed about conditions in Germany.

They accused us of deceiving the Russian workers by prophesying that a revolution would inevitably take place in Germany. And now it is they, the wretched sloths and pedants, who are themselves shown to have been deceived. We told the truth. And this truth now stands before the whole world: there is revolution in Germany. [Applause.]

As I said at the beginning, the life of every country, every class, and even every individual depends now, to a frightening degree, upon the international situation. The international situation in Germany is extremely grave.

The peace which it has turned out that the German Government are going to be obliged to sign is in all respects harsher and more merciless than the peace which we were obliged to sign at Brest.

Our Kerenskys and Tseretelis charged us Bolsheviks with committing a crime by signing a terrible peace treaty. But in Germany the Kerensky and Tsereteli of that country, namely, Scheidemann and Ebert, have found themselves forced to sign a peace treaty which is much more terrible. Thus, putting one's signature to a peace treaty is not just a matter of goodwill. One signs a terrible peace treaty when there is no other way out. When a hostile imperialism has you by the throat and you have no weapon in your hand, you sign a terrible peace treaty. That was how we were compelled to act. And there can be no doubt that if Kerensky and Tsereteli had been in power at that time, they too would have signed at Brest, and signed a peace treaty that was ten times worse. The best proof of this is that they and their like handed over Georgia, Armenia and Poland wholly to the tyranny and plundering of German imperialism, just as tomorrow they will hand over Transcaucasia to Anglo-French imperialism. Negotiations to this end are already going on now... Germany's situation is extremely grave. What can save the country is that which saved us, namely, a revolution in the enemy state -- in this case, in France and Britain, with the development, the extension, of the proletarian Communist revolution on an international scale. But, for that to happen sooner and more surely, it is necessary that in Germany itself the revolution should advance farther along its natural path, it is necessary that, in place of the cowardly compromisers who are trying to shorten, dock and clip the wings of the German revolution, to keep it within the bourgeois framework and deprive it of the agitational power it must develop -- it is necessary, in short, that, in place of the Scheidemanns and Eberts a revolutionary government should come to power, headed by Liebknecht. Here, however, the difference between Germany's fate and our own makes itself felt. We

lived for a long time under the conditions of Tsardom. We developed revolutionary underground practices and traditions, first among the Narodniki and the members of Narodnaya Volya, and later among the Social-Democrats. This illegal, clandestine, revolutionary work, proceeding at first from the underground intelligentsia to the advanced workers, found its legitimate and vivid expression in the Communist Party.

At the moment when, under the frightful blows of history, the Russian working class rose to its feet, that class did not need to start from scratch. It had at its head a centralized party, united by the closest ties of historical doctrine and internal revolutionary solidarity, which marched along with it through all the obstacles in its way, and which is now in power -- our Communist Party.

In Germany there is still no such party, because there the energy of the working class has for decades been poured into the channel of legalism, of parliamentarism. And when the working class of Germany was hurled by the will of events into the revolutionary arena, it found there no organized revolutionary party. There is still today no such party in Germany. The working class made use, willy-nilly, of the organization which is represented by Scheidemann. But there can be no doubt that the lack of conformity between this organization, its practices and mentality, and the needs of revolutionary proletarian development will be revealed more and more clearly with every passing day. The German working class is faced with a twofold task: to carry out its revolution and, in the process of doing that, to create the instrument of its revolution, that is, to build a genuine revolutionary party. We have no doubt that it will cope with this twofold task, and this is the guarantee that this new, Communist revolution will be met by a revolution in France.

Already today the wireless is bringing us news of large-scale strikes and revolutionary demonstrations in Lyons, Paris and other places. It would indeed be monstrous if the French working class were not to come out against its class enemies.

We know the French working class from its past. If any proletariat at all has old revolutionary traditions, it is the workers of France, who carried out the Great French revolution, the revolution of 1830, the revolution of 1848, the Days of June, and, finally, the Paris Commune. But just because the French working class was the first to take the path of revolutionary action, that class has developed a certain political aristocratism, comparable to the economic aristocratism of the British working class.

The British working class looked down for a long time upon the workers of all other countries: in their eyes the latter were pariahs, paid low wages, living in semi-starvation, ruled by soldiers, ignorant of sport, and so on, whereas the British working class, that is, its skilled upper stratum, enjoyed a privileged situation. Hence their contemptuous attitude toward revolutionary struggle. The French working class, contrariwise, regarded itself for a long time as the sole revolutionary force in Europe. They were the Messiah, called upon to save all the other peoples. Beyond the borders of France everyone was wallowing in barbarism and ignorance. In Germany there was absolutism, in Russia Tsardom. Even Britain had a King and Lords. In France the working class had established a republic, and it would be the first to achieve socialism. That was how the upper stratum of the French workers thought. With this revolutionary aristocratism the French working class combined *patriotism*. Their line of thought was this: 'If the Kaiser crushes us, France will perish -- France the sole focus of revolutionary struggle. Consequently, saving France, at whatever cost, means saving socialism.' The upper stratum of the French working class accepted the fact that the government of France, by making an alliance with Russia, thereby gave support to Tsardom. There was opposition, of course. But the broad masses were deceived,

lulled, put to sleep by the notion that the danger from German absolutism was too great, that alliance with Imperial Russia was the only way out of the situation, since otherwise the German Bashi-Bazouks would crush France, and, by so doing, strangle the socialist revolution. Only gradually were the workers convinced, by their experience of the war, that both camps were equally hostile to the proletariat. Threatening voices arose more and more frequently from the French trenches. True, by combining patriotic lies with police persecution, Clemenceau still holds the French workers in his grip. But now, when the old imperialist Germany lies prostrate on the ground, when the French working class are no longer threatened by any external foe but, on the contrary, their own bourgeoisie itself constitutes a frightful, deadly danger to other peoples acting, to be sure, at the beck and call of the British and American bourgeoisies -- there can be no doubt that, in response to soviets of workers' and soldiers' deputies in Germany and Austria-Hungary, bar ricades will soon appear in Paris.

It is highly probable that the French proletariat will be outstripped by the revolutionary working class of Italy. As you know, the Italian Socialist Party has sustained with honour the trials of the present war. The reasons for this are, on the one hand, that the Italian party had purged itself of the opportunist element already before the war, and, on the other, that the Italian bourgeoisie and monarchy took nearly nine months to go over from the camp of the Central Powers to that of the Entente countries, and start to wage war on the side of France and Russia. During those nine months the Italian party was able to convince itself, from the experience of other countries, of the demoralisation and prostitution which results from the policy of 'national' unity between socialists and capitalists. These circumstances enabled the Italian party to take the initiative in calling the Zimmerwald conference. The young Italian proletariat is distinguished by a stormy temperament and has more than once already transformed the stones of Italian roadways into revolutionary barricades. All the information that is reaching us from Italy testifies that a decisive clash between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is on the agenda there. The proletarian revolution possesses in the Apennine Peninsula one of its most militant and reliable detachments.

In Britain things are now not much different. True, Britain has been accustomed to stand aloof from Europe. The bourgeoisie has educated the British people in the belief that the Continent is one thing and Britain another. The Government of Britain intervened in the old wars of Europe, supporting with money, and to some extent with its Navy, the weaker against the stronger side, until the moment came when a balance of power had been achieved on the Continent. In this, comrades, consisted for centuries the entire world policy of Britain -- dividing Europe into two camps and not allowing one camp to strengthen itself at the expense of the other. The rulers of Britain supported their allies in the same way that the rope supports the man being hanged, that is, so as to tighten the noose around their necks as close as possible, in the form of all sorts of obligations, in order thereby to exhaust the strength not only of Britain's enemies but also of her 'allies'. But this time it did not work out like that -- Germany developed too strongly, showed herself too strong, and Britain was obliged to involve herself in this war, to get deeply into it, not only with money but with flesh, with human blood. But it has been said that 'blood is very special stuff'. This intervention by the British bourgeoisie will not pass without its consequences . . . Britain's privileged position, fundamentally undermined by German competition, has vanished forever. The British trade-unionist workers used to say: 'We have no militarism here: I am a free citizen on my own island, which is protected by the Navy. There are a few tens of thousands of sailor mercenaries in the Navy, and that's all.'

But now militarism has taken this 'free' British proletarian by the scruff of the neck and thrown him on to the territory of Europe, and the war has brought with it a fearful increase in taxes and in the cost of living. All this has radically undermined the old 'privileged' economic situation even of the upper stratum

of the British working class.

The more privileged the British proletariat considered itself formerly, the prouder its self-esteem, the more terrible will be its consciousness of catastrophe. Britain's economy is ruined, destroyed. There are a colossal number of cripples and other disabled persons. All this is the consequence of the war. To of the British wor thing ilacksorevolu/Ronavi, the



however, be passive, but shall engage, as much as ever we can, in business, in speculation, in moneymaking. We shall sell dynamite, shells and rifles to both sides, and all the time pocket good capitalist percentages as the price of our neutrality.'

That was the original policy of the bourgeois class of North America. And from the very beginning of the war the 'honorable' American merchants guided in this direction the policy of the 'honourable' President Wilson. They thrust their noses into both of the belligerent camps, with their honourable dynamite, and offered it to both sides at a very honourable, usurer's price. But Britain declared a blockade, and said to America: 'No, you shall not supply your dynamite to Germany.' Relations between America and Britain at once became very strained. Wilson told his stock-exchange: 'Justice has been flouted, the freedom of the seas profaned, America's honorable dynamite cannot get to Germany.' Naturally, the whole stock-exchange, the whole of the arms industry, seethed with righteous indignation against Britain for having established the blockade. Anxious meetings were held between the big men of the arms industry, the heads of the banks, and the diplomats, and they debated whether or not they should declare war on Britain. The neutral Wilson expressed himself thus: 'We are now cut off by the blockade from the Central Empires. If we break with Britain, the Anglo-French, Russian and Italian markets for our arms industry will also disappear, and we shall be left with nothing for our pains.' The interests of American industry and trade required that Wilson stand up for a neutrality which would allow the American merchant to export his goods in immense quantities to the countries of the Entente.

In fact, the foreign trade of the United States expanded two and a half times during the war. This was not the old sort of trade, when what was exported was grain, machinery, and in general all the products needed for human life. It was in the main trade in the instruments of death and destruction. This, Wilsonian neutrality enabled American industry to do splendid business.

But now Germany took the offensive against Britain, with her unrestricted submarine warfare. That was in January 1917. This was then the situation: all over America there were arms industries that relied on the European market. They had been cut off from the Central Empires by the British blockade, and now the German submarine blockade threatened to cut them off from Britain, France, Russia and Italy. Naturally, this exhausted the patience of the arms industry and, therefore, also of Wilson's 'pacifism' and 'neutrality'.

I had forgotten to tell you that Wilson was an apostle of 'pacifism', that is of the idea of peaceful co-existence between the nations, so long as this idea served as the flag under which trade in America 'neutral' dynamite could be carried on. But, from the moment when the two blockades barred the way, the great apostle of hypocrisy, Wilson, began to incline towards the view that it was now time to intervene. The American bourgeoisie gave him plenty of time to make up his mind. They said to him: 'Just look at this Tower of Babel, our arms industry, just look at this Mont Blanc of shells and cartridges that we have manufactured for Europe -- what are we to do with them?' Wilson spread his hands and declared that he had discovered no means of combating the submarine campaign. They said to him: 'You must take these goods for the American state. If you can't get them all across to Europe, then pay for them out of the pockets of the American workers and farmers.'

There you have the origin of American militarism, which has grown so monstrously in such a short time: American industry prepared this militarism for export to Europe, but then it overwhelmed the American people, and they were obliged to absorb it at home. Wilson's intervention in the war was thus, on the one hand, an attempt to subdue Germany, and all Europe along with her, and, on the other, direct

profit-seeking by the American arms industry. Such were the moral principles of that old hypocrite Wilson.

But this experience did not fail to leave its mark on the American working class. This class has some features that make it akin to the British working class. In both countries there are conservative trade unions. The upper stratum of the American working class considered that it was an even bigger aristocrat than its British equivalent. The British working class has a King, a noble estate, Lords, but not so the American working class. The United States is a 'free' republic, a federation, with plenty of land, plenty of grain, and so on and so forth.

All that was now left behind. It was no longer the case. No trace remained of the so-called free federal republic. The war finally put an end to that. We see now in the United States of America a centralized, militarist, imperialist country. The power of the American president in no way falls short of that of any King or Tsar. Where all fundamental questions of life and death, questions of war and peace, are concerned, the American president, as executant of the will of finance capital, has concentrated all power in his own hands for the duration of the war. Over there militarism has assumed a truly American size and scale. The living standards of the masses have worsened to an extreme degree. I was able to see this with my own eyes even before America openly entered the war. All the energy of the working people was being expended not on producing articles needed for existence, consumer goods, but on producing articles for extermination. Prices of necessities of life rose in America to a level never previously known there.

In January and February 1917, when colossal masses of war material were concentrated in all the eastern railway termini and ports and jams were forming on all the railways, prices for articles of consumption made a frenzied jump, and in New York I saw tens of thousands of housewives demonstrating in the streets, smashing up and pillaging shops that sold consumer goods, and overturning hawkers' stalls. It was a chaotic, stormy movement, the first precursor of social upheavals to come.

We thus arrive at the conclusion that, in America, this war has prepared all the material and ideological preconditions for a revolutionary outbreak by the working class of that country.

And this working class, comrades, is not made tip of poor material. The American working class was formed from representatives of a great variety of nationalities, and not from their worst representatives, either. Who emigrated to America? To America there emigrated, from the beginning, rebellious workers and peasants who were persecuted in their home lands. To America emigrated tens of thousands of workers and peasants after all the revolts and revolutions that were suppressed -- after 1848 from Germany and Austria, from France after the suppression of the 1848 revolution and after the Commune of 1871. To America emigrated from Russia, after 1905, an enormous number of advanced workers belonging both to the oppressed nationalities and to the basic Russian nationality -- it was revolutionary elements, militant forces, that emigrated across the ocean. True, they found there opportunities of better pay and a better life than in their old homeland. But the war did away with all those privileges, destroyed them, and this first-class proletariat was locked in the unbearable fetters of imperialism. There can be no doubt that they will smash these fetters, and the American proletariat will reveal all its revolutionary qualities.

French Communards, German organizers and our own Russian Bolsheviks settled over there. Our Bolshevik comrades play an important role there in all the revolutionary organizations. All this in combination will undoubtedly cause the American revolution to assume American dimensions.

A couple of words, comrades, about Japan. Japan is the country that we know least about: it lies in the Far East like an Asiatic Britain, like a guard-dog beside the continent of Asia, just as Britain lies beside the continent of Europe. Japan wants to carve and re-carve Asia in accordance with its own interests and ambitions, acting even more imperiously and barbarously than Britain has acted for centuries towards the continent of Europe.

But this is not the age for that sort of thing. Japan has set out on that road too late to be able to occupy the hegemonic position, as the master, the economic dictator, which alone enables a bourgeoisie to control its own working class over a long period.

Information has reached us in recent months that a powerful revolutionary strike movement has developed in Japan, involving about two million workers, under the slogan: 'Rice and peace!' These were our slogans, except that instead of 'bread' the Japanese say 'rice'.

Apart from that, this was the slogan of our own working class when it was tired out by militarism and war. Japan, as you know, is famous for its great imitiveness, its capacity for imitation. This is not a special gift of nature, a national characteristic, but a feature of a nation which has taken the road of world development later than others and has been obliged to run and jump in order to catch up with the others. Consequently it has cultivated an ability to imitate other nations, to borrow their practices, procedures and techniques. A nation like that learns how to *act* in the European way more quickly than to *think* in the European way.

The heads of the Japanese bourgeoisie are still full of old feudal superstitions, the conceptions of the clan and caste way of life, the prejudices of the Samurai caste, the old 'heathen' religions, and so on. But it is already able to rake in profits in conformity with all the methods of capitalist bookkeeping.

The Japanese working class, too, is undoubtedly far less advanced in its consciousness than in its practice. In general, comrades, what is consciousness? It is a very sluggish thing, even if it is man's mind. Subjectivists, such as our SRs, considered that all progress is due to consciousness. That is not true. Indeed, if men's consciousness were the vanguard factor, we should not have had this accursed war, these degradations and crimes.

Was not all this written about earlier, in books? It was all foretold, down to the last detail. Therefore, if consciousness were what moves men, they would long ago have understood this and would long since have sent their ruling classes to the devil. Why did this not happen? Because, in fact, consciousness is the most sluggish factor in all history. And it is necessary that external material facts should impel, thumping peoples and classes on the back, on the back of the head, on the temple, before this accursed consciousness will rouse itself, at last, and start to toddle along in the wake of these facts.

All this is shown with particular clarity from the example of Japan, just because Japan was obliged by its entire situation to introduce European tools as quickly as possible, on pain of being crushed. For tools you need factories, and for factories you need technology. And so Japan set about creating in a hurry its own technology and science, its own industry. The philosophical part of consciousness, the political, critical sphere, did not develop parallel with this, it did not have time, and the mass of the Japanese are still stuck in mediaeval ideological barbarism. But precisely because this is the situation, leaps forward are bound to occur.

We look upon the Japanese working class as a backward working class. That is true. In the mass it is

extremely backward. But weren't people saying to us only yesterday, about the Russian working class: 'So you think that in Russia there will be not only a revolution but also a dictatorship of the working class. But, after all, the Russian proletariat is extremely backward. It is sunk in peasant superstition.' We replied: 'If we built our hopes only on the consciousness of the proletariat as a whole, as it is today, then, certainly, your criticism would be correct. But there is an objective logic, the logic of our centralised industry, the logic of Russia's Tsardom, the logic of the counter-revolutionary nature of the Russian bourgeoisie and of the insignificance of the petty-bourgeois democratic elements, the logic of the international situation. This external, objective logic will be transformed into an historical stick that will drive the Russian working class, at first even in conflict with its consciousness, on to the road of the conquest of power.'

We were proved right. The same can be said of the Japanese working class, which entered even later than we did the path of historical development, and which is obliged to develop even faster. These three million workers, striking with the slogan:

'Bread and peace,' are experiencing a moment in their development which combines our 1903, when our first mighty, spontaneous strike movement took place, our 1905, when the revolution still went cap-in-hand to the Tsar, and even the beginning of the 1917 revolution, when our working men and woman demanded peace and bread. All that has been combined into one event.

The predatoriness of the Japanese bourgeoisie, its militaristic fury, will get stronger and stronger, because the USA is now more frightening than ever for Japan. Previously, America had no army, but now she has a huge one. Her navy is being strengthened. Japan is poor in comparison with America, and on the basis of her poverty she has to create a powerful army: for this purpose the Japanese working class has to be exploited without mercy, fleeced to the skin. These are the objective factors which tell us that a revolution in Japan is inevitable.

The Japanese bourgeoisie has, within a short space of time, more or less caught up with the European bourgeoisie where the technique of production and the technique of plundering are concerned. The Japanese working class will have to catch up with the European working class so far as the technique of proletarian revolution is concerned.

From my necessarily cursory survey of the working-class movement in various countries it follows, comrades, that the war has everywhere brought fully to light the fundamental class antagonism which in peacetime is not so clearly perceived by the working class, not so vividly noticed and felt.

It has now been stripped bare, and the workers of all countries are faced with this fateful choice: either to be destroyed by history or to seize state power. This is why war is the mother of revolution.

Even if we assume that America and Japan will lag behind while all Europe is enveloped in the flames of social revolution, they will not crush us.

If the German working class takes a step forward -- which it will do -- and takes power into its own hands, expropriating its bourgeoisie and applying itself to the organizing of a Communist economy, it will be a thousand times stronger than us in its organization and technique, and our alliance with it, the alliance of Soviet Russia with the German Communist working class, or the alliance of Soviet Russia with Soviet Germany, this alliance alone will constitute a power strong enough for the waves of the European and world-wide counter-revolution to break against it.







You know what changes of orientation are going on now in all the neutral and all the occupied countries, in those that were till lately being towed by Germany, and in those where the bourgeoisie was still recently kissing Wilhelm's jackboots: they are all now declaring for the whole world to hear, that the one person really responsible for the war was the German Kaiser, and they are all turning themselves into vassals of Anglo-French militarism. Needless to say, while yesterday, on the shores of the Caspian Sea, Turkey was fighting against Britain and her agent Bicherakhov, tomorrow Bicherakhov will be marching alongside the Turkish hordes against us.

Krasnov and Denikin were adversaries, for Krasnov obtained his pieces of silver from Germany, from Wilhelm, whereas Denikin received his from Lloyd George and Clemenceau. Today this antagonism -- in which there was no element of principle, since British and French pieces of silver ring exactly the same as German -- today this antagonism has vanished, and Krasnov is united with Denikin on the part of Anglo-French imperialism.

In the Ukraine, Skoropadsky was in the service of the German Government. Now this Skoropadsky has joined Romania. Romania, which previously went over from the Allies to Germany, has now, by the same route, through the same gate, returned from the German camp to that of the Allied imperialists. They are all united and are levelling out their front against us. And everything in the Balkan Peninsula that is still intact will, of course, be directed against Soviet Russia.

The attempts to crush us from the Northern Front have so far come to nothing. It is not out of the question, of course, that the Northern Front may wake up again in the spring, if major events have not taken place in Britain and France before then. But at present, during the winter months, no danger threatens us from the North.

Nor do we expect any danger from the East. We have cleared the Volga, and in the Urals the work, though proceeding perhaps more slowly than we should like, is going ahead solidly and well. We have grounds to hope that Ufa and Orenburg will be ours in the very near future. [Applause.]

As regards the former Western Front, that is, the German front, you know that the White Guards have recently been grouping themselves there. Before Pskov an army was formed, under General Dragomirov, which was to have threatened Petrograd. Throughout the Western zone German militarism created counter-revolutionary forces to fight us, and did the same in the Ukraine. Now, with the revolution in Germany, all these forces are left hanging in the air, and, of course, for us the only conclusion to be drawn from a revolution in Germany would be to proclaim the treaty of Brest-Litovsk null and void. [Applause.] But that would mean that instead of Dragomirov marching against us from Pskov or Vilna, somebody else would march, carrying the Soviet flag, towards Pskov, Vilna, Riga, and all the centres of the occupied regions. And it is no secret to any of us that today, in all those regions, our party, the Communist Party, is leading the workers, and to a considerable extent the peasant masses too, and that the Soviet power will not remain indifferent to the struggle which has already developed there, and which will develop tomorrow in full force in the Ukraine.

This struggle is now losing even the slightest aspect of a conflict between us and Germany, for free Latvia, free Poland and Lithuania, and free Finland, together with, on the other side, free Ukraine, will not be a wedge but a connecting link between Soviet Russia and the future Soviet Germany and Austria-Hungary. This is the beginning of a federation, of a European Communist federation, a union of the proletarian republics of Europe.

Consequently, our Western Front presents at this time no threat to us: on the contrary, we can finish off our work with that quarter, establishing Russia within the borders that confirm to the will of the masses inhabiting the former Tsarist Empire.

But the Southern Front remains for us, as before, a front full of menace. It is here, comrades, that the knot of fate could be tied. Germany strove to get, through the Ukraine and Trans-caucasia, to the British dominions in Asia: here lay Germany's proposed imperialist highway. Now imperialist Germany has been overthrown. But now along this same route march the British and the French, uniting all the counter-revolutionaries around them. Turkey, the Ukraine, the Don Cossacks, the Transcaucasian nationalities -- that is, their bourgeois classes -- all will be welded into one by the single cement of class hatred against the proletarian Communist revolution.

You have read how the first vessels have already appeared in the waters of the Bosphorus, under the walls of Constantinople, and the radio reports that, soon, dozens of Anglo-French pennants will be flying in the Black Sea, at Odessa, at Sevastopol and at Novorossiisk. With this is connected the question of an Anglo-French landing on the Black Sea coast and an advance into the Ukraine. Things are, of course, not done as quickly as they can be said. To land a few tens of thousands of Anglo-French soldiers would signify nothing. Germany and Austria-Hungary needed to keep half a million soldiers in the Ukraine merely so as to control the railway junctions and to prevent a country that was constantly on the boil from exploding. That was the temporary state of semi-order which enabled the German troops to plunder the Ukrainian peasants. The Anglo-French will need an army no smaller than the Germans had, for the sympathy felt by the Ukrainian peasants and workers towards these liberators will be no more ardent than it was towards the German soldiers. And it is not just a matter of the Ukraine alone, but of all Russia. True, the German 'White Guards' and the Ukrainian bourgeoisie will help them. The cadres of the Great-Russian bourgeoisie, the Great-Russian imperialists will rush to the Ukraine and come to the aid of the Anglo-French aggressors.

Nevertheless, this is a task that requires not just days, not just weeks, but months. However, the danger is great, especially great because the Allies now have their hands free. With Germany defeated, enormous military forces have been made available.

True, the threat of revolution has increased throughout Europe, but this revolution has not yet taken place, it is only at its beginning. It will come. But it is not here today. We have to take account of the situation that exists today. And so it is still materially possible for them to throw large forces into the Ukraine. Our salvation lies in preventing Anglo-French imperialism from linking up with the Russian counter revolution.

The German troops are forming their Soviets all over the Ukraine and spontaneously returning home, or coming over to us. They are leaving their weapons with us. But, as the German troops depart, others are trying to come in, and are already knocking at the door. We must take advantage of this moment, and as one lot departs and the other tries to enter, we must thrust a wedge between them, we must say, along with the Ukrainian workers and peasants, regarding the whole of the Ukraine: 'This is also part of our Soviet house,' and lock the door securely, telling the foreign scoundrels, both German and British: 'No entry here.' [Applause.]

Comrades, all history is now condensed for us in this question, as though in a single lump. Shall we be able to do this, shall we succeed in it? If we do not succeed, I won't say that the revolution is doomed to fail -- the world revolution cannot fail. There was the Paris Commune, which was put down. There was

the year 1905, when we were put down. But we rose again. And if we are again put down, the revolution will arise once more, from our bones. But we are not content with the idea of gaining the victory in the last analysis, in 25 or 50 years' time, we ourselves want to win, and you who are sitting here, our generation, having taken power, don't want to give it up. That is the point. [Applause.]

We must accomplish the task history has set before us. It was for that reason that the Central Executive Committee proclaimed that our Soviet Republic was to be turned into an armed camp. There is no task so urgent, so obligatory, so imperative for us as that of waging armed struggle on the Southern Front.

I sometimes encounter, let me call it, departmental narrowness and professional conservatism on the part of a section of our Soviet officials. They frequently send me complaints, by telegraph, that our war machine is hindering certain cultural tasks, some cultural work or other. I know that, perfectly well. The war machine, which seizes hold of many forces and resources, often acts clumsily, barbarously, roughly. This is all quite plain to me and I am ready to acknowledge it. But alas, comrades, this is a consequence of the fact that we are fighting a life-and-death battle, and war is a harsh trade. War is a merciless thing. And, of course, in every town, in Voronezh, Kursk, Moscow or Tambov, here, there and everywhere, the circumstance that we are waging a struggle to the death is expressed in the fact that the Commissariat for Education suffers, the Commissariat of Justice suffers, Social Security suffers -- they find that they have had taken from them not only material resources but also men, their best men, who are sent to the front.

When Soviet officials complain that teachers have been taken from the schools, and that we need these teachers, that they are good proletarian teachers, I invariably give the same answer: "They will undoubtedly make excellent Red officers, and I shall not let you have them back." I received a telegram from the workers in a hospital fund complaining that we had taken their best doctors. We need doctors, first and foremost, for the army, and good doctors in the service of a hospital fund will be good doctors for soldiers. The fact that Russia has been turned into an armed camp is expressed in the fact that, so far as possible, all material resources and all human forces are collected and mobilised, and this has to be done with tenfold vigour. In addition, we have to mobilise the consciousness of all Soviet officials, so that they all understand and feel that *the fate of our country is now being decided on the Southern Front*. If we give way here, if we stumble here, then you may be sure, nothing will be left of the hospital funds and the educational work. We have to ensure the possibility of our very existence, and, therefore, of our cultural work. That is why all forces and all resources must be devoted to serving the army.

I know that the Voronezh comrades have done a great deal, but, allow me to say, not everything, so far. The work can and must be carried on in a more centralized and intense way. There was a moment when the question arose of evacuating Voronezh. There can and must be no question of that. [Applause.]

Voronezh cannot be evacuated under any conditions, in any circumstances, it must be defended. You must here do what the Soviets are doing throughout the Volga region, where they have learnt the bitter lesson of the Czechoslovak rising. There, every town has now been turned into a fortress. The workers are undergoing military training. A section of the workers have been formed into a garrison, which has been stationed in different parts of the town. Each district has its commandant, a reliable revolutionary worker. Every worker knows where he must go at the moment of danger, what trench he has to occupy. In short all the towns of the Volga region have now been transformed into fortresses, and if the fortune of war betrays us, if, to assume the impossible, our enemies from the East again reach the Volga, then they will find there a line of fortifications against which they will break many of their teeth.

And you, comrades, must transform Voronezh in this way, into one of our Southern fortresses. The

working class of the factories and railways of Voronezh must be the garrison of this fortress.

That is the first and most immediate task for the local military authorities, together with the Soviet and all the trade-union organizations, in the factories and works -- turning Voronezh into a good fortress of the Southern Front. I do not doubt that this task will be performed.

The task of our provincial Soviet in relation to the province as a whole is to secure the railway lines which pass through the province. The Cossacks always break through to the railways with the help of the kulaks in the neighbouring villages. The railway zone must be guarded more strictly. The kulaks of the villages and hamlets situated along the railway lines must be made directly responsible for the inviolability of the permanent way. Take the last kulak uprisings that have occurred here in Voronezh province -- they spread a zone of fire all along the railway lines. This is a system which the Cossacks and kulaks, led by officers, derived from the experience of the German occupation of the Ukraine, where the Germans held the railway junctions. Only a small armed force is needed to fight when this system of insurrection is employed. A conspiracy of this type was prepared which was to have come to a head on the anniversary of our October revolution. All these revolts -- the revolt of a band of sailors in Petrograd, the revolts by kulaks in various localities, in various provinces, are all -- this is now an established fact -- separate fragments of an unrealised gigantic plan for a revolt timed to coincide with the anniversary of our revolution. *But in Petrograd it broke out earlier -- the organization did not hold firm.* The revolt flared up prematurely, and in other places too it fell to pieces. But it may be renewed tomorrow, and it will take place along the railway line. Revolts will continue so long as there is a Southern Front. We can put an end forever to the kulak revolts by one means alone -- by liquidating the Southern Front, the great hope of the bourgeois and the kulaks. Hither, to the Southern Front, we have sent large armed forces. We shall give our Voronezh front still more tens and hundreds of our advanced workers, to serve as regimental commissars, commanders and rank-and-file warriors, who will exert influence above all by the example of their own courage. We shall then have strength enough to liquidate the Cossack bands once and for all. We must win, because what is now being decided in our South is the fate not only of the Russian revolution but also of the world revolution for the next few years. If we let the enemy consolidate his position here and crush us, that would have the gravest consequences for the working class of all countries.

Comrades! We are standing today, like a beacon, on a high place. They want to throw us down, at whatever cost. The fact that we, surrounded by a ring of enemies, have held out till now, has at last evoked an outburst of revolution in Germany and in Austria-Hungary. If we were to fall, that would be an immense gain for our class enemies and a dreadful blow to our friends throughout the world. Comrades! We have no right to fall. We have risen too high. As the Soviet power, as the Party, we have taken on too great an obligation to the international working class. We must win. And what we have here is our most important front, we must give everything we possess to this front. You will make this front impregnable. Furthermore you will give us forces that will carry us to Novochoerkassk, Rostov, to Poltava, to Kharkov, to Kiev. And through Kiev runs a line leading straight to junction with the Austro-Hungarian revolution, just as through Pskov and Vilna runs a line leading straight to Junction with the revolution in Germany.

The period of retreat which lasted from the moment of the Brest-Litovsk peace until recent weeks, that period of retreat on all fronts, is finished. The breathing space given us by history has been liquidated. By retreating until now we have accumulated strengths. We have now to put that strength into action. Into the offensive on all fronts! Into the offensive on the Western Front and on the Southern Front -- on all the

fronts of the revolution. History is working for us. But we are ourselves a living force of history. Once we have become penetrated to the marrow of our bones with the historical task imposed upon us, no danger can make us quail. The obligation to the international working class which Soviet Russia has undertaken will be fulfilled. We shall guard, we shall secure, we shall protect our Soviet Republic as a fortress of social revolution, until the time comes for it to be united with the world revolution.





# The Military Writings of LEON TROTSKY

Volume 1, 1918

HOW THE REVOLUTION ARMED

## CHRONOLOGY OF THE RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR -- 1918

From the Original Soviet Edition

Transcribed and HTML markup for the [Trotsky Internet Archive](#) by [David Walters](#)

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(Dates previous to February 14, 1918 are given in the old style and new style, but from then onward in new style only.)

**1917**

**FEBRUARY**

(March 9-13) 24-28 General strike in Petrograd. Revolt of the Preobrazhensky, Volhynian and Lithuanian Regiments. Formation of the Executive Committee of the State Duma and of the Provisional government.

**JUNE**

18 Offensive organized by Kerensky on the South-Western (July 1) Front.

**JULY**

Armed demonstration by a section of the garrison and workers of Petrograd against the Provisional Government. Turning-point in our offensive at the front and beginning of the retreat from Galicia.

**AUGUST**

19-21 (Sept. 1-3) German break-through in the Riga positions and capture of Riga.

25-30 (Sept. 7-12) General Kornilov's mutiny. Movement towards Petrograd by the cavalry corps under Krymov. Bloodless liquidation of the mutiny through general arming of the workers.

**OCTOBER**

16 (29) Creation of the Military Revolutionary Committee of the Petrograd Soviet.

21 (Nov. 3) At a meeting of the Petrograd Soviet the Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC) is recognised as the leading organ of the troops in the capital. An emergency meeting of all the regimental committees of the garrison resolves to support the MRC.

22 (Nov. 4) 'The Day of the Petrograd Soviet'. Crowded meetings in all the factories.

23-24 (Nov. 5-6) The MRC puts the entire garrison on a footing of full combat-readiness.

25 (Nov. 7) Victorious accomplishment of the proletarian revolution. Flight of Kerensky to the forces of the Northern Front. Arrest of the Provisional Government. Opening of the 2nd All-Russia Congress of Soviets.

26 (Nov. 8) Congress adopts decree on war and peace. Appeal to the fronts and the armies for the establishment of military revolutionary committees. Formation of the Council of People's Commissars and the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs.

27 (Nov. 9) Movement towards Petrograd by the Cossack Division of the First Don Corps under Krasnov's command and Kerensky's

leadership, with the aim of suppressing the Bolshevik revolt. 28 (Nov. 10) Action by the Red Guards at Krasnoye Selo and Gatchina.

29 (Nov. 11) Suppression of the Cadets' (*Junkers'*) revolt in Petrograd.

30-31 (Nov. 12-13) Rout of Krasnov. Tsarkoye Selo taken by the Soviet troops.

## NOVEMBER

1 (14) Capture of Gatchina. Arrest of Krasnov. Bitter struggle for the Moscow Kremlin.

2 (15) Victory of the Red Guards in Moscow.

7 (20) Order given to Acting Commander-in-Chief Dulthonin to begin negotiations with the Germans and to cease military operations.

9 (22) Dulthonin refuses to enter into negotiations for an armistice. Ensign N.V. Krylenko appointed Commander-in-Chief.

14 (27) Commander-in-Chief Krylenko sends envoys under a flag of truce to the Germans, to propose an armistice. The command of the Germans' Eastern Front agrees to negotiate.

19 (Dec. 2) Liquidation of the counter-revolutionary GHQ. First meeting between our peace delegation and the Germans.

22 (Dec. 5) Signature at Brest-Litovsk of an agreement to suspend military operations from November 24 to December 4.

25-28 (Dec. 8-11) First battles with Kornilov's shock-troops and with Kaledin on the Don. Dutov's revolt at Orenburg.

## DECEMBER

2 (15) Kaledin takes Rostov.

8 (21) Comrade Antonov appointed People's Commissar for the struggle against the counter-revolution. Arrival of Kornilov and Denikin at Novocherkassk.

11-12 (24-25) Battles at Tamarovka station and at Oboyan and capture of the town of Lyubotin by Sievers. Oboyan lies between Kursk and Byclgorod, Tatnarovka is a station on the line unning westward from Byclgorod, and Lyuhotin is a few kilometres west of Kharkov.

16 (29) Lozoyova and pavlograd captured by Red Guard units. Decree abolishing all ranks and titles in

the Army.

18 (31) Sablin's forces enter Kharkov.

20 Formation of the All-Russia Board for Organising the Red (January 2) Army.

24 Formation at Kharkov of HQ of the revolutionary forces of (January 6) the Southern Front for struggle against the counter revolution, under the command of People's Commissar Comrade Antonov. Muravyov appointed Chief of Staff.

27 (Jan. 9) The peace conference at Brest-Litovsk resumes work.

29-31 Krvlenko calls for the creation of a revolutionary people's (Jan. 11-13) socialist army. Beginning of the struggle against the Ukrainian Rada.

## 1918

### JANUARY

1(14) Diplomatic relations are broken off with Romania, where the Russian troops are disarmed.

3 (16) The All-Russia Central Executive Committee adopts the decree on forming a Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.

4 (17) Beginning of the Red Guards' offensive towards Kiev.

5 (18) Poltava captured by Muravyov.

6 (19) Dissolution of the Constituent Assembly.

10 (23) Congress of front-line Cossacks at Kamenskaya *sanitsa* declares war on Kaledin.

11(24) Capture of Feodosia and Yalta by the Red Guards. Suppression of revolt by the Crimean Tatars.

16 (29) A revolutionary committee seizes power in Odessa. Formation of a revolutionary government in Finland and beginning of civil war with Mannerheim.

18 (31) Orenburg taken by revolutionary units.

26 (Feb. 8) Kiev taken by Muravyov's troops.

27 (Feb. 9) Ukrainian Rada signs separate peace with the Germans.

28 (Feb.10) Battles before Kamenskaya and Taganrog. The Russian delegation refuses to sign the annexatory conditions of the peace treaty, after declaring the war at an end.

30 (Feb.12) Capture of Torgovaya and Tikhoretskaya. Successful engagement of the Red Guards before Rogachev with the Polish Corps of Sowbor-Musnicki.

### FEBRUARY

14 Opening of the first command courses in Petrograd, Moscow, Tver and Kazan.

17 The German offensive begins.

19 Radio message by the Soviet Government agreeing to accept the Germans' peace conditions.

21 Capture of Minsk and Rechitsa\* by the Germans. Establishment of the Revolutionary Defence Committee in Petrograd. We capture Rostov.

22 The Germans reply, agreeing to continue the negotiations for peace.

23 Publication of the decree on the formation of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.

24 The German offensive continues. Capture of Borisov, Revel, Yuriev. Our troops in the Ukraine retreat.

### MARCH

2 Order by the People's Commissar for War for simultaneous demobilisation of all classes of the old Army.

3 The Brest-Litovsk Treaty signed.

4 Decree by the Government on creation of the Supreme Military Council.

5 Atanas Golubov takes Novocherkassk.

7 The Soviet Government moves to Moscow, and Petrograd is evacuated.

13 The Germans take Chernigov.

14 The Fourth Extraordinary Congress of Soviets ratifies the conditions of the Brest-Litovsk peace.

15 The Turks take Trebizond and the Austrians take Odessa.

16 The Germans take Kiev.

30 Poltava taken by the Germans.

## APRIL

3 A German expeditionary division under Von der Goltz lands at Hangö to put down the rising in Finland.

6 Occupation of Vladivostok by the Japanese.

8 Decree published on the division of the Republic into eight military districts and establishment of commissariats at *vol ost, uyezd*, province and district levels.

10 Capture of Kherson and Byelgorod by the Germans. Withdrawal of Russian naval vessels from Helsingfors to Kronstadt.

17 Capture of Novocherkassk by Soviet forces and combat liquidation of the Kornilov movement.

22 The All-Russia Central Executive Committee adopts decrees on the introduction of universal military training on the procedure for appointment to posts in the Red Army; and on the introduction in the Army of a 'solemn undertaking' (oath).

26 Rout of the Central Rada by the Germans and accession to power in the Ukraine by Hetman Skoropadsky.

## MAY

1-6 Capture of Sevastopol, Rostov and Taganrog by the Germans.

8 Establishment of the All-Russia GHQ.

10 Discovery of conspiracy by the Right SRs in Moscow.

15 Demonstration by the Anarchists and the SRs in Tsaritsyn.

21 Large-scale peasant revolts in the Ukraine against oppression by the German troops and the Haydamaks.

25 First clashes with the Czechoslovaks, and capture of Chelyabinsk by them.

29-30 Capture of Penza and Syzran [Syzran changed hands several times. It was of great strategic importance, as the railway running through Orenburg to Turkestan, Russia's main source of cotton, ran across the bridge over the Volga at this point.] by the Czechoslovaks. Krasnov takes Liski station. First decisions by the All-Russia Central Executive Committee on mobilising the workers.

31 Decision by the Council of People's Commissars and its appeal for the organisation of armed grain-procurement detachments.

**JUNE**



- 2 Establishment of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic.
- 4 Discovery of 'the conspiracy of the Allied diplomats' against Soviet Russia.
- 10 Kazan taken by the Red forces.
- Publication of the decision by the Council of People's Commissars to introduce Red Terror.
- 12 Simbirsk and Volsk taken by our forces.
- 19 Buinsk taken by Red forces.

## OCTOBER

- 3 Red forces take Syzran and Krasnovflmsk.
- 7 Rout of the Czechoslovak units and the People's Army of the Constituent Assembly in the Samara-Inza-Simbirsk area
- 8 Sanaara taken by our forces.
- 15 Offensive by Krasnov's Cossack units towards Tsaritsyn
- 16 Units of the Fifth Army take Bugulma.
- 29-31 Units of the First Army take Buguruslan and Buzuluk.

## NOVEMBER

- 1 The Red Army goes over to the offensive on the Don.
- 9-10 General strike and revolution in Germany.
- Fall of the monarchy and formation of a Government by the Scheidemannists and the Independents.
- 11 Armistice on the Western Front between the Germans and the Allies.
- 13 Decision by the All-Russia Central Executive Committee on annulment of the Brest Treaty.
- 15 On the Don, Cossack units withdraw southward.
- 17 The German occupation forces start to withdraw from the territory of the Soviet Republic. Our forces cross the demarcation line.
- 18 Arrest of members of the Directory at Omsk and proclamation of Admiral Koichak as 'Supreme Ruler' of Russia.
- 20 Capture of Pskov by units of the Red Army.
- 29 Narva taken by our troops.
- 30 Decision by the All-Russia Central Executive Committee on formation of Council for Workers' and Peasants' Defence

## DECEMBER

- I Formation of Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government of the Ukraine and publication of manifesto deposing of Skoropadsky.
- 3 In the south, Valuiki taken by units of the Red Army.
- 6 Dvinsk taken by Red forces.
- 14-17 Soviet Bye Minsk. Belorussia united with the RSFSR. Capture of 23 Decision of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee recognizing the independence of Soviet Estonia, Soviet Latvia and Soviet Lithuania. ,
- 27 Establishment of the Central Commission for combating desertion.
- 29-31 Capture of Steritamak and Ufa by units of the Red Army.

